History and Responsibility:

Shadows from the Past in Germany's Relationship towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

by

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1. Introduction[1]

In German discourse, perhaps inevitably, Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have always been objects not only of factual analysis, but also of projections resulting from guilt or the defense against it. Germany may have done better than other countries in addressing and working through their major historical crimes, but its self-image as a nation with an exemplary record has serious cracks. While, fortunately, Holocaust denial is no longer a significant position, embarrassing distortions of "the past" or the present in view of "the past" continue or are discovered constantly, even 70 years after the end of World War II. They involve not only respected German politicians but also great minds in philosophy or literature. On January 21st, 2009, quite a number of viewers of the established German TV talk-show "*hart aber fair*" (tough but fair) must have felt embarrassed, when Norbert Blüm, a high-ranking member of the Christian Democrats' labour wing (he had been Minister for Labour and Social Security from 1982 to 1998) and almost everywhere considered a courageous and upright person, used the German experience of the Nazi crimes as a legitimizing basis for criticizing Israel's human rights violations in the Gaza war, which he called a *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of annihilation). When talk-master Frank Plasberg suggested that this was a dubious term in the debated case, Blüm insisted on it. Blüm's doubly strange message was obvious, at least between the lines: We Germans had learned our lessons from the Holocaust; it was time that the Jews did that, too (see Krell 2009).

On the basis of formerly unpublished material, we today know that Martin Heidegger, who is often regarded as one of Germany's greatest philosophers of the 20th century, made some of the worst possible remarks about the Holocaust one might think of (Probst 2015). The recently deceased Günter Grass, one of Germany's most famous writers and an active *zoon politikon*, gave Tom Segev a terrible interview in 2011 in which he suggested that the Russians had "liquidated" (his terminology) "six million" (his figure) German prisoners of war. Actually only three million German soldiers had ever been Soviet prisoners, and of those one million died, mostly from the catastrophic living conditions in a war-torn USSR, devastated by Germany's aggression and war of annihilation (Heer 2014, p. 72). And in 2012 Grass wrote an infamous political poem about Israel's conflict with Iran's nuclear program in which he suggested that Israel was (the Jews were?) not only the major or even the single danger to peace

[1] This article is a revised and updated version of earlier writings in German (see in particular Krell 2004, 2008, 2009a and 2011). A similar paper has been posted on the website of the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt as PRIF Working Paper no. 26 (2015) under the title "Shadows from the Past: The Nazi Regime, the Holocaust, and Germany's Relationship towards the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". I am grateful for suggestions and critical comments by Martin Altmeyer, Reiner Bernstein, Egbert Jahn, and Dieter Senghaas.

in the region but also a major threat to world peace, and that it was willing to risk annihilation of the Iranians and with them even the whole world in a global nuclear war, and all that because it was taking a big-mouth seriously without evidence 2012).[2]

My generation of the rebellious, anti-authoritarian, and anti-fascist 68ers, too young to have been involved in the Nazi crimes or born after the war, tried their own strategies of escape. We would be totally different from our parents and thus remain untarnished by unpleasant continuities. That turned out an illusion, as the aberrations and violent offenses, some against Jews or Israel, by the Red Army Faction and its supporters vividly demonstrate (Koenen 201, pp. 331-335; Altmeyer 2007, 2007a). We did not regard our "late birth" as exculpation from responsibility, yet we practiced our own kind of de-realization. Simply cutting the generational bond with our parents, who very often had been active Nazis or at least sympathized with the "Third Reich", was ill suited to overcoming our subtle and subconscious impregnation by an extremely nationalistic, racist and violent and yet, at its time, widely accepted and supported political tradition. In this respect, there had been no "zero hour" in Germany in 1945.

Leaving the obvious and revealing misrepresentations or misdeeds aside, the criteria for an appropriate German relationship with Israel are still not self-evident or without logical or practical contradictions. An important aspect of the official German solution to history and responsibility is the "non-negotiable support" of Israel's security, which Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel declared part of Germany's *raison d'etat* before the Knesset in her speech of March 18, 2008 on the occasion of Israel's 60th birthday. While Chancellor Merkel certainly knew why she made such a declaration, her phrasing immediately raised a lot of confusion, not only in Germany and Israel. Some people even felt reminded of Alice in Wonderland, who, as everybody knows, "had no idea what Longitude was, or Latitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to say". This is caricature, of course, but the declaration involves a number of serious problems. Certainly, Germany's support is much more than symbolical; it has a strong diplomatic and even material basis such as weapons deliveries already in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the US still held on to its arms embargo,[3] and more recently the

[2] Grass' political poem contains several false factual statements, applies radically asymmetrical standards of judgement, and makes use of at least four classical anti-Semitic clichés (see Krell 2012 and Krell/Müller 2012). Frank Schirrmacher, 1994-2014 one of the chief editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, called the poem a "lousy work of resentment", www.faz.net/aktuell/ feuilleton/eine-erlaeuterung-was-grass-uns-sagen-will, p. 1 of 3 (April 6, 2012).

[3] These deliveries were made secretly, yet with the consent of the United States. When they became known more widely, the Arabs entered into diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic, thus negating the Hallstein-Doctrine of Germany's sole legitimate representation through the Federal Republic, which in turn finally led to West German-Israeli diplomatic relations in 1965.

delivery of submarines, which Israel can use for nuclear deterrence. Yet the question remains, how Israel's security can be assured best and what solidarity with Israel actually means.

The problems begin with the political basis of Germany's commitment; on Israel's side with the fundamental fact that the Jewish state will never base its security on promises of support by any other country, for very specific Israeli and also for good general reasons of international relations. As for the support in her own country, the Chancellor may indeed have promised too much. In a poll of 2008, 53 percent of the respondents (65 percent in the group aged 30 to 39) saw "no special responsibility towards Israel". 58 percent agreed that Germany should support Israel politically if it was attacked; 82 percent came out against financial support and 81 against support with soldiers (Jüdische Zeitung, June 2008, p.1). In a more recent poll, 58 percent of the Germans wanted to draw a "final line" under the history of the German persecution of the Jews, compared to 60 in a poll of 1991. On the other hand, the figure for those who considered the Shoah still relevant for the present rose from 20 percent in 1991 to 38 in 2014 (Süddeutsche Zeitung, January 15, 2015, p. 1).

Quite apart from these general problems, Israel may not accept Germany's views of and actions about her security, as vividly demonstrated by the recent controversy over the agreements between the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the EU with Iran about the latter's nuclear program and the others' sanctions.[4] For German politics in particular, it is almost impossible to try to talk Israel out of fear for its security, however ideological or irrational it may consider it. After all, it had been Germany which had contributed to the existential fear of the Jewish collective so terribly, to its experience of lethal persecution, of being victims, of alienation; feelings which persist in spite of Israel's tremendous military capabilities, its status as a major regional power, and its strong support by the United States and the sympathies of other major countries.[5]

Not only the practical contents of Israel's security may be controversial in its relationship with Germany, but also the very nature of the country to be secured. Israel should live within secure borders, is the obvious, often repeated, and widely shared German position, yet with the clear understanding that, in material geographical terms, such secure borders would be those before the conquests in the war of 1967, possibly with mutually agreed corrections. German *Staatsraison* does not extend to further territorial claims by whatever Israeli groups or governments. That may be a reasonable legal and political position, but how can Germany

[4] For a thorough analysis documenting the wide-reaching substantial concessions which Iran had to make see Müller (2015).

[5] See the empathetic analysis of Israel's "mental blockade" and "distorted logic of desperation" by David Grossman, *Unsere Verzweiflung ist unser Untergang*, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, July 7, 2014, p. 11.

divide its support for Israel's security between Israel proper and the occupied territories, which are so strongly connected economically, ideologically, and politically? No sane political person in Germany will claim that Israel's borders of 1967 were secure by definition; they would have to be made secure – by treaties, guarantees, and controls. Germany's problem is that many Israelis, including their current President and Prime Minister, feel these borders were *insecure* either by definition or at least given current and foreseeable circumstances.

There are important Jewish voices, in Israel and elsewhere, however, which would like to draw Germany (and other friends of Israel) in a different direction. They are concerned that their country has embarked on a self-destructive course, politically as well as morally. They warn against a military-bureaucratic-ideological settlement complex which not only affected the prospects of the Palestinians negatively, but also put Israel's future at risk. Saul Friedlander, e.g., said in an interview, he no longer considered himself a Zionist, because Zionism had been kidnapped by the far right (Haaretz online, May 18, 2014). Peter Beinart suggested something similar for American Jewry. With their unconditional support of Israel, the established Israel lobby contributed to Zionism's serious crisis (Beinart 2012). And on May 8, 2015, hundreds of Israeli scholars, intellectuals, and artists signed an urgent call for an end to the occupation and for an intervention by the international community. Out of "deep concern for our country's physical survival and moral integrity", they asked for international support to the Palestinian Authority's appeal to the UN and for immediate recognition of the State of Palestine as a full member, and even for an economic and cultural boycott on the settlement enterprise in the territories occupied in June 1967 (Haaretz online, May 8, 2015).[6]

Things become even more complicated if we consider the debate about the proper German consequences from the Holocaust, apart from recollection and admission of guilt, legal prosecution, restitution (as far as at all possible), appropriate commemoration, and genuine democratic and human rights reorientation. In some of these dimensions Germany has been quite successful, in others hesitant, inactive or – as in the case of the juridical prosecution of the participants in the murder machinery – scandalously resistant or generous. As for the more general political dimension, Israeli author and producer Etgar Keret once said, the Germans were obliged to turn the world into a safer place *for all mankind* and not just for Israelis (Frankfurter Rundschau, March 3, 2008, p. 16.) There is an interesting analogy here with the internal Israeli debate expressing a similar alternative between a particularistic and a universal

[6] Among the signatories are many with strong intellectual and personal connections to Germany, such as Moshe Zimmermann or Moshe Zuckermann; see also Zimmermann (2010) and Zuckermann (2015).

reaction to the Holocaust: "this must never happen *to us* again" versus "this must never happen again *anywhere*" (see Zuckermann 1999). That means that even the historical and moral basis for Germany's obligations may lead to conflicting consequences in the relationship, inasmuch as solidarity with Israel resulted in the neglect or even the violation of the human rights of third parties.[7]

In Arab and other Islamic countries, there is a wide-spread feeling that the Palestinians in some way also had become victims of the Nazi's racial fanaticism: via the foundation of Israel as a consequence of the Holocaust. The world, out of remorse for the Holocaust, had forced the Jews upon the Palestinians. Some Israelis or other strong pro-Zionists have their own quite different view of the triangle between Nazism, the *Yishuv*, and the Arabs. They argue, the basic and central cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had always been Arab anti-Semitism, against which the Jewish immigrants had to defend themselves from the beginning. Without Arab intransigence, fired and stirred up by the Nazis' murderous hatred of the Jews, a peaceful regulation of the conflict between the indigenous Arab majority in Palestine and the Jewish immigrants would have been possible (see Küntzel 2004 or Gensicke 2007).

I will analyze these two variants of historical discourse by the conflicting parties, in order to help clarify the requirements of a "responsible" German position. I have done little original research for this examination; it is mostly based on a synthesis of expert literature. Where I do not find consensus, I will mention the controversy. I will also put the relationship between the Nazi era, the Holocaust, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a broader historical perspective. I know from experience that I am entering delicate territory here (see Krell 2007). Many Israelis do not like or even strongly reject the suggestion of a connection between the Holocaust and their conflict with the Palestinians. They argue that establishing such a connection was a manipulation of German feelings of guilt, a qualification of the Holocaust, or a distortion of the causes of the Middle East conflict in the Palestinians' favor. Yet the hypothesis is neither new nor weird. As German historian and orientalist Alexander Schölch had written in an article of 1982 with the title "The Third Reich, the Zionist Movement, and the Palestine Conflict (in German)":

> You cannot escape historical legacies; you will be forced to face them in the most unusual circumstances. One bequest from the Third Reich to the Germans is their enmeshment in the conflict about Palestine. As for the birth of Israel as a consequence of anti-Semitism, the persecution of the Jews, and finally the systematic genocide in the areas dominated by National-Socialism, this legacy was basically accepted as an obligation. As for the direct consequences of the foundation of a Jewish

[7] For a more recent statement about Germany's dual responsibilities towards the Jews *and* universal humanism see Boehm (2015a).

> state in Palestine, in particular the exodus of the Palestinians Arabs, the historical legacy was largely rejected, by refusing to see the connection (Schölch 1982, p. 646, my translation).

Since Schölch's article was heavily criticized at the time, I would like to make clear several points in advance. (1) The two variants which I will look into are *moderate* elements of established national narratives. Much nastier variations exist on both sides, which I will not address because they are so obviously absurd. (2) The hypothesis about a possible connection between the Holocaust, the foundation of Israel, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does *not* imply that the Nazis had envisaged or wanted to establish a Jewish state, although Jewish emigration, under pressure or even enforced, from Germany (and Austria) to Palestine had been an option among leading Nazis including Hitler himself until the late 1930s (see Zimmermann 2005, pp. 291-296). Had Nazi-Germany won the war in North Africa, it would probably have destroyed the *Yishuv* (see Mallmann/Cüppers 2007). (3) It also does *not* say that the Jews did the same unto the Palestinians as the Nazis had done unto them. Unfortunately, these comparisons are quite common not only in the Arab world and in Germany, but also in other European countries.[8] In the war between the Arabs and the *Yishuv*/Israel, both sides were armed actors and victims at the same time, and never has genocide been part of the Zionist program or practice.

(4) Of course, the suggestion of a possible connection between *the* Jewish and *the* Palestinian catastrophe is *not* anti-Semitic. The connection between the Holocaust and the foundation of Israel, at least, is discussed seriously and controversially in Israel itself by highly respected researchers such as Evjatar Friesel (1996), Yehuda Bauer (2002), or Dan Michman (2003). And the famous American historian of German origin, Fritz Stern, writes in his fascinating autobiographical book "Five Germanys I Have Known":

> […] the Holocaust had made the Zionist claim to a Jewish state, to Israel, morally compelling and a physical necessity, but the Palestinians who in 1948 lost their homes were also its indirect and underacknowledged victims. The memory of the European mass murder made some Israelis intransigent vis-à-vis the outside world, especially vis-à-vis the Arabs, and the consequences for the Palestinians fed the Arabs' rage […]. Germany would not have been divided nor Israel created had it not been for Hitler's Germany and its bid for world hegemony" (Stern 2007, pp. 348 and 420).

(5) Finally, in contradiction to the seeming offensiveness of establishing a connection between the Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Dan Michman speaks about a Zionist or Israeli national mythology, which legitimized Israel by the Holocaust and the participation of many Jews at the side of the Allies in their fight against Hitler, as hinted at in the declaration of independence. Quite different traditions even suggested an empirical causal relationship, either in religious or in secular terminology:

[8] Polls in Germany show support between 25 and 50 percent of such comparisons as the one by Norbert Blüm mentioned above. In Europe, this is not, as I used to believe, a particular German problem, however.

> [The] *Wiedergutmachung* negotiations and agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1950s were based on the understanding that the State of Israel was the natural heir of the Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Gradually, especially from the 1960s onwards, Israel's image worldwide and in internal Israeli and Zionist interpretations of Jewish history and fate became linked to the Holocaust – by secularist educators, historians, lay people and religious thinkers [...] The fact that this mythical perception was so powerful and became widely accepted in Jewish circles and elsewhere very quickly proves, in my eyes, that for many people it satisfied an inner need to invest history with meaning. This 'meaning' of the Holocaust (with a 'happy ending') provided some solace for the tragedy of the past and justified massive self-mobilization for the collective ideals of the State especially when Israel had to contend with growing opposition beginning in the late 1960s (Michman 2003, p. 317).

As the central counterpart or complement to this Jewish national narrative on the Arab side, Michman sees the already mentioned interpretation that the Holocaust had been the major reason why the West "imposed the Jews onto Palestine". Here, too, national mythology serves legitimation (in this case of resistance) and the mitigation of pain, because it gives meaning to the defeat and to *al-Nakba*.

2. The Holocaust and the Foundation of Israel

2. 1. The NS Regime, the War, and Jewish Immigration

The fifth a*lija*[9] between 1932 and 1938 brought about 200.000 Jews to Palestine, increasing the share of Jewish residents in the British Mandate from around 18 (1932) to about 30 percent (1939). Immigration was particularly strong in the years between 1933 and 1936. Both sides, Jews and Arabs, were aware of the importance in the change of the demographic relationship: On the Jewish side, the prospect of their own state came within sight, on the Arab side panic spread. To what extent this immigration was a result of Hitler's *Machtergreifung*, is controversial. Several studies, including Israeli or other Jewish reports, grossly overrate the number of immigrants from Germany. I give two examples:

> As German dictator Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party rose to power, about 144.000 Jews, primarily from Germany, immigrated to Palestine in the early 1930s to escape increasingly ruthless persecution (MSN Encarta 2008).
>
> Between 1933 and 1936, more than 164.250 Jews fled Germany and entered Palestine, thus doubling the size of the Yishuv (Lipman, no year).

In both cases, the figures are much too high (unfortunately), they should read "more than 164.250 Jews fled *Europe*". It is true that the new wave was often considered "the German *alija*".[10] Yet the *Jeckes*, as the German immigrants use to be called, were not the largest group at all. With the Nazis in power, their share of annual immigrants increased tenfold from a very low 2.5 to 25 percent on average, but even in the 1930s 75 percent of the immigrants still

[9] The term *alija* literally means "rise" and is used for the Jewish waves of immigration to Palestine/Israel.
[10] There is a saying that the newly arriving Germans would be asked: "are you coming out of conviction or from Germany?"

came from other countries (Rubinstein 1997, p. 31; Nicosia 2000, Appendix 7). 40 percent came from Poland, a reaction to right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism there and the politics of "Polonization". Tragically, too few Jews left Germany in time. And the more urgent emigration became, the more difficult it was, on both ends of a life-saving journey, Germany *and* Palestine. While at the end of the 1930s Jews from Germany still were a small minority in Palestine, their immigration was of particular importance for the economic stabilization of the *Yishuv*, however. The *haavara* (i.e. "transfer") agreement of 1933 between the Zionists and the German government, which allowed for the transfer of at least parts of the wealth of Jewish emigrants and which was used to finance German exports to Palestine, increased the imbalance between the Jewish and the Arab economies in Palestine and contributed to the latter's separation (Schölch 1982, p. 649; Mejcher 1993, pp. 213-214).

About 200.000 Jews survived the concentration camps, forced labor, and marches of death.[11] 10.000s went back to their places of origin in Eastern Europe; others joined the camps for *Displaced Persons* (DPs), mainly in the American zones of occupation. Towards the end of 1945 and particularly in 1946, another 175.000 Polish Jews, who had escaped the SS to Central Asia or were discharged from the Soviet *gulag*, came back to Poland. There they were confronted with a very inhospitable environment: Families and relations could no longer be found, houses and apartments were used by other "owners", who were not prepared to give up their new possessions, and even life and limb were at risk. Many of these Polish Jews continued their flights and went into American DP camps. In 1947, around 250.000 Jews lived in these camps. All of them wanted to move further as soon as possible, mostly to the United States or to Palestine; many of them were or had become Zionists. In the end, about one third went to the US, two thirds to Palestine.[12] They were joined by other Jews, who emigrated from Eastern Europe when the Communists came to power there.

Dan Michman argues that Polish anti-Semitism had been responsible for a large part of the wave of Jewish emigration after 1945, which had nothing to do with the Holocaust but was based on indigenous Eastern European traditions (Michman 2003, pp. 308-311). Polish analyst Joanna Beata Michlic comes to a similar conclusion:

> […] in contrast to the wartime anti-Jewish violence in Lomza, the early postwar anti-Jewish violence in Poland constituted more of a classic case of ethnic cleansing. Its intent, despite its severe brutality, was not to kill all Jews but to force them to leave Poland. Because of its intent this violence can be seen as similar to the anti-Jewish violence of the interwar period. The practice of ethnic cleansing in early postwar Poland was extremely effective (Michlic 2006, p. 217).

[11] This and the following is based on Bauer (2002), pp. 246-248.
[12] The relationship could have been reversed, had the American quotas been more generous (ibid.).

Yehuda Bauer considers the illegal and then legal[13] immigration of Holocaust survivors and other DPs towards the end of the Mandate, a period of new violent confrontation between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and then in the first Israeli-Arab war an important contribution to the *Yishuv's*/Israel's victory, but – similar to Michman – he does not regard the Holocaust as the decisive factor in the foundation of the state:

> The State of Israel is, first and foremost, the creation of the generations that preceded the Holocaust and that created in Palestine a basis for the struggle for independence. Because of that foundation, the survivors could make an impact (Bauer 2002, p. 260).

It should also be mentioned that the by far greatest waves of immigration of Jews from Europe and then from Arab countries, even from the whole world, occurred in the early years *after* the foundation of the state of Israel, and for quite a number of different reasons, among which the Nazi era and the Holocaust had been one of several and sometimes did not play a role at all (Segev 2008, pp. 152-153). It was this mass immigration, connected with dramatic individual and collective burdens, which created the required demographic base for Israel's further development and secure existence.

2.2 Effects on Zionism

Theodor Herzl had always envisaged a Jewish state. The Balfour Declaration, which was integrated into the League of Nations' Mandate for Palestine, only speaks about the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people in Palestine", and it also says: "nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities" (Laqueur/Rubin 2001, p. 30). This wording was used to make it sound less offensive to other concerned parties and to leave the mandator space for interpretation. Still, the British press saw in the declaration the founding document of a Jewish state, and in the early years a pro-Zionist line dominated British policy in Palestine. Quite a different tone is to be found in the British White Book of 1939, however:

> His Majesty's Government therefore now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State. They would indeed regard it as contrary to their obligations to the Arabs under the Mandate, as well as to the assurances which have been given to the Arab people in the past, that the Arab population of Palestine should be made the subjects of a Jewish State against their will (Laqueur/Rubin 2001, p. 45).

Among the Zionists, too, the meaning, form, and even the necessity of a Jewish state had been controversial. Immigration and the building of Jewish institutions were paramount. And here, the *Yishuv*, which by the early 1930s had state-like institutions in almost every relevant field, was much more successful than the Palestinian Arabs (for the Arab side see Khalidi 2006). In

[13] With the foundation of Israel, Great Britain's restrictions on immigration were immediately rescinded.

the course of the 1930s, Jewish priorities changed, however. One reason was the increasing discrimination and emigration pressure on the Jews in Europe. Chaim Weizmann, the President of the Jewish World Organization, combined his concern about the fate of the European Jews with the prospect of a Jewish state in a statement for a British commission of enquiry in 1936, in which he still rated the "German question" as "much smaller" than the Polish one (Freimark 1993, p. 62).

In addition, the Arab revolt of 1936-1939 destroyed hopes for different arrangements, including a bi-national state – always a minority position anyway. At this time, the *Yishuv* began to build up its own army. The coming war in Europe led to the expectation of major Jewish waves of immigration, and the increasingly dramatic situation of the European Jews in wake of Nazi Germany's conquests resulted in the famous declaration of an Extraordinary Zionist Conference at the Biltmore Hotel in New York in 1942 with the perspective of the transformation of (all of) Palestine into "a Jewish Commonwealth". There could be no doubt that this meant a Jewish state, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness once and for all and give the Jews who were persecuted by the Nazis a signal of hope (Laqueur/ Rubin 2001, pp. 55-57).

At the time of the Biltmore declaration, the full dimensions of the Nazis' murderous program were not yet visible. When they became obvious and undeniable, the question of a Jewish state achieved a new quality, i.e. it was no longer seen as a question: "The Holocaust was to propel the movement almost instantly into statehood" (Morris 2001, p. 161). The Zionists' darkest fears had come true, even been surpassed, and thus Zionism, originally the position of "a minority within the minority" (Karady 1999), turned into a central option of Jews in general. Yet the mass murder also had paradoxical consequences for the Jewish state-building project. What could a Jewish sanctuary and what could international support of such a place of refuge be good for, if there was nobody left to make use of it? So Yehuda Bauer and others argue that, on balance, the Holocaust impeded rather than promoted the formation of a permanent "Jewish home" in Palestine: "There were almost not enough Jews left to fight for a state" (Bauer 2002, p. 258).

Most experts will agree that the *Shoah* had ambivalent effects on Zionism. On the one hand, it strengthened it. Its political opponents within the Jewish national movement, in particular the *Bundists* in Russia and in Eastern Europe, had been "defeated", i.e. murdered by the Nazis, and partly by the Communists. In light of the literally murderous conditions, their program was no longer plausible or practical. Because of the Holocaust, most Jews, mainly but not

only in the United States, who had originally not been Zionists, decided to support Zionism ideologically, politically, and even materially. On the other hand, Zionism had been greatly weakened by the mass murder of the East European Jews, its major demographic source.

2.3 The International Decision-Making Process and the Great Powers

The United Nations: After Great Britain had given up the Mandate, the United Nations tried to find a solution to the conflict between the *Yishuv* and the Palestinian Arabs and to prevent war. In the UN's deliberations, the *Shoah* and the difficult situation of the survivors in the DP camps strengthened the arguments for division and thus a Jewish state. (In the end, the minority report still favored a Federal Union under Arab predominance.) Benny Morris and many others see a strong connection here:

> Resolution 181 was, in some way, 'Western civilization's gesture of repentance for the Holocaust (…), the repayment of a debt owed by those nations that realized that they might have done more to prevent or at least limit the scale of Jewish tragedy during World War II.' […] Helped to a great extent by the nations' feeling of guilt about the Holocaust, the Zionists had managed to obtain an international warrant for a small piece of earth for the Jewish people (Morris 2001, p. 186).

A number of other factors were also important, however, and so Dan Michman represents the opposite position when he explicitly denies that Israel had been established as a kind of "reparation gift to the Jews from the Western world as compensation for the Holocaust" (Michman 2003, p. 321). One of these factors was political or economic pressure from the United States on smaller members; not always effective, however. Others were sympathy or at least respect for the *Yishuv's* fight against the British Empire in some developing countries, and serious diplomatic mistakes by the Arabs. The suggestion of division also had great plausibility in itself in light of the direction which the conflict and the animosities going with it had already taken.

The United States: Essential for the final decision of the required two thirds majority in the General Assembly was the unexpected cooperation between the two great former anti-fascist allies, the United Sates and the Soviet Union, who were about to enter into their own superpower conflict. In the US, the Holocaust had not only strengthened the position of the Zionists among American Jews but also created much empathy with the Jewish fate among Americans in general and in Congress. A national home for the Jews in Palestine would also offer a way out of the American dilemma between openness toward immigration and resistance against it. President Truman received controversial recommendations from his cabinet and his other advisors. The State and the Defense Departments, in particular, were against division, not only because they were concerned about future relations with the Arabs but also because they cared about the democratic credibility of US foreign policy, since the Arab majority in Pales-

tine had no voice in an existential decision about their political future (for details see Krell 2004, pp. 6-11).

In the end, Truman ignored Roosevelt's and his own promises towards King Saud and other Arabs potentates, not to decide about Palestine without involving the Arabs. Truman had not only his reelection in mind but also important general political considerations. He hoped that division would stabilize a region which quickly seemed to become involved in the conflict with the Soviet Union, and he desperately wanted a solution for the Jewish survivors in the American DP camps in Germany.

The USSR: To the surprise of everyone, the Soviet Union supported the division of Palestine and a Jewish state. The USSR helped to create Israel not only diplomatically but also militarily. It was actively involved, together with the United States and the Jewish Agency, in working out the details of division and held on to it steadfastly during the violence between Arabs and Jews towards the end of the Mandate and during the first Arab-Israeli war, even when the US leadership had second thoughts and briefly considered the option of a United Nations trusteeship for Palestine. The USSR tried to strengthen Israel's international legal status – they were the first country to recognize Israel *de jure* – and they resisted all propositions running against the young Israel's vital interests. They put the blame for the violence and the war onto "Arab aggressors, commanded by British officers", and also made Great Britain and "influential circles" in the US responsible for the fate of the Palestinian refugees (see Brod 1980 or Heinemann-Grüder 1991; also Gorodetsky 2003). While the US officially followed the UN's weapons embargo, the Soviets allowed substantial and crucial weapons deliveries from Czechoslovakia, among them German weapons which the withdrawing *Wehrmacht* had left behind. They began before the Communist *putsch* in Prague in 1948, and they were continued after it.

In his speech at the Special UN General Assembly on May 14, 1947, a speech which differed in many ways from former Soviet positions, Deputy Foreign Minister and chairman of the Soviet delegation Andrej Gromyko explicitly justified the foundation of a Jewish state with the Holocaust and Western Europe's "failure to protect the Jews against the fascist executioners" (Brod 1980, p. 58). Soviet motives were much more material than remorse for the Holocaust, however. Because Zionism had fought against the British during the end of the Mandate, it had changed in Soviet eyes from an instrument *of* imperialism into an instrument *against* it (Heinemann-Grüder). Thus the USSR hoped to restrain the British Empire via the foundation of a Jewish state, which also happened to have socialist credentials.

The Soviets had always behaved opportunistically towards the Jews and often followed anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish, or even anti-Semitic policies in their own sphere of influence. In parallel to their commitment to a Jewish state in Palestine, they closed Zionist institutions in the USSR, increased pressure on Jews, in particular Jewish intellectuals, and ran campaigns against "cosmopolitism". The show-trials in the Eastern bloc between 1949 and 1953 had a clear anti-Semitic thrust. And the Soviets soon reversed their position in the Israeli-Arab conflict. As early as 1949, Russian press reports claimed that the Zionists were supporting Anglo-Saxon "underground agitation" for war not only in the Middle East but elsewhere in the world, and, in another *realpolitik* turn, they switched back to the Arab side with weapons deliveries in the mid-50s.

Great Britain: With the Balfour Declaration, Great Britain had laid the foundation for the Jewish state, and until 1939 it supported the Jewish side in the three most important controversies in the Mandate: Jewish immigration, land acquisition, and Arab exclusion from governmental responsibilities (Flores 1993, p. 91). The brutal repression of the Arab revolt 1936-1939 was an important prerequisite for the renewed Arab defeat and their "catastrophe" of 1947-49 (Khalidi 2006, pp. 105-139). The closer the danger of a major interstate war against Nazi Germany came, the more the United Kingdom tried – out of overriding strategic concerns – to take Arab views and interests into account. In 1939, it decreed strict limitations on Jewish land acquisitions and immigration. This resulted in serious political disputes in the *Yishuv*, which were decided in favor of cooperation with Nazi Germany's enemies and thus in favor of Great Britain. When the war came to an end, parts of the Jewish national movement moved against the UK, however, including violent measures. One of the reasons was that Britain still insisted on strict limitations of Jewish immigration and tried to enforce this policy politically as well as militarily. British policy towards Jewish refugees was subverted not only by the Zionists but also by other countries, and it turned out counterproductive, especially in the notorious case of the *Exodus* affair (see Bergman 2002).

The strategic background to British Middle East policy after the war was that the Labour Government wanted to preserve the Empire's position as a global power. Yet Great Britain no longer had the required resources nor could it calm down the resentment against its long rule in the Arab world, even though it supported an Arab solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians (Weiler 1987). Exhausted by the war and the emancipation of some of its colonies, India in particular, under pressure from Jewish terror against its rule in the Mandate, and in view of increasing American irritations, which it believed it could not afford in the

beginning Cold War, the United Kingdom passed its Middle East conflict on to the United Nations and withdrew from Palestine. In the decisive vote in the General Assembly, Great Britain abstained. Behind the scenes it supported the rapprochement between the *Yishuv*/Israel and King Abdullah of Transjordan and thus his plans for an annexation of the West Bank.

3. The NS-Regime, the Arabs, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The hypothesis of a connection between the Nazi era and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict via the Arabs also comes in variations. The extreme version sees the Arabs collectively as the historical allies, quick pupils, and heirs of the Nazis, preparing another Holocaust. The strong variant suggests that without the Nazis, their propaganda and support, a peaceful solution of the conflict between the Jewish immigrants and the Arab residents would have been likely or at least possible. The weak version assumes Arab co-responsibility already in the early escalation of the conflict and accepts that their part cannot be excluded in a discussion of the Nazi era, the Holocaust, and the problems between Jews and Arabs, but it does not see this connection as a major cause of the conflict.

3.1 German Strategy and Muslim Reactions

In the 1930s, several dimensions played a role in the Nazi leadership's discussion of the relationship between the "Jewish question", Zionism, the Arabs, and Palestine. Hitler's overriding strategic concern was to keep the "British option" open, i.e. to win British toleration of Germany's domination of the continent. So British interests in the Middle East, e.g., would not be infringed upon. As far as Zionism was concerned, Jewish state-building capabilities were not rated highly; what the Nazis did fear (or professed to fear) was what they called "a new center of conspiracy for world Jewry". Official policy of the Foreign and the Finance Ministries as well as the SS was that, in order to "remove" the Jews from Germany and Europe – one of the Nazis' priorities –, they might even be allowed to go to Palestine (see also the already mentioned *haavara* agreement), hoping that they would not fare well there anyway. Those groups skeptical of Jewish emigration to Palestine were the first to discover the Arabs as potential partners of the Third Reich. Hitler himself supported the strategy "Juden raus nach Palästina" (off with the Jews to Palestine) as late as 1937 and 1938. All this changed with the war and the conception of the "Endlösung" (Zimmermann 2005, pp. 291-296).

War with the United Kingdom meant that Germany no longer had to take British interests into account. When the envisaged quick victory did not materialize in the skies over England, German war strategy turned against the "lifelines" of the Empire, in particular the connection to the Arab oil fields. That required a military pincer movement from Northern Africa via Egypt

and Palestine into the Near East and from the Caucasus into Iran and Iraq. In this context, Arab collaboration became increasingly relevant. Both the *Wehrmacht* and the SS set great hopes on cooperation with the Islamic world, particularly after the "Third Reich's" first major setbacks in North Africa and Russia.[14] They urgently needed new manpower and they hoped to create problems for Great Britain and for the Soviet Union behind the lines as well. In a major propaganda effort, addressed at Muslims mainly in the Soviet Union, the Balkans, and North Africa, they tried to win support for their cause by emphasizing similarities between Islam and National Socialism and stressing their assumed joint enemies: Imperialism, Communism, and the Jews. To some extent, they built on a tradition reaching back to World War I and to geopolitical debates in the 1930s (see Motadel 2014, pp. 15-37). One important difference was that the Nazis were reluctant to appeal to national aspirations among Muslims. This was prevented not so much by the "racial barrier", which still remained, but by their own imperialist ambitions and by consideration of the ambitions of Vichy-France and Italy. Another difference was their anti-Semitism, which was not just directed against Jewish colonization in Palestine but combined with a more general vehement and violent anti-Jewish agitation unknown in modern Jewish history.

Reactions in "the" Muslim world, which existed more in German pan-Islamic fantasies than in reality, were decidedly mixed; some positive, some negative, some neutral – some ideological, some opportunistic (for details see Achcar 2010 or Motadel 2014). Where suppression of Islamic and ethnic traditions was strong, as in southern parts of the USSR, e.g. the Crimea or the Caucasus, German propaganda and relative generosity towards Islamic religious practice were often successful. The *Wehrmacht* established four foreign military legions there which fought on its side against the Soviet Union. In the Balkans, where the Muslims were under pressure from Communist partisans, radical Serbian Cetniks and the Croatian Ustascha, many turned to the Germans, because they had no one else to turn to. Here, the SS created its own *Handzar* division. Towards the end of the war, however, more and more Muslims joined Tito's militias, risking brutal German reprisals.

Wehrmacht and SS attempts to establish Arab formations were less effective. By February 1943, about 2.400 Arabs are said to have stood under German command in North Africa. Yet desertions and defections were serious problems, and "compared with other Muslim recruits, the Arab volunteers proved exceptionally disloyal – a complete failure" (Motadel 2014, pp.

[14] While I am aware of some of the older literature, much of the following is based on Motadel (2014). See also my critical reviews of Mallmann/Cüppers (2006) and Gensicke (2007): Krell (2007a).

227-228). Altogether, far more Arabs, including 9.000 Palestinians, fought for the Allies than for the German Reich.

3.2 Arab Collaboration in Perspective

That does not mean that there had been no sympathy for the Nazis among Arabs, quite to the contrary (see Achcar 2010). Among the four major political groupings in the Arab world, the Liberals would remain on the side of the Allies, in spite of European colonialism. The Communists would remain on the Soviet side, although Soviet turnarounds created serious problems for them. Much more important, though, were the Nationalists and the fundamentalist Pan-Islamists. Among the Nationalists, many expected help from the Germans against British imperialism and Zionist colonization. Pan-Islamists showed the greatest ideological affinity, because of a partial correspondence between their religiously based anti-Judaism and the racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis. This did not necessarily mean an alliance with the Germans, as the Saudi example shows. And it also did not mean that there had been a general affinity of Islam toward Nazism. In his first major political statement, the Iranian Mullah Musavi, who later became known as Ayatollah Khomeini, denounced the "Hitlerite ideology" as "the most poisonous and heinous product of the human mind" (as quoted in Motadel 2014, p. 109).

The Arab collaborator *par excellence* was Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, a Palestinian nationalist and also a ruthless Muslim anti-Semite.[15] As Mufti of Jerusalem, he was a leading representative of the Islamic world, and as Chairman of the Supreme Arab Committee also a kind of speaker for the Palestinian Arabs. For a long time, he remained a loyal ally to his British superiors, playing the role they had cast for him: to cooperate externally and keep the locals quiet internally. Like other members of the elites co-opted by the British in their colonies, he believed that he could achieve gradual political concessions and self-government in the end, if he played by the rules. This strategy failed in Palestine because of the Balfour Declaration and, in its consequence, the denial of a Palestinian Legislative by the British Parliament in 1935 (Baumgarten 1991, chapter I. 1; Segev 2005, pp. 175-176, 202, 295- 296, 316, 334, 343, 392, 467; Khalidi 2006, pp. 79-82, 87-90).

Since he had been deeply involved in the Arab revolt 1936-39, the Mufti was sought by the British and fled Palestine. In late 1941 he settled in Berlin, where he literally became a well-paid mouthpiece for German propaganda towards the Muslims and where he tried to influence German policies. The most dramatic example was his intervention to prevent the emigration of Jews from Germany's southeastern satellite states to Palestine. Otherwise, his impact was

[15] For the Mufti, see also Gensicke's biography (2007), which is well researched but too one-sided, in my view, in some of the major political conclusions.

limited. German support for Arab or Palestinian independence, which he had hoped and asked for, did not come, although Hitler, in his first meeting with the Mufti in November 1941, assured him that the fight against the Jewish home in Palestine was part of Germany's relentless fight against the Jews – which by then already meant the "Endlösung" (Zimmermann 2005, p. 297). The Nazis only needed him as a pan-Islamic leader, and as such they vastly overestimated his influence, although he considered himself a kind of Muslim pope (Motadel 2014, pp. 42-44).

On the ground in Palestine, the boundaries between anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish agitation had been fluid, but one ought to be careful not to generalize from the Mufti and his supporters. As a report by the SD, the Nazi party's intelligence service, noted in 1937, the Arab population did not show the required understanding of the National-Socialist movement. Opposition towards the Jews was not based on racial hatred, but was a social question around the ownership of the land. A Jewish question in the National-Socialist sense did not exist in Palestine (as quoted in Wildangel 2007, p. 103). Yet in the triangle between British rule and the conflict between Zionism and the Arab national movement, the Jews were indeed used to some extent as a "buffer" by the Arab feudal elites in their internal class conflicts. Resistance against the Zionist project did not have to be manipulated "from the top" or by the Nazis, however. Even without the Mufti, the Palestinians would have radicalized their opposition against foreign domination and immigration. Arabs resisted European colonization in many places and long before the Nazis, just as indigenous residents did almost everywhere, not only against subjugation by external powers but also against settler colonialism.[16]

3.3 Supplemental Remarks

Perhaps since the Balfour Declaration, certainly after the early 1930s with the increased Jewish immigration and the following violent confrontation, a war to finally decide the conflict between Jews and Arabs about national territory and rule in Palestine had become likely. Many British commissions of enquiry clearly saw this danger, and their views corresponded to views among the *Yishuv's* leadership itself:

> Everybody sees the problem in relations between the Jews and the Arabs. But not everybody sees that there is no solution to it. There is no solution! … The conflict between the interests of the Jews and the interests of the Arabs cannot be resolved by sophisms. I don't know of any Arabs who would agree to Palestine being ours – even if we learn Arabic […] There's a national question here. We want the country to be ours. The Arabs want the country to be theirs (Segev 2001, p. 116).

[16] For the Arab revolt, including its internal problems, see Laqueur 1975, p. 535; Morris 2001, pp. 121-160; Krämer 2002, Chapter XII; Kimmerling/Migdal 2003, pp. 102-131.

This is a quotation of a statement by David Gen-Gurion which he made in 1919. Even more explicit was Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, President of the Revisionists, the predecessors of the Likud. In his famous paper *The Iron Wall*, which was first published in Russian in 1923, he wrote:[17]

> […] it is utterly impossible to obtain the voluntary consent of the Palestine Arabs for converting 'Palestine' from an Arab country into a country with a Jewish majority. […] I suggest that my readers consider all the precedents with which they are acquainted, and see whether there is one solitary instance of any colonisation being carried on with the consent of the native population. There is no such precedent. The native populations […] have always stubbornly resisted the colonists (Jabotinsky 1937).

Already shortly after the Basel Congress, the rabbis of Vienna had sent two representatives on a fact-finding mission to Palestine to explore Herzl's ideas. Their cable to Vienna described the basic problem differently, in a more humorous yet still serious way: "The bride is beautiful, but she is married to another man (as quoted in Shlaim 2000, p. 3)."

Interestingly, there is not much difference between these assessments and serious literature on the Arab side, as the following summary of the Mandate period by Rashid Khalidi shows:

> For the Palestinians to accept such an idea (of a national home in Palestine for what they saw as another people, G.K.) in some form would certainly have removed or at least weakened the ludicrous but widely believed accusation that they were motivated by no more than anti-Semitism in their opposition to Zionism, rather than just being a colonized people trying to defend their majority status and achieve independence in their own country. […] It is important to understand in this regard that Palestinians did not see Jewish immigrants to Palestine primarily as refugees from persecution, as they were seen by most of the rest of the world. They saw them instead as arrogant European interlopers, who did not accept that the Palestinians were a people or had national rights in their own country, believed that Palestine instead belonged to them, and were coldly determined to make that belief into a reality (Khalidi 2006, pp. 120-121).

So the basic historical constellation of the conflict between Zionism and the (Palestinian) Arabs has nothing to do with the Nazis or with Arab collaboration. Of course, for the Zionists and then many other Jews, the Nazi era and the Holocaust in particular dramatically increased the existential importance of their envisaged "national home" in Palestine. And the Nazi era also strengthened an already discernible but not yet dominant tendency in Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism: to blur the distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism (Zimmermann 2005, pp. 301-305), although the strong thesis about a connection between Arab anti-Semitism and the conflicts in the Mandate cannot be confirmed.[18]

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[17] See also Shlaim 2000, pp. 16 and 18: „Jabotinsky never wavered in his conviction that Jewish military power was the key in the struggle for a state. It was the Labor Zionists who gradually came around to this point of view without openly admitting it. […] The Arab Revolt, which broke out in April 1936, marked a turning point in the evolution in Ben-Gurion's attitude toward the Arab problem. […] he was willing to admit that in political terms they [i.e. the Zionists] were the aggressors while the Arabs were defending themselves. […] the revolt made him conclude that only war, not diplomacy, would resolve the conflict."

[18] See also Zimmermann (2004), p. 301: „At the time of the notorious Mufti of Jerusalem in the 30s and 40s, the alliance between Arab and European anti-Semitism had been a rather esoterical matter" (my translation). Arab diplomacy also recognized – in the Alexandra Protocol of 1944, the basis for the Arab League – and regretted

We also have to note an important difference here. European anti-Semitism has always been and remains purely paranoid and hallucinatory; it has no basis in social reality. In Europe, the Jews as a collective never threatened anybody. Modern Arab or Islamic anti-Semitism, which today is much stronger than in the rest of the world,[19] is also paranoid and hallucinatory, yet it is or can be connected with a genuine political group conflict, nourishing it and being nourished by it. Although the political and military confrontation between Jews and Arabs cannot explain the stupidity, meanness and maliciousness of anti-Semitism, such excesses are not unusual in violent national, ethnic, or religious conflicts. Unfortunately, irrational images of the enemy often develop a dynamic of their own and add a heavy layer of obstacles to rational conflict settlement. They are also fed by poisoned ideologies, by perverted psychological urges, and by propagandistic needs of authoritarian regimes.

The relationship between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and anti-Semitic attitudes is strong: In the Middle East and North Africa, even 64 percent of the Christians hold anti-Semitic views (75 percent of the Muslims do); in Eastern Europe only 35 (Muslims 20), in Western Europe 25 (Muslims 29), in the Americas 19 percent. In the West, more educated people are *less* likely, in MENA *more* likely to harbour anti-Semitic views (ADL Global 100). Nobody can guarantee that Arab or Islamic anti-Semitism will disappear or at least lose much of its political strength, if the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians came to a conclusion in an enduring compromise. But there are enough indications to suggest that a large part of the support for the radicals is less connected with their Islamist program than with their strong resistance to the occupation and the accompanying deprivations.

4. Extension of the Historical Perspective

4.1 The Zionist Project and Western Responsibility

In any debate about the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, basic conditions need to be discussed without which the Zionist project would not have been launched or not gained ground. European nationalism and anti-Semitism were the most important factors at the beginning, joined by colonialism and imperialism. The project of a systematic Jewish settlement of Palestine with the goal of establishing a "national home", i.e., in the final instance, a Jewish

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the terrible suffering which the Nazis had inflicted on the Jews. They only did not want that the Arabs had to pay the price for it (see Krämer 2002, p. 360).

[19] ADL figures for the share of people with anti-Semitic views often reach around 80 percent for Arab or other Islamic countries in the Middle East: West Bank and Gaza has the highest figure with 93, Iran the lowest with 56 percent. The by far highest figure for Europe, by the way, is Greece with 69 percent (!), with averages for Western and Eastern Europe of 24 and 34 percent, respectively. Asia has 22 and the Americas have 19 percent (The ADL Global 100).

state, as an answer to almost chronic discrimination and often violence against European Jews (see, e.g., Karady 1999) could only be achieved (1) against Arab hopes and Western promises of self-determination, (2) with political, economic, and military support from abroad and (3) in the end by violent majorization – against hopes or rather illusions of an arrangement with the indigenous Arabs. Apart from small minorities, neither Jews nor Arabs wanted a bi-national state, and most Arabs would not voluntarily accept a Jewish-dominated one. Arab diplomats consistently and almost unanimously demanded unrestricted sovereignty over Palestine, an end to (or at least a limitation of) Jewish immigration and to land sales (Qasimiyya 1993).[20] Until the very end, they placed their hopes on a revision of Mandate policy in this direction – by no means without reason. Such revisions had been requested and even promised again and again by high-ranking British politicians and commissions, even before the "notorious" White Book of 1939.

Without the support of European imperialism, the Jewish settlers would not have been able, in spite of their unquestionable and remarkable pioneering achievements, to create the prerequisites for the establishment of their own state. With effective Arab political co-determination, the Jewish project would have been impossible anyway, even though individual Arabs recognized the historical legitimacy of an organized Jewish presence in Palestine. Western diplomacy ignored the "objective" problems of the Jewish project, although they were listed frankly by the King-Crane Commission's report, which American President Woodrow Wilson had asked for but did not take into account. This report, published in August 28, 1919, said that the Balfour Declaration, if read closely, was not compatible with the Zionist project of transforming Palestine into a Jewish state. Such a project would be impossible without serious encroachments on the civil and religious rights of the other communities, and such encroachments had been excluded explicitly.

To confront nine tenth of the total population in Palestine with unlimited Jewish immigration would not only massively violate their rights but also the principles which the American President had announced on July 4, 1918. The peace conference in Paris should not overlook that the general mood in Syria as well as in Palestine was decidedly anti-Zionist. None of the consulted British officers believed that the Zionist project could be achieved peacefully. And the argument, often brought forward by Zionist representatives, they had a right to Palestine on the basis of Jewish ownership 2000 years ago, could hardly be taken seriously. The report concluded:

[20] An exception, highly relevant for the final success of Israel's foundation, was Transjordan's position.

> In view of all these considerations, and with a deep sense of sympathy for the Jewish cause, the Commissioners feel bound to recommend that only a greatly reduced Zionist program be attempted by the Peace Conference and even that, only very gradually initiated. This would have to mean that Jewish immigration should be definitely limited, and that the project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish commonwealth should be given up (Laqueur/Rubin 2001, p. 25).

The King-Crane report had no effect at all on the decision-making process about Palestine at the Paris Peace Conference, in the League of Nations, or in the United States. Hardly anybody took notice of it. But it establishes the foundational connection between European history and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With the Balfour Declaration, which was followed by similar declarations from other Western countries, including the United States, the West (in a broad sense, which here includes Russia and also the Zionist movement), delegated its internal "national" conflicts with the Jews, i.e. its incompetence to integrate its Jewish co-citizens peacefully and enduringly, to "the South" (here: the Orient). Those mostly affected by this delegation were given no effective voice. The discrepancies between British (and French) imperialist and the Zionists' national-colonial interests on the one hand and the Arabs' interests (and Wilson's principles) of self-determination were bridged by the Mandate system, which stood in the tradition of "altruistic imperialism". The developed (i.e. white) peoples of the world knew best what was good for the rest. The Arabs would profit from Jewish colonization, too, even if they did not see it that way.[21]

4.2 Further Historical Dimensions

Other historical dimensions point even further back than World War I or the birth of the Zionist movement at the end of the 19th century. One of them relates to the crusades and the related conflicts between Orient and Occident. This very old connection, ideologically revitalized by the Arab side in connection with the Jewish colonization in Palestine and kept alive to this day by newly politicized and radicalized Islamic traditions, played an important role in Western images and ambitions vis-à-vis the "Holy Land" in the 19th century, during World War I and even later (see Schölch 1993, pp. 14-39; Davidson 2001; Brecher 2011). When Edmund Allenby, who had led the British Army to Jerusalem in December 1917, died in May 1936, the Los Angeles Times reminded its readers that the general had directed the victorious "Christian troops" through the gates of Jerusalem in order to hand the Holy City of Zion back

[21] We often forget that, at the Paris peace conference, it was still common for the developed countries of the time to consider their right of disposal over much of the rest of the world as self-evident. Very telling in this respect is Woodrow Wilson's statement at a meeting with leading American Zionists on March 2, 1919: "Don't worry Dr. Wise. Palestine is yours." On August 11, 1919, Lord Balfour wrote in an internal memo for the Foreign Office, the Great Powers had decided to support Zionism. Zionism, whether right or wrong, good or bad, had its roots in centuries-old traditions, in demands of the present and hopes of the future, which were of much greater significance than the desires and prejudices of 700.000 Arabs who happened to inhabit this ancient land. The Great Powers did not plan to consult them (for this and more details see Davidson 2001; the quotation is on p. 21.)

to the Chosen People. The Washington Post gave Allenby a place next to Richard Lionheart and Gottfried of Bouillon, and it added that he would remain in the memory of mankind as the liberator of the Holy Land (Davidson 2001, pp. 113-114).

Large parts of the Christian Right in the United States stand in this tradition even today. In their fundamentalist ideology, the complete restitution of the ancient Israel including the temples in Jerusalem is a prerequisite for Christ's return. In a Pew poll of 2013, 82 percent of white Evangelical Protestants in the US stated that God had given the Jews the (whole) land of Israel. Among Americans in general only (or still) 44 and among American Jews 40 percent believe that (Pew Research 2013). As Presbyterian Senator Inhofe from Oklahoma said in 2002: "God appeared to Abraham and said: I give you this land – the West Bank. This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether or not the word of God is true" (as quoted in Bala 2006, p. 320).[22] It must be mentioned in this connection, of course, that analogous Jewish positions find much support among the dogmatic religious Right in Israel, including important representatives in the current Israeli government. In May 2015, *de facto* foreign minister Tzipi Hotovely advised Israeli diplomats in a video broadcast from Jerusalem to offensively support the "biblical right to the entire Land of Israel", including "Judea" and "Samaria", i.e. the West Bank. "This land is ours, all of it. We didn't come here to apologize for it", she said (The Times of Israel, May 21st, 2015, online).

A second historical deep structure lies in the European dominated phase of globalization which began in the early modern age and includes settler colonialism and Western imperialism. Zionism's and Israel's specific historical place and its tragedy in this regard would be that it stood or still stands at or even beyond the very end of this process. In 1947, India became independent, i.e. the declaration of the State of Israel not much later, represented, as Micha Brumlik has suggested, "the peak and at the same time the turning point of the colonial as well as the imperial age (Brumlik 2007, p. 146, and pp. 131-150 in general)". This leads to further considerations.

In the colonization process, one may distinguish two different forms of pioneer societies and states. In North America, parts of South America, in Australia and New Zealand, European "fragment societies" succeeded in anchoring and in overwhelming, wiping out, or at least marginalizing the indigenous population. These fragment societies, which came from outside, turned into unchallenged majorities; today they are mostly seen as self-evident and widely

[22] I should note here that the implication of a common historical Christian-Jewish tradition against Islam is of course a construction, neglecting, e.g., that much of Christian violence in the crusades had been directed against Jews. Even today, there is a lot of deception in the evocation of a "Christian-Jewish civilization" among Christian fundamentalists or the populist anti-Islamic Right.

stable countries in the regions in which they established themselves (Lustick 2008). Other "fragment societies" from Europe neither obliterated the indigenous groups nor marginalized them enduringly. Among these societies Lustick counts the Crusader Kingdoms, South Africa, Rhodesia, French Algeria and Israel. In the case of Israel, the demographic, cultural, and symbolical density of Palestine and the whole Near East is the reason why its foundation "could not and cannot definitively be concluded without the consent of the resident societies" (Brumlik 2007, p. 148, my translation). This is Israel's major challenge: to secure its existence, which it has had to fight for again and again, enduringly in a genuine compromise with the moderate forces on the other side.

4.3 Supplemental and Concluding Remarks

To avoid that my analysis of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and of a credible German position is used or rather abused for anti-Israeli anti-myths, I will summarize the question of historical responsibility for this conflict in a different way. Like many other nations, Israel was born in violence. In order to establish a Jewish state, the at least as legitimate national ambitions of the indigenous Arabs had to (and still have to) give way or compromise heavily. But in this dramatic historical process many other parties share responsibility. Had Europe kept the enlightenment promises of emancipation and democratization, Zionism would have remained one variation of Jewish nationalism and would not have been able to gain a relevant position compared to other reformulations of modern Jewish identity. Without European anti-Semitism, the pogroms in Tsarist Russia and the discrimination and enmity in France, in Germany and Austria-Hungary, Zionism's foundational books and pamphlets would probably not have been written. Without the emigration pressure in Poland in the 1920s and 30s and again after World War II, Jewish immigration to Palestine would have remained much smaller. Without the Nazis and their mass murder of European Jews, American Jewry would not have supported Zionism almost unanimously, politically and economically, and leading politicians in the United States as well as large sections of the politically relevant world public would not have considered the establishment of a Jewish state a definite political necessity. Had the community of states been more open towards immigration of persecuted and threatened Jews, by far fewer would have moved to Palestine (see Diner 1991).[23]

[23] One might add here that resentment against Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe already in the 19th and early 20th centuries played a role, too, feeding into support for a Jewish "national home" in Palestine rather than individual homes of traditional Jews in East London, Vienna, or Berlin. As already mentioned, religious ideas about the "Holy Land" and its role in Jewry and Christianity were also important, sometimes even in high politics as in the case of Woodrow Wilson.

There would probably be no Israel without British imperialism and the Balfour Declaration, a product of World War I and the competition among the great powers. And finally, the Arab side needs to be mentioned, which very early forfeited their claim that they were only defending one of their own national movements and were nothing but victims in their conflict with the Jews: through anti-Jewish pogroms in several countries in the Mandate period and in World War II, through the open and intense collaboration of one of their most prominent political and religious leaders with the Nazis, and through emigration pressure on or even expulsion of large parts of their own Jewish communities, the uncompensated appropriation of their property included.

5. Germany and the Middle East Conflict: Summary and Consequences

As the empirical analysis has shown, several genuine historical connections between the Nazi era, its legacy, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict do exist. But they are far from unambiguous or straightforward. The answer to the question, whether Israel would not have been established, had the Nazis not come to power and had there been no Holocaust and no World War II, is more complex than is sometimes assumed. If we wanted to be sure, we needed a thorough counterfactual analysis, which raises a number of difficult methodological questions. German immigration to Palestine would then have remained at the level of the Weimar Republic, yet Britain would probably not have reduced the quota for immigration and have stuck to its policy of parity. How things would have developed otherwise, i.e. if, when, and how a Jewish state would have come about in Palestine, is extremely difficult to say.

Both the Holocaust and the Middle East conflict have their own separate histories. Yet inasmuch as the Holocaust did influence the *Yishuv*, the great powers, and world political opinion in the formation of Israel, it also unavoidably influenced the conflict between Jews and Arabs. As John Foster Dulles, later Secretary of State under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, told the Lebanese delegation at the UN in 1948: “The American people and the government are […] convinced that the establishment of the State of Israel under livable conditions was a historical necessity. [This involved, GK] certain injustices to the Arab world” (as quoted in Schoenbaum 1993, p. 62).

In this connection we also have to consider that Israel’s violent self-assertion in its foundational act, which involved civil war with the Palestinians and a successful inter-state war in its defense against the attack by several Arab armies, also resulted in the flight *and* expulsion of thousands of indigenous Palestinians, massacres of unarmed civilians included; in the destruction of hundreds of Arab villages, the appropriation of the land in the countryside and of

real estate in the cities, and in the suppression of most mementos of Arab civilization and culture. As Ari Shavit, who argues that his country was built on several layers of denial, writes:

> This denial is astonishing. The fact that seven hundred thousand human beings have lost their homes and their homeland is simply dismissed. Asdud becomes Ashdod, Aqir becomes Ekren, Bashit becomes Aseret, Danial becomes Daniel, Gimszu becomes Gamzu, Hadita becomes Hadid (as quoted in Freedland 2015, p. 22).

Shavit, whom one might regard as a "Liberal Zionist", considers the foundation of Israel a necessity, because of the Holocaust and the urgent need for a safe place for its survivors. Yet he also mourns the violence of the Jewish side. He does not justify the expulsions on the basis of nationalism or cynical realism, and he criticizes the Israeli peace movement for its almost exclusive focus on 1967: To understand the conflict and to understand *both* sides, one also had to look at 1948. Among liberal Palestinians, one may find some empathy (not, of course, sympathy) with Shavit's point of view. Sari Nusseibeh, e.g., accepts that Israel, for the time being, will not agree to a Palestinian state (which also seems more and more unrealistic because of the continuing settlement process) – the major reason being Jewish *angst* and the experience or memory of the Holocaust. Nusseibeh is hoping for a non-violent common civil society with equal human rights for Jews and Palestinians, and for communal and later perhaps federalistic political rights of the Palestinians, too (Nusseibeh 2012).

To understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its relative connection to or independence from the *Shoah*, we also need to go back further than the Holocaust, because the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine, the option of dividing it between Jews and Arabs, or of transferring parts of the indigenous Arab population are older than World War II. These older origins are to be found in Europe more generally; in its nationalism and anti-Semitism in the 19th and early 20th centuries and also in European colonialism and imperialism. The risks of the Zionist program, the foundation of a state whose territory did not yet exist, were obvious from the very beginning, although sometimes denied, played down, or argued away with figures of speech about a supposedly altruistic Western paternalism vis-à-vis the "less developed".

Apart from the Holocaust and its potential connections with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arabs in Palestine indeed became the secondary victims of European nationalism and anti-Semitism very early, of Europe's inability or unwillingness to integrate its Jewish citizens or co-inhabitants. In no way does this negate Germany's responsibilities resulting from the Holocaust for the Jews in Israel, including support for their security as well as protection against anti-Semitism and unfair comparisons or even demonization in connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arab or Muslim tendencies standing in the tradition of the collaborator

Amin al-Husseini or other anti-Semitic Muslim radicals need to be countered at all levels of politics and society in Germany, just as do neo-Nazi tendencies. Of course, Germany (and "the West" in general) should criticize and combat Arab or Islamic states or groups for their co-responsibilities in the Arab-Israeli conflict (and other questionable or unacceptable attitudes and behavior). But they should also admit that *they*, i.e. the West, bear the major responsibility for its historical origins.

Germany needs to take into account that Israel is also the product of a European *problematique* older than the Holocaust: the Zionist reaction against discrimination and persecution in form of a nation-building program via colonization – a process which still continues. This is Germany's dilemma: It must (and should) support Israel, because of the Holocaust and also for other reasons; Israel is the only Western country whose existence is under threat. But Israel is today also the only Western state which occupies large parts of another people's country. And Germany cannot simply disregard the older history of the conflict, which again includes Western responsibilities or rather irresponsibilities vis-à-vis *both* sides, Jews *and* Arabs. This comprehensive perspective puts the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a more complete and also more honest framework; it also gives Germany a chance to join diplomatic forces with its European partners and to bring *their joint* responsibilities and also *their joint* experience in overcoming their own violent past into the debate about how to perhaps moderate relations between the conflicting parties in the Middle East.[24]

Whether Germany or Israel or even both will accept such a perspective, is quite a different matter, of course. To be sure, Israel's security situation is far from encouraging; the descendants of the millions murdered in the Holocaust are not in a comparably comfortable situation as those of the murderers (see Oz 2005, p. 54). Israel has radical enemies close by, and it lies at the rim of the vortex of a secular crisis of Arab and Islamic civilization with serious destabilizing effects, including another major totalitarian challenge not only to democracy but to the state-system as well. And it faces strong and often lethal resentment not only in the Middle East/North Africa, but even in Europe. That does not mean Israel has no freedom of action anymore in its relationship with the Palestinians, however. It could still, without risk to its security, decide to finally halt the ongoing process of colonization, help improve the circumstances of life and the human rights situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and in Gaza, *and* to negotiate all big questions.[25] There are no guarantees that the other side

[24] This is essentially Moshe Zimmermann's point, who argues more on the basis of an analysis of German-Israeli relations after the Holocaust and World War II (see Zimmermann 2015, pp. 468-470).
[25] As already suggested by Ami Ayalon, then Chief of the Shin Bet, to Minister President Netanjahu in 1998 (Moreh 2015, pp. 259-260).

would or could respond positively. That Israel it not even trying, however, not only disappoints its friends, including many in German and American high politics; it also fires the rage of its enemies, and that is much worse.

The escalation of the conflict in the fall and winter of 2015 in Jerusalem and elsewhere with attacks by Palestinians with knives or cars against Jews and with Israeli reprisals does not contradict, it rather confirms the argument. Of course, Israel has the right to defend itself; that is not in question. The question is whether it defends itself prudently, quite apart from potential co-responsibilities for the flaming-up of the chronic controversy about the Temple Mount. Senior German journalists in Israel with intimate knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and well-disposed towards their host country, such as Inge Günther or Peter Münch, and even more knowledgeable security experts from the Israeli military, such as Ami Ayalon or Herzl Halevi, warn of complete lack of hope, of desperation and frustration among young Palestinians about their political and economic situation and ask for restraint and for more flexibility in Israel's long-term political planning. It is not the first time that the Israeli government does not listen to its own experts; it rather follows policies which have failed to address the basic causes of tension in the relationship with the Palestinians again and again and which have contributed to the current malaise.

Some conflict researchers would call such kind of behavior "autistic".[26] Indeed, too many Israelis ignore or just do not want to know what the occupation means for the Palestinians,[27] which corresponds to Benjamin Netanjahu's reasoning that the government was fighting terrorists who were motivated by nothing but blind, unfounded hatred. To be sure, one (but only one) of the driving forces behind political autism is fear, and in this case fear based on trauma. Tragically, the shadows of the Holocaust still feed into the fears of many Israelis; fears however which contribute to destructive policies not only vis-à-vis the Palestinians but also vis-à-vis Israel itself.[28]

The status quo in Israeli-Palestinian relations is untenable, not only because of the occupation and the attendant violations of human and political rights, but also because it is not even a status quo; the settlement process just does not stop, although all American Presidents have asked for that for about 45 years now. Israel, in order to survive, will have to give up some of the original elements of Zionist ideology and practice: colonization and a not wide but still

[26] See, e.g., Dieter Senghaas' discussion of autism as a concept for political analysis in chapter 2 of his book *Rüstung und Militarismus* (1972).
[27] One of its ugliest dimensions is the brutal asymmetry in the legal system for Jews and Arabs with an almost complete tolerance of settler violence (see Zertal/Eldar 2007 and the more recent and even more urgent brief article by Boehm 2015).
[28] Of the newspaper articles I have seen, two have been particularly useful: Günther (2015) and Münch (2015).

risky opening for its national-religious legitimation (see Zuckermann 2015, pp. 195-196).[29] Avi Primor, Israel's ambassador to Germany 1993-1999, has suggested that a process leading to a final mutual consent between Israel and the Palestinians was highly unlikely. The United States and Europe would have to put pressure on both sides and at the same time pursue the idea of international troops to be stationed in the West Bank, in order to give Israel the security guarantees which any Palestinian government would be too weak to provide. Yet the required pressure on Israel would not come, one reason being Germany's inhibitions (Süddeutsche Zeitung, April 16, 2015, p. 2). Yes, German governments will go on complaining quietly but otherwise do nothing, making themselves believe they were behaving responsibly.[30] And Israel's reputation among the German people will continue to decrease. It is already much lower than Germany's reputation in Israel, which is now very positive; another bitter historical irony.

[29] The best comparative theoretical and empirical study, in my view, about the more general problem of how to retract settler colonialism is Lustick (1993). About the problem of politicized religion in Israel see Bernstein (2000) and Baumgart-Ochse (2008), as well as Illouz (2015, pp. 63-87) for a brief yet deep historical-sociological analysis.

[30] For more detailed recommendations what Germany could and should do, apart from broadening its historical perspective of the conflict in general, see the Open Letter by German Middle-East Experts on the Gaza Crisis (https://sites.google.com/site/nahostexperten gaza/home/en (April 21, 2015).

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