

Historical backshadowing

"Historical backshadowing" is a term coined by the literary scholar Michael A. Bernstein. These words aptly explain how historical events cast their shadows into the past and thus influence our assessment of past events. In retrospect, one is always wiser: How could people not have foreseen the impending catastrophe?

In retrospect, as history is being written, it seems clear and inevitable the dynamics that led to a particular course of events. How could people, for their part, be so blind and not have a glimpse of their inevitable fate, we ask ourselves?

The answer is: there are always several paths for contemporaries. We only see things in a different light in retrospect, because we know their outcome.

Early warning signs

The fact is that the first warning signs for the coming development of socio-political events in Germany appeared very early on. As early as 1920, the rabbi Leo Baerwald and five Jewish companions attended an NSDAP meeting in order to counter racist denigration with arguments and common sense. The response of the NSDAP members was beatings with rubber truncheons.

In 1922 the intellectual Gerhard Scholem wrote about the unbearable anti-Semitism in Munich. He had already turned his back on Germany in 1920. But that made him an exception. Very few Zionists of his time agreed with his negative view of the situation and left Germany early. But even Scholem could not have had more than a hunch of the events of the future. At this point, neither he nor Hitler nor the NSDAP itself had a precise idea of the fate that would befall the Jews in Germany at a later point in time.

Alternative realities

At that time, not all things had actually been set in motion to roll the unavoidable tracks towards the unspeakable events after 1933. Between 1924 and 1928, many believed that it was merely a temporary crisis in the republic that, like many crises before, would soon be over. And it could actually have been that Adolf Hitler would have been shot in the attempted coup in 1923. Then the story - perhaps - would have taken a completely different course.

Only in 1933 did the downfall of the Weimar Republic finally become apparent after the political murders of Eisner, Rathenau and many others.

Only in the eyes of others are all Jews equal

In any case, there was no collective perception or an opinion shared by everyone about the situation and the possible dangers in Germany among the German Jews. Half a million Jewish Germans made up less than one percent of the German population in 1933. But these people by no means formed a homogeneous group. Only in the eyes of the others were all Jews equal.

The White Rose

On June 27, 1942, the White Rose wrote in its first leaflet "If everyone waits until the other begins, the messengers of the avenging nemesis will inexorably get closer and closer, then the last sacrifice will also be senseless in the jaws of the insatiable demon be thrown. "

The second leaflet of the White Rose appeared in the summer of 1942: "Here we see the most terrible crime against human dignity, a crime that cannot be matched by anything similar in the whole of human history."

For many German Jews, any warning came too late to save themselves or others from mass murder. By the end of the brown haunt in 1945, only a third of European Jews had survived.

The life of German Jews today

Less than 30,000 Jewish survivors returned to Germany after exile. They were able to watch with confidence how Jewish museums, new synagogues and the memorial for the murdered Jews came into being. Today, in the face of recent political and social developments, there is increasing skepticism. The attack on the synagogue in Halle an der Saale and the election successes of the AfD give food for thought.

What lessons have we learned from history?

When will the Jewish existence be questioned again?

Michel Friedman and the President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster, have commented on when, in their opinion, it will no longer be possible to continue living in Germany. The AfD's entry into a coalition government is cited as such a signal.

Anti-Semitism does not stem from external factors

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that in 1954. Anti-Semitism has nothing to do with what Jews actually do. Rather, it says something about how its wearers link their own view of the world to Jewish realities through superficial references. The writer Jean Améry says aptly: He is her shame and her illness.

Even if anti-Semites rarely openly admit their attitudes, Jewish Germans are affected in various ways.

Role attributions and reality

Often it is rather discussed whether someone has actually made anti-Semitic expressions than to worry about how this expression affects Jewish people. An “accusation of anti-Semitism” is specifically and directly directed against a certain person, while anti-Semitism aims abstractly at “the Jews”. So the victims are largely intangible.

One example of this is the establishment of the second independent expert group on anti-Semitism at the beginning of 2015. Not a single Jewish member was appointed here. So while anti-Semitism is still very concrete, living German Jews remain an abstract concept.

The Jewish voice would like to be heard more in debates about anti-Semitism. But there is also a longing to escape from constant negative contexts and to be heard in self-chosen content.

New attention

If those directly affected have their say, attention can be drawn more efficiently to the issues of anti-Semitism than is the case with theoretical media attention. After the attack on the synagogue in Halle an der Saale, Jews who were in the synagogue during the attack were interviewed. The eyewitness Anastassia Pletoukhina does not allow herself to be put into the established role model of the “Jewish victim” and counters with “counter-images”: She emphasizes that she is German herself and calls for greater protection of the synagogues by the police. She would not change her religious practice, even under threat, and her identity as a Jew was not primarily shaped by anti-Semitism.

After the recent increasing episodes of violence against Jews, there has been a heightened sensitivity to anti-Semitism, which manifests itself in various ways. For example, agencies have been set up to monitor anti-Semitic acts. In addition to the educational work, the company specifically provides advice to those affected when they experience anti-Semitism.

The Visibility of Jewish Diversity

Through many individual initiatives, Jewish diversity has become increasingly visible in recent years. It is debatable whether this is a new diversity or a more modern approach to dealing with the public. The philosopher and political scientist Hannah Peaceman said that the Jewish institutions, confronted with National Socialism, did not want to publicize internal Jewish discussions in the past. The young generation of Jews has changed its attitude towards this point of view.

The diversity of inner-Jewish life plans has less influence on anti-Semitism, but rather on the social resonance space in which discussions are held in the event of a scandal. Dealing with anti-Semitism changes in an environment in which Jews have a polyphonic voice. Against this new background, an abstraction of "the Jews" is also less possible.

Initiatives

Some (incomplete) examples of the initiatives that make Jewish diversity visible:

- The Jewish Agency for Israel promotes lived Jewish diversity in Germany with the Nevatim program. The "Rent a Jew" encounter project, which has now been completed, enabled direct contact with Jews through appropriate speakers.
- Since 2010 the Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich "Studienwerk" has been promoting Jewish students. The promotion of doctoral students also applies to non-Jewish doctoral students who work on Jewish topics.
- The magazine "Yalta", published since 2017, takes positions on the Jewish present.

Finally

It remains unclear whether this new visibility of Jewish diversity really represents the Jewish community in Germany. Or whether German society would like to make this disproportionately visible in order to highlight it as a sign of a living Jewish culture in Germany as a sign of compensation.

Criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism

Israel has to endure a lot of criticism. Is this criticism justified? Or is it to be understood as anti-Semitism?

After 1945, Zionism appeared as the only way to reunite the Jews. Beyond its theological dimension, the newly founded State of Israel had to create a homogeneous unity from the many different heterogeneous Jewish realities. Zionism was the political answer to anti-Semitism.

The criticism begins with the accusation against the Zionists that they took land by force. Because the "Jewish state" could only be enforced by force. It is a state in which Jews and the Jewish religion are declared to enjoy privileges reserved for non-Jewish citizens. Anyone who does not look to Israel from the German situation will find it difficult to bear this state of affairs.

Various moral narratives

There are two different perspectives. One focuses on the Holocaust and the corresponding historical consequences for Jews. These people see Israel as the guarantor of security for the Jewish people.

The other moral narrative does not focus on the Holocaust. Rather, the atrocities of the colonialist and imperialist West against the world are seen. The Israelis are therefore white settlers who subjugate the people who previously lived there.

These two perspectives cannot be clearly differentiated from one another, either historically or politically.

Against the background of German memory, voices who believe that Israel is a project of colonialism and exploitation and corresponding calls for boycotts against the Israeli state - and as a consequence against Jews - are viewed negatively and classified as anti-Semitic. The post-colonial thinker Achille Mbembe had to experience this for himself at the opening of the "Ruhrtriennale" in summer 2020. He was described as an anti-Semite, Israel hater and Holocaust denier. Mbembe vehemently denies these allegations and points out that the anti-Semitism allegations against him should silence any legitimate criticism of Israel.

It is not a scientific, but rather an interest-driven political debate. Mbembe agrees to support a political struggle against Israel and its politics with boycotts and isolation. There are clear battle concepts.

Not plowshares, but weapons

In a lecture in Munich in 1917, the sociologist Max Weber said that political ideas are “not plowshares to loosen the soil of contemplative thinking, but swords against opponents: weapons.” The debate about Achille Mbembe is also fought accordingly. No understanding of anti-Semitism is created in the modern age, only a political struggle is waged.

However, the discussion does not only take place abroad. There are also critical voices within Israel who see Zionism as a colonial project. In April 2020, it was Israeli scientists from the “critical camp” who demanded freedom of expression for Mbembe and even demanded the resignation of the German government's anti-Semitism commissioner, Felix Klein.

Ideological and scientific knowledge can often not be clearly separated. This discussion is no exception.

Normality in Israel

Jews were once seen as too special to be universal citizens and too universal, too cosmopolitan to be particular citizens. Israel resolves this historical dichotomy by drawing the consequences and taking a clear position. A new sovereignty has arisen from the failure of international law based on national states. This and the military ability to defend oneself, as well as the exercise of power and political violence, are rated positively in Israel.

Discussions of moral and historical concern about Israel and anti-Semitism become more complicated. Humanitarian thinking and feeling should be universal, independent and impartial. They are principles that also apply in Israel. However, they are based on a diverse basic understanding.

Talk and Silence about Antisemitism

Apparently anti-Semitism is being discussed again several times in the Federal Republic of Germany. The advance of the AfD is obvious and the party acts as a magnet for people with anti-Semitic attitudes. Thanks to the anti-Semitism commissioner, public awareness of anti-Semitism is increased. The Federal Government has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism. In this way, the anti-Semitic BDS campaign (boycott, divestment, sanctions) and Palestinian terrorism are less played down. The terrorist attack in Halle an der Saale in 2019 also served as a reminder that anti-Semitism means terror and mass murder. Nevertheless, verbal condemnation of anti-Semitism is not enough. There is a need for action in the form of expanded criminal law and funding for educational institutions for anti-Semitism. Today the form of anti-Semitism dominates the "criticism of Israel". The Israeli state is delegitimized and its policies demonized, using double standards. This is anti-Semitism, not criticism.

Anti-Semitic Reality

Although anti-Semitism is not necessarily considered socially acceptable in German society, at least 15 to 20 percent of the population is made up of anti-Semites. These are located in different political groups. All variants of post-war anti-Semitism are a consequence and reaction to Nazi anti-Semitism and are inextricably linked with mass extermination. Anti-Semitism in the present is located in the right, left and Islamist spectrum as well as in the middle of society and always carries the legacy of guilty responsibility with it.

Right anti-Semitism, left anti-Semitism and the middle of society

Right-wing anti-Semitism trivializes or denies the Shoah and glorifies National Socialism. Since the wave of success of the NPD in the 2000s, it has also been part of the political system. In 2014, led by Palestinian organizations, Islamic anti-Semites, German neo-Nazis and left-wing anti-imperialists demonstrated together. It is the example of a delimitation in which the anti-Semitic worldview connects with one another and lets us forget all other differences.

Left anti-Semitism is not part of left world views per se. Rather, it occurs in certain anti-imperialist, post-colonial and post-modern spectrums. He sees himself as morally superior and judges and judges

others. The basic ideology is anti-imperialism, which is primarily directed against the USA and Israel. This anti-Semitism and hatred of Israel is mainly based on anti-Zionism.

Anti-Semitism finds opportunities for mobilization in the middle of society. One assumes a taboo in the Federal Republic. Anti-Semitic statements from the middle of society were therefore not made public for a long time, but only behind closed doors (e.g. at the regulars table). That changed Martin Walser's speech in the "Paulskirche" in Frankfurt in 1998. Since then, anti-Semitic statements by public figures have become increasingly vocal again.

The middle of society is responsible for ensuring that hatred of Israel and anti-Semitic defense against guilt are continually mentioned in a public climate. Accordingly, right and left anti-Semitism is becoming more common again. Anti-Semitic crimes are on the rise. In addition, anti-Semitic remarks are increasing on the Internet, which would have ended up in the trash in most newspapers as anti-Semitic rubbish.

Legal handling

Anti-Semitism is far too little sanctioned in public debate and under criminal law. Anti-Semites act psychologically according to authoritarian patterns. Therefore, repressive sanctioning is a means that does not fail to have its effect.

A democratic instrument against anti-Semitism is an extension of German criminal law. It is a criminal offense that has been in force in Austria for years: the prohibition of (re) activity in the sense of National Socialism. Compared to the Austrian model, a different structure and tightening would be necessary. Any form of anti-Semitism would be understood as a re-activity and prosecuted.

Stricter criminal law alone will not turn anti-Semites into democrats. But such a legal instrument would allow a connection to the societal theory, according to which any form of anti-Semitism is now part of the aftermath of National Socialism. As early as 1945 Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that anti-Semitism is resistant to the enlightenment. Accordingly, pedagogy remains helpless in front of him. The public and criminal sanctioning of anti-Semitism is an important step in the protection of Jews and as a fundamental component of democracy.

Talk about Antisemitism

When anti-Semitism is discussed today, there is an inevitable connection with the National Socialist genocide of Jews. The sociologist and philosopher Theodor W. Adorno aptly says: "The demand that Auschwitz should not be once again is the very first step in education. It precedes everyone else so much that I neither have to nor should justify it. And yet there are categories in which an exception seems to be made. The question of the universalizability of the Auschwitz teachings raises questions such as: Are all other problems secondary? Which would it be? What is implied by political education practice today?"

In relation to the Middle East conflict, anti-Semitism manifests itself in a trinity: as a real phenomenon, as a reproach and as a (mostly horrified) rejection of this very reproach. In recent years, the dispute has come from the BDS movement (boycott, divestment, sanctions), which has been criticized as anti-Semitic.

The debate about BDS in the context of Nazi memory

As a loosely structured campaign, the movement emerged in 2005 as a reaction to the end of the Middle East peace process. The failure of militant and terrorist actions and the lack of progress for the Palestinians gave birth to it. The BDS movement now enjoys worldwide support. The stated goals are to be achieved through the eponymous strategies: an end to the occupation, the return of all Arab territories, the dismantling of the barriers, the complete equality of Arab Israelis and the right of return for all Palestinian refugees. The movement relies on the UN resolutions for formal legitimation. The association of the boycott against Israel with the National Socialist boycott of Jews is particularly striking. Berlin's governing mayor Michael Müller accordingly condemned the BDS movement and said that "standing with anti-Semitic signs in front of Jewish shops" were "unbearable methods from the Nazi era".

Since then, the BDS movement has been increasingly recognized as an "attack on the existence of the Jewish state". Inevitably, there is an association between the "Don't Buy" stickers of the BDS movement on Israeli products and the Nazi banner "Don't buy from Jews!". The boycott of Jews is a sign of the BDS movement's lack of historical sensitivity.

More and more public figures have taken a stand and condemned the movement as anti-Semitic and called for its exclusion from public spaces.

The juridification of the debate

A large part of the administrative decisions against the BDS movement are based on the working definition of anti-Semitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). At first glance, it is an easy-to-understand document that is easy to access. Indeed, the document has great weaknesses and remains imprecise and contradictory. Certain aspects of anti-Semitism, particularly those related to the Middle East conflict, are discussed very carefully, while others are largely ignored. Therefore, the document is not suitable as a criteria checklist. Despite the lack of clarity, the broadening of the discussion of Israel-related anti-Semitism was a positive addition. At the same time, however, there is a risk that politics will use the fragmentation and internal contradictions to excuse its own inability to act.

The developments exclude discourse spaces in which ambivalence should be seen, recognized and discussed. Among them, for example, the fact that Israel is both a consequence of the Holocaust and a shelter for Jewish people as well as an occupying power with a settlement history. This ranges from the first Jewish settlements in Palestine, before the establishment of the State of Israel, to the current construction of settlements in the area of Palestine. It should be discussed that Palestinians are indeed waging a legitimate struggle against their disenfranchisement. However, their means are partly terrorist and anti-Semitic and their state is undemocratic.

The constellation is confused and complicated and should not rely on the administrative end of the discourse but on emotional disarmament.

Antisemitism and Antisemitism Research: An Overview

The British philosopher Brian Klug says that the anti-Semite turns Jews into “the Jews”: a homogeneous group that only exists in the anti-Semitic imagination.

From the semi-secret alleged knowledge of anti-Semitism, there has recently been increasing public talk about anti-Semitism. The motto is: Problem recognized, measured, fought. Anti-Semitism is not as easy to measure as temperature. The figures obtained through surveys can, however, be helpful in identifying trends.

In the Weimar Republic there was little interest in numbers. It was recognized that anti-Semitism was a widespread phenomenon that was caused not by the actions of the Jewish citizens but rather by the pathologies on the part of the anti-Semites. The pre-war question was not about how much anti-Semitism there was, but why it appeared. As is increasingly the case today, it is mainly emotions that have been blamed for anti-Semitic attitudes. Religion was recognized as secondary in the attempts to declare anti-Semitism in 1933. It can be said that not many new theoretical approaches have emerged since 1945.

In a survey in 1946, 85 percent of those questioned were against the return of the surviving Jews to Germany. The following year, the US military government's anti-Semitism report produced similar data: 18 percent of the German population described themselves as radical anti-Semites, 21 percent as anti-Semites, 22 percent as racists, and 19 percent as Nationalists. Only 20 percent of those questioned had no anti-Semitic or racist tendencies. Our current expectation that genocide would have had a greater impact on public opinion has been disappointed.

Only a generation change brought about a change of opinion. It was not until 1980 that only 9 percent of those questioned answered in the affirmative to the question “Would you say it would be better not to have any Jews in the country?”. Even in 1983, 50 percent of the survey participants said they were “undecided”.

After German unification in 1990, there was a stable shift in the polls. In a 1998 survey, 86 percent of those questioned were in favor of a Jewish presence in Germany.

The findings of anti-Semitism research are undisputed: the attitude of the elites was of immense importance. “Coming to terms with the past” became a priority for reasons of foreign policy, among other things. The change resulted in a German way of dealing with the murderous past that was described as exemplary. Financing for educational and memorial sites, museums and non-

governmental organizations created an excellent environment for education and prevention against anti-Semitism.

Episodes such as Martin Walser's speech in the "Paulskirche" in Frankfurt in 1998 or anti-Semitic statements by the former AfD member of the state parliament Wolfgang Gedeons show that success is not always given. Investigations from the internet have also shown that the rapid, uncontrolled and multiple spread of anti-Semitism is accelerating and intensifying.

Outlook

Prevention and education have a measurable positive effect against anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, there is an educational resistance that causes anti-Semitic crime to increase by 13 percent between 2018 and 2019. Growing crime stands in contrast to falling polls. A possible explanation can be found in a qualitative analysis by the cultural scientist Julijana Ranc. During group discussions in the 2000s, she often recognized anti-Jewish resentments that were far too seldom parried by those involved in the discussion. What was frightening here was the realization of how easily the large majority, namely the ambivalent and indifferent, could be drawn to the anti-Semitic side.

The increasing number of anti-Semitic crimes can also be explained by an increasing structure of opportunities, a brutalization of manners, opportunities for radicalization on the Internet and the increasing salutation of nationalistic, ethnic and racist statements and actions. So anti-Semitism comes in "good" company.

The last word goes to Constant Brunner, who wrote in the early 1920s: It is simply a matter of organizing society in such a way that it protects people in their diversity.

Because what cannot be cannot bet

In German society, anti-Semitism is considered impossible. It cannot and must not be. Sometimes it even seems that the accusation of anti-Semitism is even more serious than anti-Semitism itself. Over the decades, a moral view has developed according to which anti-Semitism is understood as "overcome" with the end of National Socialism. However, anti-Semitic narratives continued to be normal in the decades after the Shoah.

With Martin Walser's speech in the "Paulskirche" in 1998, it was publicly asserted for the first time that the issue of Auschwitz was a "moral club" and the "permanent presentation of our shame". Coming to terms with the past is an externally imposed detention, but it is now done and even entitles to new national self-confidence. In the following 20 years, many people in public life followed this now accepted view.

Open anti-Semitic statements are undesirable in German society. That is why they happen increasingly in an encrypted context and whenever a German "guilt cult" is discussed or Israel is attacked. Old anti-Semitic images have given way to synonyms. People no longer speak of "the Jews" or "Judaism", but of "the Rothschilds", "the world conspiracy", "the east coast capital", "the bondage of interest" and Israel.

Education against anti-Semitism

Germany has an exemplary "culture of remembrance". As early as 1985, the then Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker said in a speech: "The secret of salvation is memory." From a pedagogical point of view, however, this approach is insufficient. The feeling of being redeemed by memory means that you lose awareness of how to deal with manifestations of anti-Semitism. With this type of "coming to terms with the past", the problem is only seen in others, not recognized in oneself, and anti-Semitism continues to thrive. The underlining of the German culture of remembrance as a special achievement also presupposed it as an achievement related to ancestry. Accordingly, it leads to the exclusion of migrants who live in Germany without a historical family background. This hidden policy of exclusion makes it possible to understand subliminally that only Germans can learn from German history. Young people who are seen as migrant or Muslim recognize the contradiction and often consider themselves not to belong. It is the task of the educators to recognize and avoid such a construction of groups through self-reflection.

Education against anti-Semitism can promote a far-reaching understanding of the world without first addressing anti-Semitism directly. Anti-Semitism education begins with underlining the heterogeneous social relationships of the participants to the topic. Detailed knowledge transfer about history, ideology and forms of expression should further emphasize the complexity of contexts. In this way, the assignment of blame to “the Jews” becomes less plausible in the reality of globalized society. Limited anti-Semitic worldviews are confronted with the fact that the reality is much more complicated than the narrow anti-Semitic worldview. The aim is to convey that uncertainty can be felt, but that economic and social crises are subject to complex dynamics that cannot be answered in anti-Semitism.

In adults, it can be much more difficult to break down well-worn thought patterns. It is important not to focus on the perpetrators in all discussions. Much more important is the protection of those affected and making them aware of their point of view. In addition, it is particularly important to mobilize the audience. Anti-Semitic attacks are only possible if a passive audience allows them. If the whole group is brought up to account, anti-Semitism will find no breeding ground.

A look into the future

Anti-Semitism has always increased particularly in times of crisis. It is therefore important to remain vigilant. Educational work against anti-Semitism does not only have to be done in schools. It is important to always reach new target groups with anti-Semitism-critical educational work. Both in the real and in the digital world, because anti-Semitism adapts quickly to new realities and educational work must not lag behind.

Dealing with Anti-Semitism in School

75 years after the Shoah, "You Jude" is still being used as one of the most frequent insults in German schoolyards. It is linked to an anti-Semitic enemy image construction, Jewish identity is stigmatized. In this context, the swear word does not need any further explanation, "you" know that it is something "bad".

Anti-Semitism is ostracized in German society and yet Jewish schoolchildren are attacked on a daily basis. How is that possible?

In a sociological-qualitative study on anti-Semitism, 251 Jewish students, their parents and Jewish and non-Jewish teachers at 171 schools in Germany were interviewed between 2017 and 2019. Based on the analysis of these interviews, the perspectives of those affected show how anti-Semitism has become entrenched in German schools and appropriate recommendations for action are given.

Manifestation of Antisemitism

Jewish students in Germany experience the full range of anti-Semitism. Resentment, discrimination, hatred, abuse and violence are included. As outsiders, as "strangers", they are devalued by the majority social identity. The anti-Semitic image of the enemy serves as an antagonist opposed to the religious, cultural, political or national community. The roles of "good versus evil" legitimize anti-Semitic violence.

Against the background of the Shoah, which is becoming an obstacle to an "undamaged identity", there is a defense against memories and guilt against Jews. Their devaluation creates a "secondary innocence". In addition, students often perceive the confrontation with the Shoah and National Socialism as "forced".

Another dynamic is that of the perpetrator-victim reversal. In Israel-related anti-Semitism, Jews are demonized as perpetrators, and even equated with National Socialists. Specifically, such phenomena were expressed in statements to a Jewish student on the part of a classmate: "You Jews suck, look to Israel, soldiers eat children there." Another Jewish student pointed out that the teaching staff never missed an opportunity to stir up corresponding enemy images in connection with Israel.

Racist stereotypes are also anchored among schoolchildren: "typically Jewish physicality", "Jewish world domination", "Jewish ruling elite" or the "proximity of Jews to money and capitalism".

Bagatellization of Anti-Semitism

The trivialization of anti-Semitism begins with the teaching staff. Anti-Semitism is perceived as a historical phenomenon that has long since been "overcome". No connections are made to acute and current episodes of anti-Semitism in everyday life, as experienced by Jewish students. Those affected struggle with discrimination all their lives, while the teaching staff often dismiss anti-Semitic episodes as just one-off "slip-ups" to which no attention should or must be paid. Parents are also quick to speak of "overreaction". One person affected: "People who are not directly affected by anti-Semitism do not notice how anti-Semitic society is."

Another critical point is anti-Semitism among Muslim students. Teachers fear that the reference to Islamic anti-Semitism as the trigger for the attacks could be interpreted as discriminating against a religious minority.

The lack of protection for victims after attacks is particularly problematic. Far too often, anti-Semitic episodes have no consequences for the perpetrators. Those affected are forced to change schools. Two respondents emigrated to Israel after experiencing anti-Semitism in Germany.

Recommendations for Action

On the one hand, prevention is the most effective tool against anti-Semitism. Education about its history, functions and manifestations in everyday life enable students to recognize it and act accordingly.

On the other hand, if anti-Semitic statements are made, decisive action must be taken. Anti-Semitism should no longer have a place in school. If the interventions do not achieve the hoped-for results, regulatory measures must be taken.

Finally, it must never be forgotten to involve the affected students and their parents and to respond to their concerns and needs.

Antisemitism on the Internet

With its new bidirectional dimension, the Internet has become the most important place for many people to get information. It is no longer just the transfer of knowledge, but also an interactive exchange of views that is possible online. Unidirectional information channels have consequently lost their influence.

Unfortunately, socially established norms are far too often neglected on the Internet. The users lack a netiquette and the manners are accordingly often confrontational. Those who do not observe the rules of conduct usually do not have to expect criminal prosecution, but only relatively light sanctions such as deleting comments or the profile. This makes the Internet a gray area in which the norms of respectful behavior do not always seem to apply. Rather, the brutalization of language and its acceptance is a dangerous breeding ground for hate ideologies to flourish. Hate speech is becoming easily and continuously accessible. Accordingly, these phenomena have recently received increased attention from anti-Semitism research. Politics, science and the media did not recognize the latest trends until late. It is therefore particularly important to keep pace with digital developments.

In Germany, anti-Semitism, which was banned from public to private discourse, can find an audience online again because the line between the public and the private is blurred here. Strengthened by the anonymity, extreme statements are made without fear of consequences. Anti-Semitism can adapt to the respective context. Despite the many positive sides of the World Wide Web, it must be said that the net not only connects various anti-Semitic and racist groups, but also generates and spreads hatred. It is wrongly conveyed that (anti-Semitic) opinions expressed in an online debate are a reflection of public opinion. In this way, the Internet simplifies the spread of anti-Semitic thinking.

Hate Speech and Hate Crime

In recent years anti-Semitic and racist statements on the Internet have preceded incidents of physical violence in the analog world. This applied both to the attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, USA in October 2018 and to the attack on the synagogue in Halle an der Saale in October 2019.

If hate ideologies are institutionally justified or state control diminishes, physical anti-Semitic violence can go as far as annihilation. The Shoah is the example of the climax of a hatred cultivated over centuries.

COVID-19 Pandemic

In times of crisis and uncertainty, anti-Semitic worldviews become more attractive. Fears and negative feelings are projected onto scapegoats using flimsy explanatory patterns, which minorities can easily identify.

“Plannedemic” is used as a play on words by pointing to Jews. Conspiracy theories are also being spread with Jews as the culprits for the pandemic. The lack of evidence is skilfully ignored or explained with further conspiracy theories.

Imperative of Action

In applied linguistics and critical discourse analysis, discussions on the Internet are often viewed through detailed analyzes. You have the great advantage of a wealth of accurate information. In order to properly classify the diverse phenomena of anti-Semitism, a linguistic context and world knowledge are necessary. Due to the high effort, only limited amounts of data records can be analyzed. Since thousands of texts appear on the Internet every hour, there can be no claim to representativeness and therefore no precise data-based information can be given about how anti-Semitism is developing on the web over time. The lack of exact numbers is more worrying than a possible data-based rapid increase would be. Evidenced figures about anti-Semitism on the Internet can serve as concrete measures for prevention.

The teaching staff should convey to the pupils pedagogically appropriate, convincing knowledge about their current stage of development. Conveying media skills and taking a position against hate speech, conspiracy myths and fake news are particularly important in this sense in order to counteract the radicalization of society.