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Security and Identity

Essays by the Sylke Tempel Fellows 2021



An Enrichment

By Martin Bialecki, editor-in-chief

For the second time, IP has gathered texts by the Sylke Tempel Fellows in a special issue. In addition to the Essay Prize, which also bears Sylke Tempel's name and whose winning text you will find in the November/December issue of IP, the fellowship is intended to commemorate the work of the outstanding journalist, publicist, and former editor-in-chief of this magazine.

Following Sylke Tempel's untimely death in 2017, the Board of Trustees of the German-Israeli Future Forum Foundation established this program in 2018. In addition to IP, partner organizations are the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the European Leadership Network (ELNET), and Women in International Security Deutschland (WIIS.de). The program is co-sponsored by Sigmar Gabriel, former German foreign minister and chairman of the Atlantik-Brücke, and former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

"Israel, the United States, and Germany: Security and Identity Issues for a Sustainable Policy": In 2021, the fellowship's call for applications again moved between the poles of the transatlantic and the Middle East. It was aimed at young writers and other media creatives, as well as students and trainees from Israel and Germany, who are working on relations between Germany, Israel, and the US.

The results of this cohort are particularly valued because the coronavirus pandemic made almost all research trips and personal encounters impossible for the writers. Nevertheless, impressive analyses have emerged, complex debates and thought-provoking deep dives. How beautiful, and how important: all the more so at a time when the tone of our societies is becoming harsher, when anti-Semitism is on the rise again, and democracy as a form of government is no longer assumed to be the best as a matter of course.

To be allowed to work with the intellectual output of others and to be surprised by new thoughts is the privilege of an editorial staff. It was a pleasure to work together in a cooperative process with these young thinkers in the spirit of Sylke Tempel and create a magazine. We found the fellows' ability to survey such a complex and fraught subject area as identity and security issues enriching. We hope, dear reader, that you feel the same way.

Simply Magic? The Return of the Myth

About the Sylke Tempel Fellowship Program

By *Tamara Or*

I don't know if it's just a coincidence that Harry Potter marries a reporter at the end of the story. I don't know because I haven't read the books yet. But this is not about overwhelming facts, but about magical feelings – which the famous wizard surprisingly develops for a journalist. Sylke Tempel could have explained this to me; she sometimes resorted to the stories of Harry Potter to explain the earthly political world to us. Now I remain perplexed, because those who have read it know that the press in Rowling's wizarding world has a pretty bad reputation.

Just in time for the turn of the millennium, the work had been translated not only into German but also Hebrew, and the fascination with magic returned to the disenchanted Western world, which for some had been serving logos for far too long, paying homage to reason and verifiability, and blocking the way for every little myth.

Wizards have also returned to politics – in the United States, in Israel, and in Germany. They

have vigorously promoted a misanthropic and health-endangering mythmaking among the population. And in fact, in all three countries, they were powerfully at odds with the journalists who had nothing better to do than debunk the wizards.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who many called a wizard, was recently voted out of office. Even former US President Donald Trump can no longer cast a spell on Chancellor Angela Merkel, as ex-US Ambassador Richard Grenell falsely claimed. And even if far-right politician Björn Höcke doesn't like it with his call for re-enchanting the world, Harry Potter couldn't win the Bundestag election (because he didn't run, of course!)

It makes no sense to ask about how much truth there is to myths. We need to shed light on their social and identity-forming function in order to understand their growing importance and to reach out to people who have chosen a sense of fear over facts.

Even if pluralistic coexistence is back as a principle, great uncertainty and growing fragmentation remain in our societies. In Israel, Germany, and the US, people are looking anxiously toward an uncertain future. There is a great need for security, not least because of the coronavirus pandemic. The longing for orientation is growing.

This year, our Sylke Tempel Fellows have taken a critical look at questions of identity and security policy in Israel, Germany, and the US. Together with our cooperation partners and mentors, they have researched and worked under the difficult conditions of the pandemic under the patronage of Sigmar Gabriel, former German foreign minister and chairman of Atlantik-Brücke, and former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

They showed us all that academic expertise, good research, and professional, fact-based journalism can indeed charm. Maybe it does make sense after all that Harry Potter married a journalist.

Table of contents

The Return of the Myth	2	Let's Talk About Security	36
A foreword by Tamara Or		How initiatives in Israel and Germany create new spaces for dialogue <i>By Bastian Kaiser</i>	
The Belief in a Free World	4	Uniformity and Difference	44
A greeting from Tzipi Livni		Questions of identity in Germany's and Israel's armed forces <i>By Georg A. Reichel</i>	
Contributions to the Enlightenment	5	The Hipster Prime Minister	50
A greeting from Sigmar Gabriel		Naftali Bennett's defeat of Benjamin Ne- tanyahu marked the triumph of religious nationalism in Israel <i>By Isabel Weiss</i>	
Toward an Effective Remembrance	6	Coded Rejection and Open Hate	58
How the introduction of the memorial siren in Germany could help shape Ho- locaust memory – and protect democracy. <i>By Dor Glick</i>		Anti-Semitic resentment in new far-right groups in Germany and the United States <i>By Lena Voelk</i>	
Whiteness and Jewish Identity	15	Yearning for Re-enchantment	66
The "white Jew" as part of the racist majority? If this idea prevails in anti-racist discourse, it will have consequences. <i>By Lisa Hänel</i>		Political theology in the United States, Israel, and Germany <i>By Jakob Flemming</i>	
Black, White, or "In-between?"	23	The Fellows 2021	74
How Jewish Identity Politics changes the global understanding of diversity. <i>By Rebecca Rose Mitzner</i>		Cooperation partners	79
A Twofold "Never Again"	30	Imprint	80
The security concepts of Israel and Ger- many could not be more different. <i>By Jonathan Kovac</i>			

The Belief in a Free World

A greeting from Tzipi Livni



Tzipi Livni joined the Sylke Tempel Fellowship Program as its second patron in 2021. Livni was the foreign minister of Israel and filled numerous other high-ranking functions; she retired from active politics in 2019.

Our world is changing rapidly. The values and international order agreed upon after the horrors of World War 2 are steadily being eroded. All over the world, democratic institutions are being challenged by populist movements. These institutions are losing support at the most critical time when humanity itself is facing global dangers caused by the pandemic and global warming.

While technological advancements and globalization have brought progress and prosperity to many, the extent of inequality has also become prominent. Too many people have been left behind, frustrated and angry. Fear, frustration, and uncertainty have been channeled into nationalism, blurring the line between patriotism (loyalty and devotion to one's country) and nationalism (exalting one nation above all others).

Social networks connect people around the world but they also expose billions to disinformation and incitement. Without agreeing on a factual basis there is no common ground for a discussion and plenty of room for brainwashing.

All of these trends deeply threaten the basis of our societies – the democratic system itself and the values it represents.

The wave of angry sentiment strengthens populist politicians and encourages them to break rules that the free world has embraced for many years. It removes the defensive shield of minorities and those groups that these rules were invented to protect.

Healing the world from the coronavirus pandemic, cooperating to save the planet from the destructive effects of global warming, and safeguarding democracy – these challenges are unprecedented and cannot be met alone by any country or leader.

What is needed is a multilateral approach and courageous leadership, an international alliance led by the compass of the free world – the United States. Policy decisions by the Biden administration create new hope that the US is taking on this role once more.

Israel and Germany are among the like-minded states that must strive to create new partnerships and alliances, both amongst nations as well as by leaders, political parties, entrepreneurs, scholars, artists, and any other public opinion makers.

Meeting these challenges head on is crucial for our future and especially for the young generation who need to be brought on board. Young people need to be convinced that part of their identity is believing in their country and being part of the free world, in cooperating with and contributing to the global society.

The Sylke Tempel Fellowship Program contributes to this discussion by bringing the voices of young journalists and academics into the discourse and helps to shape a better future for Germany, Israel, and the entire international community.

Contributions to the Enlightenment



Sigmar Gabriel served as foreign minister, vice chancellor, minister of economics and the environment, and chairman of the Social Democrats (SPD); he is currently chairman of the Atlantik-Brücke, among other positions.

A greeting from Sigmar Gabriel

We are the people!“ – that was the claim of members of the violent mob that stormed the US Capitol on January 6 to prevent the formal certification of Joe Biden’s election as president. The angry crowd expressed certainty that the election was rigged and that America’s demise would follow Democrat Biden’s assumption of the presidency. The assault on the heart of American democracy, the House, was the preliminary culmination of a confrontation in which, in the eyes of many, political competitors no longer clashed but rather became enemies.

The pro-Trump protest movement is a concise example of what can happen when political parties and their supporters are firmly convinced that electing the “other” would amount to a national disaster. Where the democratic struggle for the majority is exaggerated into a struggle for the survival of one’s own nation, it is only a small step to justifying the use of violent means. Convictions no longer have to be questioned critically, arguments no longer examined. Instead, one’s own group becomes the sole point of reference. Political debate takes place only as “us against them.” But those who only feel comfortable with like-minded people are gradually losing touch with reality. In this way of thinking, security means isolation from everything that is different. In a globalized world, however, such isolation is neither possible nor desirable.

The political fragmentation of society that gives rise to such movements is not unique to the United States. Europe also has many examples. In Israel, too, as the last election once again underscored, there is little political consensus. Hostile rhetoric against political opponents has long been part of everyday life. This development is not only true of anti-democratic forces. Even on the part of convinced democrats, dialogue with political opponents – at home or in foreign policy – is often declared impossible from the outset, threat scenarios are painted in the darkest colors, and emotions rather than arguments are emphasized.

There is no need to sugarcoat it: There are political differences that cannot be resolved, beliefs that cannot be shaken. But to forego discussions and negotiations because of this is no solution. Part of the task of politics is to educate instead of fomenting fears; to seek debate instead of just talking to those who act and think the same. Only in this way can there be a chance to resolve conflicts, to negotiate compromises.

The Sylke Tempel Fellows 2021 deal with security and identity politics in Israel, the US, and Germany. With smart and critical questions, they examine the societies of these countries, which are so closely intertwined and desperately need an open dialogue with each other. In keeping with the spirit of Sylke Tempel, who with an alert eye and clear words never shied away from difficult confrontations, these works are a contribution to an enlightened political debate.

Toward an Effective Remembrance

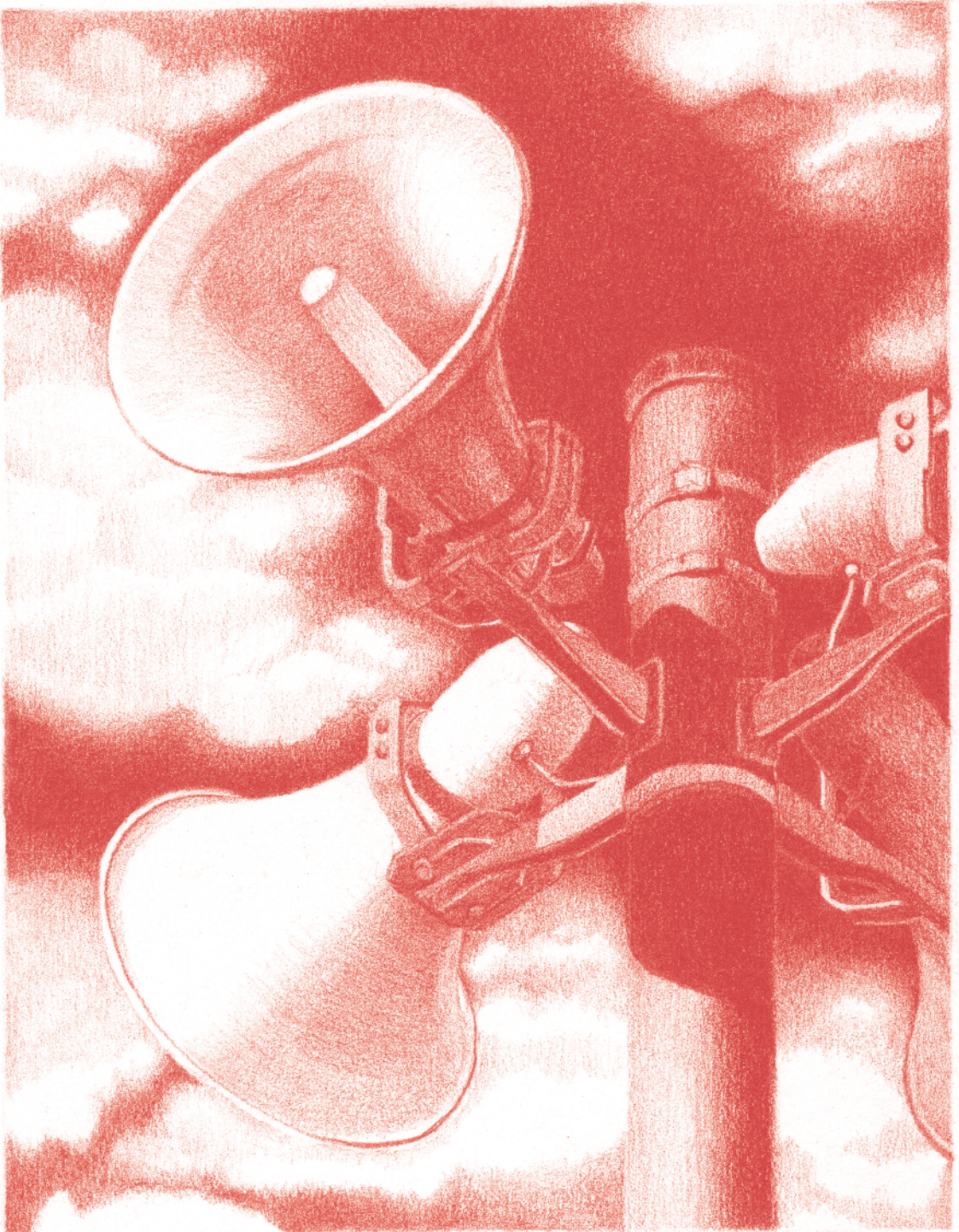
How the introduction of the memorial siren in Germany could help shape Holocaust memory – and protect democracy. Some suggestions.

An essay by Dor Glick

The importance of the current seminal moment for Holocaust memory cannot be overstated, as the last survivors die before our very eyes: My grandmother, Yehudit Meisels (née Berger), 94, an Auschwitz survivor, passed away this year, the last member standing of her class year in her native region in the Carpathian Mountains. At the same time, anti-Semitism in Europe (and elsewhere) is hitting record highs. We are living through challenging times, marked by the non-holy trinity of social media disinformation, a worldwide pandemic, and the steady stoking of hate rallies on the streets of Germany whenever Israeli-Palestinian hostilities break out, as we witnessed this May.

The idea for this essay followed a verbal anti-Se-

mitic incident I experienced in Berlin, on Friday, October 2, 2020. Having spent years working for an Israeli TV channel in the German capital, I would often report on anti-Semitic incidents that befell others, but that morning, I realized first hand, in broad daylight and out of the blue, just how grave the situation had become out there. It was while I was staying with an Israeli friend at the garden house he owns in Heinersdorf, a tram ride away from Alexanderplatz. A neighbor who, like me, was staying in the allotments colony to enjoy the last few days of nice weather, “charged” at me as I was walking with my morning coffee, and inquired what was it that had kept me so long in the kitchen. This was strange enough, and obviously none of his business – I’d never met the guy. But then he



suggested I double check the gas, at which point the penny dropped. When I said I didn't quite follow, he went, "after all, you people have had some issues with gas back in the day," and chuckled.

The joke left me cold. My sense of security in the place where I was set to spend the next couple of nights was suddenly compromised. Given a choice, I'd have left the hut that very moment. The case was not reported and neither did it make it onto the list of 1,004 anti-Semitic incidents reported in Berlin in 2020, in what marks a worrying 118-case increase from the previous year. Beyond some friends and neighbors who overheard it, the gas gag has all but fizzled away. However, it does reflect the dark clouds gathering over Jews in Germany in 2021: anti-Semitic comments at best, physical attacks at worst. I will have you know that I don't wear a yarmulke – daily threats loom much larger for anyone in present-day Germany who wears this Jewish hallmark or a Star of David pendant.

Morals and practice

From its inception in the wake of World War II, the culture of remembrance in Germany has straddled two different, arguably opposing worlds: morals and practice. Locked in a pendulum movement, it lurches between a discourse of accountability and guilt on the one hand, and pragmatic implications for security, economics, and diplomacy on the other.

This historic duty owed by the offspring of the Nazi perpetrators to their Jewish victims, coupled with its material projection, was crystallized as early as Konrad Adenauer's declaration to the Bundestag on September 27, 1951. This statement by (then West) Germany's first chancellor, declaring his country's commitment to make "moral and material indemnity" for the crimes perpetrated "in the name of the German people" de facto paved the way for direct negotiations with the Israeli government. Thus was laid the first stone not only for the famous Reparations Agreement, but also for negotiating the acquisition of the first pair of submarines built in Kiel's shipyards for the Israeli

navy, in a deal that holds dramatic implications for Israel's defense to this very day.

The German moral duty naturally constitutes a cornerstone of Israel's own complex relationship with the concept of "The Other Germany," traced back to David Ben-Gurion. Seeking to pitch the prospect of establishing relations with Adenauer's Germany to the young, traumatized Israeli public, in the face of fierce political opposition and raging demonstrations, Israel's first prime

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minister took a practical approach to the surges of immigration pouring into his tiny, nascent, economically-fragile state, and translated it into moral rationalizations of his own. Ben-Gurion found Germany to be "another" kind of political entity, one that recognized its dark past and sought in turn to make indemnity in practice and crucially, a country which had been morally transformed and held itself accountable by recalling this past.

This moral duty can also be seen as a milestone in Germany's reinstatement into the fold of the democratic nations. This was no small matter, given the horror of the Holocaust, a crime un-

precedented in the history of mankind. We have since come to realize the objective complexity of attitudes to this so-called Other Germany: Many senior officials from the Third Reich had managed to carry on their lives with impunity, while some went on to enjoy careers as senior officials in Adenauer's Germany. The most notable example of this trajectory is Hans Globke, who became the chancellor's own senior advisor, despite his position in the Third Reich's Ministry of the Interior, and notwithstanding his active role in writing a legal annotation on the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws. But far beyond Globke, a considerable number of former Third Reich officials successfully made the leap over to Ben-Gurion's and Adenauer's "Other Germany." In this sense, the current trials of some relatively junior Auschwitz staff – as in the case of 96-year-old Oskar Groening, the camp's so-called "accountant", which I covered in Lüneburg – fall under "too little, too late."

Much water has flown under the bridges of the Spree and Yarkon since Adenauer and Ben-Gurion's time. Numerous Nazi criminals, alongside most of the camp's survivors, have died in the interim, while many Israel-Germany ties have been forged since 1951. But the discourse surrounding remembrance culture as plotted out by the first post-war chancellor and the first prime minister of the Jewish state has remained remarkably similar. When Angela Merkel paid her first official visit to Auschwitz as chancellor, her spokesperson explained that Merkel had decided to travel there to "commemorate victims of Nazi crimes and be reminded of Germany's eternal responsibility for the Holocaust." Earlier, on March 18, 2008, in her address to the Knesset, the chancellor translated this moral duty into defense-related practice, by posing Israel's security as integral to the German Staatsräson or "reason of state," adding that: "For me as German chancellor, therefore, Israel's security will never be open to negotiation."

True to her words, 70 years after those first negotiations, Germany sold Israel three ThyssenKrupp submarines, with the nuclear power necessary to deliver a second strike if Israel is attacked,

in a deal that included billions in subsidies, all in the name of this moral duty. Furthermore, the initial decision to assist with the new submarines, as noted by Merkel in a TV interview with this essay's author back in April 2018, was made by her predecessor, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democrats, who, as we may recall, formed a coalition with the Greens. This suggests that to this day, despite the many shifts experienced by German politics, the translation of the moral duty into concrete defense aid packages to Israel remains a cross-partisan consensus, and while US politics holds support for Israel as a bi-partisan issue, in the German context, it can be referred to as multi-partisan.

All across this spectrum, ranging from ethics and morals to defense and economic pragmatism, the German duty is cited and translated into contributions to the national security of a foreign state: Israel. But what about Germany itself? Here, memory remains confined to realms of ethics and history, coupled with the promise-turned-ceremonial ritual: *Nie wieder*, "never again." The concrete contribution of German remembrance culture to Germany's national security in 2021 is mostly left out.

I would assert that the German culture of remembrance, bred out of a sense of moral duty, is undergoing a major transformation before our very eyes. At a time when democracies are growing ever more fragile in the face of populist attacks, and when the last of the Holocaust survivors who witnessed its horrors first hand are passing away, it is critical that we discuss the future and reshaping of remembrance culture, and crucially, its changing significance for the German public itself. Today, the right kind of learning about Germany's past, by young Germans, is becoming no less than a national security necessity for Germany. Sadly, as of now, what they are learning is neither right nor sufficient.

In a time marked by social networks, where half-truths, nay, downright lies, are propagated all the more vigorously in the name of the (sub) culture of ratings and clickbait, it is easier than

ever before to push xenophobic, anti-democratic, and anti-Semitic content. In international relations terms, while the culture of remembrance has hitherto been (as suggested by the term itself, i.e., culture) associated with “soft power” – ethics, history, identity – at the moment, we are seeing this culture fast transitioning into the realm of “hard power,” marked by an interest in force and national security. The challenges posed by the 21st century mean that learning about the Holocaust, its roots, and consequences is a top national priority, essential to protecting Germany and its freedom-loving residents. Failure to acknowledge this necessity may put the future of Germany as a liberal, democratic republic at risk.

The pandemic and anti-Semitism

During a so-called “Corona demo” in August 2020, hundreds of far-right demonstrators gathered just outside the Reichstag, some of whom were brandishing the German Reich flag. It is crucial that we set this incident against its historical context. For anyone who has learned about Germany’s past, it signifies a security threat far greater than yet another anti-lockdown demonstration in a different city or state. For the school-age child, and just as importantly, for the teacher in your average Berlin classroom following the latest, massive wave of immigration, it is imperative to make sure that teaching about Germany’s past veers off the trodden path. Not only so that the past is not forgotten, but also in order to spare the capital’s security services efforts at present, while securing the Federal Republic’s democratic nature in the future.

The association of remembrance culture with an old moral-historical duty, rather than with an acute, modern cause, means many Germans, particularly young people two decades into the 21st century, fail, at best, to identify with it; at worst, they find this concept, the Holocaust, alienating, or even intimidating.

As a consequence, they may often nurture a sense of alienation and fear when it comes to Jews, who many young Germans have never met. During my time as a parliamentary aide in the Bundestag

back in 2015, I noticed on a daily basis the huge gap between the lofty official platitudes regarding the uncompromising war on anti-Semitism and the duty of preserving remembrance culture in Germany, and the general mood on the average German street. This mood runs along the lines of “why should we beat ourselves up over crimes committed by the Nazis three or four generations ago?”, “Every war sees crimes committed, after all,” and “it wasn’t a picnic for us either.”

That is why I want to suggest three possible ways to keep Holocaust memory both alive and relevant in Germany. Here I focus in particular on children of school age, as I believe change could be facilitated by investment in the younger generation. Let us take this opportunity to recall Adenauer’s own words in his 1951 speech:

“The federal government considers it urgently necessary that the churches and the educational administrations of the federal states do their utmost in their sphere to ensure that the spirit of human and religious tolerance finds not only formal recognition among the whole German people, but especially among German youth, but becomes a reality in mental attitude and practical action. This is an essential task of the educational authorities, which, however, needs to be supplemented by the example of adults.”

A memorial siren in Germany

My first suggestion is the establishment of a memorial siren in Germany.

The importance of the Holocaust Remembrance Day siren in Israel cannot be overstated. It would be no exaggeration to say that these two minutes are the most significant, defining elements of the Israeli memorial experience. This simple practice, starting at 10 a.m. each Holocaust Day, has an impact that no budgets funneled towards commemoration or any pertinent grandiose curriculum could ever equal. Israel in the year 2021 is a state ridden by rifts, divided into different tribes, to cite former President Reuven Rivlin. The last standing sacred cow of the uniform Israeli fabric are these two minutes, when everything comes to

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a halt: cars along the highway, TV shows, industry, military drills, and – crucially – ceremonies and classes at school. From kindergartens to old people's homes, everyone stops for two minutes, once a year, in memory of the six million.

In 2009, like many young Israelis freshly out of military service, I travelled to the Far East. That April, I arrived at Pokhara, Nepal, a city of legendary views and a departure point for treks in Annapurna – as far as it gets from Holocaust and memory. Nevertheless, on April 21 at 10 a.m. Israeli time, I walked out and stood still for two minutes, a young man surrounded by bewildered Nepalese passersby. So meaningful is this ritual in the personal and national experience of Israelis, that even thousands of miles away from where the sirens sounded, this 24-year-old stood in honor of the victims.

When I first ran the idea of introducing the memorial siren to Germany past a German colleague, a true friend of Israel, I was met with a nervous reaction: "What if the siren sounds and people out there in Germany remain indifferent and carry

on as normal? This would be a catastrophic message that could backfire horribly!" Nor was the guy being paranoid: any introduction of a siren into Germany should follow painstaking deliberation and attention to detail, coupled with the understanding that German and Israeli realities are not quite the same. Most importantly, such a step should follow a gradual process.

Germany, almost needless to say, is very different to Israel: immeasurably larger in size, the republic comprises 16 states, each with its own rules, educational system, and, most probably, siren operating systems as well. Until recently, the German population was also far more homogenous than Israel's. But recent shifts, notably the absorption of more than 1 million immigrants during the refugee crisis, changed this situation. Rethinking on the part of the federal republic is required, as the composition of school classes has changed, in the Berlin districts of Neukölln or Kreuzberg, and elsewhere. The future of remembrance culture, or questions regarding the creative, smart ways of mediating it to policymakers in the latter half of the 21st century, should concern us all.

Nor is the memorial siren an end in itself: rather, it is a dramatic instrument and an unusual one at that, by the sheer insertion of a startling sound into the public sphere, which thereby introduces it into the private personal sphere of each and every human present. It must therefore be used scrupulously, while the most scrupulous, meaningful use, in my opinion, would follow a "Schools First" outline. At the same time, if the traditional ceremony already held at the Bundestag every year on the morning of January 27 incorporates a two-minute memorial siren, it could help instill the tradition in schools throughout the republic. The siren could launch discussions in classrooms, allowing for follow-up conversations on the tragic events that took place many decades ago. Moreover, the siren's uniform, invasive sound would physically, startlingly demonstrate the extreme, unprecedented nature of the events about to be broached in class, which are unlike anything we know or ever want to become familiar with in the future.

Back in 2015, while living in Berlin, I concluded my column for the *Jüdische Allgemeine* with the following words: “In order to emphasize the special nature of the Shoah, Germany should introduce a day of remembrance on which sirens can be heard throughout the country. In Israel, this has already been happening for many decades.”

As I write this essay, with the political parties in Germany gearing up for the 2021 election, *Der Spiegel* has run a review of their different party platforms. Between the lines on climate, economics, and Hartz IV policies, one could spot the following welcome statement:

“But sometimes it is small ideas that can have a big impact. For years, educators and politicians have been discussing how to make Holocaust remembrance less elitist. Phil Hackemann, a young member of the Free Democrats (FDP), had a nice idea about this that made it into the election platform: ‘The day of remembrance of the victims of National Socialism on January 27 should be upgraded by introducing a nationwide minute of silence modeled on Israel’s Yom haSho’a.’ In Israel, on Yom haSho’a, social life stops for one minute, with sirens sounding. No matter whether the FDP is involved in the next government or not – this idea should be implemented.”

Introducing the memorial siren to schools in Berlin, where the offspring of parents born in Syria, Israel, and, of course, Germany could stand shoulder to shoulder in class to remember the acts committed in the same city with the purpose of “clearing it of Jews” (and any “non-Aryan” races), is a step that conveys a message in itself. Naturally, we must stare reality in the face: some of these schoolchildren hail from countries where Hitler is still upheld as a hero. Others are children of German parents who support Björn Höcke of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the man who dubbed the Holocaust Memorial in the heart of Berlin a “monument of shame.” A two-minute memorial siren at schools will lay a common ground for pupils of different, nay, opposing backgrounds, to stand together – literally, morally – against the horrors that sprang from the place where they are

growing up. It will also drive teachers to prepare a lesson plan for the class that follows.

Israeli-German youth exchanges

The second step would be to introduce Israeli-German youth exchanges as an integral part of the curriculum.

A decade ago, I spent a summer in the town of Bremen studying modern German literature, with a focus on Günter Grass. As part of a DAAD scholarship, my international group of students would meet with local students, born and raised in the Free Hanseatic City. One night we went out for a beer and I treated one of the students to a bottle of Beck’s. As he offered to pay me back, I naturally (as I perceived it) said that the beer was on me. The guy was taken aback. He had never met a Jew before,

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but “knew” Jews were very tight with their money. He made his astonishment known, as the notion struck him as obvious, rather than, heaven forbid, racist. The Jews he had heard of were miserly; no

way was a Jew going to buy him a beer. For the price of a single Euro, I had busted his prejudice right there and then. The potential impact of informal encounters among the younger generation cannot be quantified and the earlier they take place, the greater their potential for success. This experience that the student from Bremen had at university should have happened as early as high school or middle school, as part of a mandatory exchange program, a prerequisite to qualifying for the matriculation certificate, the *Abitur*.

The setup required to broaden such encounters is already in place: it can be facilitated through the Israeli-German twin cities agreement. In fact, this is how I first went to Germany, aged 16, which made me want to learn more about the relations between Israelis and Germans. It was that one week spent in Mülheim an der Ruhr (the twin city of my native Kfar Saba) back in 2002 that prompted me to learn German. The intensive encounter, including a fascinating stay with a family in a city that I would have never visited otherwise, shaped my view of modern Germany and influenced the later trajectory of my life.

However, my student exchange delegation numbered just 20 members, of the many hundreds that comprised my class year at high school. If the initiative is extended to include all students, or at least all interested students (to be subsidized by the state, so that those of lesser means are not left out), extensive social change will indeed take place in Germany as far as Judaism is concerned (as well as attitudes to Germany in Israel). Drawing on my personal experience, I am absolutely certain of it.

Celebrate Jewish life in Germany

Judaism is more than just Auschwitz. Thus, my third suggestion is to assert the salience of “happy” Jewish life in Germany, by marking Jewish festivals at school.

Stolpersteine, or “stumbling stones” on pavements in memory of Jewish victims; 24-7 security arrangements for synagogues and Jewish schools; commemorative delegations to Auschwitz or other

camps. On the one hand, these are welcome initiatives, passing on the memory of the Holocaust and signaling a guarantee for the safety of Jews living in Germany. On the other hand, however, when these constitute the only exposure to Judaism a young German may get, it means we have a problem. These setups cast Jews and Judaism as a somber issue, a foreboding, untouchable taboo, thereby creating the image of a population under constant security risk. Happy festivals? Glorious tradition? The prospect of growth? These are virtually never associated in Germany with the word “Jew,” not even in 2021.

Here too, the solution could and should start with the education system. Imagine a merry festival like Purim making it onto the pedagogical calendar. Imagine German children wearing fancy dress to kindergarten and school. Imagine a menorah lit during the merry festival of Hanukkah at school, celebrated parallel to Christmas. These token customs may generate actual social change. And as the children go home with stories of a happy, and heaven forbid, fun kind of Jewish tradition, we may see them generating a change in their parents’ perceptions of Judaism and Jews as well.

Global remembrance culture?

January 6, 2021 was a traumatic day for Washington D.C. The images of the mob storming the US House of Representatives shocked proponents of democracy, liberalism, and freedom the world over. One particular image has stuck with me, which has everything to do with this essay. It is the image of the rioter in a skull-emblazoned T-shirt that reads Camp Auschwitz, underlined with a lame translation of *Arbeit Macht Frei*: “Work Brings Freedom.” I would like to think that the guy, later identified and arrested, is not fully aware of what took place at the location celebrated by his shirt, including the one-year-olds exterminated in the gas chambers upon arrival at the camp, some of the 1.5 million children killed during the Holocaust.

Neither the German neighbor inquiring about

my gas habits, nor the D.C. Auschwitz T-shirt rioter, Robert Keith Packer, have met my Carpathian-born Grandmother Yehudit. Or Grandma Mania, for that matter, from Radom, Poland, with number A-24317 on her hand, or her husband Avraham, the Łódź Ghetto survivor. If they were to actively learn about the past, or made to stand during the memorial siren as children, and to see the nice sides of Judaism; if they were to go on student exchanges with Israelis as teens or hear survivors' stories by meeting their third and fourth generations, I genuinely believe they would have acted differently.

Before going as low as storming his country's own House of Representatives in a Nazi extermination camp T-shirt, following a legal, democratic

presidential election, Packer would have thought twice. His German counterpart, who brandished the Reich's flag during the anti-lockdown demonstration outside the Reichstag, might have acted differently as well. Remembrance culture must be replaced: ritual recitation of "Nie wieder" by politicians at ceremonies attended by few, if any, members of the general public, should make way for a reliance on effective education and direct encounters with people from different backgrounds, with their culture and festivals. In this age of social networks, this is the most efficient, perhaps the only way, to stem the hate and extremism that could eventually escalate into a full-blown national security threat. •

Whiteness and Jewish Identity

The “white Jew” as part of the racist majority? If this idea prevails in anti-racist discourse, it will have consequences.

An essay by Lisa Hänel

Two women are sitting, relaxed, on the floor; legs bent, coffee cups in hand. Many thousands of kilometers away, people are spending the night in bunkers and stairwells. One woman explains to the other what is happening in Gaza on the Mediterranean: “There is no fighting, there is only colonization. A group of people, a group of settlers, who are colonizing Palestine.”

The two women can be seen on an Instagram infographic that was shared widely on social networks during the recent Israel-Gaza conflict in May 2021. The graphic conveys a way of thinking that US journalist Bari Weiss describes in the German daily *Die Welt*: “The narrative insists that Israel is not just an oppressive power, but the last bastion of colonialism in the Middle East, white invaders

in a foreign land squatting on the rightful territory of people of color.”

It is a binary worldview that was particularly evident during the Israel-Gaza conflict, but that is also gaining influence beyond the region. The Middle East, the whole world, seems to be divided. On the one side, are the oppressed people of color, in this case Palestinians, and on the other white oppressors, in this case Jews. Major movements like Fridays for Future have joined in, declaring on their international Twitter account that they listen to all “colonized and oppressed” peoples. And US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib shouted at a rally, “Our freedom is interconnected with black, brown, indigenous, it is connected. What they are doing to the Palestinian people is what they continue to



do to our black brothers and sisters here.”

British educator Ben Freeman, author of the book “Jewish Pride. Rebuilding a People,” calls the countless anti-Semitic attacks, offline and online, during the course of the war a “global pogrom.” He himself was subjected to savage anti-Jewish hatred. For him, the idea of the “white Jew” has also played a role: “Whiteness is key because it fits into this global narrative about imperialism, oppression, oppressor, which has been unfortunately very damaging for us, it’s been kind of a disaster.”

Critical whiteness in research

Whiteness has become a contested category in recent years. Terms like “white privilege” and “old white man” have become contested but common buzzwords. In academic discourses, “critical whiteness” approaches have been discussed for many decades, in schools of thought such as “critical race theory” and “critical whiteness” among others, and partly also in postcolonial theories. The highly-regarded essay “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh appeared as early as 1989.

For just as many decades, there has been a broad internal Jewish debate about whether Jews can be considered white or not. This is especially true in the United States, where “race” is historically valued differently than in Germany. In his book “The Price of Whiteness,” historian Eric Goldstein traces the contradictory and difficult path of Jewish assimilation in the US. The journalist Emma Green interviewed Goldstein in 2016 for her article “Are Jews White?” When asked if Jews are white, he replied: “There’s really no conclusion except that it’s complicated.”

So far, the focus has been on questions such as: Where are Jews located among the “racial” categories that apply specifically in the US? Since concepts such as “systemic racism” are gaining ground, and the idea that Western societies are deeply marked by “white supremacy” is gaining more and more acceptance, the question is no longer only: Are Jews white? But rather: What are the consequences of being considered white?

In anti-racist discourse, the discussion of whiteness plays a prominent role – even if, in the eyes of representatives of theories such as “critical race theory,” it is primarily a matter of dealing with the systemic discrimination against black people and people of color. But precisely because prominent authors like the US writer Ibram X. Kendi declare “racist power,” as he calls it, to be the central figure of a machinery of oppression, one cannot avoid taking a closer look at this “racist power” if one wants to understand who exactly falls into this category.

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Social construct or skin color?

“Race” is defined as a social construct in anti-racist texts, many of which refer to the “critical race theory” founded in the 1970s as a legal theory. “Race and races are products of social thoughts and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality,” it says for example in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanci’s “Critical Race Theory. An Introduction.” In her book “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism,” Robin DiAngelo, an icon of the anti-racist movement, also

states “‘Race’ is a social construct, so who is categorized as white changes over time.”

In a second step, anti-racist authors assign certain attributes to the category “white.” For DiAngelo, whiteness is the social norm that guides and determines everything. “Being perceived as white is more than being assigned to a ‘race,’ it is a social and institutional status and identity, endowed with legal, political, economic, and social rights and privileges denied to others.” She continues, “Whites control all the major social institutions and determine the policies and practices by which others must live.” Kendi writes, “We need to recognize the difference between racist power (racist policymakers) and white people in general.”

However, it is precisely this line that is getting blurred again and again – and this is becoming a problem for Jews. Balazs Berkovits, research associate at the Bucerius Institute for Research of Contemporary German History and Society at the University of Haifa, has written extensively on “critical whiteness studies” and its “Jewish problem,” as he calls it. He concludes that, in the end, anti-racist authors always refer to skin color when describing the dominance of “white supremacy”: “If we look at white privilege, then it is crystal clear that it’s signaling something which, in its first, spontaneous definition, has to do with perceptual whiteness. Perceptual whiteness and socially interpreted whiteness are not the same or should not be the same (which is all the more obvious in the case of Jews), but in so many instances they are mixed together without further reflection about this ambiguity.”

As a result, even when authors like Delgado and Stefancic mention that Jews have not always been considered white in American history, even before the law, Jewish identity as a persecuted minority – at least that of Ashkenazi, European-born Jews – is almost never overt in anti-racist texts. If Jews are mentioned at all, they are seemingly counted as part of the white, racist majority society. Thus, DiAngelo describes US society as one deeply marked by “white supremacy” and defines this “white supremacy” as a “socio-political economic

and domination system based on racial categories that benefits those defined and perceived as white.” Thus, she also classifies people perceived as white – by which one could assume that she means Jews – among the group of beneficiaries of white supremacy.

This becomes even clearer when DiAngelo categorizes the “distribution of people who control our institutions” by “race.” She concludes that 100 percent of the richest Americans and 95 percent of the directors who made the most commercially successful films in 2016 were white. But a quick research reveals that two of the 10 richest men are Jewish, as are at least two directors who are included in the 95 percent “white” directors. DiAngelo does not define the criteria she uses; how the social construct “white” is defined in this case, and whether it is defined other than by skin color. It is equally unclear whether a Chinese director, for example, is considered white or not. If “white” is a social construct, then shouldn’t all directors and rich people be considered white by virtue of influence and status, not just those with white skin color? DiAngelo does not resolve this contradiction and speaks of an “incredibly homogeneous group.”

Elsewhere too, Jews are not mentioned as a minority. In their introduction to “Critical Race Theory,” Delgado and Stefancic address the problem of how minorities can be played off against each other in a racist society. The authors give numerous examples, citing Japanese, Mexican, and black minorities in the US. The Jewish minority, however, is not mentioned – certainly not in all the diversity that characterizes a community that includes Ashkenazi Jews, i.e., Jews of European descent, as well as black Jews or those from the Middle East and North Africa. Berkovits also sees a methodological reason for this gap. “Jews are very hard to classify. They subvert the usual minority position, which is defined as being dominated, being exploited. The Jewish group, in a sense, is different. But this radical criticism likes clear-cut categories, binary oppositions, according to which it conducts its critique. Jews are somehow a factor

that is disturbing this kind of radical critique.”

Ancient anti-Semitic stereotype

Author Ben Freeman sees the attribution of Jews to a powerful white majority as both a novelty and a continuum. In his book “Jewish Pride. Rebuilding a People,” he describes how for centuries the “non-Jewish world,” as he calls it, has defined Jewish identity. “If you describe us accurately as what we are, as an indigenous people [to the land of Israel], then the charge of whiteness doesn’t stick. However if you strip us of our indigeneity and if you describe us as white Europeans, or white, then we are not counted among the oppressed – even though we are the people who have probably been oppressed the most in the history of mankind.” Not only does this project a view from the outside onto Jewish identity, it also serves an anti-Semitic stereotype: “It imposes tropes that have existed for thousands of years, unto modern Jews and a modern context. If you said for 2,000 years the Jews are rich and powerful and privileged and oppres-

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continuum*

sors, well what does that make us today? White.”

It is not about the color of their skin, but about the place they are assigned in society – and for thousands of years this has not been a positive one. For Freeman it is a novelty that Jews are seen as part of a dominant society for the first time. This

is primarily about the view of Jews in the Diaspora and less about social debates within Israel, the only country with a Jewish majority; a country in which racism is certainly a problem, as in so many other countries.

At the beginning of June 2021, a multimedia exhibition opened in Amsterdam that is dedicated to precisely these questions. Entitled “Are Jews White?” the exhibition explores questions such as: How can Jews enjoy certain “white privileges” and still not feel part of the majority society? One of the curators is Gideon Querido van Frank. In an interview with the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, he talks about opening up a space for dialogue and cooperation with the exhibition. Two years ago, Querido van Frank published an opinion piece in a Dutch newspaper called “Are Jews White?” on which the exhibition is based. In it he writes: “Jews have never been white, never the norm, never the majority with ‘weapons and borders responsible for poverty, violence and exploitation.’ For most of history, we have been excluded, persecuted, and exterminated as an ethnic minority, and there is damn little white about that.”

Postcolonial discourse in Germany

Classifying a society along the lines of “racial” categories is something specifically American and also has its roots in the effects of segregation and racist legislation in the US before the 1960s. But this lens is not consistent with that of other societies – including European ones. In Germany, the idea of “white Jews” as part of the majority society is hardly openly held – probably also because the crime of the century, the genocide of European Jews, has made Germans wary of any “racial” attributions.

But the idea, at least, turns up again to an extent in postcolonial theories and debates. The most obvious way in which the idea of the “white Jew” is reflected is when the Shoah is described as a “white on white crime” – as a crime committed by white people against white people. In his dissertation “Decolonize Auschwitz?” the anti-Semitism researcher Steffen Klävers concludes that this is

*A current debate in
Germany about post-
colonial theories
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Israel*

the argument put forward by the political scientist Aram Ziai. According to Ziai, the only reason why the Holocaust is being dealt with in Germany is that colonial violence has returned to the center, to Europe, for the first time. According to this thesis, the violence that was already put to the test in the colonial territories, was now being perpetrated in Europe for the first time. It only received attention because it was not Africans but “white Europeans” who had to suffer it. “It is more common in the Anglo-American world to formulate this argument so openly. I observe this less often in German-speaking countries. However, it can be found in a more cryptic form in many approaches that also appear in current debates,” says Klävers.

A current debate in Germany about postcolonial theories revolves around, among other things, whether the adherence to a singularity of the Holocaust obscures the critical view of Israel. The Australian historian A. Dirk Moses is a proponent of this view, for example. What not only Moses but also many other postcolonial thinkers imply is that

Israel should be viewed very critically, if not even rejected, because it is a colonial entity. In doing so, these theorists follow the view of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. Thus, in his essay “The German Catechism” Moses, referring to a Bundestag resolution to stop the funding of BDS events, states, “What alternative options the Palestinians can take to oppose the colonization of their country did not seem to concern these politicians.” He leaves it open which country he is talking about – the settlements or Israeli core territory – just as many BDS supporters are often ambiguous about exactly which area they mean.

Postcolonial theorist Anna-Esther Younes is even more explicit when she not only puts the Zionist movement in a colonial corner, but also adds the motif of the “white European.” In a discussion with philosopher Susan Neiman in 2021, she stated that she was unsure whether Palestinians were expelled after the establishment of Israel as a result of the Shoah or because of “an already (European-wide) existing settler colonial project and mentality that supported a ‘population exchange’ from Jews to the Middle East and then found a catalyst through Nazism.” For the anti-Semitism researcher Klävers, the argumentation of seeing the founding of Israel as one of the last imperial acts can have a clear consequence: “Then it no longer matters whether the state of Israel represents a protective function for Jewish people, one then sees only a current example of white, colonial dominance society vis-à-vis the non-white indigenous population that is being colonized.”

Tangible Realpolitik consequences

The misconception of Jews as part of a dominant majority in Western countries; a highly simplified, if not demonizing, image of Israel as a white colonial state – what does all this lead to? Jewish voices such as Ben Freeman’s and Bari Weiss’ are urgently warning that hatred of Jews is on the rise, offline and online. During the two weeks or so of conflict between the Israeli military and Hamas, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the US recorded a 75 percent increase in anti-Semitic acts.

Historian Saul Friedländer notes in the German weekly *Die Zeit*: “Certainly: not all those who gather under the banner of postcolonial criticism are enemies of Israel, and those who openly express anti-Semitism may be a minority. But anti-Semitism in the US has taken on disturbing proportions in the wake of recent protests.” It can be added that this also applies to Germany.

The reasons behind this are far deeper than just the idea of a “white Jew” who belongs to the majority society. But this idea can lead people to feel emboldened to express anti-Jewish hatred, says Freeman. The “white Jew” functions as a “dog whistle” – a message that anti-Semites understand perfectly. Until now, major Jewish organizations in the US have hardly spoken out at all on the issue of anti-Semitism in anti-racist circles, probably because of the solidarity that traditionally exists between the Jewish community and civil rights movements. But when, in early August 2021, US Congresswoman Tlaib made the connection between a rich elite operating “behind the curtain,” Gaza, and racism in the US, the president of the ADL also spoke out, calling the remarks a “dog whistle.”

After the anti-Semitic outrages in the course of the Gaza-Israel conflict – and the silence of anti-racist activists – the voices of Jews, disillusioned that they have no political home in anti-racist circles – at least if they consider themselves Zionists – increased in various countries. The journalist Mirna Funk, for example, writes in *Die Zeit*, “All those who suddenly realize that the collective fun at the Women’s March and the anti-racism demonstrations is now over, have arrived in a new era. One in which it is quite clear that they are not only excluded from all activist spaces for migration, anti-racism, LGBTQI and people of color, but are peddled as the enemy.”

Binary worldview

The anti-Semitism commissioner of the state of Berlin, Samuel Salzborn, sees the reasons for this also in the collectivist thinking of some anti-racist actors. Instead, a democratic society would need

a “very consistent policy against discrimination in order to create opportunities for freedom and development for individuals.”

Salzborn even sees the theoretical foundations for this in anti-racist texts themselves. He refers to postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, who placed black identity at the center without rejecting a “freedom paradigm.” Unfortunately, authors like Fanon are not discussed enough within the theo-

Major Jewish organizations in the US have hardly spoken out at all on the issue of anti-Semitism in anti-racist circles

retical discourse.

“My fear,” Salzborn says, “is that there’s a lot of indifference in the anti-racist movement and that there’s a danger that these small, vocal, anti-Semitic positions can get a foothold. There are many forces that are trying to get these discussions going. That’s the important point, that debates have to get going here, that in the end you have to exclude the anti-Semitic positions from the anti-racist context and get to an anti-Semitism-sensitive discussion, also with regard to the question of Israel.” For Ben Freeman, too, it is essential that theories such as postcolonialism and “critical race theory” continue to develop: “In a way critical race theory has nothing to do with us. This is a theory about the black experience in America. But it has created a binary. So, actually, for critical race theory to be

a theory fully rooted in reality it should take into account other experiences. The black experience is important and it's valid but so is mine."

The binary worldview of anti-racist theories leads to making the Jewish minority appear invisible. In a world made up of oppressed and oppressors, there is no nuance and no place for a minority that does not fit into these boxes. A minority that is supposed to be absorbed into a negative majority and to which, at the same time, all those stereotypes that have haunted it for millennia are attached.

Unconsciously or consciously, the anti-racist worldview as it is currently preached, coupled with a demonizing, simplified image of Israel,

may contribute to anti-Semitism in a new guise. What is more, without dealing with the weaknesses of one's own theory, it will be difficult to reach a common denominator when it comes to the assessment of anti-Jewish hatred. For example, in his article in *Die Zeit*, Saul Friedländer describes how synagogues and Jewish businesses in the Fairfax neighborhood of Los Angeles were also attacked as part of Black Lives Matter demonstrations. A. Dirk Moses again disagreed. Also writing in *Die Zeit*, he denied that they were targeted attacks on Jewish establishments. Instead, Moses said, the protests were aimed at "reminding the white residents of affluent neighborhoods of the suffering of Blacks." •

Translated from the German by Kate Brown

Black, White, or “In-between”?

How Jewish Identity Politics changes the
global understanding of diversity

An essay by Rebecca Rose Mitzner

Debates on identity politics, about the “problem of Jewish identity” or “Israel’s identity crisis,” are losing increasing numbers of Jewish listeners. Their tone, however, has intensified. In international political conversations, being Jewish is more and more perceived as holding hegemonic “White privilege.” Jews are sweepingly subsumed into the “White” category when speaking of “White supremacy,” and are therefore held responsible for the past and present oppression of diverse groups.

In response, Jewish identity politics endeavors to differentiate between “White” and “Black” Jews in order to emphasize the plurality of Jewish life situations, including political positions.

This reaction creates a paradox: Jewish iden-

tity politics appear to be dominated by the very same black-and-white thinking against which they seek to defend themselves. The more they strive to integrate Jewish identities into a global community, the more differences in appearance, gender, religion, or social status are defined as characteristics of “minorities,” whose identity a “majority” still has to approve as Jewish. Not only does this approach reinforce anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist resentments against a supposedly authoritarian Judaism, but it also neglects one of the essential aspects of Jewish culture: Diversity is not added to Jewish tradition. It is inherent in it.

The point is not to ascribe an “overly complex” sense of self to “the Jews.” Rather, it is to emphasize different interpretations of common identity



flavors. As the Israeli writer Amos Oz once put it, “We Jews can’t stand sentences that begin with ‘We Jews.’”

Thus, a generally applicable definition of diversity can be implicitly based on Judaism’s particular understanding of diversity, since the latter results from a collectively cultivated awareness for the many-sidedness of each identity.

The fact that ultimately no identity can be reduced to a single attribute is made clear above all by the emerging voices of Black Jews in the United States, Germany, and Israel growing louder. They advocate for academic, political, cultural, and social emancipation from a mindset that seeks to classify people according to a single aspect of their identity.

In June, the American Jewish Committee released a statement by Narda Alcorn, who spoke as one of many “Faces of American Jewry”. “Being Jewish in America,” she said, “is a source of enormous joy and pride for me even though I continue to encounter members of the Jewish community who question my authenticity. I am a Black, queer woman married to a white Jewish woman and the parent to two adopted Black Jewish children. However, I’ve been told that I can never really be Jewish because I am Black.”

Sociologist Katya Gibel Mevorach, who identifies as a Black American Jew, analyzes an argument by anthropologist Karen Brodtkin, to trace the way that intra-Jewish discrimination has infiltrated Jewish self-perception. Brodtkin had argued that “Jews are White but there are other people who are Jewish but not White like the rest.” The word “but,” Mevorach says, suggests that the power to decide who is Jewish is made by the stereotypical White, Eastern European Jew who feels solely responsible for the preservation of Judaism. To do justice to the diversity of Jewish identities, Mevorach calls for abandoning the “intellectual laziness” towards integration experiences. She argues that culturally embedded racism inevitably influences social developments since it mistakes Whiteness for a natural fact instead of viewing it as the social construct it is. Hence, Jews in the Diaspora face

the challenge of detaching themselves from myths of identity politics. For example, slogans such as “We are all Americans” lead to a one-sided focus on the dialogue between Jews and Black people who subordinate their individuality to the American “super identity”. The buzzword “Black-Jewish relations” suggests that Jews are a unified group of ethnically White Americans opposed to Black Americans. The complex reality is ignored. However, ideals of the “American Dream” such as equal opportunity cannot be realized as long as “the American perspective” does not see people as they really are: not categorically equal, but individually different. Mevorach urges Jewish communities to disengage Jewish identity concepts from over-simplifying White ethnicity discourses. “To overcome discrimination, one must no longer retain discriminatory thought structures,” she states. In her view, Jewish identity politics must move to more substantive debates that address how Jewish values are defined and what it means to identify with them.

A necessary change of attitude

Such discussions move beyond descriptions of a plural reality that merely lists and compares religious and secular Jewish ways of life. In order to do justice to the diversity of Jewish identity conceptions and protect Judaism from ideological appropriation, a change in mindset must come first.

*Amos Oz: “We Jews
can’t stand sentences
that begin with ‘We
Jews’”*

The American philosopher Lewis Gordon speaks to this prerequisite in the context of “Black existentialism” as the “decolonization of thought.” He explains, “Being Black does not automatically and solely mean thinking ‘like a Black man,’ whatever this would or should mean. However, this insight has indeed something to do with my identity as a Black man and a Jew.”

Accordingly, individual insights are related to one’s origin. Still, individuality does not change the fact that there are limits to human recognition. Being able to think oneself into the place of others, in Kant’s sense, does not legitimize speaking for them. Critical thinking rather leads to questioning one’s self-perception. Following Gordon’s philosophy, decolonized identity politics would have to criticize dominant cultures that claim to be objective and universal. Likewise, self-images deriving their authenticity exclusively from personal experiences should be rejected. If Judaism, for example, were as one-sided as fundamentalist or nationalist Jews interpret it, today’s diversity of Jewish self-conceptions would never have come into existence. The decolonization of Jewish identity politics implicates a return to the distinctiveness of Judaism. Secular plurality was integrated into the Jewish tradition and not vice versa: the world, or other religious cultures, were never intended to adapt to Jewish ideas of truth. This fact is also of structural relevance to Israeli identity politics.

On the one hand, Israel is a symbol of Jewish cultural diversity, consisting of Eastern European- (Ashkenazim), Arab- (Mizrachim), and African- (Beta Israel) Jews’ traditions. On the other hand, the Beta Israel have experienced massive discrimination since their return to Israel. It began with the allegedly necessary recognition of their Jewish identity by the Chief Rabbinate, which was not completed until 1977. The rabbinical representatives of the Ashkenazim and Mizrachim saw it as their obligation to prove to the “black” Jews that they were the “lost” tribe of Dan. More recently, their socially precarious situation has been instrumentalized politically: Ethiopian immigrants are offered subsidized housing in the

The decolonization of Jewish identity politics means a return to the distinctiveness of Judaism

West Bank. This supposedly social act is intended to defuse international criticism concerning the expansion of the settlements. The political staging of Jews being “black and needy” serves to counteract BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) campaigns, stylizing the Jewish population to be the “White, rich oppressors” of Palestinian “People of Color.” Obviously, the idea of combating racially tinged anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism with racially tinged Zionism doesn’t work. Since 2015, protests by Ethiopian Jews in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement have been mounting. They postulate, “We will no longer let the Black person be the poor, oppressed person.”

Even serious efforts to improve the situation of Ethiopian Jews seemingly cannot do without unilateral juxtapositions. As to that, Mehereta Baruch Ron, former deputy mayor of Tel Aviv and the first Ethiopian Jew to be elected to this office, says: “I view the traditional history of Beta Israel to be another testimony of Jewish diasporic experience. Its uniqueness should not be used to harden differences between different Jewish streams.” Her statement is aimed at scholarly efforts that attempt to demonstrate the originality of traditional Ethiopian interpretations of Jewish scriptures in contrast to Eastern European Jews’ understanding of tradition. The described scientific approach calls into question the “Jewish authenticity” of

the Ashkenazi rite. Ethiopian Jews thereby are imperceptibly declared to be representatives of an elite, which confirms the notions of a Jewish ethnical hierarchy. Baruch Ron adds, “Beta Israel never wanted to compete with other Jewish groups. We belong to the global Jewish community. That is why we no longer want to be treated like what some call ‘Falasha,’ ‘strangers’ in our own country.”

Jewish diversity is more than skin color

In Israeli public discourse, interpreting Jewish diversity competitively, and hierarchically, leads to evaluating attacks on Ethiopian Jews as a consequence of “de-Orientalization” to the point that the violent behavior of predominantly Mizrahi police officers is “excused” by the fact that Jews of Arab origin had supposedly adapted too much to the “Western White authoritarianism” of the Ashkenazim. This argument reinforces a racist definition of Jewish identity so far as it pretends that “Jewish diversity” refers only to the colors of skin and not to individually-responsible people, capable of self-critical thinking.

Despite of all the above mentioned, Israel still remains the Ethiopian Jewish dream.

Pnina Tamano-Shata, the first Ethiopian Jew to be elected to the Israeli parliament and Minister of Immigration and Integration since 2020, argues: “If my love of the country would only be depended on some racists’ opinion, they would get what they want, they would win, while the rest of Israeli society, including myself, would lose.” The danger lies in misunderstanding Zionism solely in the context of social exclusion and security demarcation. Instead, the “Jewish state” should be seen as a sanctuary of Jewish diversity in its comprehensive sense: It is offering an opportunity for different Jewish cultures to flourish, while simultaneously developing a common voice to engage in dialogues with other nations and cultures. In order to realize this vision of “Israel”, it is not enough to answer hostilities directed against Israeli-Jewish identities with a supposedly “positive” discrimination of certain groups within the Israeli population. One cannot reduce the different, socially unifying

elements of a society to a single, group-specific experience. Instead, a common interest in emancipation from such ideologies must be promoted.

Accordingly, the impact of imperialism, colonialism, racism, and nationalism on the history of the state of Israel and Israeli society can no longer be ignored or underestimated. Being Jewish does not protect from thinking ideologically. Nevertheless, “Jewish thought” has the potential to be traditionally oriented towards diversity rather than ideology.

“Showing that Judaism comes in all different types of colors and shades is going to have a powerful effect on the Jewish people and on the rest of the world,” says Nissim Black, an Orthodox Jew, and rapper of African-American descent. With his music, he wants to be a voice for Black Jews and stimulate discussions about the extent to which Black cultures belong to Judaism: “For me, ‘Yiddishkeit’ means two things,” he says. “Firstly, I can be very self-confident about who I am and what I am doing, due to my close relationship with Hashem.” Black views the many rules of Jewish Law not as regulations, but as “tokens of love” that he is allowed to “render” as an expression “of the good relationship I am in with God and myself.” Secondly, it is “about the awareness that cultures inevitably influence each other.”

The various Jewish conceptions of identity result from a development of tradition that takes other ways of life seriously and therefore enters into a relationship with them.

The apparent discrepancy between the fundamental cosmopolitanism of Judaism and the authoritarian positions of some Jews must be examined more closely. When asked what constitutes Judaism in Germany, Artur Abramovych, chairman of the Jewish branch of the far-right party, “Alternative for Germany” (AfD), replied that German Judaism today is post-Soviet Judaism: “I don’t use terms like Jewish diversity. There are Jews who follow Judaism, those who don’t, and countless gradations in between.”

However, it remains debatable what he means by “Judaism.”: Jewish AfD members consider

themselves to be generic Germans or integrated German Jews who share the same “Judeo-Christian” values, only with a different religious background. Correspondingly, the AfD uses the principle of “racecraft,” according to which the collective “fantasy of a race,” is disguised as a national community, is created through the practice of racism. The appreciation of minorities, which are socially willing to integrate, legitimizes discrimination against all those who resist the appropriation of identity. Anti-Semitism, racism, or homophobia seem to have disappeared in the AfD, as “being German” functions as the primary identity which displaces being Jewish, queer, or a person of color.

The reasons why some Jews nevertheless join such extremist movements are manifold. Of course, it would be just as ideological to expect “the Jews,” in particular, to have infallible morals. Even a self-determined Jewish identity, does not protect against fatal errors of judgment, such as those confidently committed by Jewish AfD members.

That is why left-wing Jewish activists like the lyricist Max Czollek call for “radical disintegration”. Ideological “thought theater” must be overcome by “radical diversity”. In a tweet from 2021, he criticizes the lack of awareness of the post-migrant reality and of German society’s hybridity: “1,700 years of Jewish life in Germany means that Jews have lived here longer than the vast majority of Germans. So, one could also celebrate 1,700 years of migration to Judistan”.

At high-profile events such as the International Days of “Jewish-Muslim dominant culture” 2020 at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, he and other artists confronted the audience with their own prejudices by exaggerating clichéd notions of identity. However, this happened at the cost of a questionable self-confrontation. The performers self-inflicted experiences of discrimination, that were previously only inflicted onto them by others, and positively reevaluated them. Identity markers such as being Jewish, black, or queer are supposed to form identity groups that unite their people according to their “struggle of alliances” for

socioeconomic justice. Representatives of queer theory criticize such practices of identity politics, arguing that instead of overcoming discrimination against individuals, the binary duality of “us versus them” is perpetuated in the struggle of “the minorities” against “the majority of society”. The compulsion to subordinate individual needs to the objectives of a constructed group multiculturalism thus remains.

Philip Egbune, whose self-perception is influenced by Jewish, Nigerian, and Eastern European heritages, feels he has to choose: “Often, I only feel accepted when I stand up for either ‘the Black’ or ‘the Jewish’ cause. But I can’t tear myself into pieces.” His statement illustrates that as long as the efforts of identity politics are reduced to issues of power, they tend to neglect the “special interests” of individuals. For example, a Jewish acquaintance told Egbune that he shouldn’t go to a Black Lives Matter protest in Munich “because people there wouldn’t accept him as a Jew anyway”. Nevertheless, Egbune was touched by the solidarity he experienced during the demonstration: “Of course, I reject any identity-political spread of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. But I would never compare the criticism of left-wing and right-wing

*Max Czollek: “1,700
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politics,” he says. Left-leaning activists, unlike right-wing identitarians, are committed to social plurality and democracy. Still, further training is needed to increase the awareness of the complexity of identity and prevent it being subsumed into categories such as “race, class, gender”. Egbune says, “I think we are far from having exploited the full potential of the Jewish tradition, which could have a great impact on sociopolitical issues.”

His argument is highly relevant in view of globalization and migration: Due to the diversity of Jewish self-images, the extent to which Jewish identity politics can take a concrete mediating position between the different group- and individual interests should be given greater consideration.

The task of identity politics is not limited to identifying growing social multiculturalism. It also must consider the multi-dimensionality of each individual identity. The positions of Black and Jewish people presented above indicate this kind of change of perspective. They call to free oneself from a way of thinking that categorically excludes people.

To conclude, this essay is not about the idealization of Jews with black versus white skin color. Instead, non-White identities simply stand in the context of a history of discrimination, which makes them particularly sensitive to the fragility of identity constructs. The editor-in-chief of the

“Zeit” Magazine, Sascha Chaimowicz, who was born in Munich and has Jewish, Polish, and Caribbean roots, said in the program “Friday Night Jews”: “There cannot be a single predominant answer to the question of what identity is.” In order to do justice to the complexity of society and personality, it is not enough in terms of identity politics to juxtapose “conventional” concepts of integration with “alternative” ideas of disintegration. Genuine rethinking, which no longer fixes identity by definition and celebrates individuality, requires additional, critical self-reflection. Diversity results from the specifically human ability to want to change oneself and the world.

Continuously questioning one’s own ideas through exchange with other opinions is not a sign of losing one’s own identity but an expression of individual, humane self-realization.

This self-confident, self-critical attitude meets one of the main concerns arising from Jewish cultural history. Jewish people’s global potential to act is derived from the vivid vision of overcoming extremist communities. Consequently, the diverse Jewish identities are, metaphorically speaking, designed to stand up to the identity compulsion of totalitarian politics. •

Translated from the German by Kate Brown
Edited by Melanie Kent

A Twofold “Never Again”

The security concepts of Israel and Germany could not be more different. Yet both draw on the experience of the Holocaust and World War 2.

An essay by Jonathan Kovac

Bound forever by the memory of the Holocaust, Israel and Germany exemplify how historic identities shape security mindsets. The founding of these countries was tied to World War 2 and their experiences as victims and perpetrators shaped how policymakers in these countries approach their international affairs. Having lived and studied international security in Israel, Germany, and the United States, comparing the role of victimhood (and perpetrator) narratives in security approaches has personal significance for me and neatly mirrors the schools of realism and constructivism in international relations (IR).

Opposing burdens of history

Germany and Israel are arguably the strongest

countries in their respective regions, though their security concepts are polar opposites. While Israel's idea of security is a consequence of existential fears, which can be traced to both real and constructed threats, Germany's conception of security is heavily based on the US securities provided since World War 2, which have allowed the privilege of stability, peace, and prosperity. Their individual security and foreign policies trace back to opposing burdens of history: Israel is home to a largely victimized people and Germany is a land still contending with the horrible crimes perpetrated by the Nazi regime. Today we can see that each country has developed its own understanding of “never again,” shaping unique political identities. Simply put, Israel will never



again rely on others to ensure Jews' security, while Germany will never again start a war, act alone, or act aggressively.

Group identities and victim roles

Victimhood narratives dominate identity politics. Victimhood can be defined as either demand for recognition of a group's identity or a group's past experience as victims. In the article "A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts," Daniel Bar-Tal and his colleagues argue that collective victimhood provides a sense of being, helps to cope with stress, can morally justify violent acts, and mobilizes group members. Importantly, collective victimhood can be established through victims' narratives, thus not requiring all members of the group to have experienced the trauma. Through ceremonies, education, and political narratives a group can commemorate the traumatic experience (usually histories of geno-

Furthermore, such groups may struggle to develop trust vis-à-vis other groups and may even develop a higher sensitivity to threats as a defense mechanism. These can lead groups to rationalize immoral acts, for these are compared to the own traumatic experience and are judged as less immoral. The repeated failure of the international community to rescue persecuted groups (i.e., the Rwandan Genocide, the Holocaust) further strengthens a group's narrative of never again relying on others for protection and security.

Israel's conception of national security is a classic realist case in IR. Dominating IR scholarship during the Cold War, realism posits that the world is an anarchical, zero-sum place in which states are in a constant struggle against adversaries for power and influence, which ensure their security. Israel was, among other reasons, founded in response to Jews' suffering around the globe, with the Holocaust marking the culmination of attempts to eliminate Jews. Tadek Markiewicz goes as far as to claim that Israel's foundational identity is collective victimhood, taking a crucial place in Israel's political discourse.

As such, Israel's "never again" is based on a belief that only Israel can fully protect the lives of Jews and ensure their security, especially after the international community repeatedly failed to do so. Israeli leaders have framed Israel's national security policies and actions around victimhood narratives and, more specifically, the memory of the Holocaust.

Perhaps as a means to justify its use of force in defending itself, or perhaps as a way to create a "rally around the flag" effect, Israel's wars, especially the early wars that tangibly threatened its existence, were often framed through the lens of the Holocaust. For example, during the 1967 War, Israeli leaders used rhetoric reminding people of the Holocaust as a way to represent the threat from Israel's Arab neighbors. Similarly, Israel's founder David Ben-Gurion compared Egyptian propaganda to Nazi propaganda in 1960, suggesting that their use of "Zionist" was the same as the Nazis' use of "Jews"; in both cases Jews were accused

Israel's conception of national security is a classic realist case in international relations

cide, persecution, racism) and thereby maintain a collective social identity surrounding victimhood.

Victimhood group identities pose several challenges. For instance, groups may struggle to recognize the suffering of other groups, as their own victimhood is given superior moral value.

of controlling the US, the United Kingdom, and France and therefore had to be eliminated. Prior to Israel's invasion of Lebanon, former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin underscored Israel's destiny of constant need for fighting and self-defense, proclaiming that “We won't allow another Treblinka.” More recently, with much of the same rhetoric, though not instituting the same existential quality, author Juliana Ochs observed how Israelis who experienced suicide bombings in the Second Intifada drew analogies to their parents' and grandparents' experience in the Holocaust. In comparison to the early wars, today's challenges to Israel's security may not threaten its existence to the same extent, precisely because Israel succeeded in positioning itself as the strongest actor in the region.

Establishment of own security capacities

For insights into Israeli national security and the role of victimhood narratives, I met with Dr. Gil Murciano, CEO of Mitvim, The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies. Prior to taking up this position Murciano served as an expert on Israeli foreign and security policy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Having himself worked on security narratives, Murciano directed me to the work of Sigmund Freud and Heinz Kohut on narcissistic rage and injury in the context of rape victims. Often, perceived national threats and threats to a nation's self-esteem are conveyed using the rhetoric of rape; comparisons include a sense of the loss of control and more specifically the loss of sovereignty. Kohut suggested that narcissistic rage stems from sensitivity to perceived threats, translating into a need for total control of the individual's surrounding, at times involving revenge or harsh means to maintain control. Most crucially, in order to overcome victimhood, a process takes place in which the victim turns from a passive actor into an active actor. The active transformation may involve hurting others.

In the Israeli context, the Holocaust and generally the history of persecution created a sense of helplessness and fear among Jews, and the way to

get out of the victim role was to take an active role. According to Murciano, Israel's security goal is to establish the ability to protect itself by creating national security capacities. This translated into actions that may be deemed by some as harsh; some actors in Israeli politics would go so far as to argue that, as a result, Israel became a perpetrator in the conflict with the Palestinians. This argument is met with critics emphasizing Israel's need to defend itself, which, according to Murciano, often marginalizes the Israeli discussion about a normative-based foreign policy.

The main threat in Israel is perceived as coming from external actors; while Israel is diverse in terms of its citizens' identities, when it comes to national security, the identities among the Jewish population do not play a major role. The explanation is that in Israel every person was a victim of something, a concept that journalist Ari Shavit would agree with in his book “A New Israeli Republic.” Shavit argues that Mizrahi Jews were victims of Ashkenazi Jews, religious Jews were victims of secular ones and so on. Thus, Israel has a strong collective identity that is characterized by existential fears both for descendants of Holocaust survivors and for the remaining population, which also views current threats as existential.

Constructive identity

In stark contrast to Israel, Germany is a case study of a constructivist national and security identity, in which there is nearly a non-partisan consensus that Germany should never again start a war or even appear to act aggressively. At the heart of constructivism lies the idea that within countries, social groups engage in debates and struggle to further their interests and values, thereby influencing policy choices. The inactive attitude is rooted in Germany's role as perpetrator during World War 2. At least in theory, Germany could have chosen to pursue a more active foreign policy after the Cold War ended. Instead, seen through a constructivist lens, German society chose a nearly pacifist, non-interventionist, and multilateral approach to international relations. In other words,

constructivism establishes the link between social identities and foreign policy; this explains how a strong country like Germany chose a passive attitude to foreign policy, despite its capabilities and strength.

In a discussion with Professor Marina Henke of the Hertie School in Berlin, where she teaches international affairs and serves as the Director of the Centre for International Security, she notes that there is an anti-American component that stems from many groups in Germany. Here the history of American control in Germany comes into play, as many Germans feel that “yes, the US helped us but ... at some point, it’s enough.” From the political left to the center, this sentiment often stems from a criticism of a capitalist, expansionist, and materialist United States. Henke notes that “people who are anti-American are not necessarily the AfD,” referring to the far-right Alternative for Germany, “I think the AfD has this other component of anti-Americanism that is based on deeply-held superiority.” There, it is a kind of Germany First attitude, where Germany does not need America.

Germany’s emphasis on a peaceful and multilateral image is seen through its foreign policy agenda: protection of the environment, securing NATO and EU borders, aiding developing countries, and accepting refugees. These are all challenges that require international cooperation. Furthermore, German leaders, bearing in mind the burden of the Nazi past, attempt to pursue a normative-based foreign security policy. For example, to justify Germany’s first military deployment since World War 2 (Kosovo), former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer established the idea of Germany being “an early warning station against genocide.” In this way Fischer utilized Germany’s dark past to justify the first serious international military act in the name of another “never again”: never again genocide.

Henke agrees that post-World War 2 German identity is heavily influenced by its Nazi past and has resulted in a German foreign policy that is rather passive: “The number one reason [for a passive foreign policy] is that the United States didn’t allow

it to ... Germans were absolutely defeated, so [they essentially didn’t] have an option.” In Murciano’s opinion, Germans after the war, especially those who did not identify with the Nazis, saw themselves as victims of that regime. The solution was that Germany needed to avoid what caused the problem to begin with: a military-led interventionist approach and a strong and aggressive German military. The ultimate fear was of becoming perpetrators again and turning others into victims.

The real question then is why Germany didn’t take a more active role after the Cold War ended. After World War 2 ended the Allied Forces successfully molded German elites; according to Henke, an entire generation was (rightfully) trained to believe that Germany was guilty. German foreign policy then had to align with that of the victorious parties and only rarely deviated (i.e., Ostpolitik and the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia).

The result is that today’s young generation thinks in normative terms, but not strategically, says Henke: “the younger generation ... now have free ideas, but they actually don’t know how to put this into practice.” An example she uses is Germany’s focus on multilateralism. The German Foreign Ministry invests a lot of money in the Alliance of Multilateralism, but it does not really have a strategy for how to bring in such countries as Saudi Arabia and China that are not part of it; multilateralism should be a means, not a goal, says Henke. Accordingly, “German foreign policy [is] completely inefficient. It’s because there’s literally no strategy.” What often does happen is German risk management. An example is the handling of the refugee influx – instead of targeting the core of the problem, Germany (and the European Union) pays warlords in Libya and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to build up a fortress. Thus, among the younger generation, the notion that someone would challenge the 30-year-long stability or the liberal order is for many unthinkable, in turn making strategic thinking and military power a tool of geopolitical power concepts, options that are hard for Germans to consider, according to Dr. Ulrike Franke of the European Council on Foreign

Relations: “German millennials think of international politics in terms of values and emotions rather than interests.”

Henke concludes that Germans tend to forget that the country can allow itself to focus on normative politics and social welfare because the United States provided the necessary support after the war. The US support and decades of peace made people think that war was no longer possible. The fall of the Berlin Wall was the last time Germans directly faced power and geopolitics. However, the reality is very different in many other countries and requires military intervention.

German view

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, among Germans there is this perception that all that is necessary is to sit down and talk, but “the Germans should be the first ones to understand that ... a massive military intervention took down Hitler.” In a sense it is ironic that Germans are so opposed to military interventions and even claim to know the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Henke notes the irony in this idea of never again using military force: “as a narrative that is constructed... genocide was also stopped by military interventions, not by negotiations, not by appealing to normative ideas.” There are two “never agains” clashing: never again to starting a war but also never again to genocide. And in the case of Israel the never again concept is translated into the use of military force because the threat can’t be dealt with otherwise, at least for now.

Different challenges

Comparing the security policies of Israel and Germany is hard, as each country faces different challenges. Still, the exercise provides meaningful insights into security mindsets that have roots in a shared history that led to unique security identities. Israel’s security policies are highly strategic, as Israel is surrounded by enemies and deals with existential fears. For Henke, this paranoia helps Israelis to rationalize the at times harsh measures taken to protect themselves, something that Eu-

There are two “never agains” clashing: never again to starting a war but also never again to genocide

ropeans cannot really understand. These measures, justified by an attitude of “never again,” may at times involve harming or victimizing other groups. In contrast, Germany’s security identity is based on a principle to never again act alone and surely never again be a perpetrator. This is why even in multilateral missions, such as Mali or Afghanistan, Germany is very hesitant to contribute troops. Therefore, Germany’s inaction can actually lead to harm as well, as Henke concludes. Another explanation worth mentioning could be that the culture of restraint is somewhat of a smokescreen for turning away from the world – it is easier to be passive and Germany has a decent historic “excuse” for being so.

It took me until I lived in the US to realize how identity politics play into the national security concepts of Israel and Germany. But in truth, “never again” is woven into the fabric of each country’s daily life: growing up in Israel, “never again” was part of every ceremony on Holocaust Remembrance Day, and today graffiti proclaiming “nie wieder Deutschland” (“never again Germany”) greets me on my way home in Berlin. •

Let's Talk About Security

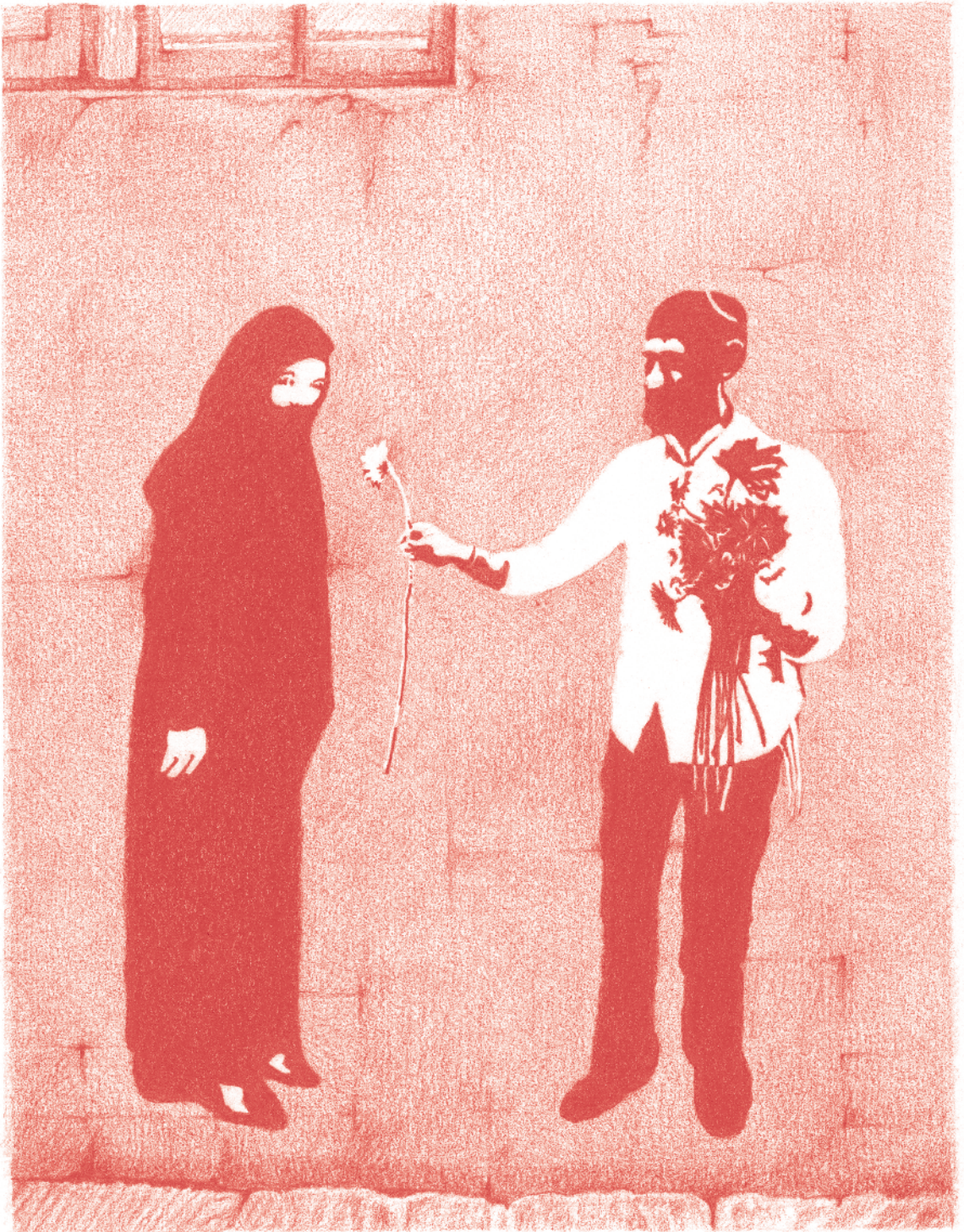
How initiatives in Israel and Germany create
new spaces for dialogue

An essay by Bastian Kaiser

Everyone said to us: don't go there." Gadi Gvaryahu squints through his narrow, tinted glasses. "But we insisted." The 65-year-old remembers well the aftermath of July 2, 2014 – the day Mohammed Abu Khdeir was murdered. Jewish youths had dragged the 16-year-old into a car in the Arab neighborhood of Shuafat in East Jerusalem, taken him to a wooded area near the city, beaten him, doused him with gasoline, and burned him alive. In court, they would later claim to have acted out of revenge for the murder of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank by members of Hamas. "It was dangerous to come to Shuafat in those days," Gvaryahu says. The sun reflects in the black barrette that fixes his kippah to his gray hair. "We came on the second or third day after the

murder. With five buses. 300 people." The Abu Khdeir family was skeptical at first, he says: Genuine solidarity or a PR ploy by the Israeli government? "But we were allowed to come. And we came again. Over and over again. Today we are good friends."

Security is a big word, its meaning as clear as it is unclear. Who or what poses a threat? What makes life safe or unsafe? Opinions and feelings differ about this – between young and old, East and West, people with and without a migration background, between Christians, Jews, Arabs, in short: between different sections of society. A study by the organization More in Common Germany showed as early as 2019 that the population's sense of threat varies greatly. Different perceptions could ultimately "lead to completely different as-



sessments of social issues.” This also means that debates about what security means are important. It is only by exchanging views that understanding can emerge. But that exchange of views can also be uncomfortable, challenging, upsetting, and unsettling. Avoiding it has never been as easy as it is today: social networks are shrinking the experience of shared reality to an ever smaller intersection – while at the same time a global pandemic has made personal encounters even more difficult and exacerbated social inequalities. But there are people who are counteracting this, outside political office and with full conviction. This text presents initiatives in Israel and Germany that

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difficult*

are creating new spaces for exchange. Exchange about what is already there and what is missing – for a togetherness in which everyone feels safe.

More than 116,000 people have lost their lives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one of the longest-running conflicts in the world. Violence flares up again and again – most recently in May of this year, when the radical Islamist group Hamas fired more than 4,300 rockets at Israel. Counterattacks

by the Israeli army killed some 250 people in Gaza. But there was also unrest inside Israel, which many called the worst since the Second Intifada in the early 2000s. “In May, we got an enormous number of calls,” Gadi Gvaryahu says. “People from all over Israel wanted to distribute flowers with us. We ended up with 20 groups. In Haifa, in Acre, in many, many mixed cities. And then, of course, we tried to visit those who were hurt. Jews and Muslims.”

Against hate crimes – showing solidarity

The “we” here refers to the Tag Meir initiative. In 2011, Gvaryahu founded it in direct response to the so-called “price tag” attacks, whereby mostly fundamentalist Jewish youths committed violence and vandalism, mostly in the West Bank, mostly against Palestinians, often as acts of revenge for Palestinian violence against the settler movement. During the peak period between early 2012 and mid-2013, observers counted as many as 800 such attacks. Tag Meir began contacting, visiting, and supporting those affected. Showing solidarity. Showing that not all Israelis think alike. Today the organization responds to hate crimes of all kinds, organizing solidarity visits where people, mosques, synagogues, or churches become objects of hate and targets of attacks. Gvaryahu has already brought Palestinians to Israeli settlements – or Jewish Israelis to Arab neighborhoods. Gvaryahu himself is a devout Jew, the son of a Holocaust survivor. He sees his own family history as the reason for his determination to fight racism and discrimination in all its forms.

Change of location. The last rays of sunlight are falling through the trees in front of Jerusalem City Hall. Gvaryahu has an appointment to conduct a tour of central Jerusalem. About once a month, he and his colleague Ruth Klein organize this tour for interested people from the Tag Meir community. They don’t stop at landmarks. They stop wherever people have been victims of hate crimes. They stop often. The tour follows an invisible, bloody trail that runs through the Holy City. Tsofit is one of the participants. She feels society is drifting apart, she

“We can’t let extremists run our lives here. It goes both ways. Our actions may be simple, but they make a difference”

says. She calls Tag Meir a “flower in the desert.” “It seems like people are getting more extreme here,” Tsofit says. “You can feel it. You can hear it. People are using expressions that no one would have uttered 15, 20 years ago.”

The group stops on Jaffa Road, Jerusalem’s central shopping street. In February and March 1996, this place was the scene of Palestinian terror twice in a row: 45 people died in Hamas suicide bombings of two public buses. “Bombings were practically my childhood images,” Ruth Klein says as she looks at the memorial plaque at this site. “Quite naturally, you grow up thinking certain things about Arabs. Especially when you have no information to counteract the emotions you automatically have.” Klein has been working at Tag Meir for about three years. Her perspective on the conflict was permanently changed by a study program at New York University that brought Israelis and Palestinians together. “We can’t let extremists run our lives here,” she says. “It goes both ways. Just as I expect Palestinians to fight against innocent people being harmed, I want to

do the same. Our actions may be simple, but they make a difference.”

To Germany. February 19, 2020, changed everything. “We were all angry, of course,” Ali Yildirim says. Nine people lost their lives that day at Heumarkt in downtown Hanau and at Kurt-Schumacher-Platz in Hanau-Kesselstadt, murdered by a right-wing extremist. One of those murdered was Ali’s childhood friend Ferhat Unvar. “At the time, I thought: the only thing that would give me inner satisfaction would be if I now went to protests and fought with some skinheads,” the 27-year-old recounts. But that never happened. At the cemetery, he met Serpil Unvar, the mother of his murdered friend Ferhat. They talked, laughed, and cried together, and kept in touch afterwards. At some point, according to Yildirim, she said: “You are all angry, I am angry too. But we won’t turn this anger into something negative now, but into something constructive.” On November 14, 2020, Ferhat’s 24th birthday, Serpil Unvar founded the Ferhat Unvar education initiative.

More than 30 young people are now involved in the project. Most of them knew Ferhat personally – from school, from hanging out together, from the city’s bars. “Actually, everyone here in Hanau knew Ferhat. He was a bit like the mayor of the young people here,” says Yildirim, who has a full beard and a deep voice. Since June, the initiative has rented its own rooms in downtown Hanau, 700 meters from one of the attack sites. Starting in November, it will hold anti-racism workshops for schoolchildren, awareness training for teachers, and counseling sessions for parents who need help with translations when dealing with teachers. All of this to combat the very racism that cost their friend Ferhat his life. “It’s peace of mind for every single person who can be involved here,” says Serkan, who coordinates renovations in the new space for the initiative, “to give meaning to the senseless death of a friend, a brother, a family member.” He and Ferhat were in the same class from sixth to 10th grade. The extent of everyday racism they experienced at their Hanau high school is something he only really realizes today, Serkan says.

The greatest threat to our security

Germany has a right-wing extremism problem. According to the latest Mitte study commissioned by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, about two-thirds of Germans say so. No other danger is classified as a risk by so many. And in no other economically rich nation does the population feel as threatened by right-wing terrorism as in Germany, according to the results of a recent survey by the Munich Security Conference. Last year, right-wing extremist crimes reached a new high since they were first recorded in 2001. When German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer presented the statistics in May, he called right-wing extremism “the greatest threat to security in our country.” But what is to be done about it?

“The reality, the sad and hard reality, is simply that at some point it will happen somewhere else, too. And every time I say that, it hurts. But that’s just the reality. 2019 was Halle, 2020 was Hanau. Who knows when the next city will be,” says Ali Yildirim. Whether everyone in Germany can feel equally safe? “Absolutely not.” He adds that involvement in the education initiative is an additional factor of uncertainty for many here. “To be honest, at first I was also afraid to be here. You become a target, so to speak,” says Berivan, who trained as a pediatric nurse at Hanau Hospital. “My parents also said: You have to be careful. Sure, you have to be careful. But it’s just not a reason to say now, okay, I’ll stay out of it,” says the 24-year-old. Her boyfriend Fatih, also active in the education initiative, has already received hate messages on Instagram: “You don’t belong with us. You don’t have to make an effort. This is not your country.”

Yildirim says that apart from kind words, there has been little support from state institutions so far. Up to now the initiative has been financed solely by donations; applications for public funds are in progress. In general, Yildirim would like to see more support, for example, a police patrol visiting the initiative’s premises every day. “But it’s just unfortunately more important that they protect the father of the perpetrator, always be in front of his house and make sure that nothing

happens to him.” Especially when it comes to the issue of racism, Yildirim complains that too many feel too little or are not concerned at all. “But I think racism can affect everyone at some point because it promotes anti-attitudes. That then also creates division in society.” “This division needs to be removed,” adds his friend Maruf. “If Lukas only chills with Tim and Ali only chills with Fatih and there’s never a point of contact, then some people are strangers to you at some point. And strangers, unfortunately, make you afraid.” “Say their names,” Maruf’s T-shirt reads.

Back to Israel. Beit Jala is about a 20-minute drive from Jerusalem, in what is known as Area C of the West Bank. Israelis and Palestinians can meet here relatively easily – in theory, because exchanges are rare. Even more so during a global pandemic, even more so after the recent escalation of violence. Some hesitated before coming to to Jala Jungle Restaurant today. Anger, grief, and fear are still present.

Emuna, a Jewish Israeli from Jerusalem, thinks back to May 11 – the day after the radical Islamist group Hamas fired the first rockets at her city. “People were really scared. My roommates stopped going out of the house. Everything was very, very hectic. Then there were all the WhatsApp messages. And I said to myself, I need to calm down.” She would not tell her parents about what she did next until days later. “They would have killed me

In no other economically rich nation does the population feel as threatened by right-wing terrorism as in Germany

otherwise,” jokes the 26-year-old, who grew up in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. She describes her family as rather right-wing. “I walked over to the Muslim quarter in my neighborhood. I just walked. I had to see face to face that people there actually just want to live their lives too and sell stuff in their stores. After three hours, I came home and thought, Okay, now I’ve calmed down.” Meanwhile, her brother kept watch in a Jewish neighborhood – fearing Arab violence.

All of those at Jala Jungle tonight are former workshop participants in the Tech2Peace initiative. The organization has been bringing together young people from Israel and the Palestinian territories since 2017. Dialogue is not the main focus at all. The initiative attracts people with workshops on programming and app development, promising a start-up mentality. “When I applied to Tech2Peace, I had seen it on Facebook,” says Elias, a Palestinian architecture student. “I didn’t even read that there were Israelis there. The text was way too long. It just said something about the sea and the beach. Okay, cool, I thought, and applied. And then I went and it was the first time I met Israelis.”

Uri Rosenberg founded Tech2Peace, along with another Israeli and a Palestinian. Rosenberg, 44, balding, and wearing a striped shirt, is from Haifa, the coastal city in northern Israel. “The broad mass of Israelis and Palestinians are not interested in dialogue,” he says. “They say, ‘Yeah, if it comes right to my door, then maybe.’ But anyone who isn’t already very moderate and peaceful wouldn’t bother to meet an Israeli or a Palestinian.”

Today, Rosenberg is on his way to a special Tech2Peace workshop, which is a kind of experiment. Around 20 former seminar participants of the initiative are meeting to talk to each other about their experiences in May this year. Sharing perspectives, also giving space to anger, disappointment, and fears. Jewish and Arab Israelis, Palestinians from the West Bank and Jerusalem are here. The potential for conflict is high, Rosenberg says, because opinions about who is friend and who is foe sometimes diverge widely – be-

tween left and right, between Israelis and Palestinians, Jewish and Arab Israelis. “That’s always the elephant in the room. Jewish Israelis see a danger coming from the Arab world, especially from the Palestinians. But that’s not something they like to

“That’s always the elephant in the room.

Jewish Israelis see a danger coming from the Arab world. And at the same time, the Palestinians also feel threatened”

say – even when they’re more right-wing. And at the same time, the Palestinians also feel threatened. They say, ‘When I see a soldier, I’m afraid.’ In turn, the Israelis don’t like that because they were all once soldiers themselves.”

Members of Israel’s Arab population in particular have been puzzled by what has happened this year, Rana says. After all, they account for a good 20 percent of all Israelis. The 26-year-old tells of brutal police violence that she and her friends experienced when they took to the streets in May: “We had enough of the racism here. We wanted to raise our voices. But the reaction of the Jewish majority was, ‘Oh, you want a voice? Sorry, you’re Arabs. We like to come to your restaurant to eat hummus. But you have no right to say anything here.’ That really made us angry.” Hence, Rana says it cost her a great deal of effort to seek out

dialogue with Jewish Israelis again. “There were moments when I felt I couldn’t, on the one hand, talk about the pain I had during the events and, on the other hand, sit together with everyone and have fun on the same evening. That’s why I didn’t turn up a lot. But over time, I’ve come to appreciate that people here have said: You’re right. You have suffered. And we’re sorry for that. It made me feel like I could reveal more of myself. Because they can feel my pain. That felt good.”

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According to a survey by the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) at Tel Aviv University, more than half of Jewish Israelis say their Arab compatriots should be respected but suspected. A quarter even see them as enemies. And that was long before the riots this year. “There is a significant number of people, up to a third of the population, who see Israeli Arabs as enemies. That’s definitely a big obstacle to integration. That’s part of the problem,” says political scientist Meir Elran. He heads the homeland security program at INSS.

But prejudices also exist on the Arab side. Hasan says his father was initially worried his son might befriend the wrong people at Tech2Peace. “He said that they were pushing the normalization of the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. Maybe they’re too left-wing. My mother had no problem with that. She was like, go there, meet new people. And if you don’t like them, you can come back home.” For Hasan, the events of the past few months have triggered a real identity crisis. “I’m very unsure right now who or what I actually am. Israeli or Palestinian?” For years, he says, he tried to be a “good Israeli,” to see himself as part of Israeli society. “But in May, I realized that it doesn’t matter to the Israeli government whether I’m a Palestinian from Jerusalem or an Arab Israeli from Haifa. The violence of the security forces is the same. I just can’t see myself as an Arab Israeli anymore, with the opposition we face everywhere.” And yet, the majority of Arab Israelis see their future in Israel. According to a survey carried out in fall 2020, only 19 percent of the Arab population supported the idea of living in a state under Palestinian leadership. “Israel, with all its faults and with the occupation, is still a democratic country. You can’t really find a democratic Arab country in this region. That is why they know what is best for them,” says conflict researcher Muli Peleg.

Civil society as a corrective

Still, Jewish-Arab relations in Israel are at a crossroads, says Meir Elran of Tel Aviv University. “Overall, the signs pointed toward integration. Then the May riots came and placed a big question mark on that trend.” Can initiatives like Tech2Peace help improve the relationship? “What they’re doing is important. They’re doing good things. But if you ask me about impact, I would say very low,” Elran says. Instead, he says, he hopes the new Israeli government – a broad eight-party coalition – can drive structural change.

And at the same time, it is precisely this independence from party politics and changes in government that unites initiatives in Israel and

Germany. Their goals extend far beyond what seems achievable in one legislative term. “That there is a strong civil society is a characteristic of democracy,” says Derviş Hızarcı, program director of the Alfred Landecker Foundation and former anti-discrimination officer at the Berlin Senate Department for Education, Youth, and Family

Affairs. “A healthy democracy allows for correctives to develop out of civil society as well. And these NGOs are correctives.” It’s not their goal that all people end up agreeing. But that they listen to each other. •

Translated from the German by Robert Olechna

Uniformity and Difference

Questions of identity in Germany's and Israel's
armed forces

An essay by Georg A. Reichel

Many businesses have famous slogans for their brands, from Volkswagen's "Das Auto" to "I'm lovin' it!" used by McDonalds. An army is hardly an ordinary business, so it may be surprising to discover that the German armed forces (the Bundeswehr) has its own snap-py slogan. Since the suspension of compulsory military service in 2011, the Bundeswehr has used the tagline "We. Serve. Germany." But who is the "we" in the slogan? Thomas de Maizière, a former German defense minister, described it like this: "Our 'we' excludes no one. Our 'we' includes everyone who has what it takes and wants to serve with us." In the 1960s, Mr. de Maizière's father, Ulrich de Maizière, served as Inspector-General of the Bundeswehr, a non-descript title adopted

after World War 2 to avoid the militaristic "Chief of Staff." Here he helped to establish the army's core principle of "Innere Führung" (literally "internal leadership," sometimes translated as "leadership development and civic education") and the idea of "citizens in uniform."

Unlike Germany, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continues to use conscription, but its criteria for becoming a soldier are ultimately similar. If an Israeli wants to serve their country, in most cases they will be accepted into the armed forces. Religion, for example, is not a barrier: as former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a forum on recruiting Christians to the IDF: "We are brothers, we are partners – Christians and Jews and Druze and Muslims, defending the state of Israel."



But what kind of personalities serve in these two armed forces? Moreover, can we pinpoint a single model of identity for the IDF or for the Bundeswehr?

Historically, the two armies operate under quite different core principles. In Germany, the refoundation of its national armed forces after the war could only take place with the idea: “Never again war!” The IDF, by contrast, has the mission: “Never again victims!”

The re-establishment of German armed forces after the country was demilitarized following World War 2 led to heated discussions, including on the name of the new armed forces. In 1955, the parliamentary committee on defense argued long and hard about whether the new army should be called the “Wehrmacht” (the name of Germany’s armed forces from 1935 to 1945), the “Reichswehr” (the name from 1919 to 1935), the “Bundeswehr,” or simply the “Armed Forces.” For example, Erich Mende, a parliamentarian for the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) and a former Wehrmacht officer, expressed a very clear position: “The people of the country do not speak of ‘Bundeswehr,’ nor of ‘armed forces,’ a term anyway so foreign it would need to be translated. The people of this country speak of the ‘Wehrmacht’; they talk about ‘the army,’ ‘the navy,’ and ‘the air force.’” The debate was heated because even the name of the proposed force clearly indicated the tradition to which it would pay allegiance, and its future direction. This was among the reasons for the ultimate choice of “Bundeswehr.” The name was intended to mark a clear break with the past, so the reconstituted armed forces could adopt a clear new identity.

However, the identity of an army does not stand still; it is caught in a permanent process of change. This is partly the result of changes within the armed forces themselves – for example, the opening of the force to women – but also responds to more general social change. As a result of such internal and external changes, the Bundeswehr’s identity has continued to evolve since 1955, as the armed forces have adapted to a series of new challenges.

Two years before the formal foundation of the Bundeswehr in 1955, the “Innere Führung” concept was developed by senior officers, above all Generals von Kielmansegg and von Baudissin. The idea meant to lay out a clear identity for the new armed forces, above all making clear that the armed forces should never form a “state within a state.” Instead, the new watchwords would be “citizens in uniform,” and “leadership by mission” (the equivalent of the American “mission command”). Officers and soldiers were to clearly understand

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the limits of orders: never again would “following orders” be an excuse for war crimes. Moreover, soldiers in the early Bundeswehr were very much shaped by the context of the Cold War; they were meant to form part of a defensive army.

The history of the IDF stands in clear contrast. The armed forces of Israel were formed out of pre-state paramilitary groups in the months after the foundation of Israel as a state in 1948. The new armed forces were immediately tested in a war for the state’s very existence. In those earliest days, there was simply no time to reflect on identity, or to formulate a clear strategy on the question. It

was only in 1953 that Israel's first prime minister proposed principles of security and defense that clearly defined the IDF's mission. Israel could in no way afford to lose a war, he emphasized, so the new state must be ready to withstand all possible threats. The country would need adequate reserves to accomplish this, be they economic, political, or military. Then as now, this strategic reserve included a small number of Christian and Muslim volunteers, but was overwhelmingly made up of Jewish conscript soldiers, who have shaped the IDF and its identity ever since. Over the years, the Israeli armed forces have achieved many military successes, which has in turn fostered Israeli society's trust in the IDF. The Israeli military has also produced its own homegrown "heroes," capable of forming an identity, for example, Moshe Dayan, a leading general and later politician.

Create your own role models

By contrast, in the 1950s the new Bundeswehr lacked role models of its own. Ships and barracks were named after individuals from earlier German armed forces, often with dubious records. A naval destroyer was named after Werner Mölders, a World War 2 fighter ace. Army barracks are currently undergoing a gradual renaming process, now often honoring role models from the Bundeswehr's own history. One barracks in Hanover was previously named Emmich Cambrai, jointly commemorating a 19th-century Prussian general and World War 1 tank battle. Now it is named Feldwebel Langenstein Barracks, after a non-commissioned officer killed in Afghanistan.

To create role models in line with the Bundeswehr's values, then-Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt founded two Bundeswehr universities in 1973. Schmidt, who would later become chancellor, had served both in the wartime Wehrmacht and as a captain in the Bundeswehr reserve. The establishment of the two universities led to changed perceptions of the German officer corps. Unlike in many countries, Germany's army universities are not military academies, they are civilian institutions run by the military's human

resources department. Officers graduate with a civilian academic degree, a step meant to increase the attractiveness of the military as a profession, but also to define and develop the concept of "Innere Führung." This includes the deeply rooted principle that every soldier must think for themselves and make decisions according to their conscience. The importance of this is reflected in the importance for today's German armed forces of the attempted July 20, 1944 coup against Hitler. The anti-Nazi resistance of dissident officers, led by Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, is a key date of commemoration in the contemporary army.

For the IDF, Yom HaZikaron is a key date: Israel's Memorial Day, on which soldiers who died in service are remembered. The day – its full title is "Remembrance Day for the Fallen of Israel's Campaigns and Victims of the Acts of Hate" – is marked every year on the eve of Israel's Independence Day. Between the foundation of Israel in 1948 and this year's Yom HaZikaron, 23,928 soldiers have died on active service, fighting for Israel's continued existence. Yom HaZikaron plays a crucial role in Israeli society: without the IDF, the state of Israel would simply not exist, hence Yom HaZikaron's position in the calendar, immediately before the country's Independence Day.

Since 1990, Germany's national holiday has been celebrated on October 3, the date upon which reunification came into effect that year. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the East German state meant that the Bundeswehr became the armed forces for all Germany, becoming known as the "army of unity." During the Cold War, the Bundeswehr had specialized in national defense and supporting the country's NATO allies. Now, the expanded "army of unity" had to quickly become an army able to meet the unified nation's growing international responsibilities. The Bundeswehr had to shift its primary focus from deployment on the Cold War border, now incorporating the new responsibility of missions overseas.

Soldiers must make life or death decisions in highly complex situations. These scenarios are

practiced in maneuvers and training situations so that, if the worst comes to the worst, soldiers will automatically do the “right thing,” including with respect to international law. Nonetheless, there can be specific actions and decisions made by soldiers that trigger wider social debate. When this happens, individual soldiers in uniform can suddenly have their identities made public, becoming figures subject to judgment by society at large.

In Germany, this kind of debate was triggered by a 2009 air raid near Kunduz in Afghanistan. Colonel Georg Klein, a German officer serving with the NATO mission, ordered the bombing of two gasoline trucks, resulting in around 100 civilian casualties. The incident led to criticism of the Bundeswehr’s participation in the mission, and new questions about the legality of deployments outside Germany. The legal ramifications of the incident continued for many years, only concluding this year when a case brought by the father of two children killed in the attack came before the European Court of Human Rights. In February, the Strasbourg-based court ruled that Klein, on the basis of the information he had, could not have been aware of the risk of civilian victims. He was thus judged to have acted correctly under international law. For many Germans, it was difficult to understand why dropping bombs on gasoline tankers, leading to many civilian victims, could not be successfully subject to legal challenge.

A comparable incident took place in Israel during what was known as the “knife intifada” in March 2016. Elor Azaria, an IDF soldier serving as a medical orderly, was involved in the killing of Abdel Fattah al-Sharif, a Palestinian who had stabbed an Israeli soldier, but who was bound and unarmed at the time he died. In parts of Israeli society, there was no question that Azaria had behaved lawfully and that he should not be convicted by a military court. For many, there were fears that a successful prosecution of the soldier could weaken the Israeli military. Nonetheless, Azaria was convicted and served a total of nine months in prison.

The cases revealed how perceptions of soldiers can differ markedly in the two countries. In one, soldiers are celebrated as heroic figures. In the other, they are subject to fierce criticism. Nonetheless, Colonel Klein was promoted to Brigadier General and now serves as Head of Operations in the Bundeswehr’s Joint Support Service Command, while the Azaria case led the IDF to introduce a four-day program called “Desert Journey” in their NCO school. Here, potential officers can thoroughly learn and reflect on the army’s moral standards. The move was intended to encourage soldiers to adopt an identity based on moral principles. However, it is questionable if the IDF can still be referred to as the “most moral army in the world,” a claim repeated by then Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman in 2018.

With their uniforms and hierarchies, militaries are often regarded as lacking in diversity. But an army is, by and large, a reflection of society. At least in theory, this automatically lends any national military a measure of diversity. One particular feature of the IDF is that, since its foundation, its ranks have been filled by compulsory military service for women, albeit for a shorter period than men. By contrast, until 2001, women in the Bundeswehr could only serve in the medical corps or a military band. Since then, the German armed forces have striven to increase the proportion of woman in its ranks.

Freedom, discipline, duty

But an army achieves a diverse identity through the variety of cultures of those who serve, not just the presence of women. Culture includes religious identity: almost 50 percent of Germany’s armed forces are Christian, around 2 percent Muslim, and 0.2 percent Jewish. The remainder have no religion. The IDF contains soldiers from several religious minorities, including Druze, Circassians, Christians, and Muslims. Both armies employ military chaplains, intended to provide soldiers with emotional support. As of this year, after 1,700 years of Jewish life in the country, the Bundeswehr once again has a military rabbinate, with Jewish

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chaplains appointed to take care of its roughly 300 Jewish soldiers, giving life lessons to prepare them for ethical and moral challenges. While there appears to be a desire to introduce equivalent Islamic pastoral care, so far there have been no concrete steps in that direction.

Diversity also means strengthening the rights of LGBTQ people within the armed forces. Both the IDF and the Bundeswehr have experienced discrimination against LGBTQ people, but this is gradually being tackled, allowing LGBTQ people to get on with their job as military professionals, a change for the better within both armed forces. Beginning in 2021, compensation can be paid to members of the German military who were dismissed or not promoted because of their homosexuality.

Moreover, the Israeli military has another identity, unlike that of any other army. The IDF employs soldiers with special needs, ranging from young people with autism, to volunteers with learning disorders and physical disabilities. Mainly deployed within logistics units, these soldiers are supported by the “Special in Uniform” program, lending the Israeli military an even more diverse identity.

Of course, both armed forces also include those that hold undesirable philosophies and

viewpoints within their ranks. In recent years, the Bundeswehr has faced a number of incidents of extreme right-wing behavior. The IDF has had related if not entirely comparable problems, underlining the fact that armed forces cannot be tolerant of all identities and viewpoints.

The Bundeswehr has struggled with right-wing extremism among its service members. There have been particularly serious incidents within the army’s elite special forces regiment. Here, repeated occurrences of right-wing extremism since 2017 led to the dissolution of an entire company in 2020. In addition, this year, a German infantry platoon serving with NATO in Lithuania was sent home after it emerged that some of its soldiers had sung a song to mark Adolf Hitler’s birthday. The incident led to two soldiers being dishonorably discharged from the force.

For its part, the IDF has had difficulties with ultra-Orthodox Jews who, if they serve at all, have repeatedly refused orders on religious grounds, endangering military discipline. Thus, for example, some nationalist-Orthodox soldiers have been known to leave rooms when women are singing. In 2011, several cadets walked out of an official ceremony during an officer training course, claiming their interpretation of religious law did not allow them to hear women singing. When an officer ordered them to re-enter the room, nine refused and faced disciplinary action, with four cadets forced to leave the course. The incident led to a heated debate within Israeli society about the limits of religious freedom under military discipline.

Comparing identity issues in the IDF and the Bundeswehr reveals that while armies may literally have a uniform appearance, in reality they consist of many different identities. All, however, have one thing in common – a desire to serve their country. As the French writer Albert Camus once put it: “Freedom does not primarily consist of privileges, but of obligations.” Soldiers of both armed forces recognize a duty to serve their country and defend democratic freedoms, regardless of specific identities. •

Translated from the German by Brian Hanrahan

The Hipster Prime Minister

Naftali Bennett's defeat of Benjamin Netanyahu marked the triumph of religious nationalism in Israel, putting the country's democracy to the test.

An essay by Isabel Weiss

In Israel's 2015 general election, Naftali Bennett, leader of the HaBayt HaYehudi ("Jewish Home") party, primarily representing settlers on the West Bank, sought to give his shopworn religious-nationalist bloc a more modern touch. With this in mind, one election video featured Bennett as a caricature of a hipster, parodying liberal Tel Aviv leftists. The video closed with the blunt message: "I will never allow a single grain of the Land of Israel to be ceded to the Arabs."

Six years later, Bennett suddenly emerged as a key figure in Israel's fourth parliamentary election in two years. One side of the election was dominated by Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing Likud party, yet again the country's strongest electoral force. Bennett had held various ministerial

posts under Netanyahu between 2013 and 2019. In 2021, he could have backed Netanyahu as prime minister in a right-wing government including religious and ultra-orthodox parties, with various offices occupied in rotation by different parties.

However, the other side was also offering this kind of arrangement. Yair Lapid, leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, also offered to rotate with Bennett as prime minister, as head of a possible eight-party heterogeneous coalition. Shortly before, Bennett had ostentatiously signed a document on television, solemnly promising to never help Lapid become prime minister. Now, two months later, he had decided to ally with Lapid after all. In this way, Bennett wrote Israeli history in June 2021, leading an unusual coalition extend-



ing from the left to the nationalist right. For the first time ever, a governing coalition would also include an Arab party. The immediate result of Bennett's unorthodox strategy was the unceremonious ouster of Netanyahu – Israel's longest-serving prime minister – as head of government.

Bennett's arrival in power also marks the arrival of religious-nationalist parties – once marginal-

Naftali Bennett has given a new, modern face to religious-nationalist political parties. But it should not be forgotten that he is actually more right-wing than his predecessor

ized – at the very heart of society. Israel's European founding elite insisted on universalism, but over the decades this has increasingly given way to particularist viewpoints. This transformation of Israeli society has had an impact on the country's democratic character, on its political balance of power, and on its foreign and defense policies.

Young, rich, modern, Orthodox

Naftali Bennett has given a new, modern face to religious-nationalist political parties. The self-made tech millionaire lives in a chic part of Tel Aviv rather than a West Bank settlement, home to most of his core electorate. The child of American immigrants, Bennett spent part of his childhood in the United States, before going on to serve in various elite units of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). At the age of 29, he founded the US-based software company, Cyota, which would eventually make him a very wealthy man.

He eventually embarked on a political career, entering at a very high level, as Netanyahu's chief of staff. However, he abruptly quit after two years; Netanyahu's influential wife Sarah is thought to have been a key figure in his rift with the prime minister. Bennett then became the leader of the Yehsha Council, an umbrella organization for Jewish settlements. The organization campaigns to build more settlements on the West Bank, the biblical heartland which many in Israel refer to as "Judea and Samaria."

In 2018 Bennett left the "Jewish Home" settler party to found New Right, a new political organization he co-led with his fellow right-winger Ayelet Shaked. The plan was to appeal to secular and nationalist elements on the right of the political spectrum, in addition to their core religious vote. There has been much euphoria about the post-Netanyahu government's heterogeneity, but it should not be forgotten that Bennett himself is actually more right-wing than his predecessor. Like Netanyahu, Bennett is basically a pragmatic politician, but he has firmly established views about the West Bank. For his electorate, these solid beliefs give him a fundamental reliability.

Bennett believes 60 percent of the West Bank should remain under permanent Israeli rule, "to safeguard national interests," a view he reiterated in his first speech as prime minister and self-appointed spokesperson for Israel's right-wing. In comparison, the "Deal of the Century" negotiated by former US President Donald Trump in 2020 had 30 percent of the West Bank under permanent Is-

“The dividing line between left and right in Israel is almost exclusively determined by attitudes to the Palestinian question”

raeli sovereignty, a figure that delighted Netanyahu while causing outrage inside and outside Israel.

An ideological split

In religious terms, Bennett identifies as modern Orthodox. Unlike German or US society, Jewish society in Israel can be divided into four main identity groups, largely distinguishable in terms of religious beliefs and practices: Hilonim (secular), Masortim (traditional), Datim (modern Orthodox), and Haredim (ultra-Orthodox).

“Religious Divided Society,” a 2016 study by the Pew Research Center, showed that these groups’ structures of identity are closely linked to their ideological and political orientation. German media rarely reports on the details about the two major fault-lines in Israeli politics: first, security policy in the autonomous Palestinian territories in the West Bank, and second, relations between religion and the state.

In an interview I conducted with Yossi Kuperwasser, a security expert at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, he stressed that: “The dividing line between left and right in Israel is almost exclusively determined by attitudes to the Palestinian question.” Nonetheless, the role of religion in the state should not be underestimated. About

50 percent of Israeli society identifies as secular and broadly left-wing; however, on the right of the political spectrum, a stronger role is played by religion and by religious aspects of Jewish identity.

Group identity on these questions closely correlates to party political preferences and to attitudes toward the West Bank. To understand Israeli politics, we have to bear in mind regional and cultural contexts, rather than simply applying “left” and “right” as used elsewhere (as is sometimes done in the German media).

Modern Orthodox

Bennett’s core electorate is a religious-nationalist one, drawn from the ranks of the modern Orthodox, the Datim, a word which translates roughly as “the religious.” According to the Pew study, 10 to 20 percent of Israelis identify as Datim. Modern Orthodox Israelis tend to be the strongest supporters of new settlements in Palestinian areas, outstripping the secular, traditional, and ultra-Orthodox demographics.

Unsurprisingly, religious settlers make up the majority of the modern Orthodox group. Overall, Jewish residents of the West Bank are much more religious than the Jewish population of Israel proper. The majority of Jews in the West Bank are either modern Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox, believing that God granted the entire land of biblical Israel to the Jewish people. However, despite their frequent references to the past, Bennett’s voters are a modern and heterogeneous movement. The mix of religious and national elements in his messaging has appeal beyond religious Jews, reaching out to secularists and traditionalists who believe in expanding Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank.

Religious-nationalist Zionism

Unlike today, religious nationalist movements played only a minor role in the early decades of Israel’s history. Political parties were dominated by European secular elites; for them, religion had cultural significance, rather than political.

However, after the Six Day War in 1967, religious-nationalist politics began to grow. The reach

of its ideology expanded, while popular support for the left-wing governing parties began to erode. Religious-nationalist Zionism must thus be understood as an expression of modernity, rather than old-fashioned traditionalism. Unlike isolated ultra-Orthodox communities, religious-nationalist cohorts participate in higher education and in the labor market. Significantly, they are actively involved in the military and form a key socio-economic sector. From the very start, religious-nationalist Israelis have relied on close integration with the mainstream of Israeli society.

Religious-nationalist Zionists reject ultra-Orthodox demands that Jews should passively await the return of the Messiah. Instead, they seek to actively shape their own future. This kind of Zionism has a religious basis for its demands for Jewish national sovereignty. From a religious-nationalist perspective, the creation of a Jewish state in all of biblical Israel is the prerequisite for the coming of the Messiah. To this end, the Jewish people must actively colonize Eretz Israel, the biblical and historical heartland, including the West Bank.

Over the years, above all in recent years, Israel's religious-nationalist camp has become an important social and political factor, with secular Israelis also coming under the influence of its core values and convictions. This growing importance means religious-nationalist Zionism is well on the way to replacing right-wing secularism as the key driver of Israeli politics. This development has, in turn, influenced the nature of Israel's democracy. Democracy has not been rejected per se. However, there is now a much wider range of interpretations of what it means to live in a democratic state.

The majority of Israel's Jewish population, secular and religious, agree that the country can simultaneously be a democracy and a Jewish state. Nevertheless, there is wide variety in how this is understood, and in its practical implementation. The meaning of democracy is open to debate when, for example, democratic decision-making clashes with Jewish law. When this point is reached – as it occurred before – there can be disagreement between the secular and religious elements of so-

Israel's religious-nationalist camp has become an important social and political factor, also influencing secular Israelis

ciety. This too is documented by the Pew Research Center survey. The vast majority of secular Jews grant precedence to democratic principles, ahead of religious law. But a similarly large proportion of modern Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox give religious law greater priority than democratic values.

Faith and military service

In recent years, tensions between these value systems have become increasingly apparent in Israel's military. There are now significantly more religious-nationalist soldiers serving in the army, especially in combat units and officer training courses, as Israeli military spokesman Arye Shalimar confirmed in an interview. "In the past, elite fighters often came from the kibbutzim, that is, from a left-wing liberal environment. Today, many combat soldiers and officers wear a kippah and come from settlements in the West Bank."

This demographic shift poses new challenges for the cultural and social norms of the armed forces. In the early years of the state, nearly all Jewish Israelis served in the army. As the security situation stabilized, religious-nationalist rabbis attempted to find a way to reconcile religious study

with military service. Since the army and the cultural norms of the time were largely secular, the alternative program was meant to offer a compromise between the secular and religious worlds, while making military service more attractive for religious-nationalist soldiers.

Since 1965, religious schools (Yeshivot Hesder) have cooperated with the army in a program facilitating compulsory military service for religious soldiers. This allows young men to pursue Torah studies while completing training in military units. For the army, this offered a way to integrate the young generation of religious-nationalist Jews, while also fulfilling recruitment needs.

However, this kind of integration can be dangerous, above all when conflicts occur between the religious authority, on the one hand, and that of the military and the state, on the other. “Previously, there were situations whereby young officers were confused as to which was the higher authority: the rules of the army or the judgment of a rabbi outside the military. It can be a difficult situation when a rabbi issues different instructions than an army commander. The army has to work hard against this,” Shalimar added. An army can have only one line of authority: “Whether the person wears a kippah or not, no military or security force can have alternative orders issued to its members from an outside party.”

Conflict of this kind has arisen in relation to state-ordered evacuations of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. For religious-nationalist Jews, military service also has an additional, religious meaning. Today’s religious-nationalist settler movement holds that the Messiah will appear only when the Jewish state controls the entire territory of biblical Israel, lending settlement building an additional, religious imperative. But it also means secular command structures in the army can conflict with religious commands, as represented by rabbinic authority. Legitimate concerns have been raised that, in an emergency, religious influence could undermine state structures.

Equality for women and the LGBTQI community is another area where more liberal military values

clash with conservative religious ones. Since the 1990s, the army has increasingly sought to integrate women into all areas of the military. Today’s military units tend to be far more heterogeneous than in the past.

Pnina Shavit Baruch, formerly an Israeli army staff officer, is now a researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv. She offered insight into the tensions between religion and secularism in the military: “In the past, most women in the army worked in civil professions, as lawyers or doctors, for example. But today, women

“No military or security force can have alternative orders issued to its members from an outside party”

serve in combat units of all kinds, and can even train as fighter pilots. There are more women than before, especially in areas where men and women work together closely. But on the other hand, the number of religious soldiers is also growing. They are more conservative and more extreme in their refusal to work closely with women.”

Strict interpretations of Jewish religious law forbid close contact between the sexes. Religious soldiers might even refuse to accept high-ranking women with authority to give orders. In this way,

women's equality can clash with restrictive interpretations of religious law.

Israel's armed forces depend on successfully integrating various social groups with different modes of identification. The growing openness of the military can help to reduce social divisions. An increasing numbers of Druze serve in the military, and to a lesser degree Arab Christians and Muslims.

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This growing pluralism, however, also puts new demands on the military. Conflicts of interest between identity groups can affect the entire structure of the security forces.

Universalism meets particularism

Israel's founding fathers, shaped by European experience, stood for universalist principles. The nation state, which emerged historically from the

French and American revolutions, replaced traditional social forms and particularist values. In this spirit, Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, wanted to see Israel homogenized according to European principles, hoping this could be a force to hold the new state and its multicultural society together. Religious communities were barely heard in this debate.

Today, however, once-marginalized religious voices are far more present in the public sphere, representing their interests and upholding their beliefs within the political and social structures of the democratic state. On the one hand, this reveals the ideological fragmentation of Israeli society. On the other hand, the fact that very different groups can participate in the political process is a testament to Israel's strong democratic foundation.

Change within Israel's elite

Change within Israel's political elite is forcing universalist and particularist standpoints to negotiate with each other. The crisis in which Israel finds itself – along with a number of other liberal democratic states – also reveals more general tensions between tradition and Western modernity. Frequently, it remains unclear how democratic states will deal with this.

Above all, the increasing popularity of particularist movements and interest groups, which look to shake the pillars of established democratic structures, poses serious challenges for the liberal state. In the past, Bennett's New Right party has repeatedly tried to restrict the powers of the Supreme Court to exercise greater political control. Now led by former Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, the party continues to campaign for the appointment of conservative judges who will be sympathetic to religious-nationalist beliefs, thus weakening older state structures. In June 2021, Bennett appointed Shaked as the country's new interior minister.

The crisis of the democratic state can be seen as a process of negotiation between established elites and formerly marginalized groups that no longer accept the status quo and want to change social and political power structures. Moreover, perhaps

unsurprisingly, growing anti-Semitism around the world, including attacks on synagogues, has resulted in a growing proportion of Israelis believing in the importance of Jewish identity, with calls for greater emphasis on the Jewish character of the state.

The return to particularist identity seems to offer more security than the left's pluralistic

ideas. Israel's new coalition, with Bennett as prime minister, nonetheless reflects the heterogeneity of Israeli society and is ultimately an expression of its functioning democracy. It remains to be seen whether Bennett, in his role as right-wing hipster, can find support among the left-liberal mainstream. Nowadays, nothing is impossible. •

Translated from the German by Brían Hanrahan

Coded Rejection and Open Hate

Anti-Semitic resentment in new far-right groups
in Germany and the United States

An essay by Lena Voelk

Arson attacks, violent attacks, and death threats. For Jews, this is still part of living in Germany even in 2021. Two years ago, during the high Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, the heavily armed right-wing extremist Stephan B. attempted to force his way in a synagogue in Halle, in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt. He failed to break through the massive doors of the synagogue and instead shot two people out front and fired into a nearby restaurant. Germany currently has a “dramatic anti-Semitic problem,” noted cultural studies scholar Aleida Assmann in a recently published essay. Yet it’s not just in Germany that anti-Semitic incidents are frequent occurrences. For Jews in the United States it’s also a part of everyday life. Only 11 months separat-

ed the two attacks on synagogues in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Poway, California, in which 12 people lost their lives.

And those are only a few of the many anti-Semitic attacks that have occurred in the past few years. What these incidents have in common, aside from the motive of Jewish hate, is the ideological orientation of the perpetrators. They were all followers of alt-right or neo-right ideologies and conspiracy theories. That doesn’t seem surprising when one looks at the statistics compiled by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a US organization that fights anti-Semitism. According to their findings, extreme right organizations are by far the most violent group among political extremist groups in the US.



Proud boys and the “Identitarian” movement

In the past few months, left-wing and Muslim anti-Semitism have been attracting the most attention, particularly in connection to the escalation in the Middle East conflict in May. It may give the impression that left-wing anti-Semitism is on the rise. Nevertheless, right-wing anti-Semitism must not be forgotten. The Shoah demonstrated that this phenomenon can carry an explicit brutality and ability to assert itself. In this text, right-wing extremism is understood as a collective term for a non-homogeneous group based on politically extreme opinions that are on the extreme end of the political spectrum.

In the US, too, supporters of right-wing extremist groups repeatedly attract attention for their anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli statements. Here, the spectrum of opinions on the state of Israel is much broader, ranging from openly propagated hatred of Israel to statements that Israel should be protected from Muslims. Yet despite all the differences in approach, they all ultimately pursue the same goal: a degradation of the other and a valorization of one's own group, as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer already described more than 70 years ago.

Right-wing extremists in Germany, mostly because of the social narrative of responsibility for the Holocaust, make use of a much less obviously recognizable anti-Semitism than is the case in the United States. However, this only belies the anti-Semitic content of many statements at first glance.

In order to examine this phenomenon more closely, the following section compares statements by the extreme-right Proud Boys from the US and the Identitarian movement in Germany. The Identitarian movement is monitored by Germany's domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, in several states and has been listed in the category “firmly right-wing extremist” since 2019. In doing so, this article analyzes the various approaches to storytelling through which new-right groups justify, mitigate, and exploit anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism at a

political level.

Fundamental differentiation from the “other”

One of the bogeymen against which the Identitarian movement appeals, is the Muslim infiltration of the Christian West (the Occident). In this respect, support for Israel would be a logical consequence of a simple friend-foe theory, according to Carl Schmitt. However, the ideology of the Identitarian movement is more comprehensive. It is not just about fear of Muslim immigrants, but about a very fundamental differentiation from the “other.” The adherents of this ideology see German culture as being in danger as soon as it is exposed to other influences. The “recovery of our historical, ethnic, and cultural identity,” as the Identitarian movement postulates on its website, is necessary to protect Germany from “self-inflicted Islamization,” they say.

This is not about “Islam, it's not about Israel, it's not about the ‘West,’ the ‘Enlightenment,’ religious freedom, the pork schnitzel in the cafeteria and the bare-breasted, unveiled pin-ups in the daily newspaper,” the Identitarian movement stated in a 2017 article. After activists from the “Center for Political Beauty” erected a replica of the Holocaust memorial in front of the home of a politician from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the

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Identitarian movement described Philipp Ruch, the initiator of the action, in a Facebook post as the “high priest of the German Federal ‘Holocaust religion.’” In addition, the Identitarian Movement Germany shared a video of Martin Sellner, the head of its Austrian sister organization, giving tips on how to “free yourself from this sick civil-religious cult.”

Götz Kubitschek, a alt-right activist who is considered the head of the Identitarian movement, also publishes anti-Semitic articles time and again in his right-wing theory magazine Sezession. There is talk of “Project Israel,” the “apartheid state,” and the “heavily Jewish-occupied” Biden administration. Numerous articles in the magazine spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and prejudices and seek to back them up with quotes from supposed experts. In its purest form, this modern form of völkisch ideology aims at an ethnically and culturally homogeneous state. As part of its self-image, the fear of an infiltration of “white” German society by non-white immigrants plays a particularly important role.

Anti-Semitism after Auschwitz

In most cases, the Identitarian movement conspicuously avoids open confessions of National Socialism and anti-Semitism. This gives anti-Semitism within the movement a new and different quality that makes it particularly dangerous. Typical for this veiled subtype of structural anti-Semitism, which is also referred to as “anti-Semitism after Auschwitz,” is the call to draw a “line” under the “culture of guilt” in Germany and to be allowed to criticize Israel. This criticism is often generalized; rather than calling for a different policy or a change of government, it outright questions the Jewish state’s right to exist.

According to the Identitarian movement, a confrontation with the Nazi past should only take place in silence, because the public preaching of “heresy,” as Martin Sellner calls it, would be a continuation of Nazi crimes, in Sellner’s words, an “ethnocide.” The only solution, therefore, would be to turn against the perpetrator, or in other words – against Israel, “the Jews,” and America.

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It is important to emphasize that these views are not openly expressed. In anti-Semitism research, this is referred to as “coded anti-Semitism” – an anti-Semitism that is not explicit, but makes it clear to everyone what the actual content behind the statement is. In this way, the Identitarian movement appeals in particular to young people with a high level of education, and its anti-Semitic statements, which are not always immediately recognizable, make it relatable even outside the far-right spectrum. Historian Bernd Marin calls this “anti-Semitism without anti-Semites,” because many statements do not need to be made to convey the message to like-minded people.

In addition to coded anti-Semitism, the group makes particular use of “secondary anti-Semitism.” This exclusively German variant of anti-Semitism is distinguished from other forms of hostility toward Jews primarily by guilt projection, perpetrator-victim reversal, and guilt defense. In the sense of “exonerating the German people,” this is accompanied by a failure to acknowledge guilt after the Holocaust, or, as psychoanalyst Zvi Rex puts it, “The Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz.”

Secondary anti-Semitism can thus be described

as anti-Semitism because of, rather than in spite of, the Holocaust. In concrete terms, secondary anti-Semitism manifests itself in Holocaust denial or relativization, for example. However, it also includes a weariness of having to deal with the Holocaust and the aforementioned call to draw a “line” under the culture of remembrance, as well as the accusation that Jews profit from the Nazi past or even harbor a “Jewish vindictiveness.”

The attempt to distance themselves from classic Holocaust denial often ends with new right-wing groups adopting a new strategy: relativizing or trivializing the crimes. In this context, distancing oneself from the denial of the Holocaust can be understood as a purely tactical calculation. Thus, new-right groups such as the Identitarian movement see “the Germans” as the true victims of the crimes of National Socialism. They consider the Allies as an occupying power that aimed to weaken the German people after the war. Including the feeling of not being able to criticise Israel because of social conventions. And that by suppressing this criticism, freedom of expression is curtailed.

Another characteristic of the Identitarian movement is its denial of the existence of anti-Semitism internally. Martin Sellner, for example, stated in an interview that people who “become extremist or become racist or become anti-Semitic have [...] no place at all in the Identitarian movement [...] and are also not welcome here.” The self-image of the Identitarian movement as a “normal” political movement manifests itself in its tactic of picking up on statements by elected politicians and augmenting them with clear opinion-making and warnings of an “Islamization of the Occident” in order to stir up fear and insecurity in the society.

Against the American universalism

The Identitarian movement maintains contacts with right-wing groups in the US, but this repeatedly brings it into ideological conflict. After all, it fundamentally opposes globalization as the driving force behind an alleged loss of German and European identity – a universalism for which America is symbolic.

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The Identitarian movement’s treatment of the state of Israel is similar. Scholars describe this as a form of “ethnopluralist anti-Zionism.” Thus, if it were up to the Identitarians, establishing a separate state for Jews and Muslims would ensure that they would not mix. And as long as Israel does not speak out in favor of such a solution, let alone recognize a Palestinian state, the Jewish state acts as the sole aggressor for the Identitarians. These aggressions also promote migration to Europe – and thus prepare the ground for one of the main dangers. Moreover, Israel is seen by the Identitarian movement as the closest ally and satellite state of the United States in its “neocolonial” activities in the Middle East, as French journalist and author Guillaume Faye notes.

How close anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are within the Identitarian movement becomes clear when analysing the notion of American capitalism within the movement. An artificial connection between the “cult of guilt,” the supposed loss of German identity, and the “immigration problem” fostered by US and Jewish machinations is among the driving forces for the Identitarian movement. Thus, the Identitarians see the Holocaust as an experience that forced the German people into a non-identity and stigmatizes feelings such as patriotism and pride.

One anti-Semitic statement after another

Pride and patriotism are no outlandish feelings for the Proud Boys in the US – as their choice of name goes to show. The far-right group also gained notoriety outside the United States in 2020 with then US President Donald Trump’s call: “Proud Boys – stand back and stand by.” Founded as recently as 2016 by Vice media outlet co-founder Gavin McInnes and others, the all-male group defines itself as “alt-right” and is known for its anti-migrant and anti-Muslim orientation, as well as its penchant for conspiracy theories.

McInnes himself left the organization back in 2017. Several members of the Proud Boys are alleged to have been involved in the storming of

anti-Semitic neo-Nazis in the past. Although it is methodologically problematic to draw a conclusion from individuals to the Proud Boys’ attitude towards Israel and Jews to the group as a whole, the large number of outbursts by individuals suggests a deeper ideology driven by identity politics.

In this context, the deliberate use of contradictory statements is part of the Proud Boys’ strategy. For example, after a visit to Israel, McInnes posted a video, since deleted from YouTube, titled “10 things I hate about the Jews,” in which he made one anti-Semitic statement after another, including that Jews have a “whiny paranoid fear of Nazis.” McInnes has repeatedly claimed that he does not want to deny the Holocaust. Yet he also made a statement claiming that there were “much less than six million and they starved to death and were not gassed.” In addition, he accused the Jews under Stalin of being to blame for the starvation of millions of Ukrainians.

As if such statements and the lack of dissociation were not indicative enough, a photo taken in Washington last year also made a splash. It shows a man wearing a cap with the Proud Boys logo, surrounded by Proud Boys members. The man is wearing a T-shirt with the words “6MWE,” which stands for “6 Million Wasn’t Enough” – a reference to the Holocaust.

Through actions and incidents like this, the group has now developed into a brand of its own and is firmly established on the right-wing and far-right scene. The Proud Boys’ self-description as “Western chauvinists” and their role within the alt-right are important in understanding their relationship to Israel. However, Enrique Tarrio, the current leader of the Proud Boys has managed to present the group to the outside world as diverse and to conceal the group’s overt anti-Semitism, racism, and hostility toward Muslims at key moments.

But the fact that its members are so often conspicuous is putting a dent in Tarrio’s strategy. At a pro-Trump event in Washington, for example, members of the Proud Boys repeatedly called counter-demonstrators “Fucking Jews.” In the fall

The Proud Boys’ self-description as “Western chauvin- ists” and their role within the alt-right are important in understanding their relationship to Israel

the Capitol and some are classified as terrorists in Canada. Individual members, including McInnes himself, have repeatedly attracted attention for anti-Semitic statements. According to the Anti-Defamation League, the group’s ideology is not fundamentally anti-Semitic, but members have often failed to distance themselves from openly

of 2020, Proud Boys member Kyle Chapman proclaimed, among other things, that “we will confront the Zionist criminals who want to destroy our civilization.” While the attempted coup within the organization failed, this example illustrates the actual mindset of many members. Chapman also proposed a name change to “Proud Goys” (Goy is a word originally from Hebrew, which in Yiddish and in this context mostly refers to non-Jews). While this attempt failed, it once again revealed the open anti-Semitism in the group.

Untrustworthy distancing

So how do the approaches to anti-Semitism in the German section of the Identitarian movement and the Proud Boys differ? It is clear that the Identitarian movement primarily uses coded anti-Semitism and that its members are less likely to make

as anti-Semitic is that of drawing a “line” under the “German cult of guilt” after the Holocaust. The less obviously expressed anti-Semitism of the Identitarian movement can be attributed, at least in part, to Germany’s role during the Holocaust and the resulting laws and societal boundaries.

In contrast, anti-Semitism is much more openly expressed by the Proud Boys. In recent years, for example, members have repeatedly been called out for statements that relativize the Holocaust. The lack of dissociation from anti-Semites like Kyle Chapman is also symptomatic of the anti-Jewish attitude of the alt-right group. It is true that both the Identitarians and the Proud Boys have spoken out against anti-Semitism in the past when confronted with it. But this can hardly be set off against the anti-Semitic statements – especially since the credibility has to be questioned.

The less obviously expressed anti-Semitism of the Identitarian movement can be attributed, at least in part, to Germany’s role during the Holocaust

America and Israel

The Identitarian movement’s attitude toward Israel is primarily based on anti-Americanism and a link between the state of Israel and the United States. In addition, the immigration of Muslims plays an important role for the Identitarians. However, there is still no clear position on the Jewish state within the Identitarian movement. Occasionally, Israel is blamed as the trigger for the refugee crisis, or even suspected of being behind a larger plan of “replacement migration.”

The Proud Boys have an equally ambivalent attitude toward the state of Israel. It is noticeable that the group is willing to make pro-Israel statements as long as they can score points against their political opponents on the left. However, it appears that pro-Israel statements are often more driven by opportunism rather than by an actual recognition of the state. Equally clearly anti-Zionist statements are made, referring, for example, to a Jewish world conspiracy and too much influence of Jewish politicians.

At the same time, the Proud Boys have repeatedly presented themselves as protectors of Jews, for example at a pro-Israel demonstration in Detroit, where members of the Proud Boys held placards

overtly anti-Semitic statements. Unlike the Proud Boys, the Identitarian movement aims to appeal primarily to young people with a high level of education. A central demand that can be classified

with inscriptions such as “Anti-Semitic leftists, go home! Proud to defend Jews!” This ambivalence makes a clear classification difficult.

Thus, it can be argued that the forms of storytelling, especially with regard to the coding of anti-Semitic statements, definitely differ in the Identitarian movement and in the Proud Boys. The initial stance is also different due to the different histories of the two countries. However, the end result in both cases is a clearly anti-Jewish attitude. This is a danger that should not be underestimated in either country.

Thus, the danger posed by coded anti-Semitism can only be banished by raising society’s aware-

ness of these forms of anti-Semitism and help them decode the actual messages behind them. Educational work on decoding is essential if one wants to counter the new right-wing extremism as practiced by the Identitarian movement. Moreover, the responsibility that unites the post-war generations should be characterized by a proactive politics of remembrance of the Shoah. It is clear that the latest developments show that even more than 75 years after the Shoah, neither German nor American society have succeeded in eradicating this deeply inhuman ideology. •

Translated from the German by Robert Olechna

Yearning for Re-enchantment

Political theology in the United States, Israel,
and Germany

An essay by Jakob Flemming

New Year's Eve, Poland, 1999. Anne Applebaum is celebrating with a group of friends. Mostly well-off and conservative, they are looking forward to the new century with optimism. The flipside of communism's defeat, still recent, is the victory of liberal democracy. However, some 20 years later, there are deep rifts dividing the people who celebrated together that New Year's Eve. Some support the right-wing populist Law and Justice Party (PiS,) which has ruled Poland since 2015. Others, including Applebaum – an American who is also a Polish citizen and has lived in the country for many years – view it as an authoritarian party, part of a right-wing revolt against liberal democracy. Personal friends and political allies have become bitter enemies.

This profound fissure, described by Applebaum in her latest book, “Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism,” has not only torn apart friends who gathered at her New Year's Eve soirée. Nor is the fissure only present in Polish society. In fact, it is a symptom of a growing authoritarianism in all Western societies, which is putting liberal democracy and its cohesion to the test.

Applebaum is a historian and journalist who was once regarded as “neoconservative.” But that was back when there was still a US conservatism that supported American exceptionalism and took pride in exporting its achievements, including democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. In the 1990s she wrote for prominent neoconservative



magazines, including the Spectator and the Weekly Standard and was awarded a fellowship at the American Enterprise Institute, a neoconservative flagship. The “neocons” – architects of the hated “forever wars” – are seen with hostility on both the left and right, an unsurprising standpoint given the growing isolationism on both ends of the political spectrum. There is a particular loneliness suffered by neoconservatives who did not jump on the MAGA bandwagon, who now often find themselves as isolated “Never Trumpers” on the US right.

Applebaum’s 1999 anecdote highlights the new political climate emerging in Poland and beyond. In this climate, there can be no civilized arguments or consensus formation, in the liberal-democratic discursive tradition. Political opponents are regarded only as existential enemies, who must be fought bitterly. In “Twilight of Democracy,” Applebaum’s analyses this in Poland, but also in Hungary, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Notwithstanding the four countries’ different histories, cultures, and political systems, Applebaum discerns amazingly similar right-wing authoritarian movements occurring in parallel. In Poland, the PiS has been working to hollow out the rule of law since 2015. In Hungary, the Fidesz government has been abolishing minority rights since it came to power in 2010. In Britain, the campaign to exit the European Union was successful in 2016, while in the United States, four years of President Donald Trump have left the idea of free and fair elections hanging in the balance.

As Applebaum sees it, all four cases have something in common – in each country, the rise of authoritarianism has been fueled by a “medium-sized lie.” In Poland, for example, conspiracy theories hone in on the plane crash of former President Lech Kaczyński, while in the United States, fabricated claims of electoral fraud in the 2020 elections are widely believed. Moreover, this right-wing authoritarian turn is associated with massive social and political polarization, which has torn apart friends, families, and political allies.

Carl Schmitt’s anti-liberal yearning

An “authoritarian predisposition” in human beings is how Applebaum seeks to explain the simultaneous polarization in various democratic societies. She argues that people are drawn to authoritarian ideas because they feel overwhelmed in an increasingly complex world. Rejecting division, they sought unity.

At first glance, this seems like a paradox. Why would a desire for unity prompt support for authoritarian ideas, which make a clear distinction between friend and enemy, and have little interest in consensus or democratic communication? To resolve this paradox, we might turn to Carl Schmitt’s “Political Theology,” a book of which much contemporary political discourse is, to say the least, strongly reminiscent. Similarities are above all to

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be found in Schmitt’s conception of the political, and in the vocabulary that he uses to discuss it. Political discourse today increasingly resembles the “discourse” of rival soccer fans, whose sole aim is to do down their opponents, distorting reality to lend legitimacy to the camp to which they belong.

Schmitt, a constitutional lawyer, joined the Nazi Party in May 1933. No surprise then, that his

ideas and actions were motivated by the struggle against liberalism and democracy. Schmitt's rejection of liberal democracy is founded on his political theology. In "Four Chapters on the Doctrine of Sovereignty" (1922), he claims that every term in modern constitutional law can be traced back to the secularization of a previously religious term. He then criticizes the modern constitutional state – with its "positivistic indifference to any metaphysics" – for ignoring the theological origin of its own concepts.

The central idea in Schmitt's analysis is the state of exception, which has religious origins in the concept of the miracle. Similar to how miracles contradict and overcome the laws of nature, so the state of exception constitutes the sovereign's intervention in the prevailing legal order. This argument allows Schmitt to develop one of his best-known statements, defining the sovereign as he who "decides on the state of exception." The liberal democratic state, he argues, denies its ultimately theological justifications and thus any decisionist understanding of democracy. In this way democracy degenerates into a functionalist shell of a system, only good for "the arithmetic of majorities and minorities," as Schmitt put it in his 1932 book "Legality and Legitimacy."

In 1926, in "The Contrast of Parliamentarism and Modern Mass Democracy," Schmitt sought an alternative to this contentless democracy, proposing a state based on substantial equality of the people, a state which, if needs be, would "eliminate or destroy" anything non-identical. What would be left after this would be a homogeneous people. The political will of this people could be established "through acclamation, through its self-evident and unchallenged existence," which would work just as well as any "statistical apparatus." Here, we can clearly hear contempt for elections as the central institution of liberal democracy, so it is unsurprising that Schmitt's 1934 essay "The Führer Protects the Law" hails Adolf Hitler as the "true leader," capable of anticipating the homogeneous will of the people.

Applebaum suspects – and a reading of Schmitt

Modern authoritarian movements above all yearn for the "re-enchantment of politics," for government to find its ultimate justification in metaphysics

confirms – that modern authoritarian movements may in some sense seek unity, while above all yearning for the "re-enchantment of politics," i.e., for government to find its ultimate justification in metaphysics. Lacking this basis, liberal democracy is described as a technical-bureaucratic system of rule, one based solely on arithmetic. Despite considerable differences, these anti-liberal yearnings can be seen in the political systems of the United States, Israel, and Germany. However, all three systems still have their own mechanisms for the defense of democracy and the rule of law.

The "Big Lie": Putting the state of exception to the test

US Congresswoman Liz Cheney is not considered a particularly moderate Republican, and never has been. On any and all "partisan issues," be it fiscal or foreign policy or border security, Cheney has consistently voted for conservative, "traditional Republican" positions. Nonetheless, for the majority of the Republican base, fiercely loyal to former President Trump, Cheney is now regarded

as a “RINO” – a Republican In Name Only. For the Republican base as it now is, “RINO” is anyone who does not believe in and will not propagate the “Big Lie,” namely the idea that President Joe Biden won the election through widespread election fraud.

Cheney, the only House representative for the small conservative state of Wyoming, was one of the few Republican members to vote to impeach Trump a second time, in January 2021. Since then, she has regularly spoken out publicly against election-related conspiracy theories, and in favor of basic democratic and constitutional principles. The question of the election’s legitimacy has become

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such an identity issue for Republicans that in May Cheney was removed as the Republican Leader of the House, because of her deviation from the party line on this issue. In July, Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House, invited Cheney to join the non-partisan committee tasked with investigating the January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Two things are highlighted by case of Cheney and the “Big Lie.” First, it is by now obvious that the Republican Party mainstream is consciously creating mistrust in the democratic process and the rule of law. Second, it is clear just how consistently the Republican Party will punish deviants on this issue. The party is careful to foster internal ideological homogeneity within its ranks.

Some elements of Schmitt’s political theology can be seen in bogus tales about electoral fraud, recounted with a view to delegitimizing the 2020 presidential elections. An attack on free elections is itself an anti-liberal act, and the story behind the “Big Lie” is strikingly reminiscent of Schmitt’s antipathy to parliamentarism. The alleged electoral fraud is presented as the work of a detached Washington elite seeking to prevent a Trump victory, thwarting the candidate of the “silent majority” by any means necessary. Or, to put it in Schmittian terms: “Today parliament itself seems more like a huge antechamber opening onto the offices and committee rooms of the invisible rulers.”

An uprising against the “invisible rulers” was first attempted in January, with the attack on the Capitol. However, the institutions of the liberal constitutional state stood firm, ensuring that power was transferred to Biden, the winner of the democratic election. And yet the ongoing “Big Lie” – that Trump remains the rightful president – can be regarded as another attempt to define a state of exception. The attempt to do so raises the question of sovereignty.

While liberal democracy can only justify itself in procedural terms, for example by reference to free elections, authoritarianism seeks its justification in metaphysics and the homogeneous popular will. This is the only way to understand how Trump and his supporters can completely disregard constitutional rules, while remaining convinced that the former president will be reinstated on day X (the most recent date suggested for the “reinstatement” was August 2021). If they were right about this, it would indeed be a miracle, one providing the ultimate justification for an anti-liberal state in the spirit of Schmitt. If there is no miracle, Amer-

ican liberal democracy will have won out for the time being. However, debunked prophecies can, and usually do, have unexpected effects on true believers.

Alternatives to authoritarianism

Germans like to pretend that the lure of authoritarianism is mainly an American phenomenon. And it sometimes seems like the well-turned elegies for American democracy come with a whiff of *schadenfreude*. But for four years now, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a right-wing authoritarian party, has been represented in the German parliament. At least since the AfD's arrival in parliament, German politics has been marked by a new and sharper tone, which could also be heard in this year's federal elections.

It is striking how accusations of polarizing rhetoric have themselves become a central part of political debate. Moreover, these accusations tend to come with references to the United States. Interviewed by the women's magazine *Brigitte*, the Green Party co-leader Annalena Baerbock suggested that accusations of plagiarism around her book, "The Green Chancellor," were the kind of "mixture of truth and falsehood" seen in the

United States. In response, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* condemned the Greens' defensive reactions, on the grounds that they represented a shift into "Trump mode."

Polarizing debates in Germany in recent years have mostly focused on identity-political issues like migration, Islam, and gendered language. Faced with such questions, the authoritarian right has presented its usual answers, colored with populism, xenophobia, sexism, and nationalism. However, we have also seen the rise of authoritarian attitudes on the left, where anyone deviating from its own moral standards faces immediate punishment. Anyone failing to adopt gender-inclusive terminology, or daring to offer a rationalist critique of Islam, is immediately written off as a right-winger who has disqualified themselves from the conversation of decent people.

It is as if elements on the left are responding to right-wing yearnings for a re-enchantment of political life, but rather than an ethnically homogeneous national community, what they long for is a morally homogeneous society. The latter vision is more sympathetic than the former, since it lacks the folk-nationalist flavor, but it will not save liberal democracy from authoritarian temptations.

There are some on the German left who reflect where others do not, and who are willing to take a stand against the majority on their own side, regardless of the political consequences. In particular, the veteran Green parliamentarian Cem Özdemir should be singled out for praise: For many years he has taken a clear stance for Israel and against all forms of anti-Semitism, despite fierce pushback within his own party. Likewise, Kevin Kühnert, a prominent young Social Democrat, who last year began a debate on Islamism and the left. Only this kind of open democratic discourse can serve to counter the growing wave of authoritarianism.

Liberal democracy has already lost if we have right-wing authoritarianism, with references to Carl Schmitt, competing against left-wing authoritarianism citing Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. Rather than seek the moral delegitimization

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of political opponents, we must defend the principles of liberal democracy and freedom, continuing to seek common ground in spite of political differences.

A united front against Bibi

Israel's political framework is entirely different to that of Germany or the United States. Rather than the US two-party presidential system, Israel has a parliamentary democracy. Unlike Germany, it has developed a system with a very large number of parties. The recent parliamentary elections saw 13 party lists elected to the Knesset, representing a wide variety of ideological and demographic interests. For a long time, it seemed as if this political constellation would save Israel from polarizing into two opposed camps. However, this is exactly what has happened this year, albeit not on ideological grounds, but rather on positions toward long-time Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Although right-of-center parties won a comfortable majority in the election, winning 72 of 120 seats, Netanyahu was unable to form a government, despite regarding himself as the leader of the bloc. Three right-wing parties refused to enter into a coalition with Netanyahu: Yamina, a religious-nationalist party led by Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked, the secular-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu of Avigdor Lieberman, and the Likud splinter party Tikva Chadasha, led by Gideon Sa'ar. Their refusal had less to do with ideology than with reservations about Netanyahu as a person. At one time or another, Netanyahu had been an ally of Bennett and Shaked, and of Lieberman and Sa'ar, but now all four politicians had ongoing private feuds with the veteran prime minister.

The result was that, rather than form a right-wing coalition with Netanyahu's Likud, the three parties entered into an alliance with centrist and left-wing parties. To secure the narrow majority, the Islamist Ra'am party (the United Arab List) also had to be included, and so for the first time in Israel's history an Arab party elected a prime minister as part of a government coalition. The prime minister in question was Bennett, consid-

ered a right-wing hardliner, who will be replaced in office by the more liberal Yair Lapid after two years, as part of the coalition deal.

Netanyahu reacted with affront to the deal, declaring that the new government was a "dangerous left-wing coalition," accusing the coalition parties of selling out Israel's interests to left-wing radicals and the Arab minority. For days, Bennett's and Shaked's private residences were besieged by Netanyahu's angry supporters. The rhetoric used by the pro and anti-Netanyahu camps can hardly be seen as a democratic competition for the best arguments. Instead, as in the United States, this is an existential dispute between deeply hostile camps, strongly reminiscent of Schmitt's concept of the political.

Yoaz Mendel of the Tikva Chadasha (New Hope) party, and another former Netanyahu ally, is communications minister in the new government. He explained the remarkable political composition of the new coalition with the words: "Being on the

*Rather than seek the
moral delegitimization
of political opponents,
we must defend the
principles of liberal
democracy and free-
dom, and seek com-
mon ground in spite of
political differences*

right does not mean you have to be a Bibi-ist.” Opposition to Netanyahu seems to have outweighed the parties’ enormous ideological differences.

Schmitt would not have been impressed that the leader of a party with 6 percent of the votes could, in good liberal-democratic style, reach a consensus with seven other parties to secure a narrow majority in the Knesset, and be elected prime minister.

For Schmitt, this would have been the mere “arithmetic of majorities and minorities.” It would,

in other words, have represented the final degeneration of democracy into a hollowed-out functionalist shell, where politicians enter into pragmatic alliances in search of power, seeming to ignore the “will of the people.” In reality, however, the formation of this Israeli government was a victory for liberal democracy and a sign of its vitality: Without the capacity to balance opposing interests and achieve consensus, liberal democracy cannot survive. •

Translated from the German by Brian Hanrahan

The Fellows 2021



Jakob Flemming

is a Berlin based political scientist. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. degree from his studies in Political Science, Jewish Studies as well as in International Politics and International Law at Heidelberg University, Kiel University and at the University of Kansas. The focus of his studies was the research on legislative behavior. In his M.A. thesis, he analyzed the determinants of foreign policy voting behavior in U.S. Congress by applying quantitative methods. Jakob is actively committed to the German-Israeli relations as well as to the transatlantic relations by working in the Youth Forum of the German-Israeli Society and in the Young Transatlantic Initiative.



Dor Glick

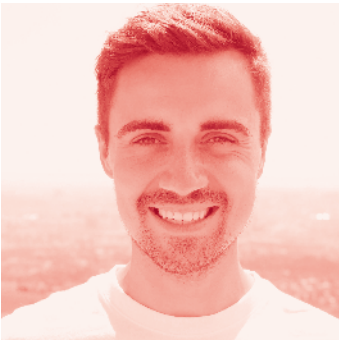
is an Israeli journalist with 15 years of investigative journalism experience, covering international politics, economics and historical themes. Dor worked in leading television channels and radio stations, as well as print and online journalism. His career began in 2004 during mandatory military service for Israel's national radio network, Galei Tzahal. As Europe Correspondent for Channel 10 News (Israeli TV) based in Berlin, Glick exclusively interviewed Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2018. He was a Knight-Bagehot Fellow (2018/19) in Economics and Business Journalism at Columbia University in New York City. Dor served as parliamentary assistant in the German Bundestag, and was website

editor and project manager for Goethe-Institut in Israel. He has degrees in International Relations and History from Hebrew University of Jerusalem and London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).



Lisa Hänel

is an editor at Germany's international broadcaster "Deutsche Welle", where she completed her journalism traineeship from 2017 to 2019. She has written, among other things, about the anti-Semitic attack on the Halle synagogue and so-called "Israel-criticism", both for TV and online contributions. Prior to her position at Deutsche Welle, Lisa worked for media outlets such as Frankfurter Allgemeine, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Deutschlandfunk and Internationale Politik. Her last international trip before the Corona pandemic brought her to Israel, where she is eager to travel again for her first trip after the pandemic.



Bastian Kaiser

is a journalist and communications expert who specializes in international politics and security. He studied Journalism at Technische Universität Dortmund as well as International Affairs at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin and the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals. Following a one-year journalism traineeship (Volontariat) at the West German Broadcasting Corporation (WDR), he worked as a reporter in German public media. As a freelance journalist and a scholarship holder of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation's journalism academy, Bastian reported from various European countries, the Middle East, and South America. Since 2019, he has been working as

a Communications Manager at the Berlin office of the Munich Security Conference.



Jonathan Kovac

received his B.A. in Political Science and German Studies from Yale University and his M.A. in International Affairs from the Hertie School in Berlin. Jonathan's academic interests center around diplomacy, military interventions, politics of the Middle East, and NATO, which partially inspired his thesis: "Economic Interdependence and Deterrence: The Determinants of Troop Contribution to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence." Jonathan has also studied the role of religiosity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how dehumanization operated in the concentration camps, using the works of Primo Levi and Hannah Arendt and the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. He has served in

the Israeli Defense Forces and interned at the German Bundestag, Boston Consulting Group, and the German Foreign Ministry, where he analyzed rising rates of anti-Semitism across Europe.



Rebecca Rose Mitzner

is a philosopher with a German-American family background. From 2011 to 2018, she studied Philosophy, Jewish Studies and European Ethnology (B.A.), Interreligious Studies (M.A.) and Human Rights and Transitional Justice (M.A.) in Germany, Israel and England. During her time at university, she was active, amongst others, for Hillel International, Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft e.V. and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. In 2019, she was a Goldman Fellow at the AJC's Africa Institute in New York City. Rebecca is an ELES Research Fellow and has been working on her PhD in Jewish Philosophy on the topic of Jewish identity since 2020. She is also currently addressing this topic

in a book on the Shoah survivor Elias Feinzelberg and in a Brodt Foundation project.



Georg A. Reichel

is a Master's student of Political and Social Sciences at the University of the German Armed Forces in Munich. After graduating from the Domgymnasium in Fulda, he joined the German Navy as an officer candidate in 2016 and, after successfully completing the officer training course, began studying political and social sciences with a specialization in international law and politics in 2017. In addition to his studies, he volunteers in various youth work projects and in organizations that deal with security, education and climate policy, among other things. His hobbies include long-distance hiking, attending theater performances and traveling..



Lena Voelk

is a photo journalist and currently studying political science, history and photography in Munich. As a journalist and photographer she is working, amongst others, for Deutsche Presse-Agentur and Süddeutsche Zeitung. She will also soon start a traineeship at the London studio of the German public-service broadcaster ZDF. Lena has worked as a photographer for the Israeli Press Agency. In her freelance photographic work, based on a sociological and anthropological approach, she is interested in Jewish identity and antisemitism. In her work as a journalist, as well, she focuses on the political developments in the Middle East as well as anti-Semitism. She has developed a video segment for Süddeutsche Zeitung, examining the linguistic Nazi heritage in the German language. Starting

in October 2021, she will work in Paris and study at SciencesPo there.



Isabel Weiss

is currently writing her PhD thesis on the sacralization of state politics in Israel at Berlin's Humboldt University. Prior to that, she studied, amongst others, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; in her Master thesis she examined the emancipation process of Mizrahim and the rise of the Shas party. After her studies, Isabel lived in Israel for several years and worked at the Jewish Claims Conference in Tel Aviv. Currently, she is active in the International Doctoral Program "Security and Development in the 21st Century". During her studies, Isabel spent time in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen for research. Most recently, she worked for a project with BwConsulting, the inhouse consultancy

of the German Federal Armed Forces.



Dr. Sylke Tempel (1963–2017) was editor-in-chief of **IP** from 2008 until her death. In addition to the fellowship, whose works from the 2021 volume are collected in this issue, an essay prize is awarded annually in her name to honor the life and work of this outstanding journalist, author, publicist and mentor. She is missed.

Cooperation partners

The **German-Israeli Future Forum Foundation** brings together professionals and executives from Germany and Israel who take on responsibility and champion the democratic organization of our societies. We support multipliers from Germany and Israel and fund bilateral projects that contribute to shaping the present and the future of German-Israeli relations in a sustainable manner.

The **American Jewish Committee (AJC)** was founded in New York in 1906 by American Jews, predominantly of German origin, with the aim of providing Jewish security and promoting democracy, human rights, and international understanding worldwide. For more than a hundred years the AJC has promoted democracy, pluralism, and human rights. Following the visions of its founders, the AJC is committed to a mutual understanding of nations, religions, and ethnic groups.

ELNET Deutschland e.V. is a non-profit and independent organization that aims to promote German-Israeli relations in a non-partisan manner on the basis of common democratic interests and values. Alongside our partner offices in Brussels, Paris, Warsaw, and Tel Aviv, we strengthen the dialogue between European and Israeli decision-makers in politics, economy, and society. In addition, we support existing networks and expands these through strategic dialogues and traveling delegations..

Internationale Politik (IP) is Germany's leading foreign policy journal. It starts off where the news stops. Experts from politics, business, science and the media write about the broad spectrum of international relations in the form of analyses, essays, interviews, and commentaries. The IP was founded in 1945 under the name Europa-Archiv. It appears in print every two months and online in German and English (Internationale Politik Quarterly). Published by the German Council on Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.), IP is available by subscription and sold at bookstores found in railway stations and airports throughout Germany.

Women in International Security Deutschland (WIIS.de) e.V. is a non-profit association and a union of women involved in foreign, security, and defense policy. The goal of the association is to give greater consideration to women's interests in international and national foreign and security policy and to support women working in these fields and help them build networks. The headquarters of WIIS is in Washington, D.C., and the association is represented internationally by 22 „National Chapters“.



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TZIPI LIVNI joined the Sylke Tempel Fellowship Program as its second patron in 2021. Livni was the foreign minister of Israel and filled numerous other high-ranking functions; she retired from active politics in 2019.

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