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Guilt, Innocence, Post-Guilt: Memory Communities and their Discontents in Germany

Culpa, inocencia, postculpa: las comunidades de memoria y sus descontentos en Alemania

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the intricate dynamics of memory politics and cultural discontent in Germany, focusing on Jewish and Palestinian communities post-1945. It highlights the concept of *agnotology*, or deliberate cultural ignorance, as a tool for understanding Germany's societal silences surrounding its Nazi past and its impact on minority groups. The author argues that Germany's memory landscape is deeply fragmented, influenced by postcolonial thought, and further complicated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Events such as the October 7th, 2023, Hamas attacks and their aftermath reveal the pervasive tensions within German society. The study critiques Germany's approach to Holocaust remembrance and its interactions with Jewish and Israeli and Muslim and Palestinian communities, suggesting these memory cultures clash with the dominant national narrative. It calls for empirical research to replace ideological discourse and foster inclusive, fact-based understanding of memory politics.

RESUMEN

El artículo explora las dinámicas complejas de la política de la memoria y los descontentos culturales en Alemania, centrándose en las comunidades judías, israelis, musulmanes y palestinas después de 1945. Destaca el concepto de *agnotología*, o ignorancia cultural deliberada, como una herramienta para comprender los silencios sociales de Alemania sobre su pasado nazi y su impacto en las minorías. El autor sostiene que el paisaje de la memoria en Alemania está profundamente fragmentado, influido por el pensamiento poscolonial y agravado por el conflicto israelí-palestino. Eventos como los ataques de Hamas del 7 de octubre de 2023 y sus consecuencias reflejan las tensiones en la sociedad alemana. El estudio critica el enfoque de Alemania hacia la memoria del Holocausto y sus interacciones con las comunidades judías israelis, musulmanes y palestinas, señalando que estas culturas de memoria chocan con la narrativa nacional dominante. Propone reemplazar el discurso ideológico con investigación empírica para fomentar una comprensión inclusiva y basada en hechos.

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Keywords: memory politics; Holocaust; post-guilt; agnotology; postcolonial thought.

Palabras clave: política de la memoria; Holocausto; postculpa; agnotología; pensamiento postcolonial.

Prologue

This paper was initially conceived as an exploration of Israeli and Palestinian memory communities in Germany. However, and given the sequence of events that have unfolded in Germany since October 7th, 2023, it seems more urgent to focus on conflicting German memory communities and how Israelis and Palestinians become pawns in German identity games —circumstances in which they have limited opportunity to express agency due to their sheer minority situation, and due to overwhelming German societal structures and social mores.

Since October 7th, 2023, protests in support of Israel or Palestine (but rarely, if ever, both) have become an ongoing feature across the country. Antisemitism and antisemitic hate crimes against Jews (in general) increased drastically in the immediate aftermath of October 7th, 2023 —and, notably, before the Israeli Defense Force initiated military action in the Gaza Strip (RIAS, 2023).[1] Germany's well-documented and underlying strain of anti-Judaism (Nirenberg, 2013) based antisemitism had found an outlet (Zick, Küpper & Mokros, 2023); antisemitism focussed on Israel specifically became central in left-wing antisemitism, as well as within other distinct strains of antisemitic sentiment (Kranz, in press a; Fischer & Wetzels, 2024). In this sense, it can be argued that citizens and residents of Germany were enacting their own local version of the Middle East conflict (Kranz, 2022). The tendency is for individuals to align themselves with one side or the other out of allegiance and/or ideology and/or ethnic or religious ties. This expression often lacks factual substance, with ideology and identity politics (sharply expressed, admittedly) replacing concrete knowledge and engagement with the facts (Judt, 2010; Kranz, 2024c, in press a).

The combination of fervor and lack of substantive knowledge is dangerous. The long-term effects of the Nazi era, the silences surrounding what had happened in Europe, in the Middle East, and in North Africa in the 1930 and 1940s, the unwillingness to include "others" and their memories in the official history of German: all these underpinned the German version of what I describe as "historical agnotology." *Agnotology*, a deliberate and culturally based ignorance (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008), is a helpful tool for conceptualizing the ignorance created by the silences surrounding the 1930s and 1940s. The silences

[1] It should be noted that Islamophobic hate crimes also increased, but not to the extent that antisemitic hate crimes increased.

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and the consequent strain of agnotology have had an increasingly evident impact on academia. Empirical, social scientific research on the post-1945 Jewish population (Kranz & Ross, 2022), including their relationship with Israel, is patchy at best (DellaPergola & Staetsky, 2023; Kauders, 2008). While Muslim life-worlds are better researched, no study to date has considered the relationship of Muslims in Germany —a diverse population— with Israel/Palestine. Differentiated, long-term multivariate analyses (such as by the two criminologists Jannik Fischer and Peter Wetzels [2024]) evidence higher rates of antisemitism amongst Muslims compared to Christians. The crucial detail that community-based religious praxes correlate positively with antisemitism for both groups is known in expert circles but not elsewhere (Fischer & Wetzels, 2024). The anthropologist Jana Jevtić (2023) has researched the Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions (BDS) movement concerning Muslims in Bosnia and the United Kingdom. She found that this activism tended to be characterized by more complex parameters than merely ethnic or religious affiliation.[2] Islamic ethics are critical for interpreting this context, not least because similar dynamics may hold for diasporic Jews vis-a-vis their support of Israel. With all this said, there is no single ethnography or social scientific study exploring the nuances of this issue in the context of Germany. Nor is there any empirical research on the attitudes of Jews vis-à-vis Muslims or Christians.

The structure of these multiple knowledge gaps can be evidenced as an example. Before Israelis in Germany hit the mainstream headlines at the beginning of the last decade, raising research funding was sheer impossible (Kranz, 2020a). "Living Jews" of any kind are not reckoned with in German academic funding structures (Kranz, 2020a) —problematic, as I will discuss below— because engagements with Jews and contemporary Jewish life are founded on outdated and often inaccurate presumptions about the constituent aspects of the Jewish population of contemporary Germany. Things Jewish are "a thing of the past," and Jewish and Judaic Studies barely engage with living Jews (or Israelis) (Kranz & Ross, in press). Palestinians, similarly, remain an under-researched social group (Atshan & Galor, 2020; Badr & Samour, 2023; El Bulbeisi, 2020; Koch & Ragab, 2018). The multiple gaps in the knowledge created by this failure in research are again filled in by ideology; as I will argue, German society's historical engagement with the State of Israel has shifted from (collective) guilt to (collective) innocence (Salzborn, 2020), to what I have conceptualized as (collective) post-guilt in a society split along ideological based fault lines (Kranz, 2024a). The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict serves as a useful proxy; as long as respectful, fact-

[2] At this point it should be mentioned that BDS did not originate from Palestinians, but that it was exported from British academics, who lobbied for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions from the early 2000s onwards: "BDS was not initiated or invented in Palestine by "the oppressed". It was initiated and invented in the UK, by British people who wanted to boycott Israel. They went to Palestine between 2003 and 2005, and they persuaded certain Palestinian activists that BDS would be a good strategy" (Hirsh, 2018: 101). I argued that this "export" constitutes an intellectual, post-colonial supracolonialism, which, in this case, exculpates Brits from their inherited guilt (Kranz, in press a).

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based dialogue is denied a place in the wider discourse, the conflicts between groups aligned to different memory communities *and* ideologies will only increase.

In what follows, I depict some of the conflicts between memory communities and history post-1945, with specific reference to the Holocaust. It is important, I think, to frame the current debates in the German context, including different German memory communities, local and native, and to highlight the specific issue of agnotology in local memory. From this, I then explore diversity issues in Germany and the discontents that inevitably followed. I will include the developments —the conflicts, to use a more apposite word— that have played out in Germany since October 7th, 2023, the day that Hamas perpetrated a pogrom against Israeli civilians and military targets. The attacks culminated in the taking hostage of more than 200 people: Israeli Jewish and non-Jewish citizens, Thai labor migrants, and other foreign citizens. Israel responded by initiating military action against Hamas, leading to (at present) upwards of 40 000 deaths in Gaza's civilian and non-civilian population and the murder of Israeli hostages. All these are considered primarily from the perspective of the aftermaths of the attack in Germany and its impact on post-Holocaust discourse in Germany.

Postcolonial thought, I argue, provides an intellectual umbrella for Germans seeking to evade historical guilt for the Holocaust and, from this, to locate themselves within the parameters of a "post-guilt" society. Many of the individuals concerned are descended from ethnic Germans associated with National Socialism. This will not work, however. To resolve the actual issues on the ground and detoxify the situation, the agnotological silences buttressed by postcolonial-infused, binary blueprints, operating in stark terms of heroes and villains (the encampments and student protests of the last year are, despite their evinced concern with the fate of Palestinian civilians, a clear example of this), need to be replaced by factual, empirical knowledge. This requires, in practice, the active support of empirical research —which includes accepting rather than eliding inconvenient and painful data that sometimes emerges in its wake.

Memory politics and memory cultures post-1945

Memory cultures and politics in the German context have attracted the intense scrutiny of national and international scholars. The Israel/Palestine issue, in conjunction with postcolonial thought, the notion of multidirectional memories (Rothberg, 2009), and the idea of a German catechism concerning the "right" way to remember the Holocaust (Moses, 2021), all constitute discursive flashpoint both domestically and abroad. These debates are anchored by an incomplete, emotional working through of the Nazi past society at large in situ. The ghosts of the guilt, of injustice, the unmourned, and potentially unmournable

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dead (Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich, 1977) all maintain their presence, as area experts have shown concerning post-1945 Germany (Berg, 2003; Corsten, 2023).[3]

On the issue of agnotology specifically, the first ethnography of post-Holocaust and post-Second World War Germans, conducted by the German-speaking, Austrian-born anthropologist Harry Robert Lowie (1954), uncovered that the population had at least partial knowledge of what had happened. Lowie's post-war ethnography corresponds to the diaries of Friedrich Kellner (Feuchert et al., 2011), a justice inspector at a local court, published decades later. Lowie demonstrated that while antisemitism was not limited to Germans and German speakers, "German Germans" had developed the most lethal and effective system to put antisemitism into practice, attempting to rid themselves of Jews —and profiteering on the way (Kleibl & Kiel, 2022). In his diaries, written between 1939 and 1945, Kellner wondered how people, in general, could pretend ignorance with respect to what was happening. However, "people" maintained this ignorance: the first *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s circled around the issue if a select few had perpetrated the Holocaust, convinced Nazis, or if vast parts of the population had been involved as well. The *Historikerstreit* could have been voided if Lowie's and Kellner's writings, as well as the opus magnum of the historian Raul Hilberg (1961), had been incorporated into the post-war (West) German canon of history research and education. This inclusion was disabled by way of structural and personal resistance within the profession of history (Berg, 2003; Corsten, 2023) and beyond rejections of admitting knowledge (Longerich, 2006) —or silence: the agnotology (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008) concerning 1933 and 1945 had begun to take shape on a societal level.

In due course, the agnotological silences surrounding what had happened between 1933 and 1945 were joined by what happened *after* 1945. Neither these silences nor the official history discourse could, however, erase personal, collective, and embodied memories. For example, in her research, the ethnologist Susanne Spülbeck (2000) explored different layers of silence in an East German village in the early post-reunification period. Spülbeck had set out to understand the villagers' responses to incoming Russian-speaking and Jewish "quota refugees". She found a whole web of connected silences extending from the run-up to the Nazi era up to the establishment of the GDR, and continuing into the era of her research. The Russian-speaking incomers of the present day provided a pretext for the fears and insecurities of the local East German villagers in the unsettling early 1990s (Körber, 2005) and consequently were treated with mistrust. The historian Monica Black (2020) had similar findings in her psychohistory of early post-war Germany. Black describes social relations as cold, distant, and steered by mistrust; "one" knew what one's neighbor had done in the Nazi

[3] Fascinating output on the victims of Nazi crimes, and the physical presence of these dead in present society exist for Poland, which goes way beyond notions of haunting to the physical traces that mass murder and genocide left physically, and which still impacts on health and well-being in situ to date (Dziuban, 2016). I am not aware of a similar source for the territory of present-day Germany.

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era, a knowledge that was shrouded in functionalized silence. This silence is epitomized in the concept of agnotology (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008) —a wilful ignorance, culturally and socially supported, and serving the function of maintaining the prevailing social order and social hierarchies, in this case, in post-Nazi Germany.

This detour, by way of an introduction, serves the purpose of establishing that the concept of memory, for the ethnic German population, is heterogeneous and diverse, even if it is silenced or shared with only a select few. To borrow the term coined by literature scholar Michael Rothberg (2009), memory is multidirectional in the sense that different groups of (ethnic) Germans experienced the Nazi era, the Holocaust, flight and displacement, and the division of Germany into two countries in 1949 differently. Officially, two distinct national memory communities emerged, with Jews becoming key in West Germany's official history but not in East Germany. Privately, the constellations were much more diverse: former Nazis regretted the downfall, opponents blessed it, opportunists just got on with their lives; city dwellers began rebuilding destroyed towns, and in particular "rubble women", *Trümmerfrauen*, were key in this endeavor; ethnic Germans had fled the advancing Red Army to the West and realized they would not return to their former homes; Jews emerged from hiding; Sinti, a German-speaking Rom people, continued to face fierce discrimination after the *Porajmos*, which was only acknowledged as a genocide in 1982. Germans, in the widest sense, were extremely heterogeneous, as were their memory communities, with personal memories being a different dimension to official memories.

Nevertheless, owing to societal changes, the horrors of the Nazi era was remembered on official memorials days, which also meant that the Nazi past could be contained by way of a ritualized public memory culture. At the same time, personal memories diverged, and continuities of high-ranking personnel were manifest. Kurt Georg Kiesinger of the Christian Democratic Party, chancellor between 1966 and 1969, had been a Nazi party member since 1933 and served in the Foreign Ministry in the Nazi era. It is safe to assume that it is no coincidence that the law[4] that downgraded various crimes relating to the Holocaust and war crimes in general to mere "administrative offenses," which means that even capital crimes became subject to a statute period, was passed by his cabinet.

Looking at this heterogeneous constellation allows for questioning the German catechism put forward by the historian A. Dirk Moses (2021): is Holocaust memory, and more so its official historical representation as well as the support of Israel, indeed *the* German catechism? Or is it something closer to publicly performed lip service for some (Marwecki, 2020) or a deep emotional investment for others (Dekel, 2022), even as a significant propor-

[4] The law itself carries the non-descript name "Introduction Law to the Law of Administrative Offences" (*Einführungsgesetz zum Gesetz über Ordnungswidrigkeiten,* EGOWiG). The law was abolished in 2007. John Demjanjuc, known as a particularly cruel watchman in Trblinka, was sentenced in Munich in 2011 for being an accessory in roundabout 28 000 counts of murder. Prior to 2007, individuals like Demjanjuc could not be persecuted under German law.

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tion of the population has remained indifferent or has become part of a web of agnotology (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008)? Moreover, where do post-1945 migrants fit into this structure? The historian Philipp Lenhard (2024) argues that issues of excluding memories focus on the memories of Palestinian migrants to Germany in particular. The anthropologist Alice von Bieberstein (2016) found that memories of migrant groups were generally disregarded, not being "the" memories deemed important in this respect. Historians have criticized the limited focus of formal history itself: Joël Glasman and Marcia C. Schenck (2023) argue that the focus on history at universities is too narrowly focused on Germany and that non-European history in particular, and entanglements across world regions/continents are barely represented.[5] The historian Gesine Krüger (2019) has argued along similar lines: non-European history should form part of the canon, and African history should not be limited to colonialism. A parallel emerges concerning depictions of historical Jews: posthumously, they were either venerated as the bearers of a lost and high culture or reduced to anonymous victims (Schneider, 2005; Sterling, 1965). Even when well-intended, these limitations erased their actual, multifaceted, previous and current life-worlds and cultural heritage (Ross & Kranz, 2023). Imagined Jews entered non-Jewish memory politics and culture in West Germany and reunited Germany, as did too orientalized Arabs, including Palestinians. Postcolonial studies tap into this void of knowledge in Germany. Whilst conflicts between all sorts of memories and formal history are rife, one must ask whether postcolonial thought is sufficient to disentangle the situation in Germany itself.

Guardians of history and their challengers: history and memory

Jews who spoke up publicly on Jewish issues within German institutions in early West Germany were removed and relegated to the Jewish realm, i.e., to Jewish communities (Kraushaar, 2001). The same applied on a societal level: Jews who spoke up about suffering, persecution, and terror were relegated to "contained" physical spaces, i.e., memorial activities, where they were tasked to bear witness to the Nazi terror, or they were simply denied the opportunity of making any meaningful impact to the public discourse as the sociologist Y. Michal Bodemann (1996) has demonstrated with regard to West Germany. The blanco statement that Jews did not talk about the Nazi era is incorrect. The historian Jael Geis (1996) evidences much the opposite; and she and Bodemann (1996) underline that a ritualized memorial culture began to take shape in the 1970s, leading to a further containment ofoutspoken Jews.

[5] Glasman and Schenck outline that the limited focus also owes to structure of German academia, which does not know departments, and in which 93 % of all academic researchers are on non-tenured, fixed term positions (Buwin, 2021), meaning that the very few tenured professors hold an excessive amount of power, and impact over research topics. Kranz and Ross (in press) have outlined this calamitous situation for the area of Judaic and Jewish Studies.

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Jews, and some non-mainstream non-Jews, who wanted to contribute their historical research toward understanding the Nazi era were deemed *Unbequeme Erinnerer* (inconvenient rememberers) (Corsten, 2023). By and far, they were disregarded —a task made easier as most had fled Germany and remained abroad. In this sense, historical research was not immune to agnotology. How involved the West German historians were in shaping their version of historical "truth" about the Holocaust was clarified by the historian Nicholas Berg (2003). Berg's brilliant and iconoclastic analysis caused much upset in the German historical profession; it should be remembered that Berg's book was published nearly two decades after the first *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s, and the defensive reactions reveal the perseverance of specific patterns of interpreting the Nazi past, the reluctance to reflect on these —and one's profession for this matter— and a reluctance to deal with the past emotionally, to engage with inherited worlds (Schaum, 2020), and with memories as such.

Furthermore, the acknowledgment of the involvement of vast swathes of the German population in Nazi society was still largely denied in public. What Lowie (1954) found in his ethnography of "the commoners", nearly 50 years ahead of Berg, remained true. One can say, in fact, that Berg unknowingly built on Lowie; reactions to both help explain the current conflicts about memory cultures and politics and how an overt engagement with memory cultures and politics can obscure a clear view of current affairs.

Unsurprisingly, the fates of "normal" Holocaust survivors who are central in the research of Geis (2000) and the social scientist Kristin Platt (2012) are scarcely documented; the narratives of non-elite Jews and those non-Jews who were more marginal, such as the Sinti and Rom[6] and Yenish[7] people, individuals who were branded antisocial, homosexual, or disabled, as well as political opponents were treated as individual cases.[8] This means that until recently, they have not benefitted from group-based claims for compensation or group-based representation.[9] The group —or non-group— that individuals fell into is key to understanding how their lives continued post-1945, how their persecution was remem-

[6] The Porajmos, the genocide against the Sinti and Rom was only recognised in 1982 by the German state. Sinto and Rom comprise two different ethnicities, and their "joining" together owes to shared interests.

[7] A well-documented case is that of Ernst Lossa, a Yenish boy who was murdered as part of a Nazi "euthanasia" program. Historically, the Yenish comprised of marginalized, often travelling laborers. They did not benefit from the general qualities that allow characterizing genocide legally as they did not fit with the definitions of an ethnic group. The ethnicization of the Yenish is a rather recent development, the *Zentralrat der Jenischen* (Central Council of the Yenish) was founded in 2019. Its form, function and aims resemble the central councils of the Jews, and the Sinti and Roma. So far, the Yenish are not recognized as an ethnic or minority group.

[8] The sociologist Andreas Kranebitter (2024) exemplifies this individualization for "professional criminals" (*Berufsverbrecher*), which were mainly marginal, small-time criminals guilty of stealing due to deprivation. In the Nazi logic they were undesirable elements of society and defined as *Asoziale* (antisocials).

[9] The Memorial and Information Point for the Victims of National Socialist "Euthanasia" Killings, *T4 Denkmal*, in reference to its location Tiergartenstraße 4 (T4), Berlin, only opened in 2014 (Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, 2014)

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bered, and if and how they received compensation. The social hierarchies after the genocide replicated the social hierarchies of the time before.

Further problematically, the issue of silence, as illustrated by Spülbeck (2000), led to the evolution of private and diverse memory communities, barely integrated into narratives of general history. Germans, the majority population during the Nazi era, were nonetheless a diverse group by way of area of residence, social class, and experiences during and after the war: ethnic Germans fled west from former German eastern territories, while others were displaced from Eastern Europe. Their histories —and embodied memories— were shrouded under a veil of official silence: the *Vertriebenverbände* (Associations of [German] Expellees) manifested a disturbance that could not be overheard. Furthermore, some high-ranking Nazis were swiftly reintegrated into West German society, their past being mentioned only by some (Fehlberg & Klein, 2021). The general silence and not dealing with the past emotionally had and still has direct consequences in the present (Grünberg & Straub, 2001), rippling into how the lived histories and memories of immigrant communities, in particular Israelis and Palestinians, and therefore Jews and Muslims, are engaged with in Germany (Kranz, 2022a).

The situation on the ground: Jews, Israelis vis-à-vis *Muslims, Palestinians in the new Germany*

Post-1949, Jews had been bestowed with some power, mainly symbolic, in exchange for their presence in the public arena (Kauders, 2007). This was, in effect, part of a trade-off with the US, who had made it clear as early as 1949 that West Germany's treatment of its remaining Jews and the relationship it developed with the embryonic State of Israel would play a decisive role in the ultimate decision whether or not to readmit West Germany into the league of civilized nations (Anthony, 2016). Bearing this in mind, the issues of silence and agnotology addressed in the previous section, and the prevailing antisemitism, the claim that Germans, at large, adhere to a "Holocaust and Israel venerating catechism" (Moses, 2021), feels a little thin. The sociologist Peter Schönbach (1961) identified secondary antisemitism as early as manifesting in the 1959/60 wave of antisemitic hate crimes. He conceptualized secondary antisemitism as based on guilt defense mechanisms and perpetrator-victim reversal. The legal scholar and publicist Ronen Steinke (2021) lists violence leveled at Jews in post-war Germany throughout, not limited to structural violence and bureaucratic torture (Lavie, 2012), characterized by violent and lethal dimensions. Philosemitism and philozionism constituted political norms for domestic and foreign relations (O'Dochartaigh, 2007), and accordingly for public diplomacy; these performances, however, were not necessarily heartfelt (Marwecki, 2020). Furthermore, stable rates of antisemitism (Zick, Küpper &

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Mokros, 2023) and an increasing dislike amongst the German population of Israel can be proven (Hestermann, Nathanson & Stetter, 2022); the "secondary antisemitism" that Schönbach (1961) had already identified at the end of the 1950s remained manifest.

It was not until the 1990s (Weissberg, 2004) that the reunited Germany embarked on the quest for its lost Jews after the national wound of separation had been —legally— fixed. However, only specific, imagined Jews were in demand (Weissberg, 2004). The reasons were twofold: on the one hand, one barely knew —and wanted to know— anything about the living Jews in the country (Kranz, 2022b, 2024c); on the other hand, these living Jews were not as imagined if one did encounter them (Bodemann, 2002). They were neither the lost German, Jewish, bourgeois intellectuals nor the romanticized, folkloristic Eastern European shtetl Jews (Kranz & Rebhun, 2023). While the majority of the Jews who populated West Germany between 1945 and 1990 were the descendants of Eastern European Jewish displaced persons (DPs), they were native German speakers and highly integrated into West German society (Rapaport, 1997). East German Jews were mostly Jews of German descent and were also highly integrated (Borneman & Peck, 1995; Anusiewicz-Baer & Dämmig, 2021). Neither West nor East German Jews were necessarily the nice, forgiving Jews Germans sought (Weissberg, 2004). They were rather a tiny group of people —27 711 West (ZWST, 2021), 372 (Burgauer, 1993) East in 1989[10]— who demanded to be met at eye level; to make things more complicated, they demanded that their Jewish perspectives and memories of the past be listened to, and integrated into historical accounts.

This situation was further complicated in the wake of reunification. Between 1990 and 2004, 219 604 individuals from the area of the (Former) Soviet Union (Haug & Schimany, 2005) migrated to Germany as "quota refugees" (Cronin, 2019). The legal category "quota refugee" had been created to accommodate Jews and their immediate family members, conferring upon them eligibility to immigrate and obtain residence in reunited Germany. The last parliament of the GDR passed legislation enabling this in the summer of 1990; it was only adopted into the reunification treaty after tough negotiations (Cronin, 2019). Here, again, the concept of a German catechism (Moses, 2021) that revalorizes Jews as desirables becomes questionable. Be that as it may, the Soviet-socialized Russian-speaking Jews brought with them their own Jewish and Soviet memories (Klingenberg, 2024), which caused conflict within (Bernstein, 2013; Kessler, 1996, 2008) and beyond the organized Jewish communities. Furthermore, they met with limited hospitality from the local population (Klingenberg, 2024; Körber, 2005; Spülbeck, 1997) and within the Jewish communities (Kessler, 2002; Silbermann, 1999).

Israeli Jews (Rebhun, Kranz & Sünker, 2022) have migrated to Germany in significant numbers between the mid-2000s and 2010s. While Israelis had always been one of the larg-

[10] These are the figures of the members of the Jewish communities. Totals remain unavailable (Kranz, 2024c).

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Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
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est Jewish immigrant groups to West Germany (Webster, 1995), this, as well as the fact that West Germany had become an immigration country for Jews after 1945, was conveniently overlooked by German non-Jews and Jews (Kranz, 2024d) —the source of another agnotological silence. These Israelis challenge established Jewish and German memory cultures and politics (Kranz, 2021). Coming from a Jewish majority state and defining themselves primarily as Israelis and not as Jews (Rebhun, Kranz & Sünker, 2022), they did not shy away from public conflict with other Jews about memory issues or the official memorialization of the Holocaust (Kranz, 2021). That said, Israeli Jews have become closer to other Jews in Germany in the wake of the attacks of October 7th, 2023, having belatedly realized that they, too, are affected by the increasing antisemitism on account of being Jews themselves. This notwithstanding, Israeli memory landscapes remain unsettling to Jews and Germans because, for many Israeli Jews, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict carries greater weight than the Holocaust (Cohen & Kranz, 2017); *in situ*, particularly in Berlin, Israelis meet and interact with their closest neighbors in the Middle East: Palestinians.

It is striking that research on Palestinians in Germany is so limited, given that between 70 000 (El Bulbeisi, 2020) and 200 000 (Lenhard, 2024) Palestinians live in Germany. Commissioned by the *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*[11] (*giz*, Association for International Cooperation), the political scientist Katharina Koch and the migration researcher Jasmin Nora Ragab (Koch & Ragab, 2018) offer an overview of Palestinians in Germany: it remains the only such overview. The first wave of migration occurred in the 1950s and 1960s: some Palestinians were laborers, and others were students (Koch & Ragab, 2018). Many were stateless, whilst some held other citizenships, as Palestine, as a sovereign state, does not exist. This contributes to a numerical uncertainty, as well as to another layer of agnotology, the German majority population failing to get to grips with another facet of the aftermaths of Nazi Germany.

Unlike the migration of Jewish Israelis to Germany, a phenomenon mediated by a range of factors and always operating (or interpreted) against a backdrop of post-Holocaust Germany, the migration —the flight— of Palestinians to Germany and other countries is a *direct* consequence of the unresolved Israeli/Palestinian conflict, which in turn *directly* relates to the Holocaust. In the Middle East, the first wave of emigration/flight occurred in 1948 as the result of the foundation of the State of Israel (Morris, 2004, 2008). Whilst the Jews of

[11] *giz* is registered as a limited company (*Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung*, *GmbH*). It receives commissions from several federal ministries, including the ministry of economic cooperation and development, the foreign ministry and the federal ministry for research and education, but also from German states and state ministries, communities, NGOs and commercial entities, the European Commission, the World Bank, and it can be hired by foreign actors, including foreign governments. This is to say that *giz* is located at the interface of state and non-state actors, it is constructed as a company under private law with the Federal Republic of Germany in shape of the *Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung* (BMZ, Federal Ministry for economic cooperation and development) holding 100 % of *giz*.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

Palestine, as represented by the Yishuv, accepted UN Resolution 181 (II) (1947), The Partition Plan for Palestine, the sovereign Arab nations surrounding Israel rejected it. Following the foundation of the State of Israel, these countries sought to reconquer the territory of the newly founded state. The Arab coalition lost the war, and Palestinians fled and were displaced (Morris, 2008); these events are remembered as *al-Nakba* (the Catastrophe). Another wave of displacement/flight, in this case of Jews, was triggered by the increasing intergroup tensions across the MENA that had prefigured the foundation of Israel and which intensified after the foundation of the state. Jews left/fled the MENA region and emigrated to Israel. An estimated 800 000 Jews were uprooted from Arab countries (Bensoussan, 2012), alongside the estimated 700 000 Palestinians rendered stateless in 1948 (Morris, 2004). The crimes of Nazi Germany against Jews had unprecedented repercussions for population movements and compositions far beyond Europe —and are remembered, in very different ways, by different memory communities, transported in the form of embodied memories from the Middle East to Germany.

Palestinians who had fled Israeli territory in the wake of the 1948 war had nowhere to return to after the war (Morris, 2004). After 1952, the Entry into Israel law blocked this; *in rem,* issues of vacated property fell under the Absentees' Property Law (1950). The Six-Day War in 1967 then sparked further displacements of Palestinians. At the same time, Palestinians had only been patchily integrated into the neighboring countries of Israel, who feared that their integration would frame the *Nakba* as a fait accompli and as a (tacit) acknowledgment that Palestinians who originated from what had become Israeli territory will not have any option of return to their ancestral lands (Morris, 2004) and that the State of Israel existed. Palestinian settlements that formed in the wake of these waves of displacements have become quasi-permanent refugee camps. The continuing status as a "refugee camp" allows for the provision of support by UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, founded in 1949), which had been established to support Palestinian refugees. It also underlines the sentiment that Palestinians were not considered locals in the host countries but rather permanent strangers (Simmel, 1908) —granted limited hospitality in the understanding that they would eventually return.

All this underscores the principal thrust of this paper. Memory communities are heterogeneous, and the official histories cleaved to in Germany have not gone unchallenged by Israelis and Palestinians. Specifically, the experience of the *Nakba* is formative for Palestinian memories, just as the Shoah is formative for Jewish memories. Fundamental differences between these memory communities and their histories remain (Bashir & Goldberg, 2018), and, of course, these differences are evident in both the Israelis and Palestinians who migrated to Germany. In situ in Germany, these memories meet —and, inevitably, clash— with the memories of Germans, particularly with the agnotology that shrouds the official history subscribed to by ethnic Germans. These Israeli and Palestinian memories disrupt the convenience that agnotology had hitherto offered Germans in Germany. Furthermore, these

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
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"different" memory communities cannot be marginalized easily, as was the case with the Jews, Sinti and Roma, and Yenish in early post-war Germany, because the Israeli and Palestinian memory communities are more numerous. Numbers count, after all.

Given the magnitude of the events that connect German/Israeli/Palestinians, it is the more striking that there is no single ethnography on Palestinians across Germany, even though the consensus is that Germany hosts the largest diaspora of Palestinians in Europe (Atshan & Galor, 2020; Koch & Ragab, 2018; Wari, 2017). The first, and so far only, ethnography is limited to Berlin and focuses on conceptualizing public space (Wari, 2017). Whilst the triangulation between Israelis, Palestinians, and Germans has gained attention even more recently, this scholarly inquiry is limited to Berlin (Atshan & Galor, 2020). More recently, Israelis and Palestinians have been depicted in the intersection with Jews and Muslims in Germany in general (Kranz, 2022a); *Arab Berlin* (Badr & Samour, 2023) offers views of Berlin from the points of the life-world view of Arabs and scholars of Arabs (Badr & Samour, 2023). It is the first volume that unites scholarly and autobiographical writing of self-identified Arabs, including Palestinians, although the near-exclusive focus of Berlin is limiting.

This lack of research points to yet another agnotology. While some progress exists in integrating Jewish history into German history, Israeli and/or Palestinian history, and Middle Eastern history generally, is not part of the mandatory history curriculum. Professorial positions for Contemporary Jewish, Israel or Palestine Studies, or Palestinian Studies are non-existent at university level. In practice, this means that the experiences of these peoples in the present and their own memory cultures and politics remain uncharted territory. While the memories of Israelis challenge German and Jewish memory culture and politics (Kranz, 2021), the memories of Muslims are migrantisized,[12] which goes hand in hand with the ongoing debate if Islam belongs to Germany in public and political discourse —even though the absolute majority of Jews in Germany post-1945 and up to the present are either migrants or have a least one parent who migrated (Kranz, 2024d). It would seem, paradoxically, that the localization of Jews occurs concomitantly with a delocalization of Muslims. For Germans, it would seem that the memories of Palestinians are even more disturbing because they hold a mirror up to mainstream society: what happened on German soil between 1933 and 1945 cannot be undone. It led to vast displacements of populations, the effects of this rippling out onto seemingly unrelated populations in the Middle East (Marwecki, 2020) and North Africa (Boum & Stein, 2018).

[12] I do harbor serious doubts about the authenticity of embracing Jewish memories as part of a broader German memory culture. But, as I indicated in this paper, migranticizing Jewish memories per se goes against the German status quo. To remain within the boundaries of this status quo, the memories of Jews of Eastern European displaced persons' origin, of post-Soviet origin, and of Israeli origin are categorized as opposed to the memories of "authentic" German Jews with pre-1933 German family biographies. The latter make up the smallest group amongst the contemporary Jewish population.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
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Considering the multiple, intersecting silences, the interview-based research of the Middle East scholar Sarah El Bubeisi (2020), including her psychoanalytic approach to Palestinians in Germany and Switzerland between 1960 and 2015, offers valuable insights. She concludes that the first generation of Palestinians who arrived in these countries, more often than not, remained silent because they had no space to talk, following the pattern I have sketched out for Jewish survivors after 1945 who were silenced until the second[13] and, more so, the third generation of Jews in Germany could not be silenced anymore (Kranz, 2019). It seems that this generational change manifests now with Palestinians (El Bulbeisi, 2020), as the second generation of Palestinians refuses to remain silent. El Bubeisi (2020) argues that the 2014 Israel/Hamas war constitutes a turning point in the awareness of Palestinians in Germany (and Switzerland). But, as I will discuss in the final section, this act of speaking out runs up against a society defined by agnotologic silence. Like the speaking-up of Jews and Israelis, it encounters resistance or it is taken out of context; the not-so-good catechists engage with it as means of settling their own post-guilt with respect to Jews *and* Israelis.

And now? Postcolonial thought, October 7th, 2023, and its aftermaths in Germany

Postcolonial thought entered the English-speaking academy in the 1980s, following the rise of scholars with family biographies in postcolonial countries to positions of power —which is to say, they could not be ignored any longer. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Gilroy, 1987) and *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989) are key works in British postcolonial thought, albeit examples of a varied and diverse cannon. The well-known *Orientalism* (Said, 1978) by the Palestinian American scholar Edward Said is an early milestone. Postcolonial thought and output did not evolve in a vacuum: first- and second-wave feminism left an imprint on the academy. Likewise, the human rights movement in the US, the decolonization of African and Asian countries, and last but not least, the acknowledgment of the social construction of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) all changed the awareness context in the scholarly community itself.

It took a while for postcolonial thought to reach Germany. The reason for this is as simple as it is compelling: Germans focus on different societal issues, and science reacts to societal and social events. Germany had lost its colonies relatively early: given the preoccupation with organizing the aftermaths of Nazi rule, working through the colonial past

[13] I capitalize First, Second, Third, when referring to Jewish survivors, and their descendants who were Germany born and raised. If first, second, third —and now forth— is not capitalized, I refer to the age cohort (Kranz, 2019). It should be noted that Second and Third Generation Jews are the minorities in their age cohorts. For the second and third generation post-Soviet Jews constitute the majority; in the third generation Israelis are the second most numerous group. Jews with pre-1933 family histories in Germany itself are the absolute minority.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

of the country was low on the agenda. The era of the proliferation of postcolonial thought in the UK coincides with the first *Historikerstreit*, underlining that different societal issues were crucial in situ.

While postcolonial thought entered Germany somewhat late, it did with full force. It entered the public consciousness in 2020[14] when the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe was disinvited from delivering the keynote address at the *Ruhrtriennale* cultural festival. A German politician had accused Mbeme of antisemitism —a claim Mbembe denies. Central in the dispute was Mbembe's stance toward Israel, which German officials found out of line with the BDS resolution (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019) of the German parliament, which had been passed a year earlier. While not legally binding, the resolution stated that state funding should not support events —and individuals— supporting BDS. Proponents of the disinvitation argued that Mbembe crossed the German political line concerning Israel; opponents of Mbembe's disinvitation argued that he represented a position from the Global South, which ought to be given space for that reason alone.

The latter argument was supported by the five key points of the "The Catechism of the Germans" (Moses, 2021). These comprise the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its non-comparability to other genocides; the civilizational rupture of the Holocaust; a special responsibility towards Jews and a special loyalty to Israel; antisemitism as constituting distinct prejudice and being different from racism; as well as the notion of antizionism being antisemitism (Moses, 2021). The historian A. Dirk Moses argues that this catechism has been in place since about 2000, replacing the old catechism that had defined the Holocaust as perpetrated by a small group of fanatics (Moses, 2021). That an exclusive club of fanatics had not perpetrated the Holocaust had over time become shrouded in agnotology and thus plausible deniability, and the intimate, familial guilt was silenced (Grünberg & Straub, 2001; Welzer, Moller & Tschuggnall, 2002). Still, it has traveled down the generations (Moré, 2013). This means, in turn, that tacit knowledge existed: it was silenced, as multiple sources illustrate. (West) Germans were found to be collectively guilty by the Allies, a verdict (West) Germans accepted more or less; to deal with collective and personal guilt, they opted for silence, as Black (2020) and Spülbeck (1997, 2000) have shown. From there occurred the generational shift to collective innocence, as the political theorist Samuel Salzborn (2020) underlines in terms of German memory culture, and as the sociologists Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall (2002) had already evidenced: *Opa war kein Nazi* ('Grandpa was not a Nazi') is the telling title of their book. This notion of in-

[14] As a side note: While I was born and raised in Germany, I am British educated, and a British social anthropologist. Upon returning to Germany in 2009 after living, studying, and working in the UK for more than a decade it left me puzzled just how little was known about postcolonial thought and that my own field, contemporary Jewish Studies and Israel Studies did not exist at all. As another side note I limit the sources and the short detour to the English language: I am well aware of postcolonial/decolonial thought and publications in French and Spanish.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

nocence finds its basis in the silence of previous generation(s). From there, it is a short step to what I conceptualize as post-guilt (Kranz, 2024a, 2024b), a means of ridding oneself of the free-floating, inherited guilt for terror which one (personally) neither perpetrated nor heard about, but which constituted an inheritance that could not be renounced at will —in all likelihood, one was, after all, a descendant of individuals who had at least been "ignorant" (Feuchert et al. 2011; Grünberg & Straub, 2001; Straub & Rüsen, 2011) vis-à-vis the everyday terror and violence of the Nazi.

Reactions to the speaking out of Palestinians in Germany are linked to this situation. Grünberg (Fisser, 2023) clarified that the apparent identification of Germans with Palestinians post-October 7th, 2023, is exemplified in signposts such as "Free Palestine from German Guilt", which stands for freeing oneself from inherited guilt towards Jews and Israel, the Jewish State. He continues that this does not mean actual support for, or identification with Palestinians (Fisser, 2023). The same logic applies to signs reading "End Israel" —which would also mean ending German guilt by way of annihilating the Jewish other — or slogans for an "Intifada Revolution."[15] The widespread occurrence of these signs pushes the question of whether the identification with Palestinians and the mourning of those killed in Gaza is, in fact, a transference of mourning for the "unmournable" German dead of the Second World War. While the extreme right acknowledges mourning Palestinans now and Germans then (Pérez, Fuchs, Gruber y Henßler, 2024), it stands to reason that this transference applies to left-wing and more moderate political factions too. While non-right-wing individuals, who more readily accepted the verdict of "collective guilt" post-1945, may be less vocal about equating the deaths of Germans with those of Palestinians, it stands to reason that they too, experience a difuse sense of mourning, and embodied memories, for the death, and displacements of Germans some decades ago, who constituted collateral damage from war Germany had started.

Furthermore, Grünberg's (Fisser, 2023) recognition of the inability to empathize with Israelis and Jews questions whether this inability serves to reject the active acknowledgment that Jews were either direct or indirect victims of the Nazis as the Holocaust reached well beyond Europe (Boum & Stein, 2018), and as the Holocaust continues to impact in the form of a dark past (Straub & Rüsen, 2011). This interpretation links up to the argument of the Egyptian, British-based anthropologist Heba Abd el Gawad (2023). Analyzing her embodied experiences of the decolonization of scientific collaborations of Global North scholars with colleagues from the Global South, she argues that these collaborations serve the strategic narcissism of cleansing the conscience of the global northerners and validat-

[15] While it is beyond focus, the French Algerian political activist Houria Bouteldja, summarises the predicament accurate and bluntly: "Killing an Israeli is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one dead man and the other free" (Bouteldja, 2020).

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

ing their "Eurocentric perceptions of equity and ethics as universal." (Gawad, 2023: 289) The emotional, self-referential aspect that el Gawad identifies connects to my reasoning. I do not question the good faith of every German activist who protests for and mourns Palestinians; I do not doubt that Germans who feel shame about the antisemitism of migrants (Dekel, 2022) do not experience this emotion, nor do I doubt that Germans who speak up against native antisemitism and/or racism do not reject antisemitism and/or racism, nor do I doubt that support for Israel can be decoupled from the past. My point goes to the underlying emotional entanglements concerning the Nazi era, familial ties to it, and its aftermath. These, too, are embodied, possibly silenced memories (Grünberg, 2010; Moré, 2013), reflecting emotional landscapes that inform positionalities.

These carry over into locally infused interpretations of postcolonial thought, which serves as the intellectual umbrella to support German attempts of reprieve. Following the Mbembe furor, the "Forum: The Achille Mbembe Controversy and the German Debate About Antisemitism, Israel, and the Holocaust" of the *Journal for Genocide Studies* (2021) observed that Israel/Palestine is central in the local German debates about postcolonialism. The Berlin-based historian Paul Nolte argued that these debates unfold within a small section of German academia —in disciplines that have strong international connections or that, by way of their focus, engage with a specific world region (Culina, 2024). In other words, knowledge about postcolonial thought, much less what decolonization would mean in practice (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and about Israelis and Palestinians remains low (Kranz, 2022a, 2024c). There is a lack of bottom-up perspectives about Israelis and Palestinians, about Jews and Muslims, in these German identity games; it is only a question of time before all four interconnected groups find themselves in new, allocated status quo spots, single individuals who fall into these groups finding themselves in demand as tokens for one ideological camp or the another (Kranz, 2020b; Özyürek, 2019). It is high time that social scientific, empirical research is conducted in these research areas and for factual knowledge to replace ideology (Kranz, 2024c).

Epilogue

While writing this piece, the situation in the Middle East —and, by extension, in Germany— went from bad to worse. In 2022, I published "The Politics of Hospitality" (Kranz, 2022a), which discusses how Israelis shift conceptually from Israelis to Jews in Germany from a German perspective —despite their own primary identifications as Israelis and not as Jews (Rebhun, Kranz & Sünker, 2022). As Jews, they become desirable guests and/or "presents"; Palestinians, by way of contrast, are ethnicized as Muslims —a status different from that of being victims in the Middle East, which also leads to them being perceived as threats in

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

Germany. While some of what I wrote back then still holds, I did not anticipate that such a landslide of antisemitism could be activated so quickly, drawing from a long-established cultural reservoir of Anti-Judaism (Nirenberg, 2013) and Judeophobia (DellaPergolla, 2024), from leftwing (Hirsh, 2018) and Muslim antisemitism (Fischer & Wetzels, 2024).

Neither did I expect that Germans would show such self-serving and self-centered support for *their* Palestinian cause, in many cases blotting out the events of October 7th, 2023, and the sadistic violence perpetrated by Hamas and their allies. The wars in Gaza and Lebanon certainly facilitate this overlooking. However, these are not the only reasons for the eruption of antisemitism. Agnotology kicks in again and connects to the past's agnotological silences. These silences and entanglements can only be mitigated if ideology is replaced by knowledge and the (currently lacking) emotional working through the past (Kauders, 2003; Moré, 2013) finally takes place. By that token, it would be valuable, scientifically and societally, to research the current protests, including the encampments, and their interface with academia generally (in Germany and beyond). If no knowledge production and transfer occur, polarization, stratification, discursive and physical violence will win. This will be at the expense of the Jewish and Muslim minorities, including Israelis and Palestinians.

Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales | Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

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Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
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Nueva Época, Año LXX, núm. 253 | enero-abril de 2025 | pp. 181-206 | ISSN-2448-492X
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/fcpys.2448492xe.2025.253.90593

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