

Foreword

When I started working on this book project several years ago, I did not anticipate the significant and specific rise of antisemitism in the year 2012 alone, when this study was finished.

This book was written for the interested public, for scholars in the field, for undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students, for journalists, decision-makers, politicians, philanthropists, and public intellectuals, among others. In this study, I deal in particular with scholars in Western countries and their take on antisemitism, Islamism, and the Holocaust. This is quite an unusual approach in research. Many authors do not discuss the work of their colleagues, regardless of how bad or mistaken their research and/or activism are. Thus, not much has changed for the better in the last years and decades, when it comes to research on antisemitism.

Most scholars think of the consequences, taking into consideration who will have power on search committees, peer journals and at professional conferences. Taking all this into account, they almost never dare to discuss problematic aspects or tropes of leading colleagues in the field. Even they disagree, they do not go public.

Therefore, I think it is imperative to finally start focusing on prevailing problems with past and current scholarship. Most decision-makers, politicians, journalists, think-tank experts, and the public base their judgments on antisemitism on the expertise of scholars. Whether those experts are on TV, radio, the Internet, published in newspapers, interviewed, or on campus, many people indirectly or directly are influenced by leading scholars in the field. Mainstream media often interview scholars after an antisemitic attack, or an anti-Jewish slur at a rally. Criticizing antisemitism is rarely controversial as long as the antisemitic slur or attack was made by a right-wing extremist or neo-Nazi, whether in the style of the KKK, the Front

National in France, the British National Front in the UK, the NPD in Germany, or the FPÖ in Austria, for example.

- But what about antisemitism disseminated by a German Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, who singles out Israel as a “threat to world peace?” (Günter Grass)
- What if the rejection of the uniqueness of the Holocaust is a core ideology of a Yale historian, who was awarded in Germany in 2012 (Timothy Snyder), as well as of newly elected President of that country? What if the new German President additionally accused those who emphasize the unprecedented nature of the Shoah of doing so because they are just looking for an “absolute” in a godless world? (Joachim Gauck)
- What if in 2012 a leading European and German center like the Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) at Technical University in Berlin employs a follower of anti-Israel superstar Edward Said? What if that Center prefers to talk about “Islamophobia,” instead of analyzing the Iranian threat and Islamist antisemitism? (Achim Rohde)
- What if a leading expert in literature, gender studies and philosophy from California is awarded a very prestigious prize in Germany, when she is known as a leading voice in calling the Jewish state “apartheid” and urging the world to “boycott” Israel? (Judith Butler)
- What if her close friend, another American professor from Yale known for her anti-Zionist stance and who accused Israel of possible “crimes against humanity” during the anti-Hamas war in 2008/2009, and who has denounced Israel for being a nation-state was also awarded a highly respected prize in the very same country in 2012? (Seyla Benhabib) Who are the professors and members of such prize-search-committees?

Antisemitism, as I shall argue in this study, is a specific phenomenon and not just an instance of generic racism or prejudice. Many people of good will and scholars all too often confuse antisemitism, which led to the Shoah and is today aiming at the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel, with racist policies, colonialism, or simple prejudice. I was very much involved in anti-racist and anti-neo-Nazi activism in Germany in the 1990s, when dozens of immigrants, punk-rockers, left-wingers, homeless, and others were murdered by German neo-Nazis. The political climate, the political culture at the time, was equally horrible and racist. Antisemitism, though, is different. Even today's racist state policies (and we have had plenty in Germany in recent decades) which led to expulsions of refugees never led to genocide.

Scholars may not fool themselves when it comes to antisemitism and pretend to be 'neutral.' Ignoring the Iranian threat is taking a position, not remaining neutral. Remaining silent on Islamist antisemitism is not being neutral either. Islamist antisemitism is the most dangerous form of antisemitism in our 21st century world. What would this Islamist threat look like if the West confronted it? What if Western politicians, diplomats, public intellectuals, Nobel Prize Winners, opinion- and decision-makers, scholars, activists, NGOs, and the public rallied against, discussed and confronted antisemitism on a regular basis? What if Islamist antisemitism were included in the curricula of high-schools in Germany and Europe and on campuses around the world, as is Nazi antisemitism and other forms of this "longest hatred?" This could be a game-changer, as silence would no longer prevail.

Germans love to portray themselves as a model for the world when it comes to remembering the Holocaust. In fact, many Germans have a predilection for dead Jews, while defaming living ones. I said this in a

lecture at Hebrew University ten years ago in December 2002. Sadly, this phrase has maybe never been truer than in 2012.

Cosmopolitanism is a nice idea and anti-cosmopolitanism was a core element of right-wing antisemitic Europe in the 19th century through Nazi Germany. The Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc and its left-wing followers in the West defamed cosmopolitanism and Jews, too.

Today, though, left-wing and liberal cosmopolitanism has sometimes turned into a tool to denounce the Jewish state of Israel. Even Islamists (like at Columbia University) follow the Western idea of cosmopolitanism and argue against Zionism and Israel. Philosophically, several rather troubling aspects of cosmopolitanism go back to Immanuel Kant, as well as to Hannah Arendt.

I have been involved in research on antisemitism since 1996, when I was still a student. Today, though, I fear that the field is being hijacked by scholars who use research on antisemitism as a tool to spread not the analysis and criticism of antisemitism but rather the opposite: post-colonial ideology, anti-Zionism, Holocaust trivialization, and the denial of Islamist antisemitism.

Scholarship on antisemitism needs to change. It is my hope that this book will serve as a catalyst for that change. And, for change to happen, scholarship itself must also become the subject of scholarship: we need to analyze what our colleagues are saying and writing on antisemitism. We cannot continue to accept distortions and inversions of the past or the present – or that is all that we will have left in the future.