

Deciphering the New Antisemitism

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Alvin H. Rosenfeld: Deciphering the New Antisemitism. Studies in Antisemitism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. 560 pp. \$35.00 (cloth).



In the last years, antisemitism and antisemitic violence have been on the rise. Antisemitic knowledge and topoi have spread and have been integrated into the worldviews of many social and political milieus. Antisemitism, since the Shoah (Holocaust) often understood as a phenomenon of the Far Right, has now become a part of the mainstream and gained new respectability. This manifests itself, for instance, in antisemitic caricatures printed in the leading liberal German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in recent years.[\[1\]](#)

Deciphering the New Antisemitism, edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, contributes to our understanding of the current wave of antisemitism. In eighteen essays, scholars shed light on facets and aspects of current forms of antisemitism. Structured in four sections, the book focuses on such topics as the relationship between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, antisemitism among Muslims, antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism, European antisemitism, and left-wing and fundamentalist Catholic antisemitism.

In part 1 ("Defining and Assessing Antisemitism"), four essays address characteristics of contemporary forms of antisemitism. Whereas the French philosopher Pascal Bruckner argues against the widespread definition of "Islamophobia" as the new antisemitism and the often connected "nazification of the Israelis," Kenneth L. Marcus scrutinizes the "ideology of the New Antisemitism" (pp. 16, 21). Marcus connects this with different strains of anti-Zionism that he sees as nodal points of such ideologies as Islamism, Marxism, Third-Worldism, and postcolonialism. Elhanan Yakira examines the role of social elites for perpetrating antisemitism by tracing the attitudes of Blaise Pascal and Ernest Renan. In the fourth essay of this section, Günther Jikeli develops a framework for the analysis and assessment of antisemitism that considers four dimensions: the quality of antisemitic beliefs; forms as well as spheres of antisemitic manifestations; the social, cultural, and historical context that can strengthen or oppose antisemitic knowledge and behaviors; and, lastly, the factions of individuals and organizations that advocate,

tolerate, or oppose antisemitism. Applying this theoretical framework to the antisemitism of the French comedian Dieudonné M'bala M'bala, the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Palestinian terror group Hamas, Jikeli demonstrates how fruitful it can be to draw on a multidimensional approach to assess the threat and potentials of antisemitic attitudes held by individuals and/or organizations.

"Intellectual and Ideological Contexts," the second section, contains five essays dealing with different ideological backgrounds of current antisemitism. The chapters cover the role of contemporary "kosherizers" in anti-Zionist discourses (Doron Ben-Atar) (p. 111); the effects of the ideas of Benedict Anderson, Edward Said, and Hayden White on nationalism in contemporary anti-Zionism (Jean Axelrad Cahan); the rhetorical strategies of denying antisemitism by French intellectuals (Bruno Chaouat); and the relationship between anarchism and anti-Zionism (Eirik Eiglau). In the section's fifth essay—the only one in the anthology dealing with contemporary Far-Right, non-Muslim antisemitism—Mark Weitzman examines antisemitism in fundamentalist Catholic milieus. By focusing on the Society of Saint Pius X, which is probably best known for the Holocaust-denying statements of its bishop, Richard Williamson, Weitzman persuasively demonstrates that "antisemitism has been, and continues to be, an essential component in the theology of many radical Catholic traditionalists" (p. 245).

Part 3 turns to a crucial argument of current forms of antisemitism: the minimization or denial of the Holocaust. Whereas Bernard Harrison surveys the debate surrounding the question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, David Patterson analyzes the historical and contemporary development of Holocaust denial as well as the "de-Judaizing [of] the Holocaust" (p. 339). In the section's third essay, Aryeh Tuchman examines how generational changes among Holocaust deniers transformed the discourse of negating the Shoah. In this context, Tuchman identifies two major shifts in Holocaust denial. He describes the emergence in the 1970s of a "more sophisticated pseudoscientific" discourse, the province of pro-Nazi groups from the 1940s until the 1960s (p. 350). A second shift took place by the year 2000, when, according to Tuchman, Holocaust denial became increasingly a tool of anti-Zionists.

In the last section, titled "Regional Manifestations," six essays address a wide range of topics. The section includes essays on antisemitism in the contemporary Left in the United States (Sina Arnold); the (more or less powerless) measures adopted by the European Union to fight antisemitism (R. Amy Elman); anti-Israel boycotts in Europe from a human rights law perspective (Aleksandra Gliszczynska-Grabias); strategies and discourses of delegitimizing Israel in Germany and Austria (Stephan Grigat); and the mobilization of antisemitism by the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Matthias Küntzel). Bodo Kahmann's essay, which deals with the relationship between anti-urbanism and antisemitism, is particularly inspiring. Examining a long time period (from the 1850s until the present), he conceives of anti-urbanism as a part of reactionary modernism. According to Kahmann, anti-urbanists, like the Nazis, rejected city life, because they understood it as a manifestation of modern forms of sociation. Since antisemitic discourse constructed Jews as the representatives and embodiment of the abstract and thus juxtaposed them to the ideal of rural-peasant life, Jews were and are equated with urban life and the frequently construed linkage to financial capitalism.

Deciphering the New Antisemitism addresses a wide range of important topics connected to contemporary antisemitism, which are approached from various theoretical and methodological backgrounds. Unfortunately, although attitudes of Far-Right movements toward Israel or (facets of) antisemitic worldviews in right-wing populism are central to the understanding of contemporary antisemitism,^[2] antisemitism in the non-Muslim Far Right is underrepresented and the topic of only one essay, and thus drifts out of the anthology's focus. Additionally, gender and sexuality are not addressed in any of the contributions. However, as antisemitic reactions to the Harvey Weinstein scandal, but also older antisemitic affairs like the Leo Frank case, have shown, notions of gender and sexuality are of great importance for the comprehension of antisemitism.^[3] Despite the lack of

these important aspects, this anthology contributes significantly to our understanding of the contemporary rise in antisemitic attitudes around the world.

[1]. Pascal Beucker, "Karikatur des Tages," *Jüdische Allgemeine* (February 27, 2014): <https://www.juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/18517>; and Hanning Vogts, "Keine Antisemiten, nirgends!" *Frankfurter Rundschau* (February 26, 2014): <http://www.fr.de/kultur/netz-tv-kritik-medien/medien/antisemitismus-sueddeutsche-keine-antisemiten-nirgends-a-615472>.

[2]. The concomitance of antisemitism and pro-Israel attitudes in numerous right-wing movements like the Austrian Far-Right party FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) is one example. See Heribert Schiedel, "Zur 'pro-israelischen' Wende von Teilen der extremen Rechten" (June 15, 2016): <https://forschungsgruppefipu.wordpress.com/2016/06/15/zur-pro-israelischen-wende-von-teilen-der-extremen-rechten/>.

[3] Stephan Grigat, *AFD & FPÖ: Antisemitismus, völkischer Nationalismus und Geschlechterbilder* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017); Kristoff Kerl, *Männlichkeit und moderner Antisemitismus: Eine Genealogie des Leo Frank-Cases, 1860er-1920er Jahre* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2017); and Tobias Langdon, "Lies, Spies and Harvey Weinstein: Thoughts on Jewish Behaviour and the Pervnado," *Occidental Observer* (December 20, 2017): <https://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2017/12/20/lies-spies-and-harvey-weinstein-thoughts-on-jewish-behaviour-and-the-pervnado/>.

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