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Thrice Tied Tales

Germany, Israel, and German Muslim Youth

How can we understand the relationship between Germany, Israel, and German Muslim youths in the beginning of the twenty-first century? How are these three collectives – seemingly disparate in terms of their boundedness, historical relationship, and historical location – related, if at all? This article presents an excavation of how the modes of discourse about Jews, Israel, and German Muslim youth in Germany interact and impact on each other.

At the core, my discussion delineates three mutually interrelated and interdependent discourses behind the anti-Israeli positioning of (some)¹ youth from Muslim communities in Germany today. The argument made here is that German Muslim youth's positioning against Israel is by no means a 'natural' or 'cultural' given; rather, Muslim youth's responses are structured by preexisting discursive relations in Germany. It will be argued that in order to understand the anti-Israeli posture found among some German Muslim youths, one needs to understand less-obvious discursive and structural conditions that fuel and encourage such attitudes. The primary objective is thus to theorize and present the relationship of three conditions: Firstly, long-standing civilizational master narratives² of exclusion that have developed into a contemporary representation of Muslims as positioned in an antagonistic relationship vis-à-vis the State of Israel; secondly, a preexisting heightened and biased concern of the German media with Israel (i.e. *Israelkritik*, 'Criticism of Israel'); and thirdly, the emergence of narratives of victimization about and by disenfranchised German Muslim youths. Each will be explored in turn.

1 I intentionally and repeatedly use the phrasing "(some) German Muslim youths" to indicate and reinforce that by no means all, or even the majority of German Muslim youths position themselves against the State of Israel. Rather, around 20 percent of youths who identified as Muslim were estimated to do so in surveys, see: Frindte / Boehnke / Kreikenbom / Wagner, *Lebenswelten junger Muslime*, 2012.

2 Master narratives are grand narratives – real or imagined – shared by members of a given society that serve as the 'glue' of affinity behind collective identity – constructs whose authenticity and validity have been challenged by postmodern scholars.

Master Narratives of Exclusion: Europe's Others

Minorities, especially Jews, have made their home within the shifting borders of territories that have constituted Germany since the fifth century to today. Germany in the beginning of the twenty-first century is an immigration country with about 30 percent of its youth coming from immigrant communities. Most notably, today there are about four million Muslims from about 49 countries in Germany – representing approximately five percent of the population.³ Thus, Germany's most prominent 'others' in the twentieth and the beginnings of the twenty-first century have been its substantial Jewish (prior to the Holocaust) and substantial Muslim (since the 1960s) communities. The conflicted relationship of Europe with its Jewish and Muslim minorities has been a long-standing topic of research, yet only most recently has discussion begun to mark out the ways in which antisemitic and anti-Muslim discourses in Europe are intertwined and are productive of one another.⁴

Contemporary master narratives in Germany (similar to the rest of Europe) build on and synthesize cumulative hegemonic discourses about the civilizational, cultural, religious, ethnic, and political differences between (Christian) Europe and its 'others'.⁵ Traditional antisemitism, carried as part of Christian doctrines, has been central to European public discourse for centuries and new forms of antisemitism continue to claim their own place in this tradition. While anti-Muslim discourse has not been instantiated in historical tragedies such as the Holocaust, it builds on civilizational narratives, which engage related processes of 'othering.' Contemporary European master narratives engender a civilizational narrative in which the West and its history are portrayed in continuity with Christian traditions and Occidental civilization. This civilizational-cultural narrative also entails an implicit religious dimension that is based on the alleged 'Christian' roots of society. While these contours of a Christian tradition have been called a "fictitious amalgam" almost synonymous to the similarly vague notion of 'Western values,' this amalgam underlies European self-perceptions which in

3 Haug / Müssig / Stichs, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, 2009.

4 Bunzl / Senfft (eds.), *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Islamophobie*, 2008; Bunzl, *Between Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia*, 2005; Gingrich, *Anthropological Analyses*, 2005; Glick Schiller, *Racialized Nations*, 2005b; Halliday, *Islamophobia reconsidered*, 1999; Özyürek, *The Politics of Cultural Unification*, 2005; Stender / Follert / Özdoğan (eds.), *Konstellationen des Antisemitismus*, 2010; Widmann, *Der Feind kommt aus dem Morgenland*. In: Benz (ed.), *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, 2008.

5 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 2003; Mignolo, *The darker side*, 1995/2003.

times past entailed ‘otherizing’ and ‘re-Orientalizing’ Judaism, and more recently does the same to Islam.⁶

An important aspect of the German civilizational narrative is a cultural narrative: A culturalizing discourse about ‘the West’ identifies specific ‘culture areas’ (*Kulturkreise*) as stemming from nineteenth century western and central European experience which up to this day is accompanied by assertions regarding the existence of a local German guiding culture (*Leitkultur*).⁷ The presence of minorities in these allegedly homogeneous German culture spaces has historically been framed as a threat, subverting and polluting the ‘cultural community.’ Historically, ethnic cleansing of Germany during the Holocaust is, at least in part, the product of this narrative. Similarly, contemporary German cultural-civilizational discourse positions ‘German Western culture’ as opposed to ‘Muslim-Oriental culture’.⁸ Resting on the legacy of historical conflict with Islam, Western civilization and Islamic civilization are presented as essentially rival, exclusive, and incompatible entities whose traits are conferred to their respective populations.⁹ The impossibility of consensus between the value systems of the two is one of the core claims behind such representations of Islam. Anti-Muslim representations spread by global media since the 1980s promote notions of a “clash of civilizations”¹⁰, portraying Islam as archaic,¹¹ and positioning it as a potential threat to Western nations, states, and societies.

They most notably include the Muslim fundamentalists’ response to Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*; widespread demonstrations in the Arab world in 1990 in support of Saddam Hussein the angry response in 2005 sparked by the Muhammad cartoon and similar protests in 2010 sparked by the Florida Koran burning; and in 2012 the global uproar over an amateur video defiling Muhammad and Islam that *Newsweek* chose to cover under the headline “Muslim Rage.”¹² The attack on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001 was a

6 Salvatore, Public Religion. In: Aziz/Said/Abu-Nimer/Sharify-Funk (eds.), *Contemporary Islam*, 2006.

7 Frobenius, *Ursprung der afrikanischen Kulturen*, 1898.

8 Hüttermann, *Moscheekonflikte*, 2011.

9 Featherstone, *Occidentalism*, 2009; Goody, *The Theft of History*, 2006; Said, *Orientalism*, 1979; Dumont, *Are Cultures living Beings?*, 1986; Grosfoguel/Mielants, *The Long-Durée Entanglement*, 2006.

10 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization*, 1996.

11 Dalsheim, *On Demonized Muslims and Vilified Jews*, 2010.

12 Ali, in: *Newsweek*, September 17, 2012; Abad-Santos, in: *The Atlantic Wire*, September 17, 2012. Lewis, in: *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1, 1990.

global turning point in the public's construction of Muslims as 'political others'.¹³ Essentialized political values are transported along with these narratives: Democratic values are ascribed to those categorized as Western and (Judeo-) Christian, and fundamentalist values are ascribed to those categorized as Muslim. Along with this, the civilizational narrative has more recently quietly and seamlessly slid into a secular and democratic narrative in which the West (now including both Christianity and Judaism) is portrayed as secular and democratic, while the Muslim world is portrayed as fundamentalist, religious, and undemocratic. Competing narratives are not mutually exclusive, thus the religious dimension in the construction of the West as a Judeo-Christian civilization coexists today with a narrative of the West as secular and democratic.

Even though claims to secularist policies at the level of the European Union would imply equal opportunities and standing for all citizens and residents, independent of religious affiliation, it has been demonstrated that the Euro-Christian roots of such European secularism' often discriminate against religious minorities. On the political Right, Christianity is proclaimed to be the foundation of European culture and civilization, and Islam is presented as an antithetical other to this culture. On the political Left, Europe is characterized as secular, democratic, and a bastion of humanitarian universalistic values. Islamic religious and gender practices are criticized as antithetical to these values and repressive of the right of the individual to subscribe to secularist values. In sum, the public discussion of both the political Left and the Right is critical of the Muslim presence in Europe.¹⁴ As such, *Muslims* may be accepted *in* Europe to varying degrees, however *Islam* is not recognized as *of* Europe (i.e., as an indigenous religion).¹⁵ In short, public discussion of both the political Left and the Right is critical of the Muslim presence in Europe.¹⁶

In Germany today, the term 'Muslim' is primarily a ideologically-infused term that has come to replace the dominant term used until about 2001 to identify immigrants and minorities in Germany – 'foreigner' (*Ausländer*). The heated debate around Muslim religious and gender practices in Germany and the politicization of Islam in the context of global political developments has elevated the stigmatization of Islam and Muslim religious practices.¹⁷ German discourses reveal concerns that Muslims are insular and not integrated and impose on them

¹³ Abbas, *After 9/11*, 2004; Brown, *Comparative Analysis*, 2006; Ewing, *Stolen Honor*, 2008; Mandel, *Cosmopolitan Anxieties*, 2008.

¹⁴ Özyrrek, 2005.

¹⁵ Asad, 2003; Özyrrek, 2005, p. 511–512.

¹⁶ Özyrrek, 2005.

¹⁷ Ewing, 2008; Eksner, *Revisiting the 'Ghetto'*, 2013.

demands that they comply with ‘German’ culture and values.¹⁸ Opinion polls reveal anti-Muslim attitudes are widespread in Germany¹⁹, with 27 percent of the population-at-large in Germany consistently agreeing with Islamophobic positions.²⁰ In 2011, 52.5 percent of German respondents agreed with the statement “Islam is mostly or totally a religion of intolerance,” and 17.1 percent of Germans (and 22 percent of Europeans) agreed that “Most Muslims think that Islamist terror is legitimate”²¹.

Crucially, contemporary German narratives about Muslims construct a third opposition: the allegedly intrinsic opposition between Muslims and Jews. Discourses about ‘Muslims and Jews’ draw on complex and interwoven narratives about Europe’s others²², Israel and Palestine, and fundamentalist Islam.²³ By adopting the narrative of a conflicted relationship of Muslims with Jews (and by extension, with Israel) as deeply significant for themselves, some German Muslims link themselves to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict constellation.²⁴ German Muslims, especially those from Arab families, are discursively positioned as second-degree victims of a conflict that is thought to affect their close or distant families, or at least their ethno-religious networks by virtue of the larger Muslim collective. Tragic antisemitic incidents in German cities, such as those in which German Muslim adolescents physically attacked Jewish men wearing Jewish head coverings (*kipas*) in the streets, feed this discourse. Political spectacles such as Al-Quds-Day demonstrations that attract wide media coverage further showcase the public imagery of groups of angry young men from Muslim communities participating in protests against the State of Israel while shouting antisemitic and anti-Israeli slogans. Such events are portrayed by the media as a collectively-shared emotional response to the victimization of the global Muslim nation (*Umma*) by the State of Israel’s actions against the population of the Palestinian

18 Adelson, *Touching Tales*, 2000; Caglar, *Das Kulturkonzept*, 1990; Petterson, *Muslim Immigrants in Western Europe*. In: Moaddel (ed.), *Values and Perception*, 2007; Vertovec / Rogers (eds), *Muslim European Jouth*, 1998; White, *Turks in the New Germany*, 1997;

19 Zick / Küpper / Hövermann, *Die Abwertung des Anderen*, 2011.

20 Leibold / Kühnel, *Einigkeit in der Schuldabwehr*. In: Heitmeyer (ed.), *Deutsche Zustände*, 2008.

21 Zick / Küpper / Hövermann, 2011.

22 Said, 1979.

23 Abbas, 2004; Ali, 2012; Amir-Moazami, *Muslim Challenges*, 2005; Mythen / Walklate / Khan, ‘I’m a Muslim’, 2009; Schiffauer, *Vom Exil- zum Diaspora-Islam*, 2007.

24 Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (ed.), ‘Man wird wohl Israel noch kritisieren dürfen...?!’, 2012; Heyder / Iser / Schmidt, *Israelkritik oder Antisemitismus*. In: Heitmeyer (ed.), *Deutsche Zustände*, 2005; Riebe, *Was ist israelbezogener Antisemitismus*. In: Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (ed.), ‘Man wird doch wohl Israel kritisieren dürfen...?!’, 2012.

Territories.²⁵ Thus, although these events represent the views of only a small percentage of Muslims in Berlin and in Germany as a whole²⁶, they have nevertheless come to be emblematic in the eyes of rank-and-file Germans of anti-Israeli sentiment subsequently ascribed in public discourse to the larger collective of Muslims in Germany.

Critics of these portrayals refer to projection of both antisemitism and anti-Israeli attitudes, assigning them to the Muslim minority group alone – a move that contextually fits well into the general societal mood that may legitimately be described as both “Islamophobic” and “anti-Muslim”²⁷. It has been suggested that the focus on Muslim youth’s anti-Israeli attitudes may displace²⁸ the concern with antisemitism in the wider population onto its Muslim minority, enabling the German public to skirt any societal discussion about similarly problematic attitudes among autochthonous Germans.

This dynamic opens up a series of wider questions about the roots of and paths taken by contemporary anti-Israeli discourse in Germany. In the course of illuminating contemporary anti-Israeli discourses in Germany, the case of German Muslim youths who have come to position themselves against the State of Israel – some of whom, curiously, do not have ties to the region themselves and do not belong to Palestinian or Lebanese immigrant communities in Germany – can only be fully understood when a prevailing milieu of Israel-Critique in mainstream German society is added to the equation – a point that requires serious examination.

***Israelkritik* by Germans and German Muslims**

Antisemitic attitudes are a persistent problem in all strata and among all groups of German society, as well as in Europe in general.²⁹ In 2010, every sixth German agreed with the statement “Jews have too much influence in Germany.” While responses as this reflect traditional antisemitic attitudes, the phenomenon of

²⁵ AMIRA, ‘Du Opfer, Du Jude’, 2008; Bundesministerium des Inneren, Antisemitismus in Deutschland, 2011; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, ‘Islamischer Antisemitismus’ und ‘Islamophobie’, 2008.

²⁶ Frindte / Boehnke / Kreikenbom / Wagner, 2012.

²⁷ Messerschmidt, Verstrickungen. In: Fechner / Kößler / Messerschmidt (eds.), Neue Judenfeindschaft?, 2006.

²⁸ i.e., an unconsciously substitute a new object for something felt in its original form to be unacceptable.

²⁹ Zick / Küpper, Antisemitische Mentalitäten, 2011.

antisemitism in Germany is not monolithic and unchanging. The changing form and function of antisemitism in Germany today is most clearly expressed in the phenomenon of “new”³⁰ or “secondary” antisemitism.³¹ In general terms, the term ‘secondary antisemitism’ describes different phenomena that result from the need to deflect guilt after the Holocaust³² that have also been dubbed “antisemitism because of Auschwitz.”³³ The main motifs include blaming the victims and claiming a shared responsibility of Jews for their persecution in the Holocaust; the attempt to reverse victim-perpetrator roles; demands to end what respondents perceive as ongoing critical and self-conscious engagement with the Holocaust in Germany; and the claim that commemorating the Holocaust serves as a means to extract financial retributions from Germany. One variation of secondary antisemitism, a central concern in the discussion at hand, is the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel and its (Jewish) citizens.³⁴

Israelkritik, or criticism of Israel, is an established political term in Germany and has been defined as one-sided and harsh critique of the State of Israel – both by Right- and Left-wing commentators. Contemporary critique communicated in secondary antisemitic thinking draws on, and is fueled, by anti-Jewish attitudes and myths of traditional antisemitic thought.³⁵ The main thrust of *Israelkritik* today is a “3-D” process that operates on three tracks: demonization, double standards, and de-legitimization. Demonization refers to the comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany and collectively blaming of all (Jewish) Israeli citizens as responsible for Israeli state actions that the accusers brand as fascist. Double standards are at work when human rights infractions are criticized if they are committed by Israeli state forces, but not if they are committed by other states. This is also reflected in the magnitude of ‘outrage’ directed at Israel for human rights violations, real or imagined, compared to other countries. Delegitimization questions the right of the State of Israel to exist by challenging its existence, claiming it is a leftover of colonialism, and negating the Jewish state’s right to exist by branding

30 The term “new antisemitism” that has been in use since the turn of the century has been rejected in the academic debate. The seemingly “new” elements – both the focus on Israel and Muslims as antisemitic agents – upon scrutinization simply represent close-up the continuation of well-known phenomena, see: Bundesministerium des Inneren, 2011.

31 Rabinovici / Speck / Sznajder (eds.), *Neuer Antisemitismus?*, 2004.

32 Leibold / Kühnel, 2009.

33 Referring to the often-cited phrase by the Israeli psychoanalyst Zwi Rex “The Germans will never forgive us the Holocaust”, cited in: Broder, *Die Vordenker als Wegdenker*. In: Romberg / Urban-Fahr (eds.), *Juden in Deutschland nach 1945*, 2000, p. 89.

34 Porat, *The International Working Definition of Antisemitism*, 2011; Sharansky, *3-D-Test of Anti-Semitism*, 2004.

35 Heyder / Iser / Schmidt, 2005.

its immigration laws as non-democratic and racist, as well as charging that Israel was illegitimately founded, based on expulsion of the Palestinian-Arab population in 1948. Direct and indirect comparisons are used to liken Israel's policies and political situation to that of the South African Apartheid regime and Fascist Germany.

Such “3-D” rhetoric patterns can today be found in the German mainstream media of both the Right and Left. For example, the chief columnist of the Leftist daily *Junge Welt* (“Young World”) Werner Pirker referred to Israel as an “Apartheid state” (*Apartheids-Staat*), an “artificially inseminated state” (*Staat aus der Retorte*), which is the result of an “unparalleled ethnic cleaning process” (*Ergebnis eines ethnischen Säuberungsprozesses, der seinesgleichen sucht*).³⁶ These positions show clear linkages to antisemitic discourses: Israel is portrayed as an artificial state without a right to exist and is built on the historical foundations of genocide and apartheid. The last in particular, invokes an indirect parallel with Germany during the Nazi era. Such statements then demonize Israel as a criminal and immoral state, while the discursive content at the same time relativizes the crimes of Nazi-Germany and reverses perpetrator-victim positions.³⁷ The right to ‘criticize’ the State of Israel is the center of the heated public debate in Germany today – a battle over where the line should be drawn differentiating legitimate criticism of the Israeli state from (secondary) antisemitic allegations. Yet, antisemitism research shows that, contrary to their claims, in practice the vast majority of those who ‘critique Israel’ in Germany also agree with other antisemitic statements.³⁸ In sum, criticism of Israel that does not carry antisemitic connotations has been shown to be “possible, but rare” in Germany.³⁹

Recent empirical studies have shown that antisemitic attitudes in Germany's general population are now primarily communicated through criticism of Israel's actions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A recent representative study showed that 32–68 percent of the general population in Germany reported antise-

³⁶ Bundesministerium des Inneren, 2011.

³⁷ Faber / Schoeps / Stawski (eds.), *Neuer-alter Judenhass*, 2006.

³⁸ In its 2004 survey on group-focused enmity (GBM), the Bielefeld Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence found that only 10 percent of respondents who communicated a critique of Israel without antisemitic overtones did also not agree with at least one other antisemitic statement, see: Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, 2012. The majority of this minority of respondents also criticized the Palestinian attacks on Israel and were against violence as a means of conflict resolution. Their political positioning was more ‘left’ than ‘centre’, they had higher educational status than average, were less nationalist and authoritarian, and more tolerant of other groups, see: Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, 2012.

³⁹ Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, 2012.

mitic stereotypes that are legitimized via a critique of Israeli state policies.⁴⁰ For example, more than a third of respondents “understands that people don’t like Jews” in face of the “politics of the State of Israel,” thereby projecting their criticism of the Israeli state onto “the Jews” in general. More than 40 percent agree that Israeli politics in regard to Palestinians can be compared to the persecution of Jews under National Socialism in Germany. Seventy percent of German respondents think that Israel presents the biggest threat to world peace today.⁴¹ More than half support the statement that Israel is conducting a “war of annihilation” against Palestinians. What the available survey data suggests then is that secondary antisemitism that legitimizes itself through a critique of the State of Israel is widespread among the population of Germany and is an integral part of the fabric of contemporary public thought and discourse.⁴²

Anti-Israeli Positioning of German Muslim Youths

I noted above the possibility that the current focus on “immigrants” (*Ausländer*), “Muslims with immigrant background” (*Muslime mit Migrationshintergrund*) and simply “the Muslims” (*die Muslime*) as the primary carriers of anti-Israeli and antisemitic attitudes⁴³ represents a case of discursive displacement. As case in point, although such attitudes and sentiment are omnipresent in public discussion in Germany, there are only few studies on the actual characteristics and distributions of both anti-Israeli positioning and antisemitic beliefs among Muslim youth in Germany. Two recent studies presenting survey data on this question showed that overall 25.7 percent of Muslims under the age of 25 agreed that “people of [the] Jewish belief are arrogant and greedy”⁴⁴, and that 26 percent of Muslims under the age of 25 reported antisemitic stereotypes that are legitimized via a critique of Israeli state policies.⁴⁵ Two other studies reported that Muslim youth in Germany showed higher levels of antisemitic attitudes than non-German youths, although scrutiny of the data reveals such antisemitic attitudes vary among Muslims subgroupings according to citizenship, ethnicity, and degree

⁴⁰ Brettfeld / Wetzels, *Muslime in Deutschland*, 2007; Heitmeyer (ed.), *Deutsche Zustände*, 2005.

⁴¹ Riebe, 2012.

⁴² Bunzl / Senfft, 2008; Bunzl, 2005; Silverstein, *The Context of Antisemitism and Islamophobia*, 2008; Volkov, *Antisemitism as Cultural Code*, 1978.

⁴³ Bundesministerium des Inneren, 2011.

⁴⁴ Brettfeld / Wetzels, 2007.

⁴⁵ Heitmeyer, 2005.

and type of religious orientation of the respondent.⁴⁶ Moreover, several studies indicate that there is no simple association between Muslim ethno-cultural or religious affiliation (as distinct from *fundamentalist* religious orientation of both Muslims and Christians) and the development of antisemitic attitudes. The findings of educational interventions and qualitative studies conducted primarily in Berlin with Muslim-oriented youths, i.e., youth who are religiously identified with Islam, provide further mounting evidence that expressions of Israel-directed antisemitism among Muslim-oriented youth in Germany are often closely linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The findings indicate that among many Muslim youths, anti-Israeli positioning is characterized not so much by traditional antisemitic stereotypes (that would indicate “culturally transmitted” Muslim antisemitism), rather they are founded on one-sided criticism of Israel. The actual spread and distribution of these negative Israel-directed attitudes among Muslim youths in Germany remains unclear and uninvestigated at this point in time, however.

In summary, while these studies clearly show that there are youths from Muslim communities who hold and express antisemitic beliefs, they also show that they do so to different degrees and with different ideologies of legitimization. Nevertheless, in the media and in much of current research, the phenomenon of Israel-directed positioning among Muslims in Germany is primarily explained as part and parcel of the transmission of traditional ethno-cultural values and religious beliefs in Muslim immigrant families.⁴⁷ The research literature frequently employs ethno-religious concepts (Islamic, Islamist, Islamized, Arabic, or Arabic-Islamic) to specify the phenomenon of ‘antisemitism’ (e.g., Islamic antisemitism, Muslim antisemitism). These terms define particular historic and cultural developments that are linked to the emergence of different variations of antisemitism in different places and among different populations.⁴⁸ The diversity of these developments is, however, erased from the dominant portrayals of monolithic groups of ‘Muslims’ in which antisemitism is ethno-culturally transmitted.

A second, more popular thread for explaining the anti-Israeli positioning found among some Muslims in Germany is to suggest they are the product of personal – though vicarious – experience of victimization in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁴⁹ The phenomenon of anti-Israeli positioning of Muslim youth as por-

⁴⁶ Frindt / Boehnke / Kreikenbom / Wagner, 2012; Mansel / Spaiser, Abschlussbericht, 2010.

⁴⁷ Stender / Follert, 2010; Widmann, 2008.

⁴⁸ Jikeli, Überlegungen zur Bewertung, 2010; Jikeli, Antisemitismus und Diskriminierungswahrnehmungen, 2012; Kiefer, Islamischer oder Islamistischer Antisemitismus. In: Benz / Wetzel (eds.), Antisemitismus und radikaler Islamismus, 2007; Wentzel, Der schwierige Umgang, 2005.

⁴⁹ AMIRA, 2008; Arnold / Jikeli, Judenhasse und Gruppendruck. In: Benz (ed.), Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung, 2008; Faber / Schoeps / Stawski (eds.), 2006; Messerschmidt, 2006.

trayed in contemporary public discourse in Germany suggests a curious mutant: It is thought of as both a cultural form of antisemitism passed down in families as part of a larger package of ‘Muslim’ cultural values and religious beliefs, and is a contemporary form of political positioning that takes recourse to (secondary) antisemitism that targets the State of Israel and its actions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The related role of narratives of victimhood, which are closely intertwined with both anti-Israeli and anti-Muslim discourses in Germany today, deserve special attention.

Narratives of Victimhood

Muslim youths who grow up in Germany today are highly aware of discourses that stigmatize Muslims and live their effects in their everyday lives. Ethnicized and marginalized youth from Muslim immigrant communities experience a particular set of ideological, discursive, and structural interpellations, and in turn they arrive at specific interpretations of society’s ascription of their own membership in minoritized groups, such as “foreigner,” “immigrant,” and “Muslim.” The preceding discussion outlined the ways in which German hegemonic narratives creates a frame in which “being Muslim” becomes an identity category, with connotations particular to the German context.⁵⁰ I would argue that as a result, – for some German Muslim youths the theme of victimization has become central to a shared (counter-) identity as Muslim – both in the context of German power relations as well as in reference to the global arena.

Experiences of victimization are reflected in the everyday lives of many German Muslims. More than 30 percent of high school students who identified as Muslim reported that they experience German society as disadvantageous for Muslims (among respondents of all ages even 50 percent reported this experience).⁵¹ Two-thirds of Muslim respondents reported incidents of victimization or discrimination within the last year. Severe victimization experiences, severe physical attacks, and damage to property were reported by 22 percent of Muslims in Germany. There is, thus, growing evidence that German Muslim youth experience exclusion, discrimination, and stigmatization. Several studies have in

⁵⁰ Dwyer, *Contested Identities*. In: Skelto / Valentine (eds.), *Cool Places*, 1998; Modood, ‘Difference’, ‘Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism’. In: Werbner / Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, 1997.

⁵¹ Brettfeld / Wetzels, 2007, p. 240.

turn identified victimization as a core trope in the experiences and narratives of Muslim youths.⁵²

It is in this context that *local* experiences of victimization as marginalized immigrants are mapped onto *global* discourses of Muslims as ‘stigmatized others.’ As outlined, a culturalist discourse based in long-standing master narratives positions Muslim youths in enmity to Jews. In reference to the culturalist-civilizational discourse that saturates the German public discussion, many Muslims in Germany perceive that Germans have a negative image of Islam and that media reporting about Islam and Muslims is one-sided. Young people from Arab and Muslim immigrant communities frequently report experiencing stigmatization – being tagged as “terrorists” and “fundamentalists.” Almost 85 percent of Muslim youths in this study replied that they were upset about the fact that after terrorist attacks the first suspected subjects were always Muslims – reflecting, in their eyes, a global prejudice against Muslims.⁵³

Several qualitative studies and interventions conducted with Muslim youths in Germany found a conspirational perception of a “war against Muslims,” often phrased in religious terms by the youth. Because of the dichotomy of perpetrator and victim underlying the idea of victimization, these ideas often include notions that “the Jews” or “the West” were the perpetrators leading a war against Muslims.⁵⁴ As evidence, 48 percent of students who identified as Muslim in a recent study stated that the “oppression of Muslims in Palestine” made them feel sad,⁵⁵ while 85 percent of respondents of all ages who identified as Muslim agreed with this statement.⁵⁶

Educators and social workers share the youth’s narrative of victimization and identify a parallel between their experiences as part of a marginalized and disenfranchised Muslim minority of Germany and the situation (i.e. victimization) of Palestinian ‘Muslims’ of Israel and the Palestinian territories. Thus, the situation of Palestinians in the Middle East, as well as the global stigmatization of Muslims in anti-Muslim and Islamophobic discourse is perceived as further affirmation of their own experiences of exclusion and marginalization, and allows some of these youths to position themselves as victims of the Western media. The emerging identities of some German Muslim youths are thus framed explicitly in

52 Jikeli, *Discrimination of European Muslims*. In: Soen / Shechory / Ben-David (eds.), *Minority Groups*, 2011; Karlin, *Righteous Victims*, 2010; Mythen / Walklate / Khan, 2009.

53 Brettfeld / Wetzels 2007, p. 240.

54 Jikeli, 2011.

55 A methodological caveat is that the last statement is a single item out of a scale for which neither reliability nor validity is known. The finding might hence not be valid as reported.

56 Brettfeld / Wetzels 2007, quote p. 241.

orientation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict constellation today. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is presented as a placeholder conflict onto which some German Muslim youths project their experiences of marginalization and exclusion. Thus, the orientation of the youth vis-à-vis this conflict may not be motivated by politics, nor fueled by antisemitism; rather, their positions may serve as a means of identification and solidarity among marginalized and ethnicized Muslim youths in Germany.⁵⁷

While other forms of response to marginalization do exist (such as, for example, the emergence of a social movement for de-stigmatization and the rights of minorities in Germany), the argument made here is that identification as Muslims and against Israel is structured by their positioning in pre-existing discursive relations between ‘Germans and others,’ and between ‘Muslims and Jews.’ The possibility to self-ascription as German is not really an option, in light of the country’s exclusionary discourse, the lingering effects of its blood-based citizenship law (*jus sanguinis* until the year 2000), and complex naturalization requirements⁵⁸; identification as Muslim affords youths who are ascribed as such a fitting niche. While such a niche is encouraged by surrounding mainstream discourse, at the same time it is perceived as a counter-identity to the hegemonic secular-Christian identity that dominates German society.⁵⁹ Both the potential for ethnicized ‘long-distance nationalism’ in regard to the Palestinian Territories of youths from Palestinian and Lebanese communities in Germany⁶⁰, as well as the presumed solidarity with the overarching global Muslim nation or *Ummah* in the background⁶¹ that tie Muslim youths in Germany to Muslims in Israel and the Palestinian territories is affirmed and legitimized by German discourse essentializing about Muslims’ relationship to Israel and Palestine. Nestled in the intersecting strands of antisemitic and anti-Muslim discourse in Germany, Muslim youths are thus afforded a position from which to construct counter-identities as Muslims in Germany and from which to position themselves as antagonists of the State of Israel.

57 Müller, “Ich bin ein Taliban...”, 2007; Müller, “Warum ist alles so ungerecht?” In: Amadeu Antonio Stiftung (ed.), “Die Juden sind schuld,” 2009.

58 Mandel, 2008; Mushaben, *A Crisis of Culture*. In: Basgöz (ed.), *Turkish Workers in Europe*, 1985; Sabeen, *Power in the Blood*, 1984.

59 Amir-Moazami, 2005.

60 Glick Schiller, *Blood and Belonging*. In: McKinnon / Silverman (eds.), *Complexities*, 2005a; Glick Schiller, *Long Distance Nationalism*. In: Riccio / Brambilla (eds.), *Transnational Migration*, 2010.

61 Abbas, 2012.

Conclusions

The chapter at hand has sought to deconstruct the discursive production of the anti-Israeli positioning of some German Muslim youth. It elucidates the conditions that led to the emergence of this phenomenon: the discursive context of long-standing cultural-civilizational narratives that ‘other’ Muslim youth, German *Israelkritik* that make Israel bashing normative, and the emergence of narratives of victimhood about and among Muslim youths. The most important insight of this reexamination is that anti-Israeli positioning found among some Muslim youth in Germany occurs within *preexisting* paths outlined by German master narratives. The emergence of a German Muslim counter-identity was shown to have strong discursive ties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to build on both secondary antisemitic and anti-Muslim discourses in Germany. Furthermore, it emerges that anti-Israeli orientations among Muslim youth draw on narratives which forge a shared experience of victimization by minoritized Muslim youths in Germany and Palestinians/Muslims in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Uniquely in the German case, such youth’s responses to what they perceive as moral injustice of marginalization and victimization in the context of German dominant-non-dominant relations is projected onto the State of Israel. This presents an interesting variation on the theme of ‘politicized identities’: While Muslim youths are marginalized as Muslims and minorities in Germany, the expression of antagonism is rarely publicly directed against the German state. The absence of a large-scale grass roots Muslim social movement to demand remediation of the situation is painfully absent in the German case. This may be, in part, because expression of antagonism towards the German state and German society by marginalized and stigmatized Muslim youths is suppressed under German discourse, law, and an executive arm that uses a heavy-hand in punishing unruly minority youths (as evidenced in by disproportionately high arrest and imprisonment rates for immigrant youth, including Muslim youths⁶²). In contrast – as elaborated above – expression of resentment against the State of Israel is in line with both mainstream German secondary antisemitic attitudes and the discursive positioning of Muslim youths as ‘cousins’ to the Palestinian and Muslim population of Israel and the Palestinian territories.

In effect, German social and discursive context legitimizes and encourages both the critique of Israel and Muslim youths’ anti-Israeli attitudes as ‘normal and acceptable, ‘thus channels expression of anger at their disenfranchisement from the object much closer to home (both literally and figuratively) to a ‘legitimized’ transnational object – the State of Israel, and, by implication, its (Jewish) citi-

62 Brettfeld / Wetzels, 2007; Pfeiffer / Wetzels, *Junge Türken als Täter und Opfer*, 2000.

zens. Muslim youth's counter-identities which are engendered by their non-dominant position within the German power matrix are incorporated and contained by German mainstream discourse by their projection onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and ultimately serve to stabilize unequal power structures within Germany. These counter-identities as Muslims may then in turn be used by other forms of collective protest,⁶³ such as anti-Israeli political actors. The anti-Israeli positioning found among some German Muslim youth is therefore distinct from more simple explanations such as the ethno-cultural transmission of "Muslim antisemitism" in immigrant families from Muslim countries, or attributing secondary antisemitism of Muslim youths in Germany to their 'natural' positioning in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In closing, I believe it would be apt to take heed of the advice of Talal, who remarked:

[...] if we find the violent practices of others abhorrent and morally reprehensible, we would do well to remember our histories are intertwined, and that we are at least partially responsible for the unequal world in which we live, and therefore for creating the conditions in which these violences have arisen.⁶⁴

In this sense, in order to understand and to respond effectively to anti-Israeli attitudes among Muslim youths in Germany, it is necessary to inquire into how German society is implicated in the production of marginalized identities and how, within a general anti-Israeli climate, feelings of disenfranchisement are deflected onto a hegemonically 'approved' object of resentment.

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⁶³ Schiffauer, 2004.

⁶⁴ Asad, 2007.

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