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**Germany and Israel: An Unlikely Alliance?**  
**(West)German Foreign Policy towards Israel,**  
**the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Palestine**  
**Question**

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## Abstract

This thesis studies (West) German foreign policy towards Israel and the Palestine question from the postwar era to the present. It aims to fill a perhaps surprising academic gap. The scant existing literature on the topic tends to reproduce the political discourse of the two states whose relations it claims to analyse. In contrast, this study seeks to provide an empirical and critical examination of the major questions raised by the topic: What have been the key drivers of Germany's Israel policy over time? Why has Israel sought relations with Germany, or rather: what has been the impact of German material support of Israel? What has been the role of the Palestine question in Germany's Israel policy and why?

The thesis is predominantly based on research in the archives of the German foreign office. Other primary sources include cabinet protocols, parliamentary debates and interviews with experts.

This study argues that postwar relations between Germany and Israel were originally marked by an exchange between symbolic rehabilitation and material consolidation. The turn to Israel symbolically helped to whitewash the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) of its Nazi past. After the 1956 Suez War, Bonn also supported Israel as a Western Cold War ally. The FRG provided Israel with a significant contribution to its pre-1967 consolidation in the form of the Reparations Agreement, crucial weapon deliveries and a secret financial loan. Declaratory moves towards Palestinians, especially from 1973 onwards, became an instrument in balancing Bonn's Israel policy with the economic and political need to maintain stable relations with Arab states. After unification and the Cold War, the FRG re-intensified its commitment towards Israel as well as becoming a major funder of the Oslo Peace Process and Palestinian 'statebuilding' afterwards. It is still wedded to sponsoring a 'process' which it knows is unlikely to result in the desired 'two-state solution'.

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A last disclaimer: while I could not have produced any of the following on my own, all mistakes are entirely mine.

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## Chapter I Introducing the Topic

Visitors of the German capital seldom fail to visit the East Side Gallery, a row of murals painted on remainders of the Berlin Wall, running from the Ostbahnhof along the river Spree. Amongst the most well-known of these murals is that of the German artist Günter Schäfer. Called *Fatherland*, it shows a combination of the German and the Israeli flag; the Star of David superimposed on the black, red and gold of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). A universalist message of reconciliation is written next to this merging of national symbols. This message speaks of “peace and unity of all peoples”, describing the artwork as a “memorial against any fascist tendency.” The dates of November 9<sup>th</sup> in 1938 and in 1989 are also painted to the sides of the picture. According to the artist, these two dates symbolize a low and a high point in German history.<sup>1</sup>

The pogroms of November 1938 were a key event in the lead-up to the German Genocide of the Jews. Within German national narratives, the fall of the wall often tends to be perceived as an ‘end’ to the ‘punishment of separation’ for the crimes of Nazism. 1938 stands for the German descent into barbarism, 1989 for the last step of Germany’s reintegration into the community of ‘civilized’ nations.

Schäfer’s work has often been vandalized. Next to swastikas and antisemitic slurs, the Israel-Palestine conflict is also re-enacted on the mural. While the artist differentiates between clear cases of antisemitism and ‘Free Palestine’ slogans, he personally cleans his mural of all types of graffiti and sloganeering.<sup>2</sup>

Relations with Israel are a key element to the FRG’s self-understanding as a state. The debate in the German parliament on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel’s founding illustrates this importance well. This Bundestag session, in April 2018, occurred shortly after the swearing in of a new grand coalition government of the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social-Democratic Party (SPD). The federal elections of

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<sup>1</sup> *Berliner Zeitung*, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 (<https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/berlin/-vaterland—von-guenther-schaefer-kuenstler-entfernt-antisemitische-schmierereien-an-der-east-side-gallery-22401260>, last access July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> For more information see also the following interview with Schäfer for the Goethe Institute that appeared under the rubric of “Meet the Germans”, presenting “typical” Germans to non-German audiences (<http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lp/prj/mtg/men/kun/sch/enindex.html>, last access July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018).



2017 had provided a shock to German postwar democracy, as for the first time since the republic's founding in 1949, a party to the right of the CDU and CSU (the Christian-Social Union, the CDU's Bavarian sister party) was able to enter the Bundestag in significant numbers. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is currently the opposition leader in the Bundestag, having gained 13% of the vote. The debate also fell into a time of uncertainty in transatlantic relations following the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency. To the joy of Benjamin Netanyahu's government in Jerusalem, Washington has since shed its reservations regarding Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. Calls for a two-state solution from Berlin have since become rare, sounding ever more hollow. Yet, while the current legitimacy crisis of (neo-)liberal democracy and the concomitant surge of the far-right across Europe and the U.S. echoed within the debate, the parties of the Bundestag displayed a remarkable consensus on the importance of the German commitment to Israel.

The parliament session expressed verbally what *Fatherland* expresses as a painting. Pivotally, speakers shared the view that the depth of the German commitment to Israel indicates the degree to which Germany has overcome its Nazi past. As Martin Schulz said for the SPD:

With the existence of Israel and the recognition of its security, our country symbolizes the definitive renunciation of the crimes and the mentality of those criminals who plunged our country and the world into the abyss. This...is the true connection between Israel's right to exist, which we guarantee as Germans, and our own development as a state.<sup>3</sup>

He continued that "by protecting Israel, we protect ourselves from the demons of the past of our own people." Green Party speaker Kathrin Göring-Eckhardt voiced the same opinion, stating that "[t]he existence of Israel is directly connected to the existence of our country as a free democracy...As a state, and as Germans, we must be the guarantor of Israel." She condensed her message in one sentence: "Israel's right to exist is our own." Parliamentarians of the CDU/CSU and the Free-Democratic Party (FDP) spoke in the same vein. The Israel-Palestine conflict appeared only on the margins of this debate. In

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<sup>3</sup> For this and all following quotes, see online Bundestag debate of April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Transcript available under <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/19/19029.pdf> (last access July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

fact, many statements seemed peculiarly detached from Israeli-Palestinian realities. For example, Volker Kauder of the CDU said about Israel that “this beautiful little country” has “set an example for democracy and the rule of law” in the Middle East, adding that “by defending Israel’s right to exist we do not only defend this country...but also democracy and the rule of law.” Kauder did not address the question of Israel’s borders, nor what those Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza may have to say about Israeli democracy.

Across parties, speakers echoed or explicitly referred to chancellor Angela Merkel’s well known statement to the Israeli Knesset in March 2008, when she said that

[e]very German Government and every German chancellor before me has shouldered Germany's special historical responsibility for Israel's security. This historical responsibility is part of my country's *Staatsräson* ('raison d'état').<sup>4</sup>

The word *Staatsräson* portends to something deeper than mere state interests, which easily change according to exterior circumstances. It is a word which makes clear that the commitment to Israel is part of the foundations and self-understandings of the German state. Thus, both parties occupying the outer poles of the parliamentary spectrum in German politics, the AfD and Die Linke ('The Left'), adhere to this commitment, too. Dietmar Bartsch, who heads the 'pragmatist' wing of Die Linke, spoke of a “special responsibility of Germany for Israel”, which, referring to Theodor W. Adorno, he framed as part of “the moral duty to do everything so that Auschwitz may not repeat itself.” For the AfD, Alexander Gauland said that Israel originated from the “singular break of civilization” which “will forever be connected with Germany’s name: the Shoah.” The guilt-evading terminology of “connected with Germany’s name” is noteworthy, as it is part of the AfD’s attempt to belittle the place of Nazism in German history as much as possible. For example, two months after this debate, Gauland likened Nazism to a “bird’s poop” within the overall course of German history.<sup>5</sup> In line with the overall far-right hegemonic

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<sup>4</sup> The speech was held in German. For an official German translation, from which the above is quoted, see [https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/doc/speech\\_merkel\\_2008\\_eng.pdf](https://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/doc/speech_merkel_2008_eng.pdf) (last access July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Countless similar examples could be given. This particular example, however, circulated within international media and in Israel, too. See for example *Times of Israel*, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

strategy of connecting with the mainstream liberal discourse in order to subvert it, Gauland used the notion of *Staatsräson* to implicitly argue for German militarization and to agitate against the presence of Muslims in Germany. He doubted whether Germans would be prepared “to fight and die on Israel’s side” and then cited examples of antisemitic acts by Muslim immigrants who have thus “forfeited their right to hospitality.” (see also Rybak 2015).

Beatrix von Storch (AfD) and Frauke Petry (former AfD, now independent) further tried to escalate the debate by adhering explicitly to the discourses of the Netanyahu and Trump governments. Petry, an erstwhile founding figure of the AfD, denounced the “boycott movement against Judea and Samaria.” In referring to what the German government calls the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) by their biblical, Hebrew terms, Petry took position against European efforts at distinguishing between Israel in its 1948 borders and the post-1967 occupied territories. Within this logic, she called upon the Bundestag to give up on the two-state solution. Storch used her speech to rally against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), created after 1948 to care for Palestinian refugees, claiming that the German funding of this institution is equivalent to funding antisemitism. Alluding to a spectre of a civilizational East-West struggle, Storch also resorted to the common trope of a “Judeo-Christian civilization”, a phrase which conveniently blurs the fact that the history of this ‘civilization’ has consisted largely in the Christian persecution of Jews.

It is hard to estimate to what degree this Bundestag debate should be read as a ritual; to gauge the levels of authenticity and instrumentality of the parliamentarians and the parties they represented. Speakers clearly pursued different political intentions when following the overall German state’s line of portraying Israel’s existence as part of the German *Staatsräson*. Yet this is an interesting point in itself. For one thing that the debate suggests is that if a political force in Germany wants to gain acceptability and hold state power in view, it needs to adhere to the principle of a German commitment to the secure existence of the Jewish state. What this principle entails concretely is seldom defined. The principle is generally linked to the present-day German self-understanding of

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(<https://www.timesofisrael.com/far-right-leader-nazi-era-a-speck-of-bird-poop-in-german-history/>, last access July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

a nation-state that has learned its 'lessons' of the past. However, these lessons are understood differently across the political spectrum. For Die Linke, this may be a principled commitment against racism and antisemitism in general, whereas for the AfD, it entails a hostile attitude towards Arab-Muslim migrants and refugees. The AfD also finds no difficulty in expressing allegiance to Israel perceived as a militarized, ethno-nationalist state, along civilizational lines of a West-East struggle.

The first insight one can thus derive from this debate is that German-Israel relations are integrally linked to the various reformulations of German national identity after 1945. This relates to another observation: Absent from the debate was a consideration of what Germany-Israel relations have concretely consisted of. Yet, such an appreciation may work towards illuminating what in German discourse is so often referred to as inexplicable and miraculous. For example, in the same debate, Andrea Nahles of the SPD called the "unique friendship" between Germany and Israel a "miracle" and she expressed her "awe" and "gratitude" for the "reconciliation" between the two countries. Indeed, only one parliamentarian of the CDU/CSU spoke briefly about current military relations between Germany and Israel and their early origins in the postwar era, urging his colleagues to talk more openly about this undoubtedly crucial area of bilateral relations.

The importance of military relations between Germany and Israel is much greater than one would think judging only from German political discourse. A research report by the U.S. Congressional Service found that "Germany's commitment to Israel's sovereignty and security has historically been the strongest influence on its policy in the Middle East and a key factor in its cooperation with the United States in the region." (Belkin 2007: 1). According to the report, "[t]he extent and precise value of arms shipments to and from Germany through the mid-1990's remains unclear, yet analysts assert that German arms played a considerable role in Israeli military victories in 1967, 1973 and 1982." (Belkin 2007: 5). The report asserted that

German leaders have consistently chosen to support Israel—whether militarily, financially or politically—despite periods of public, political or even international opposition. This support, however, has often been carried out secretly. In fact, historical accounts suggest that German success in maintaining relatively positive relations on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict has depended largely on its ability to avoid a high-profile leadership role in the region. (Belkin 2007: 15).

The history of German economic, financial, military and political support to Israel is highly under-appreciated in German and English-language academia. Scholarship on international relations and the Middle East typically focuses on the preponderant U.S. role in the region and U.S. support to Israel. Yet this focus omits that the U.S.-Israeli military alliance has been developed only from 1967 onwards. The FRG played a crucial role in Israel's consolidation prior to that year, a role that has not yet been sufficiently explored. Also absent from the Bundestag debate about the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel's founding was the issue of the Palestinians and their right to self-determination. As this debate shows, Palestinians hardly figure in the German narrative of reconciliation and friendship with Israel. Palestinian dispossession, the birthmark of Israel's founding in 1948, is apparently too problematic and unwieldy a topic for it to enter the celebratory discourse of the German Bundestag. In fact, it was the far-right which spoke most about Palestinians in the above-cited debate, framing the Palestinians as aggressors, as those unwilling to compromise and fuelled by antisemitism. However, Palestinians are more than a significant, if often invisible *Other* to German-Israeli relations. The FRG has had a concrete impact on the Palestinian situation, indirectly through its support of Israel, directly through its role as a major supporter of the Oslo Process (1993-2000) and subsequent funder of Palestinian 'statebuilding'. German political discourse does not reflect this impact.

The Bundestag debate and the *Fatherland* mural both draw, with different instruments, a picture of Germany-Israel relations that suggests national reconciliation and a German mastering of the barbaric past. It is a German picture, not an Israeli and even less a Palestinian one. This picture of reconciliation seeks to cleanse Germany of antisemitism, which, however, always seems to creep back into the frame. Likewise, the Palestinian question, repeatedly pushed out, does not disappear by ignoring it. Yet the picture of reconciliation that German political discourse draws is in itself a function of Germany's Israel policy, a policy which remains unexplained if one looks only at the German political discourse about German-Israeli relations.

The rather ritualised governmental discourse about the German moral-historical responsibility for the safe existence of the Israeli state contrasts with emotive, often problematic or simply caricatural debates in the German public sphere about Israel and Palestine. Given the importance of FRG-Israel relations for the Middle East and the central role of

Israel in German foreign policy and domestic discourse, one would assume this to be a well-covered topic in the intersecting academic fields of International Relations (IR), Middle Eastern studies, studies of antisemitism and racism, as well as German, Israeli and Jewish history. However, this is not the case, at least in English and German-language academia. Regrettably, for reasons of feasibility and linguistic capacity, Hebrew and Arab-language works are not discussed in this study. Mapping the English and German literature on German-Israeli state relations, however, reveals a surprising scarcity. There is no solid corpus of literature, no debate of opposing perspectives.

The first German-language academic monograph about (West) German-Israeli state relations over the duration of their existence appeared as late as 2002. The author, Markus Weingardt, bases his work entirely on existing secondary sources from related fields and a number of published primary sources. Description, not analysis, is his stated aim (Weingardt 2002: 13f.). The absence of an analytical research agenda results in a non-weighted chronology of events. He does not inquire into the role West Germany has played in the build-up and consolidation of the Israeli state. He also does not inquire into the effects of Germany's policy towards Israel and on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the author expresses concern that his work may exhibit a eurocentric bias (Weingardt 2002: 21), he largely ignores the Palestinian version of the conflict. Scholarly works that integrate the Palestine question into a systematic analysis of Germany's Israel policy are nonexistent.<sup>6</sup>

Two major and related deficits characterize the existing, scant literature on German-Israeli relations. Firstly, existing works are rarely historically grounded. They are generally not based on research in the relevant archives. Notable exceptions to this state of affairs have been provided by Dominique Trimbur (2000, in French, see also Trimbur 2003) and Yeshayahu Jelinek (2004, see also his 1997 commented document collection). Both focus their historical work on the postwar era. Trimbur's 2000 monograph provides a carefully balanced and detailed account of bilateral relations until 1956, whereas Jelinek's historical account (2004) covers bilateral relations until the onset of diplomatic relations in 1965.

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<sup>6</sup> The only exception is an earlier work by Kinan Jäger (1997). Jäger's contribution is helpful as it depicts German policy towards the Palestine question in terms of broader German Middle East interests. Yet, his book was published before the collapse of the Oslo-Process. A new analysis which embeds German policy towards Palestinians within German-Israeli relations is thus called for.

The second and related problem of existing works is their tendency to uncritically adopt the discourses of the two states whose relations they claim to analyse. This unwillingness to significantly move from the reproduction of political self-descriptions towards critical analysis results in an affirmative writing of diplomatic history. The effect of such affirmative writing is a 'moral bias' especially in the German literature on German-Israeli relations (see for example Pallade 2005, Hansen 2002, Lavy 1996, Wolfssohn 1993, Gardner-Feldman 1984). 'Moral bias' denotes the idea that postwar West Germany turned to Israel predominantly for moral reasons and that morality has since remained central to the German-Israeli relationship. As the German historian Jenny Hestermann has pointed out, Israeli academia does not share the German academic tendency of portraying bilateral relations as grounded in 'morality' (Hestermann 2016: 19ff.), which ties in with the analysis offered in the subsequent chapter of this thesis. The moral narrative is unconvincing already because of the well-documented fact that under the first Adenauer administration, the early process of Denazification instigated by the Allied powers was aborted and partially reversed. The postwar FRG was characterized by Nazi continuities on the level of the state bureaucracy, functional elites and societal attitudes. The 're-integration and amnesty' (Frei 2002, see also Taylor 2012) of former Nazi criminals was but one element in the moral wasteland of postwar West Germany, in which the different levels of involvement in National Socialism were repressed and German victimhood narcissistically upheld. Anson Rabinbach earlier situated Germany's Israel policy in this context:

The German Federal Republic's efforts to find absolution in reparations and an official policy of philo-Semitism must be seen in the context of its relative silence about the Nazi past, its myth of the 'zero hour' of 1945 as a historical tabula rasa, its tolerance of former Nazis, and its unwillingness...to press for war crimes trials of Nazi criminals still at large (Rabinbach 1986: 5).

The first research desideratum, then, is an analysis of Germany's Israel policy which is able to account for this historical context. This does not mean to simplistically stand the 'moral narrative' on its head, but to integrate Germany's Israel policy into the context of the FRG's domestic dealing with the Nazi past. Secondly, pertaining to the field of Middle East studies and IR, an analysis of Germany's Israel policy would need to draw out the

much under-appreciated role German support of Israel has played in the consolidation and fortification of the Israeli state. A third desideratum is to shed light on the question of how the FRG, in the context of its Israel policy, engaged with the Palestinian question. Consequently, three overarching questions will guide the analysis. Firstly: What have been the key drivers of Germany's Israel policy over time? Secondly: Why has Israel sought relations with Germany, or rather: what has been the impact of German material support of Israel? Thirdly: What has been the role of the Palestine question in Germany's Israel policy and why?

The main purpose of this thesis is to fill a rather remarkable gap in the academic literature. As of yet, there is no critical and empirically-grounded examination of Germany's Israel policy and the Palestine question ranging from the postwar era until the present. The aim here is to provide such an examination. It should be noted in the beginning that the claims to a 'critical' and 'empirically-grounded' analysis are closely intertwined, as the above brief critique of the existing literature already suggests. As Norbert Elias explained, the sociologist's task is to 'chase myths' (Elias 1970/2009). The above depiction of the 2018 Bundestag debate about the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel's existence indicates that myth-chasing, meaning going beyond official representation in order to look at the historical drivers, motivations and effects of Germany's Israel policy, is the first task faced by an analyst of this topic. While not of the illusion that 'neutrality' on the topic of this thesis is possible, moral reasoning and normative critique are not the aims of this study. It is grounded in the belief that the elucidation of historical 'facts' prior to a political engagement with these facts is imperative. The impossibility of pure objectivity in assessing historical records, however, should be the motivating force to strive towards it, especially regarding this topic.

This work draws from a number of academic fields and disciplines, yet its discipline of origin is IR. It is a study in the contemporary history of international politics. The historical chapters cover the time frame from the foundations of the FRG and Israel in 1949 and 1948, throughout the Cold War, up until the demise of the Oslo Process in 2000 until today. The focus of this work lies on West German foreign policy. It does not engage in a



comparative study of the GDR's policy towards Israel.<sup>7</sup> However, the question of the GDR is important as the 'two Germanys' often acted in almost mirror-like symmetry vis à vis Israel and the Palestinians. This may have an explanatory value, especially with regard to the questions of rehabilitation and integration into the respective Cold War alliances. Thus, the foreign policies of the GDR will be addressed whenever it affects or helps understanding the research interest at hand. However, this study leaves much room for possible future comparative research in this regard. Unless otherwise specified, whenever this thesis speaks of 'Germany' prior to unification, it refers to the FRG.

### **1.1 Literature Review: On the Academic Reproduction of Political Discourse**

The 1984 monograph by Lily Gardner-Feldman on the "special relationship" between Germany and Israel is still considered important by the more recent works on German-Israeli relations (Pallade 2005, Hansen 2002, Weingardt 2002). While this work is rather dated, Gardner-Feldman, a political scientist at John Hopkins University, has recently provided a generalization of her basic argument towards the cases of Poland, Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic and France, in which she claims that "the cornerstone, perhaps the very definition, of German foreign policy after World War II became, progressively, reconciliation." (Gardner-Feldman 2012: 18).

The data Gardner-Feldman provided in her 1984 publication makes her account valuable until today. Yet her interpretation of the empirical material demonstrates well the key problems of the existing, small body of scholarship on German-Israeli state relations. Gardner-Feldman attempted to make the chief argument that "[t]he overall experience of West German-Israel relations since 1952 bears witness to the impressive role of morality in international affairs." (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 274). The author somewhat contradictorily continues by stating that "[p]ragmatism catalysed the policy relationship. Israel needed economic rejuvenation, while Germany sought political rehabilitation." (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 274). Gardner-Feldman does not clarify the relationship be-

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<sup>7</sup> For a balanced, historically-grounded and detailed examination of the GDR's (non-)relationship to Israel, see Timm 1997. Recently, Jeffrey Herf has provided a thoroughly researched yet rather politicized account on the GDR's and the West German New Left's policies and positions towards Israel (see also section 3.4).

tween morality and pragmatism, yet throughout her work she puts an emphasis on the centrality of morality to the forging of the “special relationship” between Israel and the FRG. According to the author, special relationships “are expressed quintessentially in what countries do. For a relationship to be special, both countries must practise preferential treatment towards each other in more than one substantive policy area.” Strong informal ties must also be observable (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 266). According to Gardner-Feldman, German-Israeli relations, from their inception until the early 1980s, qualify as ‘special’. Building upon her work, political scientist Yves Pallade (2005) asked whether relations could be considered “still special” (Pallade 2005: 26) in the 1990s and beyond. He concludes in the affirmative. Just like Gardner-Feldman’s, his work is important empirically. It is however questionable whether applying the notion of a ‘special relationship’ already amounts to the construction of a theoretical framework. For what this notion illuminates is only that Germany describes its relations with Israel as special and that the authors find this to be an accurate description. When attempting to explain how this ‘special relationship’ came about, the authors fall back on the morality/interest spectrum, accentuating the former over the latter. The dichotomy between morality and interest thus remains central to the narrow academic field of German-Israeli relations. When moving beyond description with the intention of formulating analytical questions, the central puzzle with which existing works are generally concerned is how and why German-Israeli relations could be established in the wake of the German Genocide of the Jews. The above-mentioned dichotomy is used to solve the puzzle. It relates to the paradigmatic divide between Social Constructivism and Realism in IR theory. The IR paradigm of Social Constructivism emphasizes the role of norms, values and identities in the foreign policy behaviour of states. The argument that morality explains the German turn towards Israel can thus be attributed to the social-constructivist mode of thinking about international politics. Hannfried von Hindenburg (2007) adheres to the constructivist spectrum, as he attempts to show that the German decision to enter into diplomatic relations with Israel in 1965 is explicable by popular pressure from below (Hindenburg 2007: 3). This argument is an incorrect historical simplification, as William Glenn Gray (2010) shows in his scathing review of Hindenburg’s “beguilingly simple and heroic story” (Gray 2010: 145). While by the 1960s, German silence on the Holocaust and WWII partially gave way to a limited acknowledgement of responsibility and to an opening of a

more honest debate, it is not the case that a moral drive for reconciliation became dominant in German postwar society and that this supposed moral drive translated into the FRG's decision to take the relationship with Israel to an official diplomatic level (Gray 2010).

Gardner-Feldman, however, draws an explicit connection between a supposed societal reckoning with the past and the turn to Israel: "What is important to understand...is that the perception of morality, which was shared by Adenauer, his Christian Democratic supporters and his Social-Democratic opponents, was essential in the launching of the special relationship. This moral view is tied, explicitly, to the psychological response, the feelings and emotions, *embedded in the German people*." (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 41, emphasis added). This is a misrepresentation of German postwar society. Gardner-Feldman reproduces Konrad Adenauer's naturalization of a German people, the same *Volk* which was so shortly before cast as the Aryan master race, imbuing it with a rather undefined morality. However, she seems to doubt her own line of argument. Regarding the West German decision to enter the reparation negotiations, she states that "[i]n Adenauer's case morality and pragmatism coexisted, but politically expedient reasons were ultimately decisive in his offer of direct negotiations." (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 54.). The inconsistency of Gardner-Feldman's argument and the thin proof she provides for it in the face of contrasting evidence call for a better explanation than the morality hypothesis can provide.

While the theoretical and explanatory arguments advanced by Gardner-Feldman or Pallade are unconvincing, a relatively recent German publication is somewhat more disconcerting. Having appeared so far only in German, Niels Hansen's (2002) work illustrates well the ideological pitfalls which may arise from a predominantly 'moral' perspective on German-Israeli relations. A former diplomat, Hansen has worked in the field he later chose to write about. His reconstruction of Germany-Israel relations in the era of Adenauer and Ben-Gurion was lauded by right-wing historian Daniel Koerfer, who gained notoriety for his revisionist attacks on the study by Moshe Zimmermann, Eckart Conze and Norbert Frei about the continuities of Nazi personnel in the Auswärtiges Amt (AA). Koerfer complimented Hansen's work as "objective, differentiated and astute" in a review for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) (Koerfer 2002). He noted approvingly Hansen's emphasis on the importance of the two 'leadership personalities' Adenauer and Ben-

Gurion. However, a more detached observer can hardly fail to read Hansen's work as a tediously written, crudely sentimental story of a 'friendship' between the 'two great old men', Konrad Adenauer and David Ben-Gurion. This assumed 'friendship', propelled by Adenauer's purported deep moral commitment, had supposedly steered German-Israeli relations 'out of the shadow of the catastrophe', thus the telling title of his book, towards a partnership testifying to an admirable German mastering of the Nazi past. The claim to objectivity of the book's subtitle - "a documented report" - is contradicted by the fact that Hansen is entirely oblivious to any of the available historiography which critically assesses German postwar history and contradicts the grand moral narrative Hansen espouses. Hansen's willingness to whitewash the first German chancellor of any possible criticism at times ventures into the absurd. For example, he cites a number of examples which clearly show that Adenauer held stereotyped views about 'Jewish power', a topic that will be addressed in the following chapter. While noting that such ideas were rather common in Nazi Germany, he plays down Adenauer's evocations of them and expresses his surprise that "today, such views are even seen as antisemitic stereotypes." (Hansen 2002: 242). It is also not beyond Hansen to speak with peculiar approval of the "SS-warhorse" (*SS-Haudegen*) Otto Skorzeny, "Hitler's favourite general", who after the war sold his services to the Egyptian government and then to the Israeli secret service, the Mossad (Hansen 2002: 501). It comes as no surprise, then, that Hansen, echoing Adenauer, would look at Arab nationalism with undisguised contempt (Hansen 2002: 621).

Hansen's book appears to be less an analysis of his topic than a deeply embedded academic reproduction of the postwar German state's framing of its relations with Israel. In other words, it is a work of normalisation, its main intent being revealed already in its title. As such, it operates in a similar fashion to an earlier book by historian Michael Wolffsohn. *Ewige Schuld?* was published first in 1988 and subsequently went through five editions. It was published as *Eternal Guilt?* in English in 1993 (Wolffsohn 1993). Wolffsohn makes important points, for example when he shows that, contrary to postwar mythology, Germany never assumed the role of the penitent towards Israel. However, the overall impression of his book is that of a brief, well-written treatise of popular

science which does not look at Germany's Israel policy in depth.<sup>8</sup> Wolffsohn's conceptual differentiation between *geschichtspolitik* (the politics of history) and *tagespolitik* (everyday politics) echoes the above-criticized false dichotomy between morality and interest. The popularity of this book is easy to explain: the question of its title is clearly answered in the negative. It is a book which contains what (non-Jewish) Germans of conservative political orientation like to read about themselves.

## 1.2 Israel, Antisemitism and the Remakings of German National Identity

The academic gap on the topic of this thesis contrasts with the extent to which Germany's Israel policy ranges into German domestic discourse. The closeness of German academic literature to official representations confirms that academic knowledge production is not independent from the societal and political context in which it takes place, a general characteristic of the social sciences which seems especially pertinent to this topic. This section briefly discusses some of the ways in which Germany's Israel policy relates to the questions of nationalism and antisemitism in Germany after 1945. These two terms require definition.

### *Nationalism and memory in postwar Germany*

This thesis follows a standard historical-constructivist understanding of nationalism as an invention of capitalist modernity (see especially Anderson 1983/2006, Hobsbawm 1990). It conceives of nationalism as the constantly reproduced idea that one shares a common identity with a large group of people whom one does not know and who are located differently across social-economic hierarchies. Viewing nationalism as a historical construct means to posit oneself against the everyday knowledge that national identity is a 'natural' phenomenon, whereas national-*ism* is the ideological perversion of a basic fact of life. In the sociological analysis, differences between hostile forms of national identity and

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<sup>8</sup> Recently, Pól Ó Dochartaigh (2015) has provided an eloquent overview over the broader topic of "Germans and Jews since the Holocaust", which touches briefly upon some core aspects of German-Israeli relations. It is written from a much more disinterested perspective than most of the works referenced above.

common sense feelings of national belonging appear as moral differences within an identity spectrum tied to the birth and expansion of the modern state.

That national identities are historically constructed does not make them any less real to their bearers and as historical forces. In political terms, the variation in national identity formulations is highly important. To give an example: In January 2017, a leading AfD member called the Berlin Holocaust Memorial a “‘badge of shame’” (*Schandmal*) in the heart of our capital”. The speaker deliberately left open whether by “shame” he meant the memorial itself or what it stood for. German historian Martin Sabrow characterized the speech as neo-fascist and as an open challenge to the much fought-for democratic consensus in Germany that the Nazi past needs to be remembered in order to prevent its re-emergence (Sabrow 2017). The AfD radicalizes an older and more widespread perception in German society that there should be an end to the memorialization of the past in order to allow for the ‘unhindered’ expression of German nationalism.

The social-constructivist perspective is able to account for the instability of any type of national identification, its reliance on *othering* and its inherent potential for radicalisation and violence. What it does is seeking to dispel, in the case at hand, any primordial notion of ‘German-ness’ (which is what Shlomo Sand did for the case of Israel and Zionism in an account that has received a predominantly critical reception among historians, see Sand 2009).

Here is a point of crucial importance to this topic: one may be able to deconstruct German (or any other) nationalism. What one cannot deconstruct, and what cannot be escaped, is the web of memory and the burden of history. People are born into a history which may not be of their own making, yet it is theirs nevertheless. To understand their actions in society, they have to become aware, as far as possible, of the history that made them. Nationalism, more often than not, is an impediment to this task. For the German case, the complex relationship between national identity and the burden of memory relates to a divide between what has since unification become a strong public memory culture and the long-standing relative absence of introspection within the private sphere of the family (Frie 2017, Welzer et. al. 2002).

This study follows a standard typology accepted in the field of (German) antisemitism studies which differentiates between traditional-Christian, racial-modern as well as postwar East and West German antisemitism (Benz 2004). While Christian antisemitism has informed modern-racial antisemitism, the latter differs from the former in that it provides a full-fledged ideology, a delusional worldview created under the unexplained conditions of capitalist modernity (Adorno and Horkheimer 1947/2002: 137-173).

For the history of the GDR, Benz observes an anti-Zionist variant of antisemitism. While not the topic of this thesis, it is clear that the 'antifascist', formulaic, state-sponsored anti-Zionism of the GDR can rather easily be interpreted as a veil to avoid a more thorough societal confrontation with the past.

When this work talks about antisemitism, it is mostly about what is commonly referred to in Germany (and Austria) as 'secondary antisemitism'. German postwar antisemitism relates to guilt and the defence against it. With racial antisemitism tabooed in the public sphere after the Nazi defeat, antisemitism is expressed via codes and by-way communications. Secondly, guilt-defensive forms of German postwar antisemitism seek to direct the burden of guilt towards Jews, a psychological operation encapsulated well in the oft-quoted phrase of Israeli psychanalyst Zvi Rex: 'the Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz'. Historical victim-perpetrator inversions such as likening the Israeli state to Nazi Germany are a good example of such guilt-unburdening within a German context. The aim of unloading guilt is linked to the desire for an unburdened, unhindered, national identity, which is why Wolfgang Benz aptly refers to secondary antisemitism as a "patriotic project". Benz describes guilt-defensive postwar antisemitism as an "independent phenomenon with few manifest characteristics but considerable latency", giving as one example of its manifestation the question of reparations and restitution payments (Benz 2004: 19). The popularity in Germany of Norman Finkelstein's book *The Holocaust Industry* is a good example for actualizing guilt-defensive anti-Jewish hostility. Finkelstein argued inter alia that Jewish organizations in the U.S. 'extort' Swiss and German banks for restitution payments. He essentially portrayed these banks as *victims* of what he assumes to be the (Jewish) 'Holocaust Industry'. Concern for the 'exploitation of Jewish suffering' was, one may safely assume, not the main factor behind the book's bestseller

status in Germany. While the book was applauded by the organised Neo-Nazi fringe<sup>9</sup>, its main theme speaks to a much wider problem in German society. For example, one well-regarded, large-scale study found in 2014 that 55% of Germans feel angry at 'still being reminded of the German crimes against the Jews' (*Bericht des Unabhängigen Expertenkreises Antisemitismus* 2017: 55).

A phenomenon that is closely related to guilt-defensive forms of antisemitism is that of (West) German postwar philosemitism (see also Kloke 2008). Frank Stern, who pursued an academic career in both Germany and Israel, studied this phenomenon within the context of the "moral legitimization of German postwar society." Stern argued that postwar philosemitism initially developed spontaneously, yet soon assumed a "public character...that tended to distort: it stereotypically exaggerated Jews and everything Jewish, idealizing its object." (Stern 1992: 402).

#### *Israel as replacement in German national identity constructions*

How does the above link to the topic of German-Israeli relations? When thinking about this rather complex issue, it is helpful to start from the presupposition that when Germans talk about Israel, they actually talk about their own past.<sup>10</sup> Of course, the apodictic nature of this blunt statement has to be academically qualified at once, but it is revealing to read German societal debates about Israel as projections in which contrasting positions towards the Nazi past are acted out and German national identities are differently articulated. In the preface to *The Iron Wall*, his landmark study on Israeli policy towards the Palestinians and the Arab world, Avi Shlaim cites Ernest Renan: "A nation is a group of people united by a mistaken view about the past and a hatred of their neighbours." (Shlaim 2000). Renan's remark has an impressively broad range of applicability, yet requires modification for the case of postwar Germany. After Auschwitz, the German na-

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<sup>9</sup> The German Neo-Nazi party NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) celebrated Finkelstein's book, arguing that a "guilt cult" is upheld by the "Holocaust Industry" and the Jewish community in Germany. The NPD advocates the "liberation of Palestine" with obvious motives (quotes taken from the German German Federal Agency for Civic Education, see: <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/41473/npd-ohne-schminke?p=all> (last access April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> I owe much of this insight and indeed the formulation of the phrase to Jan Rybak.



tion can be considered a group of people united by the need to deal with a past that prohibits any renaissance of German nationalism.

German national identity constructions face the central problem of how to integrate Nazism and the Holocaust. As the introductorily cited Bundestag debate about the 70th anniversary of Israel's founding demonstrated, one answer to this problem of national identity construction is the German state's commitment to Israel.

In terms of confronting the past, German public debate about Israel can, in principle, fulfil two opposite functions. In an earlier historical overview, German political scientist Thomas Scheffler showed that in the German public sphere, policy towards Israel was "the focal point of two opposite moral discourses". They were argued for either as an alibi to whitewash the past, or as a means to enforce a more thorough working through of the past (Scheffler 1988: 76). In the 1950s and 60s, it was especially the non-communist left that combined struggles against antisemitism and revisionist tendencies with a pro-Israeli attitude (Scheffler 1988: 82f.). Historically, a positive recourse to Israel has been part of a comparatively progressive dealing with the Nazi past. Scheffler wrote about the earlier German left that "[e]ven where reservations existed towards Zionism and the concrete policies of Israel, the symbolic value of Israel was more important, namely, to be the national representative of the Jewish people which, by its very existence, served as an accusation against all traces of Third Reich continuities in Germany." (Scheffler 1988: 82). One can easily see in this context the quintessential complicating factor of any critique that seeks to address the German backing of specific Israeli policies. Such criticism has to simultaneously reflect upon the question of which place Israel holds in German discourses of the Nazi past and the reformulations of German nationalism.

### **1.3 Theory, Methodology and Positionality**

The literature review argued that the dichotomy between morality and interest is not helpful for explaining German-Israeli relations. While explanations emphasizing the role of morality in political decision-making fall into the social-constructivist spectrum, the concept of interest is usually associated with the paradigm of Realism in IR theory. The problem with Realism, in all of its variants, is its conception of timeless anarchy as the

basic condition of the international system of states. It is very much a Western paradigm. From the perspective of the global south, international politics take place within historically constructed hierarchies (Hinnebusch 2011: 213). This thesis builds upon the theoretical assumption that states are primarily motivated by their interests. They act within a global hierarchy of states shaped by the structural process of capitalist expansion – of which international politics is the political expression. Looking at how the Middle East has been integrated into international politics, it is evident that states follow their interests not only to defend themselves against eventual threats, but also to realize hegemonic projects. The post-1945 Middle East saw both official decolonization and the continuity of Western domination, mainly retained in the form of U.S. hegemony, pitted against the Soviet Union's hegemonic Cold War claims in the region.

Any study of Germany's Israel policy has to conceptualize and address the role of the U.S. This study started from the initial assumption that the origins of Germany's Israel policy should be perceived within the intersection of three individual hegemonic projects. The Israeli project was conceptualized as having been, until now, the consolidation and fortification of the state in a hostile Middle East. The West German *postwar* project has been the rehabilitation of the German state and its integration into the Western alliance in the Cold War. Both of these aims were pursued under the umbrella of the U.S. leadership of the Western bloc. The U.S. political project was at this point the consolidation of the Western alliance in the Cold War. The basic U.S. aim in the Middle East after 1945 has been the extension and stabilization of American hegemony for politico-economic and geostrategic purposes (Achcar 2004: 9-45).

Two main methodological problems emerged when preparing for this study. The first concerns the role of prior theoretical and historical assumptions. An overly deductive approach, especially when it chooses to bypass the hard archival labour of the historian, inevitably sacrifices empirical nuance, contradiction and the possibility of surprise on the altar of smooth grand narrative. Such is the problem with the 'moral' stories of Germany-Israel relations criticized above, yet it could equally afflict a study on this topic which seeks to be of critical orientation. The second difficulty one encounters when conceptualizing a rather general, historically extensive study of the kind proposed here lies in having to choose, prior to actual research, on which questions and time frames to focus.

As for the first difficulty, it will be left to the reader to decide whether this particular narrative of Germany's Israel policy is historically fair or not, whether it meets a sufficiently high standard of empirical accuracy. Regarding the second question of what to emphasize, this examination was guided by the initial assumption that the time frame from the inception of both Israel and the FRG until 1967 is the historically most crucial one. It is during this period that both states truly constituted themselves as states. It is also only after this period that the U.S. decided to make Israel its prime ally in a region of highest geostrategic importance. As for the question of the German role in the Israel-Palestine conflict, this study assumed that the FRG's Middle East policies only had a *directly* tangible effect on the Palestinian situation after the Oslo Process, into which Germany inserted itself as one of the main financial and political backers.

These initial choices are reflected in the methodology. Research in the political archives of the AA was undertaken for the time period until 1967. Interview-based fieldwork focused on the German role in what may be called a triangular relationship with Israel and the OPT since the Oslo Process and its aftermath.

The wealth of archival material available on the topic of Germany's Israel policy contrasts with the above observation that available studies have largely been based on secondary sources or published document collections at best. This wealth of material, as well as overly optimistic initial research plans, have made it necessary to more clearly delimit what to research and where. Linguistic constraints and the sufficiency of data available in the political archives of the AA spoke against more prolonged research visits in the Israel State Archives (ISA) the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) and the Ben-Gurion Archives (BGA). However, talks to archivists in those archives and limited research have proven very helpful in the initial stages of this work. For the time frame until 1967, which ranges into the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the AA archives were my main source of primary data. Again, the amount of material on the topic reflects its political significance; the fact that a lot of this material has so far remained un-accessed reflects academic negligence. As this thesis sought to provide a general examination of the basic characteristics and most important aspects of Germany's Israel policy, historical detail was neglected in favour of focusing research on recently declassified files labelled 'confidential', 'secret' or 'top secret' (those files were taken predominantly from the B130 inventory).

When doing research on Germany's Israel policy in the AA's archives, it is necessary to pay attention to Nazi continuities in the German foreign policy establishment. The historical enquiry referred to above by Conze, Frei and Zimmermann on this topic is relatively sparse about Germany's Israel policy (Conze et. al. 2010). However, their findings on the continuity of Nazi personnel, while unsurprising, are sufficiently disquieting in order to work on the assumption that antisemitic thinking has influenced the formulation of Middle East policy in the AA. One may think in this context of the notion of the 'traditional German-Arab friendship'. It seems plausible to assume that former Nazi regime adherents have found it easy to engage in a more Arab-leaning foreign policy not only for reasons of 'plain' strategic or economic interests. Indeed, compared to the 'Arabists' of the AA, the German Ministry of Defence (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, BMVg) and the chancellor's office were much more positively inclined towards Israel. However, as the problem of Nazi continuity in terms of personnel and traces of ideology extended to all sectors of the FRG's state institutions, it is difficult to create a binary equation in which an Arab-leaning stance is automatically suspect of antisemitism and an Israel-leaning one is not.

That historical sources are never neutral is demonstrated for this topic, in another way, by an extensive document collection edited and commented by German journalist Rolf Vogel, which has partially been translated into English (Vogel 1969). Existing works, for example those of Weingardt and Hansen, make extensive use of this collection, but without noticing what Trimbur called its "very hagiographic" character regarding the persona of Konrad Adenauer (Trimbur 2003: 267, footnote 14). In fact, Vogel was not merely a journalist, but also temporarily employed by the German secret service when observing the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, as will be explained in the third chapter. A close confidant of Adenauer, Vogel was highly active in publishing books and movies that propagated Adenauer's version of German-Israeli 'reconciliation', as espoused by Hansen. Under the Nazis, Vogel was 'classified' according to the Nuremberg Race Laws as 'semi-Jewish', which allowed him to narrowly escape death. For Vogel, this translated, ironically enough, into deep thankfulness toward Adenauer's right hand in office, Hans Globke, who had written an important legal commentary on the Nuremberg Race Laws. An important and easily accessible source for this topic is the *Aktenedition zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik* (AAPD), an excellent edition of core foreign policy docu-

ments of the FRG, published by the Munich Institute for Contemporary History, on behalf of the AA. Other sources include the online documentation of the German Bundestag debates, government replies to parliamentary requests and cabinet protocols.

For the time frame from 1967 until the end of the Cold War, this examination relies mostly on secondary sources. Those parts of the last chapter devoted to the German role in the Oslo Process and after are based on a mixture of fieldwork and practical work experience, as discussed in the chapter itself.

The analytical agenda of this thesis is broad and covers a long time frame. To this difficulty one needs to add a potentially greater one, which is the historical sensitivity of any topic that brings Germany, Israel and Palestine into the same equation. Every researcher is historically, politically, culturally and otherwise positioned and his or her positioning invariably influences the research process and its outcomes. It is thus only fair to inform readers of my biographical background and political predispositions. Born and raised in Germany and not Jewish, my political socialization has been to a high degree marked by the question of how National Socialism and the Shoah were possible. They are still immediate history. I do not think that it is either possible or desirable 'to come to terms with' this history. What is needed, still and maybe now more so than before, is an unmediated confrontation with the past in Germany. Such unmediated confrontation would necessarily be open-ended (Adorno 1956/1986) and would also need to include the attempt to critically deconstruct memory as transmitted within the family (Frie 2017). In the German context, many words are continuously expended on the question of how to position oneself towards the Israel-Palestine conflict and how to assess and contextualize Palestinian suffering on the background of the Shoah. As I suggested above, German debates about Israel and Palestine are best read as fulfilling diverse mediating functions within broader German discourses about the Nazi past. Doubtlessly, anybody who is born into a German family whose history ranges into that past and who is socialized in German society needs to be especially self-reflective when engaging in debate about Israel and Palestine. What is also talked about, which aggressions or guilt-feelings may be repressed, articulated or re-channeled in such debate? Principally, instances or structures of oppression and injustice can (and need) to be opposed as such – this is just much more difficult in a German context, when the topic concerns Israel and Palestine.

#### 1.4 Historical Contextualization and Overview

Theodor Herzl famously wrote in *Der Judenstaat*: “Everything depends on our propelling force. And what is that force? The misery of the Jews.” (Herzl 1896/2012: 36). True, viewed in its European origins, Zionism is a much too complex and internally diversified historical phenomenon in order to be reduced to a reaction against antisemitism. However, as this is a study about the relationship between the successor state to Nazi Germany and the Zionist state, Zionist ideology interests us here primarily in terms of its framing of antisemitism.

Modern antisemitism, while drawing much from ‘traditional’ Christian antisemitism, is an integral part of capitalist modernity and of its form of political organization; the bureaucratic nation-state. The problem of European nationalism, as it posed itself to Jews in the form of the antisemitic threat to their existence, was, for Zionism, also the solution: a nation-state of one’s own, to be realized outside of Europe. In its European origin, Zionism bears similarities to later anticolonial movements of the global south, as it crafted the tools of its liberation from the instruments of its own oppression (see also Vogt 2016, Raz-Krokotzkin 2015).

Towards the end of the 19th century, Zionism competed with other Jewish political movements, of either assimilationist (Western Europe) or socialist-universalist (Eastern Europe) orientation. Support for Zionism grew in the decades preceding Nazism. Based on the premise of the impossibility of diasporic life outside the Jewish nation-state, Zionism had the most ‘realistic’ view on antisemitism compared to assimilationism and internationalist socialism precisely because it was the most pessimistic one. The actual barbarity to unfold could not, however, be foreseen by even the darkest of Zionist predictions.

As Walter Laqueur, one of the principal historians of Zionism, relates, German immigrants to Palestine in the 1930s were often greeted with a bitter joke: “Are you here out of conviction—or do you come from Germany?” (Laqueur 1992/2017: 85). Whether Zionists or not, in the time frame of Nazi persecution and closed doors to Jewish refugees in the West after the 1938 Evian conference, Palestine became a refuge for a limited number of European Jews. As Moishe Postone had earlier put it, emphasizing also Eastern European collaboration and Western neglect of the Jewish plight, “Zionism, as a na-

tionalist response, became convincing to many Jews after having experienced how the projected image of the Jewish World Conspiracy became realized as its opposite: a world 'conspiracy' against the Jews" (Postone 1980: 103, footnote 8). Dan Diner similarly writes about the connection between Nazi Germany's project to murder all Jews everywhere and the nationalization of Jewish life: "[a]t the latest by 1945, the various Jewries in the world had come to understand themselves more than ever before as part of a Jewish collective in the process of nationalization, as part of a quasi-political Jewish nation. This had been a consequence of Nazi genocide." (Diner 2018: 17). It is clear that Zionism derived much of its justification *ex post facto* from Nazism and the Shoah. If we depart from these European origins, we see that Palestinians, through their dispossession in 1948, were drawn into a history that originally was not theirs.

While critical of Herzl's quasi-naturalistic view of antisemitism as an eternal fact of Jewish diasporic life, Hannah Arendt initially saw in Zionism "the only political answer Jews have ever found to antisemitism and the only ideology in which they have ever taken seriously a hostility that would place them in the center of world events." (Arendt 1951/1962: 120). Arendt's version of Zionism, as practiced during her years in Parisian exile during the 1930s, was on the one hand one of escape, as her youth emigration activities attested to. More than that and close to Bernard Lazare or Ahad Ha'am, she also saw in Zionism a potential project for regaining Jewish freedom, dignity and nationhood. Arendt defended herself against antisemites as what she was attacked as: a Jew. She aimed for a collective Jewish politics to which, in her view, the territorial question was secondary.

It was for her care about a Jewish homeland, yet more so for her existential anxiety over whether there would be a Jewish future to speak of at all in view of the genocide in Europe and the precarious situation of the Jewish community in Palestine that Arendt became a critic of the Zionist movement in the 1940s. In several essays written over the decade, Arendt staked out clearly the political choices faced by the Zionists at the time under the given set of conditions. The most important choices regarded the question of Jewish-Arab relations. Contrary to Herzl, for whom the indigenous population of Palestine had simply been invisible and contrary to the majority view of the Zionist movement in the mid-1940s to establish a Jewish state in all of Palestine, Arendt thought an accord with Palestinian Arabs to be inevitable for the preservation of what she called the 'Jew-

ish homeland' (Arendt 1948/2007: 388-401). She was clear that the plan of establishing a Jewish state in a territory already inhabited by a non-Jewish majority would leave this majority only two options: minority status in the Jewish state or flight. Both options, as Arendt correctly predicted, would be deemed unacceptable. She warned that a Jewish state founded in confrontation with an indigenous population, in a hostile neighbourhood, would from the moment of its birth depend on external imperial powers for survival: "only folly could dictate a policy which trusts a distant imperial power for protection, while alienating the goodwill of neighbours." (Arendt 1944/2007: 372).

Arendt's position on Zionism has never been fixed. It evolved in the face of the unfolding genocide, it changed given the situation in Palestine. Yet, her struggle against antisemitism, her striving for Jewish autonomy, dignity and nationhood, did not lead her to choose a confrontational policy towards the indigenous population of Palestine: Such a policy would make the newly found Jewish state dependent on exactly those powers from which Jews had previously escaped. It is indeed harshly ironic that postwar West Germany would come to play a major role in Israel's early consolidation.

The following chapters are about that consolidation and about that irony. Chapter two reads the 1952 Reparations Agreement between the FRG and Israel as an exchange between symbolic rehabilitation and material consolidation. For the West German administration, the rehabilitation provided by the agreement was one element in the overall policy of Western integration. The capital inflow provided by the agreement allowed for Israeli industrialization. While portraying the agreement as a German-Jewish affair, it forcibly turned the FRG into an actor in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The third chapter examines the most important period in German-Israeli relations, ranging from the aftermath of the 1956 Suez War to the 1967 war. During these years, the FRG was the only Western state to support Israel with three forms of support: military, financial and economic. West Germany thus played a crucial role in the making of Israel's post-1967 regional hegemonic status. Rehabilitation continued to be a German motivating factor, albeit to a lesser degree. Germany's Israel policy must overall be seen in terms of the Cold War. In 1964-65, the FRG fulfilled a proxy role for the U.S. in the military support of Israel, with the U.S. gradually taking over the role of Israel's principal backer.



Chapter 4 firstly analyses the 1965-67 transition period in German-Israeli relations in detail. As in the preceding chapters, attention is drawn to the antisemitic aspects of West German Israel perception during that time. The chapter then traces German efforts at 'normalizing' relations with the Jewish state and assesses the German engagement with the Palestine question in this context.

The final chapter assesses the intensification of Germany's Israel policy after unification in terms of strategic interest and German national identity. Examining the German support of the Oslo Process (1993-2000) and of Palestinian 'statebuilding' afterwards, it questions whether the modalities of this support can in fact be seen to have contributed not to the realization, but the failure of the two-state solution.

## Chapter II The Reparations Agreement of 1952: Exchanging Symbolic Rehabilitation for Material Consolidation

In 1966, two years into retirement from office, Konrad Adenauer was asked on German television about his policy of reparations towards Jews and the State of Israel. Adenauer, whose name is identified like no other with the 'rebirth' of Germany after 1945, replied as such:

We had done to the Jews so much injustice, committed such crimes against them that somehow these had to be expiated or repaired, if we were at all to regain our international standing...Furthermore, the power of the Jews even today, especially in America, should not be underestimated.<sup>11</sup>

Adenauer firstly states his aim to pay reparations in order "to regain our international standing". This goal of rehabilitation is then closely intertwined with a central idea of modern antisemitism: that of Jewish power.

There does not seem to be much disagreement in historical scholarship that rehabilitation and integration into the Western alliance were the main German motivating factors for the 1952 agreement. For example, even the introduction to the West-German cabinet protocols for the year 1952, a publication of the German Federal Archives, downplays the role of moral considerations and concludes that "a decisive motive" for concluding the agreement was "not to endanger... the Federal Republic's integration into the Western world."<sup>12</sup> The discussion of the German motivating factors in seeking an agreement relates to the question of the extent of American influence on Germany decision-making. Constantin Goschler, one of the principal German historians on the topic of post-WWII reparations and restitutions, found this influence to have been decisive. He concludes that without the U.S., the FRG would have felt much less compelled to pay

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<sup>11</sup> For a transcript of the interview conducted by Günter Gaus see <https://www.konrad-adenauer.de/dokumente/interviews/1965-12-29-interview-zdf> (last access July 17th, 2018). The interview itself was conducted on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1965. It aired on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1966. See also Stern 1992: 383.

<sup>12</sup> see the online edition of the cabinet protocols under [http://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1952k/kap1\\_1/para2\\_5.html](http://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1952k/kap1_1/para2_5.html) (last access July 2nd, 2018).

reparations (Goschler 2008: 928, see also von Jena 1986).<sup>13</sup> As Trimbur sums up his careful weighing of the sources, “[i]t seems erroneous to claim that the West Germans only agreed to negotiate under pressure from the Americans; but it is also clear that West Germany’s yet heavy dependence on Washington influenced the West Germans to call for direct talks with Jewish organizations and Israelis.” (Trimbur 2003: 265).

As regards the question of antisemitic stereotypes, it must be pointed out that Adenauer was at no point in his life a Nazi. The stereotyped content of the above statement is also, of course, far removed from a genocidal nature. What may surprise though is that Adenauer so openly admitted to his motivations in addressing the German public. The aim of rehabilitation, coupled with an overblown idea of Jewish power, seemed self-evident, a natural thing to say on German television also in 1966. As we will see, it is indeed difficult to separate constructions of assumed Jewish might from the goal of rehabilitation, which stands at the historical core of the German turn towards Israel. Goschler confirms that much exaggerated ideas about Jewish influence were a factor in German decision-making at the time (Goschler 2008: 126). According to Tom Segev, Nahum Goldmann, chief negotiator for Israel and the Jewish Claims Conference, was aware of Adenauer’s weakness in this regard and used it to his advantage in the negotiations, pointing to ominous ‘consequences’ a failure to reach an agreement would have.<sup>14</sup> Pivotaly, the West German decision to pay reparations to Israel needs to be seen within the context of Adenauer’s overarching goal of *Westbindung*: to regain German sovereignty, autonomy and power by firmly embedding it in the West. This is where the question of lingering antisemitic attitudes, or their temporary transformation into philosemitic ones, needs to be addressed, as has indeed already been done by critical observers at the time.

Eleonore Sterling escaped the Nazis at the age of thirteen, her parents perished in a concentration camp in France. She returned from the U.S. to Germany and became the first female professor of political sciences in the Federal Republic. Today, Sterling and her works on antisemitism, as well as her role as a Jewish woman in postwar German academia and the public, are largely marginalized and forgotten. In 1965, she wrote an arti-

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<sup>13</sup> Earlier and more critical contributions include those of Kenneth Lewan (1975) or the edited volume by Hakam Abdel Hadi (1973). These works tend to overemphasize the American role, neglecting the space of autonomy the FRG created for itself. For an opposite account which clearly overstretches German autonomous decision-making, see Wolffsohn 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Tom Segev, see also Tempel 1995.

cle for the weekly *Die Zeit* in which she argued that the Western powers, on whom the early FRG depended politically, militarily and economically, mistrusted its supposedly novel democratic character. The FRG thus began to use symbols and substitute acts to demonstrate its postwar humanity and democratic credentials, in order to decrease this mistrust. Sterling argued that a functional philosemitic attitude has served as a substitute to a true act of understanding, repentance and future vigilance (Sterling 1965: 2f.). Frank Stern, whose work on antisemitism and philosemitism in the West German postwar period was referred to in the introductory chapter, has done much to further empirically substantiate Sterling's observations (Stern 1992).

Stern explained the 'metamorphosis' of German antisemitism into philosemitism as a catharsis—as a prejudiced attempt to acquiesce to the new authority of the Allied powers, a functional, psychological short cut to reconcile the supposedly new and democratic Germany with its immediate genocidal past. Following Stern, the postwar German public did not end its obedience to the nation-state, but used philosemitism as one of several methods to arrange itself with new authority. Ironically but logically, it is within the continuity of allegiance to the German nation that philosemitism fulfilled a function in the postwar period. According to Stern, it is important to realize the primarily tactical nature of postwar philosemitism. It is a tactic of political self-portrayal and defence against guilt. It thus does not have the deep historical roots of German antisemitism. Yet it is, in its prejudiced content, inherently unstable. As Max Horkheimer once noted, a negative and a positive prejudice are really one – two sides of the same coin (Horkheimer 1961). Like all forms of antisemitism, German postwar philosemitism cannot be explained by the actual recipients of its projections. It needs to be explained via the historical-psychological dispositions of its bearers and the political context they find themselves in.

Basing himself on Stern and thus also echoing Sterling, German sociologist Peter Ullrich argued that "[i]n the absence of Jewish citizens, German democracy sought legitimacy and catharsis on the ersatz-object of Israel." (Ullrich 2008: 62). Importantly, he added that the search for absolution occurred not only in terms of formal arrangements, but included normative efforts and changes, too.

German self-understandings and the perception of Germany abroad have become inextricably linked with how Germany discursively deals with the Nazi past (Rabinbach 1988). Referring to Dan Diner's notion of a 'negative symbiosis' between Germans and Jews

since Auschwitz, Rabinbach observed that “every stage in the emergence of West German sovereignty has been linked to the question of responsibility for the German past.” (Rabinbach 1988: 160). As Adenauer himself has put it, the Reparations Agreement of 1952 is the foundational moment in the history of the postwar relationship between German sovereignty and the German attitude towards Jews.

The Israeli interest in seeking German reparations was clear: to build the state. The new state was fledgling, its economy in crisis, survival not guaranteed. The Reparations Agreement was a crucial contribution to Israel’s material consolidation. This material need contrasted with an emotional one to exorcise everything German (Diner 2015: 9).<sup>15</sup> Israeli society identified the Germany of Adenauer with that of Hitler. Boycotting Germany was “what personal loss, revenge, and national honour required” (Segev 1993: 190). Israel at first “did indeed seem likely to forbid all contacts with Germany and to boycott it for generations...This reaction was largely instinctive: It expressed what most Israelis believed was the right thing to do.” (Segev 1993: 191). The Israeli path to Germany, which Segev so artfully reconstructs, principally consisted in the victory of the demands of the state over “instinctive” individual reaction. This struggle between individual adversity and the demands of statebuilding was acted out not least in biblical terms, which also shows the difficulty of finding a political language for a case which, in so many ways, knew no precedent. This was the situation at a time of silence over the Holocaust,

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<sup>15</sup> The German-Israeli Reparations Agreement should also be seen in the context of the cooperation between the Zionist movement and Nazi Germany prior to the Holocaust. The most far-reaching and contentious form of cooperation, which included i.e. occupational retraining or community education, was the Ha’avara Agreement (Transfer Agreement). In place from 1933 until 1939 (formally 1941), this was a complex mechanism by which capital owned by German Jews could be exported to Palestine in the form of German goods. Zionist cooperation with the Nazi regime stood against a wider Jewish boycott of Germany at the time. Breaking this boycott and creating a less-radically anti-Jewish image were main factors in the German side to this cooperation. Prior to full-scale extermination, the Transfer Agreement was one means to make Germany judenrein. For the Zionist movement, the agreement was in line with prior policies. The aim of Zionism was to build a Jewish state in Palestine. This was, and is, seen as the only possible defence against antisemitism. Thus, cooperating with the devil himself was possible, as long as it furthered the aim of building the state. The transfer was crucial to the settlement of about 60,000 German Jews in Palestine. The capital provided by the agreement and the fact that German Jews were much wealthier than immigrants from Eastern Europe meant an important contribution to economic development and agricultural settlement at the time. The Ha’avara Agreement is best read as a temporary convergence of interests between the small, essentially powerless Zionist movement and the German state. In other words, Nazi Germany considered Zionist Jews useful for a limited period of time. This temporary differentiation was collapsed in the Holocaust, which aimed at all Jews everywhere (Nicosia 2008).

not yet named as such, when the rules of memory were not yet established (see also Slyomovics 2014 for a personal and wide-ranging reflection on the question of ‘how to accept German reparations’).

In the world of international politics, boycotting the FRG was neither possible nor practical. Ben-Gurion wanted to firmly embed Israel in the Western camp. For Jerusalem, the road to Washington went via Bonn. For Bonn, the road to Washington went via Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion’s drive for ties with Germany led the Israeli state and society into political crisis. Yet in retrospect, from a state-making perspective, this policy was successful, maybe even without a plausible alternative (Segev 1993: 191f.). While Israel was driven towards Germany out of material interest, the fact of accepting German reparations was the first step towards the ‘normalisation’ of mutual relations, which was expected and desired by the German government (Goschler 2008: 173).

This chapter thus argues that the Reparations Agreement between Israel and the FRG is best understood as a form of mutual statebuilding. It was an exchange between symbolic rehabilitation and material consolidation. The structural convergence of interests, in rehabilitation and in consolidation, which those two states were so compelled to fulfil for one another, explains what seems incomprehensible on a different, individual level, namely the fact that the state which integrated so many survivors and relatives of victims and the state which incorporated so many Nazi criminals and countless enablers in its institutions could forge such important relations at such an early point (see also Trimbur 2000: 16). When viewed in this perspective of mutual statebuilding, current German evocations of a ‘miraculous reconciliation’ appear as posterior embellishments of a political exchange, embellishments which are, in fact, already part of this very exchange. It would seem that keeping this political character of exchange in mind helps avoiding the risk of implying that Auschwitz is something which could be repaired.

The following assesses both sides of the German-Israeli exchange between rehabilitation and consolidation and attempts to situate the 1952 Reparations Agreement within the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first section begins by placing the agreement within the overall history of German reparations for Nazism and situating it within the postwar German context of stymied denazification and self-victimization. It then discusses the German rationale in seeking an agreement with Israel. Following a brief discussion of the inner-Israeli contestation over the agreement, the second part of the chapter examines the

role of German reparations for the economic consolidation of Israel. Thirdly, while the Reparations Agreement is generally portrayed as a German-Jewish affair, it has unavoidably meant the FRG's assumption of a political role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the time, Bonn stressed the peaceful nature of the agreement. This claim is problematised by the fact that military relations between the two countries began, if tentatively, with the Reparations Agreement. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine German-Arab disputes over Reparations to Israel in depth. A brief look at these disputes, however, helps to understand how the FRG originally perceived and portrayed its position in the Arab-Israeli conflict, notably in relation to the question of the 1948 refugees from Palestine.

## **2.1 The Costs of Rehabilitation**

The contrasting names given to the 1952 Reparations Agreement between the FRG and Israel express the differing political rationales of the German and the Israeli side. These names are not coincidental, but reflect specific expectations and framings.

The Israeli foreign minister Moshe Sharret coined the term *Shilumim*. Based on Jewish legal tradition, *Shilumim* denotes a punitive payment. It signifies an attempt to repair, the handing back of stolen property. It is debt paid, not guilt forgiven (Segev 1993: 196). In the decisive Knesset debate over whether to negotiate with Germany or not, Ben-Gurion underlined that accepting reparations would not mean that the Nazi crimes could be repaired or forgiven. He argued that Germany should not be allowed to profit from its crimes: "The murderers of the Jewish people should not be its heirs." (Segev 1993: 215). This framing was important to the Israeli government already for the reasons of de-escalating the dramatic domestic protests against the prospects of accepting 'blood money', protests led by Menachem Begin of the Herut party (the predecessor to today's Likud). The Israeli government sought to avoid the impression of absolving Germany. This, quite exactly, was the German expectation, as expressed by the cruel term *Wiedergutmachungsabkommen*, the German name given to the 1952 agreement, used in official parlance until today. Literally, *Wiedergutmachung* translates as 'to make good again'. The term is regularly criticized for its deceptive innocence, its purposeful naiveté

(see also discussions in Goschler 2008: 11-18 and Hockerts 2001 who, however, argue for a continued usage of the term).

The closeness between reparation/absolution is also illustrated by the fact that in German, the words 'guilt' and 'debts' share the same root. Goschler thus fittingly titled his study of German postwar reparations *Schuld und Schulden* ("Guilt and Debts") a title taken from an essay by Sigrid Weigl.

The contrasting name pairs of *Schuld* and *Schulden*, or *Wiedergutmachung* and *Shilumim* relate to the conceptual framing of German-Israeli relations as an exchange between symbolic rehabilitation and material consolidation. In contrast to the above-mentioned pairs, this conceptual framing allows us to move beyond normative-philosophical considerations and official representations, in order to assess with more distance the stakes and profits involved in this exchange.

The Reparations Agreement between Germany and Israel of September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1952, was the first major treaty to regulate German reparations for the Holocaust. While the protocols to the agreement helped laying the groundwork for future individual compensation, this treaty was about reparations to the Israeli state. The agreement committed the FRG to paying \$823 million (3.45 billion Deutsche Mark) to Israel (Könke 1988: 513), which approximates \$7.8 billion in today's terms. Two thirds of this sum were paid in the form of goods and services, predominantly investment goods, as will be explained below. Only one third was paid in foreign currency. A London bank received 1.05 billion Deutsche Mark in pound sterling, with which Israel was able to buy crude oil from British companies (Ebeling 1966: 25). The second protocol to the agreement committed Germany to paying 450 million Deutsche Mark to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany. The Claims Conference, created for the purpose of the agreement, was an umbrella organization of Jewish American organizations. The 450 Million were included in the above mentioned sum allocated to Israel, which was to consequently reimburse the Claims Conference.

As will be demonstrated below, reparations were vital to Israel's economic modernization. However, they were not a major strain on the German state budget. In the first two years of the agreement, reparations paid to Israel amounted to 0.2% of German Gross National Product (GNP). In the course of rapid economic growth, the percentage share of



reparations to GNP fell to 0.06% by 1965 (Könke 1988: 533, see also Gardner-Feldman 1984: 90). The rehabilitation gained from the agreement was thus modestly priced. These numbers undergird Goschler's finding that reparations were "seen by the Allies and by the Germans as a more peripheral aspect of Germany's regaining of sovereignty, while they played a central role on the Jewish side" (Goschler 2008: 175). The stakes and profits involved in the exchange between rehabilitation and consolidation were unequally distributed, albeit in a different way than may commonly be expected.

According to a recent comparative study on post-WWII reparations in Europe, German reparations are generally perceived in the academic literature on reparations as the historical benchmark, an interpretation which "mainly dwells on the most spectacular event of German reparations, the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952", a treaty which "commonly serves as the model of redress, the one seminal example that 'changed forever the concept of reparations.'" (Ludi 2012: 76).

Government numbers indicate that by the year 2013, the FRG had altogether paid €71 billion in reparations and individual compensation for victims of WWII. The majority of this sum – about €47 billion – was paid as individual compensation under the Federal Indemnification Law (*Bundesentschädigungsgesetz* – BEG) (Goschler 2015). Recipients of individual restitution payments were, in practice, in their majority Jewish survivors. To be eligible for restitution, victims had to be connected to the territory of the German Reich of 1937, "a crucial limitation, of course, because the overwhelming majority of the victims of the Holocaust were neither German nor Austrian, nor did they suffer their fate on the territory of Germany." (Tooze 2011: 56).

The Iron Curtain was a border also for individual restitution, something which the Claims Conference unsuccessfully lobbied against. According to Tooze, more astonishing than the delimitation of indemnification to Jews of German origin was the slashing of the FRG's pre- and postwar debts following the London Debt Conference, which took place in parallel to the reparation negotiations. The London debt treaty, ratified on February 27th, 1953, foresaw a German debt reduction of more than 50%, from 30 billion to 14 billion Deutsche Mark. Yet, the FRG only agreed to these terms under the condition that further Allied WWII reparation claims would have to be deferred until a final peace treaty between the Allied powers and a reunified Germany was in place (Tooze 2011: 56).

A comparative glance at the history of East German reparations and restitution shows the determinant role of the Cold War in this question. The GDR paid substantial en bloc reparations to the Soviet Union and Poland. Individual compensation went to Nazi victims living on GDR territory and was focused on communist victims. Jews on GDR territory were compensated not as Jews, but as 'antifascists'. While the GDR's and the FRG's reparation policies mirrored their positions in the Cold War, they held one thing in common: individual indemnification benefited Germans only (Goschler 2015).

German reparations and restitution paid for the limitless violence unleashed by Nazi Germany are but one of the ways in which the Nazi past was dealt with in both West and East Germany. Yet as by definition the most costly, material expression of confronting past criminality, they are instructive of how the FRG, as well as the GDR, have as states dealt with a past that defies coming to terms with it on an individual basis. The majority of Germany's victims have, of course, not seen any forms of compensation, including the Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, victims of medical experiments or the politically persecuted. Incidentally, the omission of the politically persecuted has meant that those few in Germany who actually resisted the Nazis politically, namely communists and socialists, never became part of German public memory. Instead, those of whom Hannah Arendt had said that there was still an abyss between them and the rest of humanity, the officers who plotted to kill Hitler mainly for failed war tactics in 1944, are those whose memory is upheld. Similarly, it was possible in the postwar FRG to re-channel some of the previous antisemitic sentiment against the red scare.

Forced labourers, a euphemism for the millions of mostly Eastern European slaves utilized in the German war industry, received limited compensation only in 2000, when few were still alive to claim them. This list of uncompensated victims does not include the million Polish and Soviet victims of the *Vernichtungskrieg*, as well as victims of the war elsewhere.

When retrospectively thinking about the gap between the limitless nature of Nazi violence and the limited reparations and compensations which were eventually paid, one needs to also bear in mind that war reparations and individual indemnification somehow proportional to Nazi violence would have meant foregoing on German postwar recovery, just as a thorough denazification of Germany would most likely have meant giving up on the West German state. Limited reparation and compensation was thus another of the

prices exacted by the Cold War. Lastly, the fact that German reparations for WWII appear as highly significant in the history of reparations in the 20th century needs to also be related to the paucity of acknowledgement, reparation and restitution for other European genocides, such as the Turkish genocide of the Armenians in 1915, as well as for the other major crimes of European modernity: imperialism and colonialism. One may think in this context also of the fact that the German government refuses to pay reparations for the genocide of the Herero in Namibia, a refusal which relates to German societal amnesia about the crimes of German colonialism.

The practice of paying reparations and restitution, then, is also a practice of writing history, of determining who is remembered and who is forgotten. Quite certainly, it is also the de-complexification of Nazi criminality as it appears in reparation praxis which has made it possible for the Federal Finance Ministry to proclaim in the mid-1980s that Germans should be “proud” of postwar reparation policies (Musial 2015: 65).

Conversely, however, in focusing its reparation and restitution policies on Jewish victims, the FRG has restored a difference that was at the heart of the Nazi project of extermination. Not only were Jews the largest victim group of Nazi genocidal policy. The specificity of the attempt at their destruction was that means and ends were the same: Jews were exterminated for no other purpose than their extermination, an extermination which continued also after defeat had become inevitable (see also Postone 1980). As Hannah Arendt said in an interview with Gaus in October 1964, Auschwitz was “truly as if the abyss had opened. One imagines that everything else could have, somehow, be repaired, just like everything in politics can be repaired. Not this. This has never been allowed to happen.”<sup>16</sup>

It is however questionable whether the postwar West German move of focusing on Jewish victims was motivated by considerations of the specificity of the Jewish genocide. A hierarchical view of criminality wherein the Holocaust is the most evil of Nazi crimes was not prevalent in German postwar society. According to survey data, only five per cent of Germans admitted to feel guilt towards Jews in December 1951. The majority was equally divided between those who thought that only people “who really committed something” should pay and those who found that Jews were “partly responsible” for their fate

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<sup>16</sup> For a transcript of the interview see [https://www.rbb-online.de/zurperson/interview\\_archiv/arendt\\_hannah.html](https://www.rbb-online.de/zurperson/interview_archiv/arendt_hannah.html) (last access August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

(Judt 2010: 271f.). In this light, reparation and restitution brought to speech what was generally not talked about in the republic, namely the German crimes against the Jews.

What, then, is it that led to selective reparation policy in the postwar period? One could think of an answer in terms of power, in an ironical double sense. With Israel, there existed a Jewish *state* which was able to claim reparations and present itself as the legitimate representative of the survivors. This was not the case for any other victim group of Nazi genocidal policies. Secondly, German decision-makers continued to be inspired by ideas of 'Jewish power', ideas not held, for example, about the Sinti and Roma people. An explanation along these lines, however, fails to fully convince.

Elazar Barkan, in what one reviewer called an "ill-informed history" of reparations (Cheserman 2000), argued that Adenauer's willingness to push for reparations despite popular sentiments to the contrary was testament to his moral commitment. (Barkan 2000: 12). However, this simplistic moral explanation cannot account for the fact of Nazism's afterlife in the Federal Republic. Hannah Arendt once publicly said about postwar Germany that "[t]he Germans may call their terrible past mastered once they have condemned the murderers that still live among them and once they have removed those who are guilty from public offices." (cited in Geisel 2015: 439). This has never happened. For instance the '131er' law reintegrated the 'victims' of Allied Denazification policy. Witnessing West German efforts at amnesty and reintegration of former Nazis perpetrators and enablers had turned Arendt into a sharp critic of the Adenauer government, as several passages in her famous coverage of the Eichmann trial attest to. Norbert Frei, in his landmark study on the subject, agrees that the postwar German state needed to be built partly on previous elements, for the fact was that the depth of Nazism in the German state and society made a clean slate impossible (Frei 2002). What Frei sees as the most troubling outcome of his study, however, is the degree of voluntariness with which West Germany pursued its policies of amnesty and reintegration of former Nazi criminals (Frei 2002: 11). Adorno stated in 1959 that he considered "the continued existence of National Socialism *within* democracy potentially more threatening than the continued existence of fascist tendencies *against* democracy." (Adorno 1956/1986: 115, emphasis in the original).

In article titled *The Jewish Question in the German Question*, Rabinbach had earlier explained remarkably well how the reparations question and the afterlife of Nazism were

connected in the postwar republic. The first was used, not least, to allow for continued existence of the latter:

The discovery of the Jewish question as a way of distancing the present German government from the past created a peculiar situation which necessitated that German leaders be more philosemitic than their constituents, legislate political morality and prohibit antisemitism by strict sanctions, perpetuating a deep disjuncture between public professions of responsibility and popular attitudes. If the famous paragraph 131 permitted the reintegration of former Nazis into the civil service, the reparations declaration sanctioned the substitution of the Jewish Question for the Nazi question. The implicit power accorded to the Jewish Question...also produced what Saul Friedländer described as a negative form of Jewish power in contemporary Germany: the power of absolution. That this power would eventually become the source of resentment was not hard to predict (Rabinbach 1988: 167).

Among the Allied powers, the U.S. had initially most forcefully pursued a Denazification policy. The continuity of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* ('ethnic community') and its drive to forget, to reintegrate and to 'look forward' frustrated these efforts. As the Cold War took shape in the immediate aftermath of WWII, the U.S. administration became gradually less interested in the persecution of Nazi war criminals, placing priority on West Germany's rehabilitation and integration into the U.S.-led alliance (Breitman and Goda 2010). By 1949, Washington's interest in a stable, West German frontline state in the Cold War had trumped political efforts at Denazification.

#### *Adenauer's 1951 Bundestag declaration*

The idea of demanding indemnification for Nazi crimes had been debated by some Jewish organizations in the U.S. already in 1941 (for this pre-history of the agreement, see Segev 1993: 196-210 or Deutschkron 1970: 42). Adenauer had already ventilated an offer of about \$2 million before the official Israeli demand in 1951. This rather ludicrous sum may give some indication as to how Adenauer would have preferred to handle the matter. The starting point for the negotiations that would lead to the 1952 agreement were two notes sent by Israel to the four Allied powers in January and March 1951, demanding \$1.5 billion from West and East Germany (one billion from the FRG, half a billion from the GDR – a demand the FRG was able to reduce in the subsequent negotia-

tions). The Soviet Union did not reply. The Western powers referred Israel to direct negotiations with Germany. In April 1951, a clandestine meeting between two Israeli government representatives and the German chancellor himself paved the way. In this meeting, the Israelis made clear that what they needed from the chancellor was a public declaration of guilt. Israel could not negotiate with an unrepentant Germany.

Adenauer's resulting speech in the Bundestag on September 27th, 1951 was the first German declaration about responsibility for the Nazi crimes. As such, it may be read as one of the FRG's founding documents. The decisive, short passage of the speech had been drafted in a back-and-forth between the German and Israeli governments, as well as the World Jewish Congress (Segev 1993: 203-205, see also Lustick 2006). Adenauer accepted a number of Israeli proposals to the speech. Yet, he remained firm on his positions regarding the fundamental questions of German guilt and responsibility. Ben-Gurion wanted the chancellor to admit to the guilt and responsibility of the German nation as a whole. This was rejected by Adenauer. Here is the relevant paragraph of Adenauer's speech:

The government of the Federal Republic and with it the great majority of the German people are aware of the immeasurable suffering that was brought upon the Jews in Germany and the occupied territories during the time of National Socialism. The overwhelming majority of the German people abominated the crimes committed against the Jews and did not participate in them. During the National Socialist time, there were many among the German people who showed their readiness to help their Jewish fellow citizens at their own peril—for religious reasons, from distress of conscience, out of shame at the disgrace of the German name. But unspeakable crimes have been committed in the name of the German people, calling for moral and material indemnity, both with regard to the individual harm done to the Jews and with regard to the Jewish property for which no legitimate individual claimants still exist. In this field, the first steps have been taken. Very much remains to be done. The Federal Republic will see to it that reparation legislation is soon enacted and justly carried out. Part of the identifiable Jewish property has been restored; further restitution will follow. (cited in Segev 1993: 202).

This statement has been extensively and critically commented upon (see for example Herf 1997: 282f.). If "the overwhelming majority of the German people" supposedly opposed the genocide, one may wonder who had actually committed the murder. In an ingenious construction of guilt evasion, Adenauer spoke of crimes not committed by Germans, but "in the name of the German people". The picture that emerges from Adenau-

er's statement is that of a German people in its majority opposed to Nazism, of which it was itself, in fact, a victim, since its name had been abused for Nazi crimes. Yet nevertheless, seemingly out of generosity, the "German people" would be willing to pay reparations for a crime it was not responsible for.

The German guilt-evasive discourse, well at display in Adenauer's speech, was numerically expressed in the federal state budget. Tooze (2011) situates the Reparations Agreement within the context of the decisions taken by Germany in 1952, the year which, he argues, saw the final transition from postwar crisis towards internal stability and Western integration for the FRG. On the basis of the federal budget, Tooze demonstrates the economic dimension of those histories which stress the amnesty and reintegration of NS criminals (Frei 2002) and the politics of selective memory and of balancing German suffering against that of the German victims (for example Moeller 1996). According to Tooze, the disaggregation of the German state budget in the 1950s

reveal[s] the comparatively modest sums that West Germany was required to pay both in compensation for the most grievous crimes committed under Hitler and to settle the debts left unpaid since 1933...In the annual budget, the requirements of the Cold War and the needs of domestic welfare massively dwarfed any consideration for Germany's past liabilities. (Tooze 2011: 55).

In the year 1953, German expenditures for the integration of German expellees from the East was 13 times higher than payments to Israel for that year (Tooze 2011: 55). The numbers advanced by Tooze clearly indicate that among the overall postwar demands of internal stabilization and pacification, Cold War military contribution and paying reparations to the victims of Nazism, the latter was the least important (Tooze 2011: 47).

The Israeli 'response' to Adenauer's speech, drafted a day before the speech was made, reflected the prior tug-of-war over the speech's contents. In contradiction to what Adenauer said, Israel's official statement read that "the entire German people bears responsibility for the mass murder of European Jewry." The asymmetry between Adenauer's attempt to absolve the German nation and the Israeli government's depiction of all its individual members as equally accountable brings to mind Hannah Arendt when she stated "that there is no such thing as collective guilt or, for that matter, collective inno-

cence, and that if there were, no one person could ever be guilty or innocent.” (Arendt 1963/1994: 297f.).

For practical purposes, Israel then acknowledged Adenauer’s declarations as “an attempt on the part of the Federal Government to solve the problem.” (cited in Lustick 2006: 59). Lustick called “the entire episode...a carefully choreographed performance of minimal substance and maximum form.” (Lustick 2006: 60). As part of this performance, Lustick gives a detailed account of subsequent participant, journalistic and scholarly reporting which “hailed Adenauer’s speech in terms considerably more dramatic than was warranted by the text itself.” (Lustick 2006.: 60). The New York Times saw the speech as a “moral regeneration”, whereas the Washington Post described it as “the best thing that has come from Germany since before 1933.” (cited in Lustick 2006: 61).

For the U.S., the Reparations Agreement smoothed German integration into the Cold War bloc and consolidated the Israeli state which by the time of the 1967 war would become its key ally in the Middle East. Again, when pointing to the U.S. and Israeli role in the early rehabilitation of Germany, it must be borne in mind that the FRG’s record on reparations would have been a much lesser one without the pressure of these two states. The history of the 1952 Luxembourg Agreement illustrates the two main roles of Israel in the perception of the FRG. On the one hand, Israel is a powerful reminder of the Nazi past to Germany. On the other, as the carefully staged episode of Adenauer’s speech and the Israeli acceptance of it shows, Israel has been utilized, but also contributed to, the early whitewashing of the FRG. This was the price Israel paid for relations with Germany. In 1965, Ben-Gurion stated in retrospect that Adenauer had “recognized the moral responsibility of the entire German people for the crimes of the Nazis.” (cited in Lustick 2006: 61). While Adenauer’s commitment to Israel cannot be doubted, this had most certainly not been the case.

The bartering over Adenauer’s 1951 declaration furthermore speaks against a common misperception of the German-Israeli relationship as a one-sided one in which Germany pays and Israel receives. The misperception of unequal relations originates with the Reparations Agreement. One would assume that paying reparations is a moral act of contrition, in which indeed one side pays and the other receives. Yet, again, the Reparations Agreement involved little German selflessness. Furthermore, contrary to the arguments



of opponents of the agreement within the German state administration, reparations paid under the agreement with Israel eventually proved beneficial to the German economy in the longer run. The all-important fact is that two thirds of the overall sum was paid not in the form of hard currency, as Israel would have preferred, but in the form of goods. This German condition was set already prior to the start of negotiations, contained in the letter signed between Adenauer and Nachum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), in December 1951 (Deutschkron 1970: 47). In exchange for this concession, Israel demanded that the rest of the overall sum would be spent on oil deliveries (Könke 1988: 515f.).

With Israeli orders from German companies paid for by the federal budget, these orders effectively served as a stimulus to production. As German economic historian Günter Könke pointed out, it helped reviving those sectors of the German economy mainly geared towards export, such as the shipbuilding and machine-building industry, as well as the ferrous steel, petrochemical and electronic-engineering sectors. (Könke 1988: 533).

Furthermore, the Reparations Agreement enabled Germany to get a foothold on the Israeli market, a fact which helps explaining the strong economic relations between the two countries to this day. Currently, Germany is the fourth-largest trading partner of Israel and its most important trading partner within the EU.<sup>17</sup> Economic relations between the two countries were almost non-existent prior to the agreement. By 1962, regular German exports were already larger than exports of commodities under the terms of the agreement, mostly because of follow-up orders and because in a number of key economic sectors, Germany was able to establish itself first (Ebeling 1966: 40). Contrary to boycott threats and protests, German exports to Arab countries were generally not afflicted by the Reparations Agreement. And while it is true that individual German companies, industrialists and businessmen argued against reparations for fear of losing Arab markets (Deutschkron 1970: 80f.), German industry overall was greatly interested in the agreement, competing strongly for Israeli orders (Könke 1988: 531f.). In summary, repa-

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<sup>17</sup> See information on German-Israeli relations on the AA website, [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Israel/Bilateral\\_node.html#doc341270bodyText2](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Aussenpolitik/Laender/Laenderinfos/Israel/Bilateral_node.html#doc341270bodyText2) (last access March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

rations paid to the Israeli state in the form of goods turned out to be a profitable, long-term investment for the FRG.

*Defining the German interest: moral demands, financial constraints and the need for rehabilitation*

It is necessary to describe the opposing German positions on the agreement and to zoom in on the negotiations between Germany and Israel in order to show which perception of the German national interest eventually won out and why. Studying the amply-documented negotiations, we can point to three different camps or lines of argument: the morality-driven argument, the financial argument and the argument of longer-term political rehabilitation, which eventually prevailed.

German-Israeli negotiations over the actual content of the agreement took place on neutral Dutch ground from March to June 1952. The FRG simultaneously conducted the above mentioned negotiations in London over the settlement of its pre- and postwar commercial debts. Contrary to prior promises, the FRG made negotiations with Israel and the Claims Conference dependent on the outcomes of the London negotiations.

Law Professor Franz Böhm and lawyer Otto Küster, who led the German negotiating team, represented a morality-driven approach towards the question of reparations for Nazism's Jewish victims.<sup>18</sup> Böhm and Küster were opposed by Hermann Josef Abs and finance minister Fritz Schäffer. Abs, executive board member of the Deutsche Bank under the Nazis, who oversaw 'aryanization' measures of Jewish property, became a close adviser of Adenauer on financial questions after the war. In line with their institutional positions, the argument of Abs and Schäffer was that the FRG was unable to agree to a

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<sup>18</sup> Giora Josephthal, who led the Israeli negotiations, wrote to his wife: "It is all unreal. The Germans are unreal, too, for they represent the best aspects of the Weimar Republic and not the Germans of the past twenty years. And I do not know how much influence they have in Bonn." (cited in Deutschkron 1970: 57). This encounter between Israelis and Germans in a small suburb of The Hague was indeed surreal. In order to not further provoke Jewish resistance and outrage at the negotiations, the parties had agreed that for "optical" reasons English would need to be the official language of negotiation, knowing that German would quickly be used. As Deutschkron illustrates, during the first negotiations Felix Shinnar and Otto Küster found out that they both were brought up in Stuttgart, having even attended the same school (Deutschkron 1970: 57). Giora Josephthal and Felix Shinnar were both German-born Jews, escaping the country in 1938 and in 1934, respectively, to settle in Palestine. Like Küster and Böhm, Shinnar was part of the educated upper middle class, holding a PhD in law. Küster and Böhm did not follow the Nazi regime, opposing it to varying degrees. After 1945, both were highly active in the domain of restitution.

substantial payment of reparations to Israel, when it was simultaneously working to reduce the repayments of German interwar debts. Schäffer was especially adamant in his opposition. It was also not beyond him to chafe at what he saw as the “overblown expectations of the *Weltjudentum*.”<sup>19</sup> While the term *Weltjudentum* literally translates as ‘world Jewry’, it is part of the German antisemitic vocabulary and alludes to the idea of a Jewish global conspiracy.

According to Goschler, Adenauer found himself riven between the positions of Böhm and Küster and those of Abs and Schäffer (Goschler 2008: 311). Indeed, the chancellor’s zigzagging on the reparations question seems to support this claim.<sup>20</sup> For example, while he agreed on the Israeli note of March 1951 in a meeting with Goldmann in December the same year, he sent off the German delegation to the negotiations ordering them “to go and find out what these gentlemen really want.”<sup>21</sup> This certainly came as a surprise to Böhm, since Adenauer knew well what “these gentlemen” wanted, having personally discussed it with them. However, as Tooze demonstrates throughout his above-cited analysis, Adenauer’s manoeuvring on the issue was less a form of aberrant personal behaviour than part of an overall strategy aiming at a positive outcome in all the negotiations in which the FRG engaged itself at the time, as well as a reflection of the differing structural constraints under which the chancellor found himself (see also Goschler 2008: 311f., as well as Trimbur 2003: 264-272).

Thus, Böhm and Küster were forced to employ a wait-and-see tactic at the negotiations table. In April, crisis ensued as Abs and Schäffer intervened in the negotiations seeking to exploit Israel’s dire economic and financial situation by making an offer much below the initially agreed-upon terms. Böhm and Küster, after harsh confrontations with Schäffer, resigned from their posts in protest. Adenauer now faced a public opinion disaster in the eyes of Western publics.

It is in this context that economics minister Ludwig Erhard, commonly referred to in Germany as the ‘father’ of the ‘economic miracle’, intervened in the discussion. Contrary to the ‘moral’ advocates and the ‘financial’ opponents of the agreement, he argued that

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<sup>19</sup> See 204th session of German cabinet, February 26th, 1952 TOP B (Cabinet Protocols of the Federal Republic online).

<sup>20</sup> For an actor-centric and ironical-critical approach towards the Adenauer years, see Köhler 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Böhm 1976: 448, cited in the German Federal Archive’s online introduction to the cabinet protocols of 1952 (“Londoner Schuldenabkommen und Abkommen mit Israel”).

the political and the economic dimension were in fact inseparable. In a letter to Adenauer, he expressed his support for the Reparations Agreement with Israel in the following terms:

If we do not bank on further economic expansion, we abandon ourselves...From a more dynamic assessment of the situation and particularly from the political aspect it may very well serve the German interest better to acknowledge a greater amount of debt, if we thereby strengthen Germany's credit and in the end even reconcile the Jews of the world to the German past. The difficulty is that the possibilities cannot be weighed or measured and therefore also do not impress the German public...But either we have a future, in which case we may wager something, or we are lost, and then all agreements are without significance.<sup>22</sup>

For Tooze, this statement signifies the transitional moment of the West German state at the time, in which indeed the future did not appear as fixed (Tooze 2011: 68).

Under direct pressure from the U.S. administration (Tooze 2011: 68) and the Social-Democrats (Sachar 1999: 43f.), Adenauer intervened decisively to prevent an irreversible breakdown of negotiations. Following the advice of Böhm, who thus reassumed his position in the German negotiating team, Adenauer offered the Israeli side an outcome based on the initial agreements. This is the background to Adenauer's final imploration to his cabinet to come to an agreement on the reparations question. The protocol of the meeting, on June 17th, 1952, states:

The chancellor underlines the paramount importance of the matter in relation to the entire western world and especially to the USA. Breaking off negotiations with Israel without a result would summon the gravest political and economic dangers for the FRG. Therefore, even considerable financial sacrifices must be made in order to come to an agreement with Israel.<sup>23</sup>

Here, as in almost all other internal statements, Adenauer does not make moral arguments for paying reparations. Secondly, the audience for Adenauer is not primarily the Israeli state, nor, for educational purposes, German society. The audience lies in the West and, specifically, the U.S. Adenauer warns of great political and economic dangers.

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<sup>22</sup> Translation by Tooze (2011: 68) who cites the letter from Michael Wolffsohn. Erhard's letter is a key document, published also in the AAPD 1952/108.

<sup>23</sup> 228th session of German cabinet, June 17th, 1952 TOP C (Cabinet Protocols of the Federal Republic online, see [https://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1952k/kap1\\_2/kap2\\_46/para3\\_12.html](https://www.bundesarchiv.de/cocoon/barch/0000/k/k1952k/kap1_2/kap2_46/para3_12.html), last access July 27th, 2018).

It is for this reason that a certain financial sacrifice has to be made, in order to ensure the political and economic well-being of the FRG in the long run. In summary, Adenauer proposed, in line with the statement of Erhard quoted above, to pay a substantial reparations to Israel, in order to ensure Germany's political rehabilitation in the West, which would in turn make possible German economic expansion as well.

The last hurdle to take was ratification in the German parliament. On March 18th, 1953, the Reparations Agreement was ratified with 239 delegates in favour, 35 against and 86 abstentions.<sup>24</sup> The Social-Democrats voted unanimously in favour with 126 delegates present. Adenauer's governing CDU/CSU coalition voted with 84 in favor, 5 against and 45 abstentions. The only party to unanimously vote against the agreement was the Communist Party (KPD) with 13 votes. Delegates of the parties to the right of the CDU/CSU mostly abstained, with yes and no votes rather evenly scattered. The Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP), which then contained strongly revisionist and hard-right nationalist elements, voted 17 in favour, 5 against and 20 abstentions.

Reading the speeches by representatives of the major parties shows a number of important points. Firstly, all those speaking in favour of the agreement argued in terms of the positive impact on the German global reputation and the clearing of its name. This argument became more pronounced, or seemed to become the core argument, on the right-wing spectrum. Walther Hasemann spoke for the FDP, referring to the agreement as "an act which wants to be seen as a moral one, its aim being to clear the German name and reputation." Hasemann, who voted in favour, was a member of the NSDAP already prior to Hitler's accession to power and a party loyalist until 1945. Parliamentarians who in the Nazi years profited from 'aryanization' measures, such as Hans-Christoph Seebohm or Hans-Joachim Merkatz, a regime supporter, voted in favour. Both of these figures later changed from the Deutsche Partei (DP) to the CDU. One obviously finds many former Nazis among the abstainers and no-voters among the right-wing parliamentary spectrum. An interesting case for our analysis is the one of Franz-Josef Strauss. An ex-officer of the Wehrmacht, he was to soon become one of the figureheads of Ger-

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<sup>24</sup>Voting records and following citations from Bundestag Protocol 254th Session, First Legislative Period, March 18th, 1953 (Bundestag Protokolle Online Dokumentation). See <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/01/01254.pdf> (last access July 17th, 2018).

man postwar conservatism. He abstained. Yet already a few years later, he would become the central figure on the German side for establishing close military ties with Israel. The possibly most interesting division runs between the KPD and the SPD, the two left-wing parties in the parliament who voted en bloc, against and in favour. Kurt Müller of the KPD had suffered severe injuries inflicted by the Nazis in a German jail, before being sent to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, where he survived until its liberation by Soviet troops in 1945. Müller started his speech stating that “the death and murder of six million Jews is an accusation against a terrible, odious system of barbarism...But we oppose the fact that there are speakers today, who, when the demand of the hour was to oppose these crimes, either stood aside or supported them.” He continued by criticizing the fact that at the time, individual restitution was not yet underway. Citing from the agreement, he argued that it would be Israeli, German and American industrialists who would profit from the agreement, but not individual Jewish victims of National Socialism. He then argued that the agreement ultimately served an American purpose to build up Israel as a military spearhead in the Middle East. The fact that former Nazis now sitting in the Bundestag were in its favour added insult to injury regarding the memory of Nazi victims and the fate of survivors.

The Social-Democrat Carlo Schmid, while not a follower of Nazi ideology, was a former member of the National Socialist Association of Legal Professionals and Wehrmacht mayor. He spoke about the barbarism of the Nazi regime, pointing out that Jews were singled out by Nazi terror. Schmid recognized the collective claim of Israel for Jewish representation, yet was adamant that this should not prevent the payment of individual compensation to all victims of Nazism without consideration of origin, residence, race or faith. While thus presenting both general and specific cases for reparations and restitutions, Schmid was also aware that German reparations were helpful in restoring the German reputation.

Eugen Gerstenmaier, who had not been a Nazi out of his Christian convictions, spoke in favour of the agreement on behalf of the CDU. His speech resembles closely the positions and framings of Adenauer on the issue. Gerstenmaier began his speech with a statement on the “outbreak of lunacy” that was Nazi barbarism. While he spoke about the systematic, genocidal Nazi horrors, he also stated that a large number of Germans opposed this system. However, their number was not “large enough” to allow speaking

of a “collective innocence” of Germans. He then claimed that the “counter-strike of history” was to “transform the whole of Germany into a large ghetto. Even more insurmountable than an oriental ghetto were, to us Germans, the walls of hate, contempt and rejection, which were drawn around us already before the war and which held us imprisoned after the war.” He then framed the Reparations Agreement as a central means to display a novel attitude and to overcome these “ghetto walls”.

## **2.2 The Impact of the Reparations Agreement on Israeli Statebuilding**

The prospect of negotiating with the FRG provoked a massive contestation in the Israeli public sphere, which peaked with the attempted storming of the Knesset on January 7th, 1952, following a mass rally organized by the Herut led by Menachem Begin. Herut was the successor party to Vladimir Jabotinsky’s Revisionist movement and the predecessor to Likud, Israel’s governing party nowadays. Jacob Tovy (2017) has recently provided an overview of the main actors and their lines of arguments in the struggle over the Reparations question. Direct negotiations with Germany were opposed from the right and left of the political centre. Herut organized the right, communist Maki and socialist Mapam led the struggle from the left. Independent media and Holocaust survivor organizations were important to opposition outside of parliament. Former Ghetto fighters and partisans tended to lend their authoritative voices to Mapam (Segev 1993: 211). Israeli left-wing opposition argued along similar lines to those of West German communism. At this stage, both Maki and Mapam were oriented towards Moscow. Their opposition to the agreement was “schizophrenic” (Segev 1993: 217) as both deemed relations with West Germany an abomination, whereas relations with East Germany were considered legitimate (Segev 1993: 217, also Tovy 2017: 493). It must be remembered that throughout the Cold War and especially in the postwar years, denouncing the reintegration of Nazis into the FRG’s administration was a favourite propaganda tool of the Soviet Union and the GDR, propaganda which contained, of course, more than a kernel of truth. In pointing out the rehabilitating functions of the agreement for the FRG, the Israeli left may be said to have opposed the agreement for plausible reasons, yet it has done so in defence of a totalitarian state ideology which did not recognize a specifically Jewish claim to res-

titution and which was no stranger to antisemitism, as the 1952 Slánský trials demonstrated (which led to Mapam's split and distancing from Moscow).

Herut's campaign under Begin was one of emotions and national honour. To Begin and his many followers, the whole affair appeared as a despicable trade of the memory of the victims for bloodstained German money. Begin argued for upholding the anti-German boycott, insisting that negotiating with Germany would mean "[n]egotiations with a pro-Nazi regime". Herut, along with the other opposing parties, asserted that "Adenauer's government was helping to revive Nazi ideology in West Germany." (Tovy 2017: 490). Those opposing the negotiations also argued that direct negotiations were not worth the moral degradation, as the FRG would pay very little and thus not provide a serious economic help to the state (Tovy 2017: 491). According to Tovy, those favouring negotiations, namely the Labour party under Ben-Gurion, which was in firm command of the state, made three principal arguments. Firstly, reparations would strengthen Israel. A strong Jewish state "would be the Jewish people's greatest victory over Nazi ideology, which had attempted to wipe out all vestiges of Jewish existence, and the best possible guarantee against the perpetration of another Holocaust." Proponents also argued that reparations from Germany would constitute the first time in history that those persecuting Jews would be made to pay for their crimes. Those who stole and murdered should not be allowed to also benefit from their crimes (Tovy 2017: 491f.).

Three specific arguments were levelled against those of the opposition. As for upholding the boycott, supporters of negotiations argued that Israelis and Jews outside Israel were already engaged with Germany over restitution questions. Secondly, the rehabilitation of the FRG would proceed with or without Israel; the FRG had practically already been aligned with the Western Cold War bloc. Thirdly, reparations were to be a singular instance, and no "prelude to the establishment of economic and diplomatic relations between the two countries." Israel would remain committed to the boycott and "there would be neither reconciliation nor forgiveness for the horrifying events of the Holocaust." (Tovy 2017: 492).

How to evaluate in retrospect the above arguments favouring and opposing reparation negotiations? As demonstrated below, the main argument in favour, namely that reparations would lead to a fortification of the Israeli state, was proven entirely correct and the opposition fear's to the contrary turned out to be unfounded. It is also plainly evi-



dent that the fact of accepting reparations had not simply been a singular instance of accepting partial compensation for Nazi crimes. Instead, the agreement opened the door towards economic normalisation and a military relationship between the two countries, as well as diplomatic relations, topics dealt with in the subsequent chapter. Thus, proponents and opponents were both proven right: the agreement led to the consolidation of the Jewish state, it also opened the door towards the 'normalisation' of bilateral relations, as well as playing a role in the rehabilitation of Germany.

The argument that the FRG's rehabilitation would have proceeded with or without Israeli help (see also Wolffsohn 1988) does not detract from the above-demonstrated fact that for the West German administration, the agreement was perceived as an important factor in 'regaining the FRG's international standing', as stated in the quote from Adenauer at the beginning of this chapter. Again, it needs underlining in this context that the exchange between rehabilitation and consolidation was differently priced, reflecting both countries economic and political status at the time. For the FRG, the rehabilitation that the agreement provided turned out to be cheap. For Israel, its effects were crucial.

### *The Economic consolidation of Israel*

The Israeli government prioritized state reparations over individual restitution for statebuilding purposes. David Horowitz, director general of the Israeli finance ministry, argued "for en bloc reparations as the centrepiece of Israel's demands on Germany. Indemnification of individual Jews was vital...but only reparations to Israel would make the difference between economic survival or collapse." (Sachar 1999: 35). Nahum Goldmann called the agreement "a downright salvation" for Israel (cited in Vogel 1969: 99). In his historical overview of Israeli relations with Europe, Howard M. Sachar wrote that deliveries under the Reparations Agreement have been an "indispensable economic lifeline", since "the principal industrial shipments were of capital goods intended to develop the Jewish republic's fragile economic infrastructure." (Sachar 1998: 50).

The relevance of the Reparations Agreement to the early consolidation of the Israeli state is regularly noted, yet seldom systematically assessed. An article by economic historian Günther Könke (1988), which appeared in the renowned journal *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, so far constitutes the only German-language ac-

count that systematically assesses the effect of reparations on Israel's economic modernization. This may seem peculiar in light of the importance of German-Israeli relations to the German self-image, especially since after unification. One would assume that the German contribution to Israel's build-up could even be turned into source of national pride, linked to the German 'mastering' of its past. Regarding German policymakers at the time, a main reason for downplaying the significance of the agreement to the material consolidation of Israel was to not further endanger relations with Arab states, a topic dealt with further below.

To the protagonists, especially Israeli ones, the relevance of the German deliveries was obvious. Felix Shinnar, who was one of Israel's chief negotiators and afterwards headed the Israel Mission in Cologne, stated the importance Israel attached to the agreement in an interview with German Journalist and chronicler of German-Israeli relations, Rolf Vogel:

For Israel, the necessity of receiving goods was important because thus she had the opportunity, putting aside the urgent needs for daily consumption, to obtain substantially only those goods that served the peaceful, industrial, or agricultural upbuilding of Israel. Some 80 per cent of the agreement was accepted in shipments of capital goods of all kinds, and accordingly the shipments under the agreement (and I believe that this does justice to the meaning, the inner meaning of the agreement) were a visible, lasting constituent of the building-up of Israel in those first years, so decisive for the economic consolidation of Israel. (cited in Vogel 1969: 88).

The story of Israel's "economic consolidation" via reparations can in fact quickly be told. The pre-State Jewish economy in Palestine, the Yishuv, necessarily depended on foreign capital inflows and financial assistance. The structural characteristic of economic outside dependency has marked Israel since its founding. Economic self-sufficiency was achieved only recently (cf. Nitzan and Bichler 2002: 27ff.). Israel thus imported much more than it exported, a trade deficit which could not be evened out by the state budget. Foreign currency reserves were chronically low. Reparation payments to the Israeli state helped bridge the trade deficit, giving the Israeli administration capital into its hands to undertake a program of state-led import-substituting industrialization (Könke 1988).

Reparations helped the Israeli economy out of a bottleneck. After the ceasefire agreements of 1949, the Jewish population of Israel doubled. 340,000 immigrants had arrived

from Europe's DP camps by the end of that year. A further 345,000 arrived over the course of 1951, mostly Jews from Arab countries (Halevi 2008). The government needed to impose a strict austerity and rationing program on the population to meet basic housing and welfare needs. Lustick cites comprehensive data about the relative lack of basic amenities of the Israeli population compared to that of West Germany (Lustick 2006: 55). Population growth overburdened the economy to such a degree that immigration was halted in early 1952, shortly before reparation negotiations with the FRG began. This, of course, was directly contrary to the key Zionist objective (Arlosoroff 2018).

Israel's economic growth, however, was already in the making. GNP increased by 11% annually from 1950 until 1965 (Halevi 2008). As Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan explain, this "expansion was driven by two main forces: population growth and foreign aid." (Bichler and Nitzan 2002: 122). The significance of German reparation capital is indicated by breaking down the growth rate in the 1950s. While GNP rose by 1.8% between 1952-1953, its growth rate increased almost ten-fold, to 17%, in the years 1954-55, when deliveries under the agreement were underway (Rivlin 2010: 37).

In other words, Israel's doubled population was put to work in a program of industrialization, enabled for by capital from abroad. Arab-Jewish immigrants, the Mizrahi, provided the cheap labour necessary for this task (Hanieh 2003: 7). Incidentally, reparations would thus help perpetuate Israel's ethno-class structure. In fact, this happened in two ways, as individual restitution paid to German Jews would also contribute to the wealth gap between European and Mizrahi Jews.

#### *Quantitative aspects: the relevance of reparations and restitution to Israel's capital inflow*

Gardner-Feldman showed that the capital inflow provided by the Reparations Agreement was significantly higher than grants in aid provided by the U.S. government at the time. According to Feldman's data, Israel received \$757.3 million worth of capital from the FRG between 1953 and 1965. U.S. grants stood at only \$214.7million for that period. In other words, the foreign aid provided by the FRG to Israel in its formative period was three times larger than that of the American government. The third major form of capital inflow were contributions by Jewish organizations and individuals. These contribu-

tions were more than twice as high as German state-to-state reparations. If we add up reparations and individual restitution payments for the 1953-65 period, German contributions and Jewish contributions were about equal. What becomes clear from Gardner-Feldman's numbers is that the Israeli state at the time depended essentially on two sources of income, none of which being the U.S. government, which provided only 5.9 per cent of the overall sum provided by West Germany, Jewish organisations and individuals and the U.S. taken together (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 96).

In terms of descriptive, quantitative data, the significance of reparations can be gleaned off Israel's foreign trade statistics. Taking his data from the German Federal Statistical Office, Könke shows that before the Reparations Agreement was put into practice, German-Israeli trade was almost, yet not entirely, non-existent. In 1954, the share of West German goods to overall Israeli imports stood at 18% (Könke 1988: 546, table 8). German exports to Israel would soon consist not only of reparation capital, but of 'regular' goods. Regular trade evolved for two reasons. On the one hand, German firms had acquired a large foothold in the Israeli market, mostly due to follow-up orders on reparations deliveries. On the other hand, the German contribution to Israel's industrialization strengthened Israel's export potential. This fact is also indicated by the growth of Israeli exports to Germany. In 1952, Germany received 0.5% of Israeli exports, consisting essentially in citrus fruits. In 1960, Germany received 12.4% of Israeli exports. These numbers testify to Israel's explosive growth during that period, as well as the relevance of the FRG to this growth (Könke 1988: 546, table 8). They also show that 'normalisation' between the two countries proceeded, first of all, in the economic sphere.

On the Israeli side, Fanny Ginor co-authored a 1965 Bank of Israel report which assessed the impact of German reparations and restitution payments on the Israeli economy. Ginor reassessed her findings in a 1972 article, from which Gardner-Feldman cites. According to this 1972 article, German reparations and restitution taken together made up more than a quarter of overall Israeli capital imports in a nineteen-year period (cited in Gardner-Feldman 1984: 97). Ginor placed high importance on the effects of individual restitution payments on the Israeli economy. According to the data provided by Gardner-Feldman, by 1978, 40% of individual restitution payments had been granted to Israeli citizens (Gardner-Feldman 1984: 94). These payments relieved the state of welfare payments and helped to stock up Israel's chronically foreign currency reserves. Thus,

reparations can be seen to have tackled the structural economic problem of the Israeli trade deficit, whereas restitution pumped money into the Israeli economy. Ganor's summary evaluation, as quoted by Gardner-Feldman, is worth re-quoting here:

Reparations and restitution payments had a considerable impact on the size and composition of investments and savings, and therefore on the country's economic growth and employment...Together both sources paid for 12% of total imports during 1953-71, and for 27% of the excess of imports over exports. Their greatest importance lay in the fact that over a prolonged period they constituted a sizeable part of the foreign currency receipts without creating foreign exchange debts or the obligation to pay interest. (cited in Gardner-Feldman 1984: 99).

*Qualitative aspects: reparations as a targeted program of industrialization*

It is helpful to understand how the 1952 agreement actually worked out in practice. The way in which it was carried out forcibly contributed to the creation and gradual intensification of bilateral relations and, thus, to the long-term goal implied in the German drive for rehabilitation: the 'normalisation' of relations with Israel, a topic covered in detail at the beginning of chapter four.

The Israel Mission, created under the terms of the agreement and located in Bonn, was responsible for Israeli purchases in Germany. The federal government paid the agreed-upon yearly instalments into the Mission's account with the Bank deutscher Länder (later Bundesbank). The Israel Mission was subordinated to the Israeli ministry of finance, where the Israeli purchasing lists were first drawn up (Könke 1988: 516, Sachar 1998: 49). According to the agreement, the Israel Mission was "entitled to engage in all activities which may be required in the Federal Republic of Germany in connection with the expeditious and effective implementation of the present agreement." (Article 12). The Israel Mission was a juridical person in the eyes of German law. Its rights and duties resembled those usually accorded to consulates and embassies. Extraterritoriality applied, thus the mission was exempted from taxes and its staff was accorded diplomatic immunity. Accordingly, in the files of the AA, Felix Shinnar was referred to as the 'Israeli ambassador' in Germany long before the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1965. The scope of his activities soon expanded beyond those demanded by the Israel Mission,

serving as both the Israeli mouthpiece in Germany and as a channel of communication for the German government towards Israel, in lieu of official diplomatic relations. Regarding questions emanating directly from the agreement's implementation, the Mixed Commission was formed, consisting equally of German and Israeli government officials, with the Israeli members of the Mixed Commission drawn from the Israel Mission. The central task of the Mixed Commission was to agree upon the delivery list for each year of the agreement. An exclusively German body tasked with oversight of the agreement was the Bundesstelle für Warenverkehr (Federal Office for Trade Transactions). The Bundesstelle helped the Israel Mission to find adequate German companies for its orders. Via the Bundesstelle, the German government saw to it that areas of special economic need such as West Berlin, as well as companies employing German refugees, were "adequately considered" in the placement of Israeli orders (Ebeling 1966: 17f.). In Israel, the Shilumim Corporation, also created under the terms of the agreement, was in charge of channeling the German deliveries into the Israeli economy. This body drew from personnel of the Histadruth, Israel's major and state-affiliated trade union. It was led by Hillel Dan, the director of Solel Boneh, the Histadruth's umbrella organisation for its construction companies.

The above-described mechanism turned out to work well. Contrary to initial fears of Ben-Gurion (Deutschkron 1970: 74), the FRG took care to smoothly implement the agreement, which stands in contrast to the hesitancies and tactical manoeuvres which characterized the negotiations. As explained by Shinnar in the statement quoted above, reparation payments were specific in that they targeted Israel's longer-term industrialization. Könke argued that the true significance of reparation payments was that they constituted a "substantial contribution to the economic modernization of Israel in the 50s and 60s, which enabled the accession of Israel to the group of industrialized countries and which, over the longer-run, helped secure the political and economic existence of the Israeli state." (Könke 1988: 534). The "New Economic Policy" (NEP) devised in 1952 centrally sought to reduce Israel's import dependency and to achieve industrialization via a strong steering hand of the state within the economy (Könke 1988). The very name of this policy shows Israel's orientation towards state planning at the time. The German 'economic miracle', built on a free market shock therapy helped by Marshall

Fund capital, thus aided the ‘economic miracle’ of Israel, built upon a state-planned industrialization afforded to a high degree by German reparations capital.

As one third of the agreement was earmarked for procuring oil from British companies, the agreement simultaneously helped Israel to build its industry and to cover the energy requirements for its modernization. Article VI of the agreement divided German deliveries into five groups: ferrous and non-ferrous metals; products of the steel-manufacturing industry; products of the chemical industry and of other industries; agricultural products and services.

Situating the deliveries under the agreement within the context of Israel’s NEP reveals its modernizing functions. The official report issued by the Mixed Commission on the agreement’s implementation in 1966 (Ebeling 1966) gives an overview of the deliveries of goods under the agreement between 1953 and 1965. This overview is reproduced, in English-language, in the collection of primary sources edited by Rolf Vogel (Vogel 1969: 89). The report disaggregates the deliveries into the five main categories agreed upon in Article VI of the treaty and also offers a survey of the specific types of deliveries within each group.

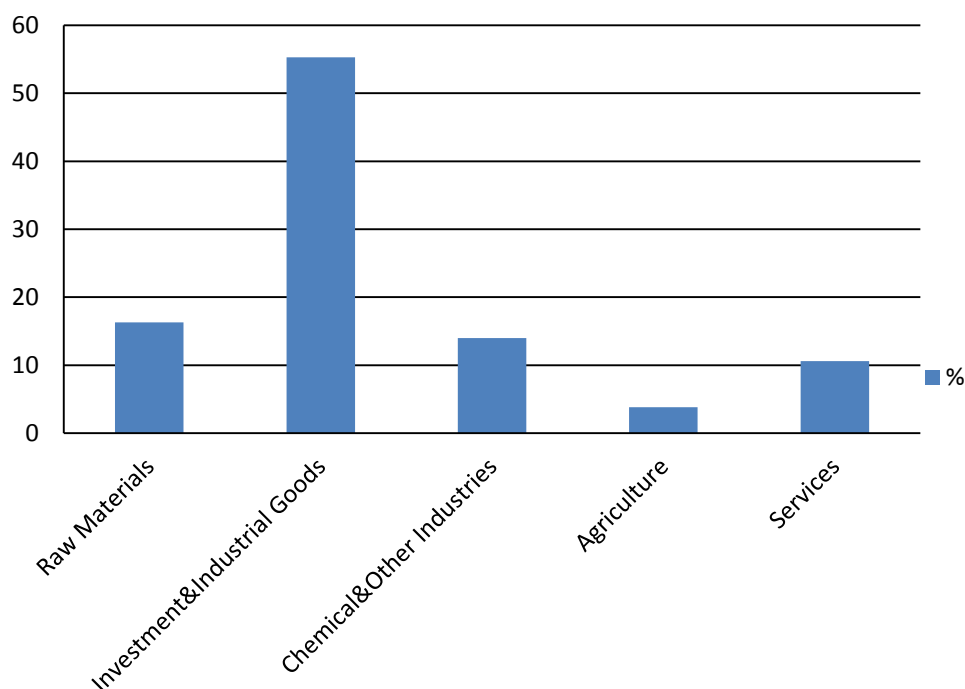


Figure 1. Percentage share of goods delivered under the Reparations Agreement, 1953-1965.

Groups 4 and 5 are rather insignificant. Agricultural products under Group 4 made up only 3.8% of overall deliveries. "Services" as subsumed under Group 5 also do not interest us. Even though these amounted to over 10% of the overall sum, they mostly covered corollary costs to the deliveries, such as freight, insurance and the financing of the Israel Mission. Thus, we are concerned here only with the first three groups, which account for over 85% of the sum invested in deliveries to Israel.

Raw materials went into the construction of factories and plants. As the above-quoted German report of the Mixed Commission explains, those materials "involved chiefly the procurement of structural steel for the large facilities that were later to house the manufacturing plants of varied industries...Shipments of structural steel covered chiefly the first nine years of the total period, declining sharply in the last four years, since the major projects were concluded by 1962." (cited in Vogel 1969: 89, see also Könke 1988: 518). The investment goods delivered under Group 2 were the core of the statebuilding program, amounting to 55.3% of the overall share. These deliveries comprised capital-intensive investment goods especially of the engineering sectors. The report of the Mixed Commission explains why this was the case:

From the first drafting of the agreement the parties both felt that the need for investment goods should be given primary consideration in order to set up an efficient economy in Israel...The supplying of capital goods was also of special importance to the economy of the Federal Republic and the various suppliers, since these were products whose manufacture, in contrast to the goods of Groups I and III, is particularly labour- or wage-intensive. The products of the mechanical engineering industry in all their variety were supplied chiefly from 1957 onwards, that is from the point when the projected factories in Israel were sufficiently far along so that they could be equipped with machinery. Machinery of all kinds was supplied, and all the branches of the industry shared in the orders—textile machinery, machinery for the chemical industry, metal- and woodworking machinery, motors, machine tools, construction and highway equipment, cranes, locomotives, transport equipment, pumps, farm machinery, equipment for sugar mills, office machinery, and various others. (cited in Vogel 1969: 90).

Könke finds that deliveries under Group II played "a key role for the build-up of the Israeli economy" as the investment goods of this group equipped the newly built factories and enterprises that would serve as the backbone for the transformation of the Israeli economy (Könke 1988: 518). If we disaggregate deliveries under Group 2, we find that



machinery made up 13.2% of the overall share in deliveries. Electrical industry, also under Group II, made up a significant 9.3% share of the overall amount. Between 1955 and 1960, the FRG delivered five electrical power plants to Israel. Electricity demand rose not only with population growth and expansion of agriculture, but most notably in relation to the pace of industrialization, as Könke lays out in detail (Könke 1988: 518).

Among the products under Group 3, those of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries were the most important, amounting to 6.7% of overall deliveries; textiles, rubber and products of the woodworking industry were of some significance.

The largest single item was shipbuilding, also delivered under Group 2. Shipbuilding made up 24.4% of the overall share of deliveries. The report of the Mixed Commission explains why:

More than DM 585 million of funds under the agreement were invested in ships. This large sum is the easier to understand when we reflect that Israel has only one open frontier, that to the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and must carry on her entire goods traffic by sea. In addition, at the beginning of the agreement, in 1953, Israel had only an insignificant merchant fleet with a few, over-aged ships. A total of 60 vessels with a total tonnage of about 450 thousand was supplied, with 13 West German yards participating in the construction. (cited in Vogel 1969: 90f.).

The report adds that “Israel would hardly have been able to expand her industry at such a pace and to supply it with raw materials and transport its products abroad, if she had not had her merchant fleet.” (cited in Vogel 1969: 97). However, the emphasis on shipbuilding also served German industrial interests. As the report explains, a large number of German companies not related to shipbuilding profited as subcontractors. This was the reason why the Mixed Commission was able to agree upon the emphasis on this sector (Ebeling 1966: 30). We may add, however, that due to the Demilitarization measures of the 1945 Potsdam Agreement, shipbuilding was prohibited in the FRG until 1951. After the lifting of restrictions, this sector saw a massive rise in production, with the FRG holding a world market share of 17% in this sector already by 1956. Certainly the construction of the Israeli merchant fleet played its part in this rise in production, helping to solve a problem of unemployment in these sectors.

### 2.3 Situating the Reparations Agreement within the Arab-Israeli Conflict

It was especially in the time period between the signing and the ratification of the Reparations Agreement that Arab League states lodged complaints against it. Heinrich von Brentano, at the time chairman of the CDU/CSU faction in the Bundestag and who would succeed Adenauer as foreign minister in 1955, wrote to Adenauer about these complaints. Brentano cautioned against swift ratification of the Reparations Agreement because

[i]t is apparently not the case that solely egoistic or even antisemitic tendencies are behind the protests. These [Arab League] states partly also feel seriously threatened in their existence if because of an uncontrolled fulfilment of the agreement Israel receives commodities which could facilitate new warfare in this tense situation...I would like to suggest once more to eventually alert the American government of this specific situation and to ask for a friendly intervention on our behalf. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6428, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1952).

Adenauer's reply summarizes the official German weighing of priorities on this matter:

I do not see how we can exceed our current offer to the Arabs without defaulting from our agreement with Israel and the Jews. This would cause incomparably more damage to our standing in the world than a passing tension in German-Arab relations. The American government naturally is constantly informed by me and my staff about the state of German-Arab relations. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6428, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1952).

On March 4th, 1953, Adenauer presented the Luxembourg Agreement to the German parliament, prior to its vote on ratification.<sup>25</sup> In this speech, he also addressed the Arab protests, summarizing them in the form of two key arguments. The first argument was that Israel's claim for reparations on the basis of its integration of Jewish refugees was illegitimate, as long as Israel did not meet its obligations regarding the Arab "Palestine refugees" (*Palästina-Flüchtlinge*). Adenauer stated in response to this argument that the question of German reparations to Israel and the question of the refugees from Pales-

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<sup>25</sup> All following quotes from the Bundestag transcript. See online documentation of the Bundestag under <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/01/01252.pdf> (last access July 17th, 2018).

tine were two separate ones, which each needed to be addressed on their own terms. The issue of compensation for Jewish refugees who escaped Nazi persecution was to be solved between the German state and the Jewish people. Germany neither possessed the right nor the capacity to position itself towards the problem of refugees from Palestine. However, Adenauer added, Germany wished for a swift and satisfactory solution to this problem, as it knew too well from its own experience of the needs and sorrows of refugees.

Following Adenauer, the second complaint against the agreement was that it supported a state which was at war with its Arab neighbours. In reply, Adenauer claimed that the agreement “in no way constituted a breach of neutrality”, emphasizing its stated prohibition of “the delivery of weapons, ammunition and other military material to Israel.” The chancellor spoke of the “traditionally friendly German relations towards the Arab world” and stated that he was willing to further these relations. He offered closer economic ties to all Arab countries willing to negotiate with the FRG, warning that such negotiations “could only be successful if led in a spirit of friendship and not weighed down by prior threats.”

There is an abundance of files in the archives of the AA on “Arab reactions to the Luxembourg Agreement”, scrupulously collected by the AA’s chief ‘Arabist’ Hermann Voigt. A systematic assessment of this topic is not possible here and would stray too far from the task at hand. It should suffice to address two complaints which cover a lot of the spectrum of diverse Arab governmental and non-official reactions to the agreement. The first complaint is a letter by the “Arab Higher Committee for Palestine”, led by the infamous Mufti Amin al-Husseini (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6426, June 7th, 1952). The second is an official protest note ushered by the Arab League (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6426, July 21st, 1952). The Mufti’s ideological sympathies for the Nazi regime have been amply documented and hardly require further evidence. His letter is a chilling document of Jew-hatred written directly after the genocide, of which the Mufti had full knowledge. In his letter to the chancellor, the Mufti addressed the “Jewish” (never ‘Zionist’) aggression against Palestinians as well as against “the German citizens” in Palestine. The letter frames Jews as an aggressive, merciless collective, a danger for both Germans and Arabs. The Mufti asserted that “after the termination of the Second World War...there hardly exist Jews who suffer persecution and homelessness. Those Jews who claim compensations for the loss-

es and sufferings of German Jewry, have themselves committed against the Arabs of Palestine a most brutal aggression and inhumane persecution...the Arabs are the party who deserves to be compensated and redressed.” Al-Husseini closed by stating that paying German reparations not to “the Jews”, but to the “Palestine Arab refugees” would “open a new epoch for the cementation of the traditional German-Arab friendship.” It is clear on which fundamentals this friendship was supposed to rest.

The Mufti’s letter was studied in the AA and a note was prepared for the chancellor. The note was clear about the letter’s “anti-Jewish” content. It suggested that the letter should remain unanswered, because “the Arab Higher Committee cannot claim to be the representative body for the Arab population of Palestine, as it does not even have influence on those parts of Palestine that are not in Jewish possession.”(PA AA, B130, Bd. 6426, July 3rd, 1952). This, incidentally, gives further support to the majoritarian historical view that the Mufti’s influence on the Palestinians after WWII was negligible.

In contrast, Bonn could not ignore the note of the Arab League. While the Mufti falsely claimed to represent what was a dispersed and powerless Palestinian population, the Arab League note represented the view of the Arab governments. The note read that

[t]he Arabs differentiate between the paying of an indemnity to an unjustly treated person, whether Jew or not, and between the paying to Israel in her quality of alleged representative of all the Jews in the world, of funds which will permit Israel to carry on her aggression and maintain her threat to the security of the Arab States.

Furthermore, the letter stated that

[w]ithout wishing to discuss the state of the Jews in Germany, during and before the last war, or the well-foundedness or not of their allegations, the Arabs firmly believe that Germany is by no means under any obligation to a state created after the war, hostile to the Arabs, and on the latter’s soil. The Arabs categorically deny that this state represents the Jews of the world...

The Arab League note acknowledged the validity of individual reparations, yet opposed reparations to the Israeli state. The note is certainly historically insensitive regarding the Holocaust. Problematically enough, it speaks of a German-Arab friendship “both before and since the war”. However, historical judgement should maintain equal standards. The

FRG, the state in which most of the perpetrators continued to live, had itself not been especially sensitive about the Holocaust then.

In their overview of public Arab reactions to the Reparations Agreement, Litvak and Webman summarize that “mainstream discourse” in the Arab world did not deny

Germany’s right to compensate Jews on a personal basis...but Israel’s right to represent and receive reparations in the name of those Jews...A large part of the discussion about the agreement evolved around its political aspects and implications for the balance of power between Israel and the Arab states. The assertion that the Arab refugees were more entitled to compensation, which implied an equation between the suffering of the Palestinians and the suffering of the Jews under Nazi persecutions, also seemed to stem from political considerations rather than from an intention to minimize the Holocaust (Litvak and Webman 2011: 78).

Before Bonn’s ratification of the Reparations Agreement, Moshe Sharett suggested to transfer some of the German reparation payments to the 1948 refugees, “in order to rectify what has been called the small injustice (the Palestinian tragedy), caused by the more terrible one (the Holocaust).” (cited in Lustick 2006: 53f.). However, linking German reparations with the issue of the 1948 Palestinian dispossession would have meant linking the single two most explosive political topics in Israel at the time and was thus deemed unfeasible (Fischbach 2003: 191).

The AA concluded that the FRG should avoid engaging with the Arab League’s arguments. A note sent to all German embassies in September 1952 instructed ambassadors to frame the agreement as being borne “solely out of a feeling of moral responsibility for the Jewish victims of national-socialist persecution”, and that it was “based on humanitarian and not on any political motives.” (AAPD 1952/209). The note, signed by Adenauer’s confidant Herbert Blankenhorn, stated unequivocally that the FRG did not see itself in any way responsible for the 1948 refugees. The aim to depict the FRG’s support of Israel in moral-humanitarian and not political terms was, of course, itself the outcome of a political debate, as was explained above. That Bonn sought to avoid getting mired in arguments about an ‘indirect’ German responsibility towards Palestinians is thus unsurprising: the decision to consolidate the Israeli state was in itself not a moral, but a political one, aiming at the rehabilitation of the West German state in the Cold War.

The decision to pay reparations to the Israeli state followed a logic of its own that was wholly unrelated to the Palestinian issue, which was, until after 1967, seen as marginal and in primarily humanitarian terms (Schölch 1985: 46f). Unsurprisingly, Palestinians did not appear within German state discourse in terms of national identity. They were referred to in the archival files of the AA as “Arab refugees” or as “Arab Palestine-refugees” (see also Schölch 1985). In the founding documents of the Arab League one can already find the argument that via the mass immigration of European Jews to Palestine and via the founding of the Israeli state, a European problem was ‘solved’ on the back of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine (Schölch 1985: 47).

Schölch argued that one may speak of a “triangle” of German-Israeli-Palestinian relations only after 1967, when Palestinians were “rediscovered” and the Arab-Israeli conflict was “re-transformed into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict” (Schölch 1985: 47). It is true that Palestinians emerged as political interlocutors to the FRG only after the June War, a topic covered in the following chapters. However, awareness of the Palestinian refugee question, of course, existed within the West German state administration.

The earliest hints of an engagement with the Palestinian refugee question which this research unearthed date back to January 1957. AA-official Voigt argued in an internal communiqué that the FRG should augment its payments to the UN organisation responsible for the humanitarian care of the 1948 refugees, UNRWA. He argued what he found to be an obvious point, namely that German contributions were too low. According to Voigt,

the hitherto paid amount of 70.000 DM must without doubt be seen as minimal. States of comparable size [to the FRG] have partly paid a multiple of our amount...The political reasons for a contribution of the Federal Republic...are evident in regard to our relations to the UN as well as the Arab countries...it does not require further justification that for optical reasons, our contributions cannot be lower than those of Scandinavian countries and Belgium. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 3739, January 24th, 1957).

What we can see here is a form of instrumental humanitarianism. Payments to UNRWA are argued for largely in relation to German relations with Arab countries and the UN.

As for the second complaint that the Reparations Agreement served to build the Israeli state which was in a state of war with its Arab neighbours, it cannot of course be doubted that the agreement strengthened Israel’s position in the conflict. Moreover, this did

not happen only indirectly by freeing up resources for military purposes. Military relations between the FRG and Israel actually hark back to the earliest days of bilateral relations. According to Jelinek

[n]either the Jewish community of the British Mandate in Palestine, nor the Israelis ever hesitated to buy German-produced weapons or to procure weapons with German help. Many entries in Ben-Gurion's diary testify to this. In 1947, before the end of the British Mandate and only two years after the downfall of the Third Reich, the Jewish underground army, the Haganah, used German weapons and led negotiations with Germans. (Jelinek 2004: 402).

In the 1948 war, Israel bought German-produced Messerschmidt planes and light weapons from Czechoslovakia. According to Jelinek, the Israeli ministry of defence went on a purchasing mission to West Germany no later than in 1951. The ministry of defence (IMoD) was interested in surplus weapons from NATO stockpiles. It was evident to the Israelis and most certainly known to the German government that goods delivered under the Reparations Agreement were also to be used for the construction of Israeli military industries. In February 1952, shortly before the start of official negotiations over the Reparations Agreement, the IMoD sent an expert to Germany to explore procurement possibilities in this regard. The Israeli army (Israeli Defence Forces, IDF) and IMoD were involved in the allocation of the funds disposable under the agreement (Jelinek 2004: 402). The Israeli historian Roni Stauber concurs, on the basis of IDF and IMoD files that "[c]ontrary to the Israeli-German agreement and the repeated claim that the reparations money was intended solely for peaceful purposes, it served the IDF and the armaments industry for the purchase not only of raw materials but of military equipment and armaments in Germany." (Stauber 2013: 238).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Archival files of the AA tentatively confirm the picture drawn by the above authors. For example, in 1956 Israeli representatives approached a company based in Hamburg which specialized in the salvage of sunken vessels in order to express interest in sunken German WWII submarines. In the same year, the metal and steel company Klöckner reported to the Foreign Office that it was selling "material" to Israel to which it was not eligible under the Reparations Agreement. Transactions were undertaken via third parties, in order to evade open breach of the treaty. The company also stated that it was producing "very specific weapons" for Israel. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 3739, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1956).

Israeli officer Avigdor Tal became part of the Israeli Mission in Cologne in 1955. Jelinek describes his role as procuring armaments and military goods, as well as forging ties with the West German army, the Bundeswehr and with German politicians in charge of military questions: "Tals presence was surely known to the German military and civil authorities. West German military aid to Israel started in 1956." (Jelinek 2004: 403). Indeed, German-Israeli military relations became crucial only after the 1956 Suez War. The next chapter examines the period between 1956 and 1967, the most dramatic and important phase in the history of German-Israeli relations.



### **Chapter III A German *Sonderweg* in the Middle East? The Crucial Phase of German-Israeli Relations from the Suez War until 1965-67**

The reliable fulfilment of the Reparations Agreement demonstrated to Israel the FRG's commitment to its consolidation. The interest in consolidating the Israeli state and integrating it as much as possible into the Western Cold War structures continued to determine the German policy of the Ben-Gurion administration after the signing of the Luxembourg treaty (see also Trimbur 2000: 400ff.). After Luxembourg, German support of Israel consisted, besides the Reparations deliveries, of military goods, arms and a financial loan.

This support was extended out of the FRG's best interests as it conceived them. To understand the determining factors of Germany's Israel policy after the Reparations Agreement, we first need to take a closer look at the years 1955-56. In 1955, the FRG joined NATO, developed the Hallstein Doctrine and the Soviet Union entered the Middle East with the Egyptian-Czech arms deal. In October 1956, Great Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt. How do these events relate to one another and how have they influenced German Middle East policy?

West German integration into the Cold War alliance was reached and formalized with the FRG's accession to NATO; the logical continuation of the Marshall Plan (Hobsbawm 1998: 304f.). This meant that the rehabilitation factor became less determinant for West Germany's Israel policy. However, it retained importance, not least because Bonn feared that Jerusalem could use Nazi continuities within the West German state and society to bring the FRG into international disrepute. As Dominique Trimbur explains the German and Israeli rationales for relations after 1955, "West Germany needed Israel as proof of its unswerving commitment to the democratic camp, the Jewish state needed West Germany to escape from its isolation in the Middle East and link itself to a partner with growing impact in Western Europe." (Trimbur 2003: 275).

The Hallstein Doctrine testified to Bonn's increased independence on the international scene. This doctrine was a diplomatic tool for enforcing the West German claim to sole representation for the whole of Germany (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*). The doctrine postulated that diplomatic recognition of the GDR by third states would be regarded as an

unfriendly act by the FRG. A possible response by Bonn would be to break off diplomatic relations between the FRG and the state recognizing the GDR. Developed in the context of the Cold War in Eastern Europe, the Hallstein Doctrine tied German hands in the Middle East, handing Arab states a formidable diplomatic tool: to counter German support of Israel, Arab states could now threaten to diplomatically recognize the GDR. The Hallstein Doctrine thus instilled a new level of risk into German Middle East politics. For Arab nationalism bent on carving out political autonomy in the Cold War confrontation, diplomatic manoeuvres towards East Germany became an important playing card until 1965. German-Israeli relations in this period thus need to not least be understood in the context of the principal dilemma the FRG created for itself with the Hallstein Doctrine: that between supporting Israel and upholding the claim to *Alleinvertretung*. This dilemma was dissolved when Israel and Germany finally forged diplomatic ties in 1965, which ended the Hallstein Doctrine for German Middle East policy.

Importantly, the FRG increased its support of Israel because it was seen, as Adenauer told Ben-Gurion in March 1960, as a “fortress of the West” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 337). Israel stood against the forces of Arab nationalism, epitomized by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Adenauer administration, often misjudging the autonomy-seeking, non- or anti-communist orientation of ‘Arab Socialism’, feared that Egypt would drift decisively into the Soviet camp, for which the 1955 Egyptian-Czech arms deal gave indeed cause to worry.

As will be explained further below, military relations became substantial in official yet secretive form only after the 1956 Suez War. The U.S. distanced itself from the three states in the course of the Suez Crisis. The intervention also marked the end of French and British colonial influence in the Middle East. It is in this context that the FRG emerged as a key supporter of Israel from 1957 until 1965. In this period Israel received, in parallel to the ongoing deliveries under the Reparation Agreement, important quantities of military material and weapons from the FRG. From 1957 to 1962, Germany delivered light weapons (mostly Allied surplus material not needed by the German army) as well as motor patrol boats. It also provided military training. In 1962, Adenauer agreed to a major arms deal with Israel. Deliveries included heavy artillery, planes, helicopters, boats and submarines: 114 anti-aircraft guns, 24 Sikorsky Helicopters, 12 Noratlas transport planes, 250 Cobra anti-tank missiles with 1000 rounds of ammunition, 6 Jaguar

speedboats, 4 Do28 planes and two 350ton submarines. The overall value of these deliveries stood at 240 million Deutsche Mark (AAPD 1964/289). In 1964, the U.S. administration pressured Bonn to add 150 M48 'Patton' tanks to the delivery list. The tanks were the most important part of German arms supplies. As a key component of the Israeli tank corps, they were crucial to Israel's victorious Sinai ground battle in the Six-Day War of 1967.

In 1964, the FRG thus fulfilled a proxy role for the U.S. in arming Israel with the above mentioned tanks. This role needs to be explained in the context of the changes which U.S. Middle East strategy underwent in the years preceding the 1967 war. In fact, the German military support of Israel cannot properly be understood outside the framework of broader U.S. geostrategic thinking. That it was the U.S. which drove the 1964 tank deliveries shows that, at this point, Washington did not yet want to appear as openly supplying Israel with offensive arms. It is a common misconception to think of the U.S. – Israeli alliance as going back to the inception of the Israeli state. The strong military alliance between the two states actually developed in the 1960s, when Arab nationalism, led by Nasser's Egypt, moved towards an anti-Western agenda. As Achcar points out, Israel was a rather "inconvenient ally" to the U.S. administration in the 1950s (Achcar 2004: 17). Paraphrasing U.S. Cold War strategy in the Middle East as keeping "the Americans in, the Russians out, and the British (and the French along with them) down", Achcar argues that the U.S. could not allow alienating Arab public opinion (Achcar 2004: 12). In the time of decolonization, any project of imposing hegemony in the Middle East needed to dissociate itself from formal types of colonialism. Israel, however, was a focal point of anti-colonial Arab nationalism (Achcar 2004: 13.).

The time period in this chapter sees both the intensification of the German support of Israel and the leftwing radicalization of Arab Nationalism. As Nasser was the figurehead of Arab nationalism between the mid-1950s and 1967, German politics in the Middle East focused predominantly on Israel and Egypt. Angelika Timm summarized how the U.S. Cold War interest influenced its respective alliances with the FRG and Israel:

From the beginning, the U.S. saw itself as the most important military protector power for the FRG, and gradually also for Israel. This, not least, reflects American global interests, as both states were reliable allies in two geostrategically and politically important world regions—Europe and the Middle

East. The FRG soon became an important pillar of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, NATO. The Jewish State developed towards a “strategic partner” of the USA in the Middle East. It is not least due to this constellation that first steps towards a military cooperation between the FRG and Israel evolved; steps that were either tolerated or supported by the USA. (Timm 2006: 48).

Another vital form of German aid was a financial loan. This loan, dubbed *Aktion Geschäftsfreund* (‘operation business friend’) was, like the weapons, also given in secrecy. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1965, the loan was transformed into official development aid. According to the official governmental reply to a parliamentary request, from 1961 to 1965, Germany transferred 644,8 million Deutsche Mark in a low-interest, long-term loan to Israel.<sup>27</sup> Until 1967, France and the FRG were the most important sources of weapons for Israel. French military supplies to Israel outweighed those of the FRG. In contrast to France, however, Germany did not sell its weapons, but delivered them free of charge (see also Gardner-Feldman 1984: 127). Prior to the Six-Day War, Germany was a far more important source of arms for Israel than the U.S. Regarding the pre-1967 period, Shimon Peres, then Israeli deputy minister of defence and the main architect of the military relationships with both France and the FRG, stated that

the USA helped us with money, but not with weapons. France helped us with weapons, but not with money. Germany could build a bridge over the past by delivering arms, without demanding money or anything else. (Peres 1970: 71).

Ben-Gurion was quoted in the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv* in 1964 as saying that “[t]he contribution of the German government for our military security *exceeds* what any other government does for us.” (cited in Gardner-Feldman 1984: 127, emphasis in original quote).

The military and financial support extended by Germany to Israel was a crucial contribution to Israel’s attainment of military hegemony in the Middle East, such as it materialized in the 1967 war. If we factor in the deliveries under the Reparations Agreement, thus looking at the whole of German support from 1953 until 1965, a picture emerges of the FRG as the principal external backer of the Israeli state in this time period. Until 1965,

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<sup>27</sup> Antwort auf Kleine Anfrage der Linken, August 14th, 2012. See online under <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/104/1710482.pdf> (last access July 18th, 2018).

the FRG was the only state to supply Israel with all of those three forms of support: economic goods, financial aid and weapons. This means that the FRG played an overall role in Israel's early consolidation that was more important than that of the U.S., France or Britain.

Both Germany and Israel attached great importance to the secrecy of military ties and financial support. Ben-Gurion's German policy was highly contested in Israel. Most historians and political analysts explain Israeli military ties in terms of material necessity in light of the threat to its existence posed by its neighbours (for example Jelinek 2004: 402) or, similarly, as *realpolitik* (for example Shpiro 2002, 2003 and 2013). Beyond the question of material interest, the Israeli rationalization or justification for accepting German arms and loans can be summed up as such: if antisemitism is an ever-persistent fact of history and if building the Israeli state constitutes the best, if not only, effective response against antisemitism and persecution, then it is possible to accept substantial support also from the FRG, a state that incorporated war criminals, countless NS-party members, profiteers and enablers in its institutions. However, military, economic, financial and political ties with the FRG could hardly be justified to Israeli society on the basis of an accurate view of postwar Germany. Accordingly, Adenauer's Germany needed to be re-framed. As Israeli historian Roni Stauber (2013) shows, Ben-Gurion developed the concept of the 'New Germany' in 1956-57. The name reveals the purpose: to demarcate Adenauer's Germany from that of Hitler (see also Shalom 1997: 55). It was directed to a critical Israeli audience in order to legitimize ties with the FRG and it was the symbolic resource Israel was able to offer to the FRG. Extending this symbolic resource rested on the continued German commitment to the consolidation of the Israeli state. It was a symbolic concession to acquire material support.

Next to drawing out the centrality of Germany-Israel relations to both state's foreign policies, this chapter also addresses discursive shifts, or re-framings, which relate to the political relationship. On the one hand, the chapter discusses how the Israeli reframing of Germany connects to the 'Nazification' of Israel's Arab adversaries. On the other, it discusses how Israel was 'Germanified' in German eyes in the context of the militarization and deepening of the bilateral relationship.

It needs to be added as a cautionary reminder that the full extent of German-Israeli military cooperation, also in its most crucial phase under consideration in this chapter, cannot be accounted for with certainty. Much information remains classified in the relevant military archives of both countries. Furthermore, military cooperation was often based on informal, frequently only oral agreements. The AA, at least until 1965, was never directly involved in military questions negotiated between the two countries (see also Jelinek 2004: 401). Even in the BMVg itself, only a handful of people were involved. For the military historian interested in reconstructing military cooperation between the two countries in detail, these factors make for a frustrating undertaking. The available material suffices, however, for the broader analytical ambitions pursued here. On the one hand, we can follow investigations made by officials of the AA in the BMVg about the question of military cooperation. As German military support of Israel became public and a point of contention with Arab states, the AA was able to gather more concrete information on the extent of the deliveries, in order to be able to adequately deal with the ensuing political-diplomatic problems.

The data presented in this chapter largely stems from research in the archives of the AA. The published archival editions of the AA also provide ample material in support of the arguments presented here. Regarding the secondary literature, the exemplary research of Jelinek's underrated study of the period from the immediate postwar period until 1965 (Jelinek 2004) needs to be pointed out. Given that sufficient data thus became easily available for a substantive examination of German-Israeli military cooperation before 1967 and, moreover, considering the importance of this period to German foreign policy specifically and Cold War history in the Middle East generally, it is astonishing that the question of German support to Israel in this period has received so little focused scholarly attention in the fields of German and Israeli history, Middle Eastern studies and International Relations. Marcus Mohr, a German historian, attempted to fill this gap. He concluded his M.A thesis on German military aid to Israel as follows:

As Adenauer and Strauss intended, German aid secured the survival of the Jewish State. This direct West German contribution to the Israeli victory in the Six Day War and the enthusiasm with which the German public greeted Israel's victory, were proof that 'the Germany of today was no more that of yesterday', to use the words of Ben-Gurion. (Mohr 2003: 128).

This statement is representative of a view of the topic as it can be found in the German conservative and right-leaning political spectrum. It is written in the same spirit as the work by Hansen (2002), criticized in the introductory chapter. Mohr's conclusion is questionable. It is a fact that Germany directly contributed to the Israeli victory in 1967. It is also a fact that Israeli society was gripped by a fear of extinction, rooted in the Holocaust (Segev 1993: 392). However, the idea that Israel's very survival was at stake is disputable – Israel, the U.S. and also the FRG were aware of Israel's military superiority over Egypt. It is true that German public opinion, especially on the political right, was enthusiastic about the 1967 war. Yet, as will be demonstrated at the end of this chapter, this enthusiasm reads much more like a continuation of the past, instead of a break with it.

Let us now examine the above themes and arguments over the unfolding course of events. We assess first the important role of the 1956 Suez War and its aftermath in the intensification of German-Israeli relations. A second part highlights military relations as they developed after Suez, placing them in the context of another aspect of German-Israeli relations at the time, which is that of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Then follows a close analysis of the 1960 Astoria meeting between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion, as well as a discussion of how the Eichmann trial pertains to German-Israeli relations. The subsequent parts examine Germany's arming of Israel from 1962 to 1965. When this arming became public, a diplomatic crisis ensued, centrally involving Egypt, Israel, the FRG and the U.S. Germany's 'Middle East Crisis' reveals the complex, specific and important role the FRG played in this crucial period in the modern history of the Middle East. An examination of German reactions to the June War closes the chapter.

### **3.1. After Suez: How the FRG Became a Key Military Supporter of Israel**

As the previous chapter showed, the Israeli military orientation towards Germany predated the Reparations Agreement. It was mutually understood that the Reparations Agreement would also help building Israel's domestic military industry. Military relations started in earnest in 1956-57. Shlomo Shpiro, military analyst and security expert at the Bar Ilan University, who stresses the early importance of bilateral military cooperation, found that the first substantial German military delivery to Israel consisted of two motor

patrol boats in 1956 and 1957. He explained this deal in pragmatic-military terms. At the time, the Israeli navy was only “equipped with a motley collection of ancient vessels...totally unfit for defending Israel’s long Mediterranean coastline against the vastly superior Egyptian navy. Germany, with its long expertise in building military ships, its shipyards eager for new orders, was the ideal place for purchasing new boats for Israel.” (Shpiro 2002: 31). Most accounts date the beginning of military relations to the meeting between Shimon Peres, the Israeli deputy minister of defence and Franz Josef Strauss, the German minister of defence, to December 1957. While the two had met before and would meet several times afterwards, this meeting can be said to have instituted the official, yet highly secretive military relationship between the two countries that characterized German-Israeli relations until the advent of diplomatic relations in 1965 (see also Jelinek 2004: 407).

As mentioned above, the emergence of Germany as a principal military backer of Israel needs to be explained in the context of the 1956 surprise attack of Britain, France and Israel against Egypt following Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal. Following Stauber’s article on the understudied connection between the Suez aftermath and FRG-Israeli relations (Stauber 2013: 236), the German reaction to the 1956 events demonstrated to the Ben-Gurion administration “Adenauer’s commitment to the existence, security and prosperity of the State of Israel.” (Stauber 2013: 235). It is also after Suez that the FRG “began to see Israel as a strategic asset in the Cold War.” (Stauber 2013: 235).

Britain, France and Israel were aware that the U.S. opposed an attack on Egypt, but calculated that once underway, the U.S. would back its Western allies. This was a mistake. The U.S. and the Soviet Union cooperated in the UN to reinstate the status quo ante. The FRG, officially neutral, was as surprised by the attack as it was by the decisiveness with which the U.S. opposed it. The German embassy in Washington explained that the U.S. viewed its reputation among Arab states as an “indispensable requirement” for its relations towards the Middle East (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6436, March 11th, 1957). In another report about the changes in U.S. Middle Eastern strategy in 1957, the embassy found that Washington was compelled, “surely against its will”, to position itself against its European allies. With a hint of irony in inverted commas, the report suggested that the U.S. had so far played the role of an “anti-colonial” non-partial observer in the Middle East (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6438, January 8th, 1958). The U.S. could not allow itself to alienate Arab public



opinion. As explained above, in the time of decolonization, any project of imposing hegemony in the Middle East had to dissociate itself from formal types of colonialism. Across the Arab world and indeed the entire, decolonizing global south, the 1956 attack was widely perceived as a colonial undertaking. It dealt a heavy blow to French and British independent imperial ambitions.

The U.S. State Department contemplated the idea of enlisting German support in pressuring Israel towards withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza Strip. The FRG was especially fit to play such a role due to Israeli economic dependence on the Reparations deliveries (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6436, February 11th, 1957). In February 1957, the U.S. secretary of state, John Foster Dulles “suggested” to the German ambassador in the U.S. “to nudge the Israeli government towards a withdrawal from occupied Egyptian territory...The FRG would be especially capable of doing so, since Israel economically depended on it.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6436, February 19th, 1957). Washington actually considered using the “reparations weapon” immediately after the Israeli campaign in the Sinai started at the end of October 1956 (Stauber 2013: 237). However, whenever the question of utilizing Israel’s economic dependence on the FRG to force the country into compliance arose, Adenauer remained firm that deliveries under the Reparations Agreement would not be halted, since, he claimed, as reparations, they stood outside of politically utilizable development aid (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6436, February 11th, 1957). According to Wolffsohn “[t]his decision on Adenauer’s part represents the true turning-point in German-Israeli relations. From that point on, Ben-Gurion pressed not just for restitution, but above all for cooperation, for diplomatic relations—which he had sought to avoid before—and not least of all for military cooperation.” (Wolffsohn 1993: 127).

This raises the historiographical question about the extent of U.S. pressure on Germany to halt implementation of Reparations deliveries, as well as about German views of the Suez War. Stauber cautions not to exaggerate the firmness of the German stance, since there never existed anything akin to an explicit U.S. order to halt deliveries (Stauber 2013: 245, equally Trimbur 2003: 281). This finding is confirmed by the research undertaken for this thesis. The files of the AA speak of “suggesting” and “contemplating”, not of firm orders. Of course, this raises the counterfactual question of how the German government would have reacted to a formal order. According to Stauber, “Jewish and Israeli personages who were familiar with the complex relationship of Israel, Germany and

the U.S. tended to doubt that the FRG would refuse a decisive American demand on this subject.” (Stauber 2013: 246). One such personage was Nahum Goldmann, who had the most extensive personal rapport with Adenauer over the Reparations negotiations. Goldmann was of the opinion that “if the U.S. takes measures against us, Germany will stop the reparations.” (Stauber 2013: 246). This belief concurs with the view that the German commitment to Israel worked within the overall constraints of U.S. geostrategic priorities, even though it sometimes came close to putting those constraints to test.

There was also an obvious economic German interest in not interrupting the Reparations deliveries. German industry and the banking sector were relieved when learning that implementation of the Reparations Agreement would not be suspended, a decision they had lobbied for (Stauber 2013: 237). Furthermore, Ralph Dietl’s argument about the “Europeanist” (Dietl 2008) agenda behind the Suez War allows us to see the German pro-Israel stance also in light of the overall German view on the attack. While officially declaring neutrality, the FRG made clear, in internal discussions with its European allies, that it supported the offensive. The German historian and Adenauer-biographer Hans-Peter Schwarz, certainly not critically disposed towards the subject of his study, described the chancellor as a “late-nineteenth-century colonialist” who “unconditionally approved of the Suez intervention.” (Schwarz 1997: 191 and 242). The FRG was taken aback by the decisiveness with which the U.S. acted to enforce a return to the status quo ante, thus rebuffing and embarrassing Germany’s European allies. It is important to recognize, however, that no principal rift existed between NATO states on the question of opposition to Arab Nationalism as led by Egypt and personified by Nasser. In personal conversations with Adenauer, Dulles was not beyond likening Nasser to Hitler, describing the former’s manifesto, *Philosophy of the Revolution*, as the “‘Mein Kampf’ of Arab nationalism” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6439, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1958). In fact, the Suez War provides a major and early example of ‘nazifying’ Arabs in order to help legitimize interventionist wars. The Nasser/Hitler or Suez/Munich analogy was used throughout the crisis especially by Britain and France (see for example Kyle 2003). The actually divisive question among NATO states was how to respond to Arab nationalism. In the above-cited conversation with Dulles, Adenauer expressed his “great fear” that the U.S. “did not take Arab nationalism seriously enough” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6439, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1958). To the Europeans, the U.S.-Soviet handling of the crisis drove home the lesson that the two superpowers would,

if need be, cooperate over their heads in order to maintain the bipolar world order. Trimbur consequently interprets the German decision to continue Reparations deliveries not least as a “warning” to the U.S., “a gesture that could be viewed as assistance to a country at war.” (Trimbur 2002: 287).

After Suez, Israel thus found itself in a situation where it had impressed upon the Middle East and the outside world its military capacities, yet also incurred a setback in its overall effort to ally itself militarily with the U.S. Acquiring American weapons had now become a rather more distant prospect. The Middle Eastern influence of its war allies, Britain and France, was severely curtailed. Furthermore, its alliance with the French was to a large degree predicated on the Algerian war of independence. The French supplied Israel mainly because of the threat it posed to Nasser’s Egypt, which was arming the Algerian National Liberation Front. Accordingly, French support of Israel waned after De Gaulle extracted the French forces from Algeria in 1962.

It is in this post-Suez context that the FRG emerged as a potential informal military ally. Stauber also argues that for Israel, deepening relations with Germany was important in order to shield the Reparations Agreement against eventual future jeopardization from the outside, as well as because of the rising political importance of the FRG in the Western bloc.

Consequently, is in this same context that Ben-Gurion’s policy of the “New Germany” emerged (Stauber 2013: 250). As already explained, this policy was the main symbolic resource Israel was able to give to Germany and it served to justify military relations with Germany to the Israeli public. It demarcated the FRG from its legal predecessor, the National Socialist state, implying that no continuities existed between the two. Stauber perceptively follows through the implications of this concept for the Israeli view of the Arab-Israeli conflict: “according to the founding father of the Jewish State, the German state which was founded on the ruins of Nazi Germany and where millions of its former citizens still lived - officers, soldiers, and murderers - would help the Jewish People against those who arose to destroy their state.” (Stauber 2013: 252).

The effects of German reparations and military support on the build-up of the Israeli state in political, military and economic terms were decisive to the Israeli government’s acceptance of the West German turn (Stauber 2003). Building Israel was conceptualized as “the ultimate answer to activities against the Jewish people.” (Stauber 2003: 112). To

achieve this end, even cooperation with West Germany could be justified (Weitz 2000). As Ben-Gurion himself put it to the Knesset in 1959 on the question of military relations with the FRG:

the injunction bequeathed by the martyrs of the Holocaust is rebuilding, strengthening, advancing and ensuring the security of Israel. For that purpose we need friends who are able and willing to equip the Israel defence Forces in order to guarantee our survival...but if we regard Germany or any other country as Satan we shall not receive arms. (cited in Stauber 2003: 115).

The German defence establishment was impressed by the show of Israel's military proficiency during the Suez Crisis. Stauber refers to a conversation involving Franz Josef Strauss and Hans Speidel in December 1956. Speidel was a founder of the Bundeswehr and later chief-of-staff of NATO's Central European ground forces. He had also been a Wehrmacht senior commander on the Eastern Front, where Strauss had served as a junior officer. Strauss was also formerly a member of the *Nationalsozialistischer Kraftfahrerkorps*, an SA-suborganisation. Strauss and Speidel were dissatisfied with the French and British military handling of the Suez crisis. In light of the military capabilities shown by the IDF, one of the two, it is unclear from the file who, claimed that "perhaps it would have been better to have let the Jews defeat the Egyptians." (cited in Stauber 2013: 242). It is interesting, as Stauber rightly notes, that Speidel and Strauss were impressed by the military capacity of "the Jews". In fact, what will further below be explained as the re-imagination of Israeli Jews as German soldiers is closely intertwined with changes in West German geostrategic and military thinking about the Middle East. After Suez, the FRG began to perceive Israel as a defender of Western interests in the Middle East, pitted against Arab nationalism.

#### *German-Israeli military cooperation after Suez*

The question of German-Israeli military relations is connected to the question of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Both issues need to be looked at within the overall context of the contradicting German interests in, on the one hand, a useful relationship with Israel and, on the other, the territorial and political claim over East Germa-

ny. Military relations, as we will see, partially served as a compensation for the lack of diplomatic relations.

Jerusalem stated its readiness for diplomatic relations by 1956 (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8448, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1963). Consequently, Nasser threatened to diplomatically recognize the GDR (Abu Samra 2002: 72). Now, the Hallstein Doctrine, as explained above, made its impact felt in German Israel policy. It was a dilemma made of the FRG's own volition: If Arab states were to diplomatically recognize the GDR, Bonn could either break off diplomatic relations with Arab states, thus significantly decreasing its clout in the Middle East, or it could abdicate from the doctrine, thus abandoning its claim over the GDR (see also PA AA, B130, Bd. 8448, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1963). The countless internal discussions and debates with the Israelis about the diplomatic question which can be found in the AA's archives always end on the same argument: offering diplomatic relations to Israel would run the risk of Arab states recognizing East Germany in return.

It is again indicative of the weakness of the moral explanation of German policy towards Israel that the FRG was virtually the only one among the major Western nations not diplomatically represented in Tel Aviv until 1965, *despite* the Israelis requesting. As Scheffler noted, German politics towards Israel are less an illustration of morality, than a confirmation of Marx's quip that morals regularly embarrass themselves in front of interests (Scheffler 1988: 77). For the FRG, the optimal timing for diplomatic relations would have been upon the conclusion of the 1952 Reparations Agreement. This is what Adenauer signalled in the Bundestag at the time, it is what German diplomats had told the Israelis since. Now, the Hallstein Doctrine, developed in 1955, stood in the way.

For Israel, diplomatic relations were, in 1952, impossible for domestic reasons alone. By 1955-56, not least due to the German reliability in fulfilling the Reparations Agreement, diplomatic relations had become defensible to the public (see also the detailed account in Trimbur 2000: 85-219). Offering diplomatic relations to Bonn was a decision from which Israel could only gain: if refused, it could expect something else in return. Diplomatic recognition by the FRG would have meant a further bridge towards NATO states and further integration into the Western Cold War bloc. The U.S. State Department was of the opinion that Israel also sought diplomatic relations with the FRG to open up indirect communication channels with Arab states (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2876, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1957). This makes sense insofar as the FRG enjoyed a much better reputation in the Middle East

than the ex-colonial powers, Britain and France. Both the U.S. and Israel believed German fears of Arab states recognizing the GDR to be exaggerated. Arab states, they argued, would not risk losing German economic aid and trade relations. As we will see later, this argument turned out to be well-founded.

Accepting the German refusal of diplomatic relations was a concession Israel had no reason to make gratuitously. The Ben-Gurion administration pursued its policy of the 'New Germany' in tune with the flow of weapons. For Israel, military aid was at this stage more important than diplomatic recognition (Jelinek 2004: 401). "The substance of German-Israeli relations", the Israeli ambassador to the U.S. told the German foreign minister von Brentano in 1958, "is more important than its form" (PA AA, B130, Bd. 3767, June 7th, 1958). While Adenauer oversaw that the substance of German-Israeli relations remained satisfactory to both sides, towards the end of his term in office, he invested personal energies towards the diplomatic formalization of bilateral relations, much to the shock of his foreign minister. Adenauer was certainly not least motivated by a desire to embellish his personal legacy, crowning his work of *Wiedergutmachung*. He remained committed to his idea of the term, telling the head of the Israel Mission in Bonn, Felix Shinnar, that diplomatic relations with Israel needed to be achieved in order to nip in the bud renewed legal efforts in the FRG to bring former Nazi criminals to trial, since such endeavours would threaten the global reputation of the FRG (AAPD 1965/182). However, diplomatic relations would be established only under Adenauer's successor in office, Ludwig Erhard. This happened, as we will see, primarily as a result of changed U.S. geo-strategy in the Middle East.

Military ties with Israel were a highly contested issue within the German state administration. The AA argued against weapon deliveries to Israel on the grounds of *Alleinvertretung*. Proponents of military cooperation with Israel defended their policy by pointing to its secrecy; it was to be executed under the radar of Arab states' suspicion. Franz Josef Strauss was, on the German side, the driving force behind military ties with Israel. Strauss was one of the most controversial German postwar politicians, his name invariably connected to the revisionist tendencies in the early Republic. Pushing for early German rearmament, also nuclear armament, he was opposed to any moves towards legal and political confrontation with the Nazi past.

Strauss was not initially favourable towards Israel. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he abstained in the Bundestag vote on the ratification of the Reparations Agreement, arguing that the agreement posed a threat to German relations with Arab states. As minister of defence, he changed his mind. His interests in relations with Israel reflected closely his interests in German regaining of military power, the growth of German arms industries, as well as his views on the Cold War confrontation, in which he foresaw a role for Israel as a Western bastion against Arab nationalism and Soviet influence in the Middle East. It is interesting to see how Strauss framed military ties with Israel in terms of Germany's positioning towards its past. The following is taken from an interview with the already mentioned German publicist Rolf Vogel, an Adenauer confidant, later BND agent and chronicler of German-Israeli relations. In this interview, Strauss framed his politics towards Israel as he wanted them to be presented to the public:

I was of the opinion that effective co-operation between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel would be a significant contribution towards the task of leaving the past behind us. I meant this in the sense, not only of the reacceptance of Germany in the world, but acceptance of the Federal Republic of Germany as a state with equal rights in the field of present-day world politics.

And further:

where lives were concerned aid to Israel was more than a matter of obligatory reparations; it was of especial moral and political consequence to us all. I came to this conclusion with the fact in mind that millions of Jews were murdered as a result of criminal German policy and with German weapons. It is not for us to criticize the setting up of the State of Israel... It is an established fact that some of the Jews of the world have found a new home and accomplished a marvellous task of reconstruction. Many threats have been uttered against this country and its people; threats from a hostile world that it will be conquered and its people wiped out. If therefore the Federal Republic of Germany can make a modest contribution to keeping the peace in the Middle East – a critical factor for us too – then this goes some way towards reparation in the very sphere in which Germany committed some of her worst crimes. (cited in Vogel 1969: 124).

One should note the contradiction in Strauss's argument. In the first quote above, he makes clear that relations with Israel constituted a means "of leaving the past behind us." In the second quote, he speaks of the "moral and political consequences" of aid to Israel. One would assume that a moral approach towards the past would mean confronting it.

Yet Strauss meant the exact opposite: to leave the past behind. It is also worth noting the abstraction and de-personification of the German persecution of Jews: Jews have been murdered “as a result of criminal German policy” and “with German weapons”, not by actual human beings. Having been a Wehrmacht officer on the Eastern Front, Strauss was witness to German mass executions of Jews. The hostile, at times eliminatory rhetoric of some Arab states’ leaders towards Israel served Strauss as an invitation for exculpation: the “German weapons” that previously killed Jews could now be delivered to the Jewish State, faced with extinction.

Shimon Peres thought the Bavarian to be primarily motivated by a fear of Soviet influence in the Middle East and by respect for Israel’s military capacity (Jelinek 2004: 408). One immediate effect of post-Suez cooperation was that the Israelis handed over to the FRG Soviet weapons captured in the war for inspection. Israel would again offer captured Soviet weapons to Germany after the 1967 war. Shpiro, in his contributions on the topic, attaches great importance to this fact, viewing it as highly beneficial to German development of arms technology in the Cold War arms race.

German-Israeli military cooperation as it developed after Suez consisted firstly of Israeli arms sales to Germany, then of German arms deliveries to Israel. In 1958 and 1959, Germany ordered grenades, mortar shells and, most significantly, 50.000 ‘Uzi’ submachine guns from Israeli companies in the form of long-term orders. Later, smoke mortars were added to the delivery list. A summary note from the AA in July 1965 reviews German purchasing orders until that point. This summary, for which information had been gathered in the BMVg, years after the heat surrounding these deliveries had abated, stated that the overall value of on-going military deliveries from Israel to Germany stood at about 250 million Deutsche Mark (roughly equivalent to one of the 14 instalments paid under the Reparations Agreement) (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2582, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

Israeli weapon deliveries had a further afterlife, as Jelinek recounts. Of the 50.000 Uzis Germany ordered, only 40.000 were needed by the Bundeswehr. The BMVg thus sold 10.000 Uzis to Portugal, which was at the time engaged in a counter-insurgency against the anticolonial Angolan strivings for independence. In the words of Jelinek, “[t]he Angola-affair was the worst possible combination: Germans give Israeli weapons to Portugese colonialists to fight down the African struggle for independence.” (Jelinek 2004: 409).



As Jelinek explains, the decision to introduce the Uzi as the standard submachine gun of the Bundeswehr was justified by referring to its superiority and competitive price. However, the transaction was also intended as an indirect form of economic aid to Israel, supporting its growing military industry (see also Gardner-Feldman 1984: 126). Moreover, equipping the Bundeswehr with Israeli weapons needs to be considered as a tactical move to pre-empt criticism of German rearmament (Jelinek 1997: 75). Journalist Rolf Vogel had a hand in the Uzi deal, creating links between relevant officials in both countries. Vogel summarized the German rationale as such: “[t]he Uzi in the hand of the German soldier is better than any brochure against antisemitism.” (Vogel 1987: 134). The statement conveys the idea that German rearmament in the 1950s with Israeli weapons was a tool for overcoming anti-Semitism in Germany. This statement can be read as an aphorism which succinctly sums up the whole rationale of German politics towards Israel from the postwar era to the 1960s. Yigal Allon, a Knesset member of the left-leaning *Ahdut Haavodah* and later minister of defence, understood the German motivation for buying Israeli weapons well: “[t]he Germans have purchased these weapons not because the weapons are good, but because they are Jewish. The Germans desperately need rehabilitation.” (cited in Segev 1993: 316).

The above quotes of Vogel and Strauss present the fact of early German-Israeli military ties in terms of overcoming the past. One of many possible ways of criticizing such a perception is to point to the symbolic violence inherent in German-Israeli relations. In his collection, Vogel relates the following episode: amongst the Israeli sales to Germany were textile products, including uniforms for the new German army. The Israeli workers “stage[d] strikes that were easily broken by internal exchange schemes.” (Vogel 1969: 125). The cold language in which Vogel glosses over this telling episode is rather striking. Apparently, Holocaust survivors who refused to participate in the re-militarization of the successor state to Nazi Germany stood in the way of ‘reconciliation’.

### *German deliveries to Israel*

Working on the tensions between Europe and the USA resulting from the Suez War, Israel lobbied for increased NATO protection in the West European capitals. In mid-December 1957, Giora Joseftal, Mapai leader and Histadrut functionary, visited Konrad

Adenauer in Bonn. Having headed the Israeli delegation during the negotiations over the Reparations Agreement, Joseftal was no stranger to German politics. Accompanied by Felix Shinnar, Joseftal “delivered a personal message from Ben-Gurion. He described to the chancellor the precarious situation which had developed following the Soviet intrusion into the Middle East, precarious to Israel, and, thus, to the whole Western world.” (PA AA, B130, Bd.3767, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1957). He then explained Ben-Gurion’s wish for a NATO security guarantee for the Israeli state.

As Germany had no formal representation in Israel, it was difficult for the AA to gather information about Israel’s political intentions. A contact from the British embassy in Bonn would occasionally relate news items he received from his colleagues in Tel Aviv. According to the British diplomat, “Mr Joseftal returned to Israel exceedingly satisfied from his visit to the chancellor. He gained the impression that the chancellor was very open to the Israeli wishes, which is why he recommended to Ben-Gurion to deploy a high-ranking personality to Bonn.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 3767, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1957). This personality was to be Moshe Dayan, Israeli commander in chief of the Sinai campaign. However, the secret leaked and the first Israeli cabinet crisis over military relations with Germany ensued. Ben-Gurion refrained from dispatching Dayan and decommissioned the whole cabinet on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1957, to present the same cabinet to the Knesset a week later and thus renew its parliamentary support.

Thus, in late late December 1957, “three Israelis found themselves stuck in their car in the snow somewhere on the way to Bavaria. One of the three would later be appointed Israel’s first ambassador to Germany, the second would be army chief of staff, and the third, minister of defence and prime minister.” (Segev 1993: 302). Arthur Ben-Nathan, Haim Laskov and Shimon Peres were travelling to meet the German minister of defence, Franz Josef Strauss, in his private residence in Rott am Inn. This was not the first meeting between Strauss and Peres, which, according to Jelinek, went ahead on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1957. Yet, it was the most important (Jelinek 1997: 407). According to Strauss, in the December talks with Peres, as well as in a discussion he had with him earlier that year, Peres expressed the wish not only to salvage two sunken submarines, but also to order new ones. Peres also asked if Israeli officers could be trained in West Germany. Strauss and Peres further discussed Israeli options regarding the joining of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), the predecessor of today’s Organisation for Eco-

nomic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Payments Union (EPU) (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6398, January 13<sup>th</sup> 1958). According to Shimon Peres,

[w]ithin only a few months of our first meeting, very valuable equipment began to reach the Israel army. It consisted of German army surplus and equipment manufactured in Germany...We obtained ammunition, training devices, helicopters, spare parts and many other items. The quality was excellent and the quantities were considerable – compared with what we had been used to, though they were still far short of what the Egyptians were receiving. For the first time the impoverished Israel army, which had had to skimp and scrape and stretch its thin resources to the utmost, felt almost pampered. (Peres 1970: 72).

The AA was against the military contacts established by the BMVg. In January 1958, the West German Minister of foreign affairs, von Brentano, wrote to Franz Josef Strauss regarding Peres's visit:

I am seriously worried that news of this sort may become public, either via inconsiderate comments by the German parties involved or by foreign sources, especially certain political circles in Israel. The consequences for the position and the reputation of the Federal Republic in the Middle East would be unforeseeable. The Foreign Office's explicit denial of any alleged weapon deliveries and military aid to Israel would lose all of its value. The public reactions in the Arab world may lead some of these states to establish diplomatic relations with the GDR (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8410, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958).

This was to become the refrain chanted by the AA until 1965: to avoid a situation in which the German commitment to the Hallstein Doctrine would be put to the test. However, another reason may well be Nazi continuities in the German foreign policy establishment (see Conze et. al. 2010). Such continuities shed a troubling light on the somewhat undefined notion of the 'traditional German-Arab friendship'. A further reason for not endangering relations with Arab states was their economic importance in terms of markets for German exports as well as sources of petroleum. The 'oil factor', however, would drastically rise in importance only by the late 1960s, a topic discussed in the next chapter.

Kept in the dark, German diplomats attempted to learn about the content and details of military cooperation from their counterparts in the BMVg. However, the majority of those who were theoretically responsible for matters of military imports and exports to

non-NATO areas were also uninformed (PA AA, B130, Bd. 3767, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1958). At this early stage, military ties with Israel seemed to be known only to Strauss himself and an “Officer Becker” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 3767, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1958). The arguments brought forth in favour or against military ties with Israel to some degree reflected institutional positions held in the German administration. Erhard, the economics minister, argued against military ties for economic reasons. The Reparations Agreement, he argued, had undoubtedly secured the FRG a place in the Israeli market. However, trade with Arab states was three times as large as trade with Israel. Furthermore, Israel was insignificant as a source of raw materials, whereas Arab states were very important in this regard. Since military ties with Israel constituted a threat to trade relations with Arab states, they should not be pursued (PA AA, B130, Bd. 6398, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958).

The main proponents of military ties with Israel on the German side were Strauss and Adenauer. They forged these ties out of an interest in rehabilitation and in strengthening Israel as a Western Cold War bastion in the Middle East. Military ties in the 1950s were significant, but their importance rose dramatically in the first half of the 1960s. In March 1960, the German chancellor and the Israeli prime minister held their first (and last) official meeting. A closer analysis of this first meeting is helpful for understanding the rationale, dynamics and context of the consequent deepening of military ties.

### **3.2 From the Waldorf-Astoria to the Glass Booth: On the Symbolic Denazification of Germany and the Arming of Israel**

*The State Against Fritz Bauer*, a 2015 multiple-award winning German movie by director Lars Kraume, shows the efforts of State Attorney Fritz Bauer in bringing former Nazi criminals to trial in West Germany. The movie revolves around Bauer’s role in the capture of Adolf Eichmann. A short scene brilliantly captures the meaning of Germany’s policies towards Israel in this context. Bauer, himself of Jewish descent, talks to his confidant, the minister of the federal country of Hessen. The lawyer is desperate. He knows of Eichmann’s whereabouts, but does not dare relaying this information to the West German government, rightly afraid that Eichmann’s former comrades in the judiciary would warn him. It is March 1960, and in the background of the room, a TV screen

shows the global news: David Ben-Gurion and Konrad Adenauer sitting amiably together during their meeting at the New York Astoria Hotel, shaking hands. Bauer, aggravated, turns to the screen, points to Adenauer and exclaims: "I cannot listen to his damned talk of reconciliation anymore!"

As argued until now, Adenauer's policy of *Wiedergutmachung* towards Israel and the simultaneous abortion, in part even reversal, of Allied Denazification policy within the German state apparatus, were not contradictory, but two sides of the same coin. Two images convey the rapid changes of the German-Israeli relationship in the postwar era. The photograph of the March 1960 meeting between David Ben-Gurion and Konrad Adenauer in the Waldorf-Astoria shows them sitting next to each other in a relaxed, friendly attitude of mutual understanding. By contrast, the photograph of the 1952 signing of the Reparations Agreement in Luxembourg displays a frosty, speechless atmosphere of impossible communication (see also Diner 2015). Both images are equally careful political compositions. Their very different character indicates a deepening of relations (see also Weitz 2000: 272). With the *Shilumim* making a great contribution to Israel's build-up over the 1950s, cooperation between the two states intensified further, as the specific statebuilding interests of both sides were served in an ever more stable exchange. The Astoria meeting exemplifies the continuity of the exchange between symbolic rehabilitation and material consolidation. To Germany, the meeting was relevant for the image and rhetoric it produced for a global and specifically American public. Israel obtained the promise of significant flows of financial and military aid and thus the continuity of German material support.

Upon their declassification, the English-Israeli and the German transcripts of the meeting were published in 1997 (Shalom 1997, Blasius and Jelinek 1997).<sup>28</sup> At the time, even though bits of information were revealed to the press (see also Deutschkron 1983: 106 - 119), the transcripts of the discussions were kept secret, as they conveyed politically sensitive information about German military and financial support to Israel. The Astoria meeting thus gave rise to speculation. What it showed to the world was first of all an im-

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<sup>28</sup> Markus Weingardt (2002) in his German-language monograph on the history of German-Israeli relations, did not refer to the transcript. His short chapter on the Astoria meeting summarizes outdated secondary sources, instead of analysing the available primary material.

age. As German historian Rainer A. Blasius writes in his introduction to the German publication of the two meeting transcripts:

A picture went global and was memorized - a representative of the people of the victims and a representative of the people of the perpetrators, sitting together at a small table like old friends, smiling amiably, exchanging friendly gestures and shaking hands. (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 309).

This image, taken after the two-hour discussion in Adenauer's hotel room, was followed by pronouncements to the international press. Adenauer declared to be "deeply moved" by the meeting and that cooperation between Israel and Germany was to remain fruitful. In response, Ben-Gurion evoked his prior Knesset pronouncement, repeating that "the Germany of today is not the Germany of yesterday" and that "[a]fter today's meeting with the Chancellor, I am convinced that my judgement then was correct." (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 310). The impression the image sought to convey should not be confused with the political intentions behind it. Claims for representation are political and thus inherently disputable. It was certainly in the German interest to convey the idea of a public handshake between Jews and Germans, to produce a public display of forgiveness. This image and the rhetoric surrounding the Astoria meeting were the symbolic capital Israel was able to provide to Germany. As Zaki Shalom aptly put it in his introduction to the publication of the Israeli transcript of the meeting:

Ben-Gurion granted Adenauer assistance of singular historical, moral, and political importance—complete absolution of Germany under his rule from any connection with the Nazi past. Ben-Gurion did this despite his awareness that some of the more senior people around Adenauer were former Nazis. (Shalom 1997:55).

Wolffsohn also speaks of a "seal of approval" that Ben-Gurion provided to Adenauer in New York (Wolffsohn 1993: 24). To assign to Adenauer the role of a "representative" of the "people of the perpetrators", as Blasius does, did not make sense from the official German perspective at the time. This description corresponded neither to Adenauer's self-image, nor to the self-descriptions of the West German state. As was outlined before, while the FRG was the legal successor to the Nazi regime and accepted to pay reparations to Jewish victims, Adenauer repeatedly used the formula of a 'crime committed in the name of the German people', while maintaining the claim that the majority of

Germans opposed Hitler's regime (see also Stern 1991: 306-310). It was in consequence to this guilt-evasive strategy of attributing the crimes of Nazism to a small circle of perpetrators that Adenauer could perceive of obligations towards the past only as a something that was demanded by "honour" (*Ehrenpflicht des deutschen Volkes*) (Stauber 2003: 116). The handshake extended by Ben-Gurion became a key moment in the restoration of that 'honour' inasmuch as it symbolized absolution, albeit only from an uncritical perspective oblivious to political intentions.

The Astoria meeting was a well-timed public display. From the end of 1959 until February 1960, a wave of anti-Jewish incidents swept the FRG. Jewish cemeteries were vandalized and antisemitic parables smeared on public places. Stauber (2003) demonstrates that for the FRG, these events were denounced firstly in terms of their negative impact on Germany's international standing. The government produced a white paper documenting the incidents. Along with the AA, which sent instructions to all its delegations, the white paper concluded that the incidents, which went into the hundreds, were severely harming the FRG's international reputation (Stauber 2003). The international criticism levelled against the presence of former Nazis in Adenauer's administration was utilized by the GDR to paint the FRG's Nazi continuities in the strongest colours possible. For its part, the FRG put the entire blame for the 'Swastika Epidemic' on alleged GDR agents, a reaction that was perceived negatively as an effort to deflect guilt, without actually confronting the truths contained in the accusations (Stauber 2003: 104). Jewish organizations in the U.S. were much alerted by the wave of antisemitic incidents sweeping Germany, publicizing the events and sending high-profile delegations to Germany to investigate them (Stauber 2003: 105).<sup>29</sup>

Gerhard Schröder (no relation to the later chancellor), German Interior Minister and a former NSDAP member as early as 1933, presented the following interpretation of the

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<sup>29</sup>A first step towards polishing the German image was Adenauer's consequent visit to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, along with Nahum Goldmann, who advised him to make this visit, in February 1960. Adenauer's hagiographer, Hansen, documents how Adenauer heroically undertook the visit even against the advice of his doctor (Hansen 2002: 541). The German weekly *Der Spiegel* reported more soberly at the time. According to *Der Spiegel*, the West German government organized the trip to Bergen-Belsen in response to the bad press provoked by the ongoing antisemitic incidents. Reporters of the foreign press were driven to Bergen-Belsen on trucks of the German army. However, the truck drivers adhered to the regulations of not driving faster than 60km per hour. As a result, photographers and reporters of the international press were too late for Adenauer's wreath ceremony. See *Spiegel* 10/02/1960, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43063250.html> (last access: January 22nd, 2016).

incidents. Niels Hansen approvingly quotes Schröder's message to the German public, broadcasted on the evening news in late December 1959: "What is horrible...is that here, there was a violation of the public will to *finally overcome* the most despicable and inexcusable chapter of NS-history by compensation, reconciliation and tolerance." (cited in Hansen 2002: 539, italics added). It must be noted that what is lost in the English translation is the historical-religious gravitas behind the original terms *Wiedergutmachung* and *Versöhnung*, translated here as "compensation" and "reconciliation". The paradoxical idea of "finally overcoming" an "inexcusable past" falls neatly into Adorno's criticism of the German 'coming to terms with the past', incidentally published in the year the 'Swastika Epidemic' started, in 1959. Adorno criticized a conception by which the Nazi past was talked about with the aim of forgetting about it:

The question "What does working through the past mean?" must be elucidated. It is based on a phrase that has recently become highly suspect as a slogan. "Coming to terms with the past" does not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through an act of clear consciousness. It suggests, rather, wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory. The attitude that it would be proper for everything to be forgiven and forgotten by those who were wronged is expressed by the party that committed the injustice. (Adorno 1959/ 1986: 115).<sup>30</sup>

What Adorno argues is that the official slogan of *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* denotes the opposite of what it presents itself as. The intention is forgetting the past, not the conscious attempt to confront the unspeakable: "the tendency toward the unconscious and not so unconscious defensiveness against guilt is...absurdly associated with the thought of working through the past" (Adorno 1959/ 1986: 115). It is this 'absurd connection' which captures so clearly the paradox in the former Nazi Gerhard Schröder's statement (Adorno 1959/ 1986: 115).

The meeting between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion, while planned before the wave of anti-semitic incidents, was now scheduled for March 1960, in order for both to meet during

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<sup>30</sup> This translation is based on the one provided by Hartman (1986). While Hartman translated *Aufarbeitung* as "coming to terms with", the term "working through" is used here because it is seen to capture better the psychological connotations of *Aufarbeitung* (see also the discussion of the term by Hartman himself). Furthermore, *Aufarbeitung* suggests process that is constant. It should thus not be confused with the terms 'mastering' or 'overcoming' the past, which imply closure.



respective visits to the U.S.: “This meeting was perceived by the Germans as an important element of their public relations campaign in the United States.” (Stauber 2003: 105, also Jelinek 1997: 59-60). The place of the meeting was telling also because from the 1960s onwards, the German-Israeli alliance was to unfold even stronger under the U.S. Cold War umbrella, as Israel’s military importance to the U.S. was to increase dramatically in tune with the rise of anti-Western Arab nationalism.

A look into the actual contents of the discussion supports the argument that the Astoria meeting is best understood as an exchange of public absolution for the secret promise to continue the material consolidation of the Israeli state. For a German audience, Rainer A. Blasius and Yeshayahu A. Jelinek arranged and published the two records (Blasius and Jelinek 1997). Ben-Gurion spoke English, Adenauer spoke German. As Blasius notes in his introduction to the records, both protocols are remarkably congruent (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 326f.). While the Israeli translator recorded the discussion in the form of dialogue, the German translator used indirect speech. The following quotes are taken from the Israeli-English record as found in the 1997 publication by Blasius and Jelinek. The German version, from the same publication, is used only to highlight nuances or eventual differences in translation.

Ben-Gurion and Adenauer begin by expressions of mutual admiration. Adenauer lauds Ben-Gurion’s statebuilding efforts, whereas Ben-Gurion compliments Adenauer on his politics of reconciliation, notably towards the Jews (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 330). Ben-Gurion continues with an emblematic interpretation of the relationship between the Shoah and the Israeli state, culminating in the phrase that “historically, Hitler almost murdered the Jewish state” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 334), as the genocide had destroyed European Jewry, the supposed force behind the Zionist program (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 330). This exposition is only punctually interrupted by Adenauer and culminates in the requests for financial and military aid, which Adenauer agrees to. The rest of the talk is devoted to U.S. politics, the Cold War, and the question of African countries, about which the generally much more talkative Ben-Gurion is relatively more sensitive than the strongly paternalist and eurocentric Adenauer.

Both speak of morality when describing and justifying the German-Israeli relationship. Ben-Gurion tells his counterpart that “what you have done, you did out of your conscience. This fact, why and how it was done, we appreciate even more than what was

done. I consider the moral aspect more important than the material.” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 330). Adenauer invokes morality to give reasons for his promise of material support: “We will help you, out of moral reasons and out of reasons of practical politics. Israel is the fortress of the West, Israel has to develop in the interests of the whole world. I can already now tell you that we will help you, we will not leave you alone.” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 337).

There is no methodological reason to assume that Ben-Gurion or Adenauer were insincere when they gave moral meanings to the German-Israeli relationship. Instead of trying to uncover a plain material interest ‘behind’ their formulations, it is empirically more revealing to ask what Adenauer and Ben-Gurion meant when they evoked terms of morality, and why. Shortly before agreeing to Ben-Gurion’s requests, Adenauer makes an elucidating comment in this regard. As Ben-Gurion outlined that the Nazi regime destroyed European Jewry, Adenauer interrupts him, stating: “The fate of the Jews is somewhat similar to ours. We also suffered the loss of a whole layer in German society. We also are missing the personalities that were lost with that layer.” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 332).<sup>31</sup>

As demonstrated above, this deflection of guilt was not a stand-alone lapse in historical judgement, but exemplary for the spirit of the Adenauer era. Interestingly, statements as these, even though they can readily be found, are widely ignored, excused and not properly explained in the academic writing on German-Israeli relations. Blasius does not allude to this comment in his introduction to the Astoria records. Niels Hansen, in his hagiographic, apologetic work on German-Israeli relations in the Adenauer era, pursues a different strategy. He quotes Adenauer’s equalization of German and Jewish suffering in full and then attempts to explain it. This attempt reads as a surreal excuse and affirmation of Adenauer’s initial statement and is exemplary for the political drive of Hansen’s whole work. Without denying the validity of Adenauer’s comment, Hansen claims

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<sup>31</sup> The German version states the same, appearing as slightly less blunt due to the indirect form in which the German interpreter stenographed the dialogue: “Der Herr *Bundeskanzler* sagte, er habe von Anfang an die Bestrebungen der zionistischen Bewegung mit aufmerksamer Anteilnahme verfolgt. Er wies ferner darauf hin, daß durch das Ausfallen dieser Schicht von Juden und durch das Ausfallen einer ähnlichen Schicht Menschen in Deutschland zwischen dem Schicksal der Juden und der deutschen Entwicklung in mancher Beziehung Parallelen bestünden. Auch in Deutschland seien gewisse gute Persönlichkeiten einer bestimmten Lebensperiode ausgefallen, und daher habe er soviel Verständnis für das, was der Herr Ministerpräsident gesagt habe.” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 333, italics in the original).

that Adenauer meant to “affirm” Ben-Gurion’s prior statement about the impact of the Holocaust on the Israeli state. He continues by enumerating German victims during WWII. He mentions 5.3 million German soldiers killed in battle, adding 2.5 million victims of “flight, persecution and displacement”. Having thus listed the numbers of Germans killed during WWII, he proceeds to claim, without proof, that it was not Adenauer’s intention to “balance the losses” (*aufrechnen*). Yet, by uncritically reproducing Adenauer’s initial statement, Hansen himself draws parallels between soldiers of the Wehrmacht killed in battle, and Jewish victims of the Holocaust (Hansen 2002: 546f.).

If to a current-day reader, Adenauer’s equation between German and Jewish suffering may sound absurd or disconcerting, it is a discursive strategy explicable in its historical context, a context that historians and political scientists must elucidate and explain, not reproduce and excuse.

Blasius claims that the main motivation of both Ben-Gurion and Adenauer was to meet publicly in order to make a political statement regarding “the future of both peoples.” (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 329). This is hardly a tenable proposition. Ben-Gurion’s conciliatory politics towards West Germany, especially in its early stages, was risky to his political position, provoking strong resistance in the state administration, the Knesset and Israeli society. Even though protest against the Astoria meeting was not comparable to the massive mobilization against the Reparations Agreement (Weitz 2000: 275), it is hard to believe that Ben-Gurion would continue to risk his political position for moral overtures to the successor state of the Nazi regime. As Ben-Gurion told reporters of the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv* in September 1960, he went to meet Adenauer because he “hoped that from this discussion, something great would emerge for Israel, and I have good reason to believe that this hope will not be disappointed” (cited in Jelinek 1997: 533). He also justified his meeting with the West German Chancellor in religious-moral terms. Again, however, the evocation of morality is best understood as the way in which a structural interest of the state is communicated in the language of politics. This interest was the consolidation of the state. Ben-Gurion’s willingness to make public gestures of reconciliation was thus predicated on a Zionist interpretation of the Jewish catastrophe in Europe. In the first paragraphs of the Astoria discussion, he develops an argument revolving around the detrimental effect of the Genocide for the building of the Zionist state:

The real historical damage...was something that never happened in history...The Jewish people received a deadly blow from the Nazi regime. Those of our people who had vision, knowledge, ability, idealism, readiness for self-sacrifice, and material means, that was European Jewry, they were destroyed." (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 330).

This exposé logically culminates in a request for a German contribution to Israel's statebuilding efforts:

Hitler not only murdered six million Jews...historically, Hitler almost murdered the Jewish State: Our hope and heritage for 3000 years. We are not going to submit to such a fate. We will overcome it. If you do not agree, that is your right. For the life of six million people, there is no such thing as reparation. But something can be done to lessen the terrible damage that was done to the idea of the Jewish home. We want you to participate in developing our country. (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 334).

Ben-Gurion came equipped with two specific wishes for how West Germany could help in the development of the Israeli state. The first was a loan: "You cannot undo what Hitler did, but you can help giving us the means to rebuild Israel. Either you participate or you lend us every year for ten years forty to fifty million Dollars." (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 336). The German transcript quotes Ben-Gurion as asking for a loan of "forty to fifty million dollars over a time span of ten to twenty years." However, Ben-Gurion's formula of forty to fifty million dollars over ten years would become the reference point for future political haggling about the exact criteria of the German loan (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 311ff.). After Adenauer's agreement to the loan in principle, later codenamed 'operation business friend' by the German side, the Israeli Prime Minister moves on to the topic of weapons, asking for submarines and missiles. In so doing, he evokes the military relationship Israel has had with France, and in this light expresses his satisfaction with the postwar cooperation between Germany and France (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 336). For both streams of support, financial and military, Ben-Gurion refers to discussions that had previously taken place between Israeli representatives and Hermann Josef Abs, as well as Franz Josef Strauss (Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 336). The streams of financial and military aid, agreed upon at the Astoria meeting, were to become intertwined with the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem.

### *The Eichmann trial in German-Israeli relations*

Adolf Eichmann, the 'logistician' of the Shoah, was captured in Argentina by Mossad agents in May 1960. He was on trial in Israel from April to December 1961. Eichmann was executed on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1962. The trial drew global attention and placed the Holocaust into public debate in Germany and Israel, as well as the wider Western world. In the 1950s, the Holocaust had still been foremost a private affair of its survivors.

Years after the trial, the Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibovitz wrote that it was "a conspiracy by Adenauer and Ben-Gurion to clear the name of the German people. In exchange they paid us billions." (Segev 1993: 365). What the trial illustrates is the exchange structure specific to German-Israeli relations, namely that of rehabilitation for consolidation, of dissociating West Germany from the Third Reich in exchange for financial and military support. Contrary to what one may expect, the Eichmann trial had led to a deepening of German-Israeli state relations. Even on the societal level, it "moderated anti-German sentiment in Israel" (Segev 1993: 366).

Tom Segev has shown how Ben-Gurion personally ensured that the trial differentiated between a Nazi Germany of the past and a Germany of the present (Segev 1993: 346). The trial thus de-connected the FRG from its past. As Hannah Yablonka (2004) has shown and as Idith Zertal (2005) has criticized, the trial was also used to connect Israel's Arab enemies to Nazism. The one element this section adds is to enter into the equation the issue of German support to Israel, as promised by Adenauer to Ben-Gurion in New York shortly before Eichmann's capture. There is ample evidence, in the files of the AA alone, to suggest that a threat hung over the trial: if Israel had not differentiated the FRG from Nazi Germany in the Eichmann proceedings, convicting the criminal *pars pro toto* for a Nazi Germany of the past, thus severing the links between the deeds of Eichmann and the FRG, the Adenauer administration would have withheld its promised financial and military support. Thus, Germany was 'denazified' by Israel in exchange for weapons and money. On the other hand, Arab states were 'nazified' in a move that sought to legitimize the Israeli position in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The 'Nazification' of Arabs is a long standing trope in the Arab-Israeli conflict, ranging from the 'Hitler on the Nile' (Nasser) to the 'Hitler in Beirut' (Arafat) and to the framing of Palestinian opposition to Zionism as guided principally by antisemitism (for a concise

summary of this question, see Achcar 2012: 77-81). This is not to make the converse claim that antisemitism does not play any role in Palestinian and Arab enmity to Israel. It is clear that Nazis had 'travelled' to Arab states not only in a social-psychological, but also in a rather literal sense (see also Rose 2017: 39-62). This is an equally complex and politically charged topic that cannot possibly be addressed here. The relevant fact to underscore in the context of this topic is simply that most Nazis and their host of enablers continued to live where they came from, which is Germany. The question of the roles of antisemitism in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict should be disentangled from Nazi antisemitism and its afterlife in the FRG.

The FRG centrally perceived the Eichmann trial as a threat to its reputation. It worried that the trial would identify the postwar FRG with Nazi Germany. The following statement of German president Heinrich Lübke, who formerly worked as an engineer under Albert Speer, sums up well the dominant thinking of the West German political elite at the time:

A few days ago in Jerusalem there began a trial the name of which has become at once symbol and stigma of the terrible crimes committed by Hitler and his supporters in the name of Germany. Even today we Germans, including former resistance-workers and those who opposed Hitler, are still filled with deep shame that some of our fellow-countrymen were accessories to such crimes. In spite of this we must establish, for the sake of that same justice that has brought Eichmann to trial today, that it is fundamentally incorrect to equate the term 'National Socialist' with 'German'. (cited in Vogel 1969: 129).

While we find here the same guilt-deferring formulas as analysed previously, Lübke claims that by the token of the "same justice", the Eichmann trial should not be used to equate the FRG with the National Socialist state. In March 1961 chancellor Adenauer held a press conference at which numerous foreign journalists were present. He expressed his "sorrows" about the "repercussions" of what will be debated in the trial on the "overall judgement passed on us Germans." He proceeded to explain his views on National Socialism and the question of German responsibility, formulated in the same spirit as Lübke. "One should not forget", the chancellor said, that "National Socialist Germans had perpetrated against Germans exactly the same crimes as Eichmann had perpetrated against Jews". Furthermore, the chancellor claimed that the percentage of

committed National Socialists had been relatively low and that most people “joyfully helped fellow Jewish citizens whenever they could.” (cited in Deligdisch 1974: 66).

In August 1961, Ben-Gurion gave an interview to Rolf Vogel for a German newspaper. Vogel was at the time part of the German observer delegation to the Eichmann trial, employed by the German secret service, with a direct line of communication to the chancellery (Wiegrefe 2011). In the interview, Ben-Gurion said that his “opinion of present-day Germany remains unchanged. Nazi Germany no longer exists...The development of our relations with Germany today depends on the intentions and the policy of the German Government. For our part, we are ready to take up normal and close relations and to co-operate to the fullest extent.” (cited in Vogel 1969: 132). German defence minister Strauss, in his already cited interview with Vogel, suggested as well that since “Germany had defended Israel’s safety”, the FRG should not be held “collectively guilty for the crimes of a previous generation” in the Eichmann trial (of course, he was himself part of this “previous generation” of Germans active in WWII). He found that his Israeli counterparts were receptive to these worries (Vogel 1969: 124).

While Bonn had a general interest in seeing the trial demarcated the “Third Reich” from the Federal Republic, it had a specific interest in avoiding that the trial implicated Hans Globke, state secretary in the chancellery and Adenauer’s closest adviser. Globke, a jurist, had written an influential legal interpretation of the Nuremberg Laws which helped pave the juridical way towards the persecution of Jews. There was a danger that Eichmann would connect his name to Jewish persecution in Greece.

The material available in the archives of the AA suggests that Germany made the delivery of the loan and weapons promised in the 1960 Astoria meeting dependent on the Israeli handling of the trial (see also Winkler 2012: 303). Shortly before the opening of proceedings in 1961, Ben-Gurion met Franz Josef Strauss in Berlin. Ben-Gurion reminded Strauss about the loan, stating that the first rate had already been due on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961. However, Israel had not received this payment, thus having had to acquire the loan elsewhere. Strauss then asked the chancellor about the loan, who said that “under no circumstances could anything be done before the beginning of the Eichmann trial” (AAPD 1965/2). In October 1961, foreign minister Brentano wrote to Adenauer about the Eichmann trial and the financial loan promised in 1960. He referred to Shinnar, Israel’s representative in the FRG, who had stated that “reservations concerning the Eich-

mann trial” had been dispelled. Thus, the payment of the loan could now go ahead (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8414, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1961). When in February 1962, Strauss tried to convince Carl Carstens, state secretary in the AA, of weapon deliveries to Israel, he argued that “the Israelis prevented extreme agitation against us” at the Eichmann trial, mentioning especially Globke (AAPD 1962/2).

Israel received the first tranche of the ‘business friend’ loan in December 1961, after the verdict on Eichmann was spoken. A major delivery of arms was agreed upon in August 1962, two months after Eichmann’s execution (AAPD 1964/289).

Jelinek confirms that “[t]he Israeli government undertook great efforts to prevent a public debate about Globke.” His explanation for this finding is that it was the purpose of the Eichmann trial to “elucidate the global public about the Nazi crimes against the Jewish people. The case of Globke was seen as a side issue, which would have distracted from this effort.” (Jelinek 2004: 83). While it is of course true that Globke was not central to the trial, the problem with Jelinek’s argument is that other “side issues” played quite an important role. Whereas Israel downplayed the connections between the FRG and Nazi Germany, it stressed the connections between Arab states and Nazi Germany. This was done, according to Idith Zertal,

in two distinctive ways: first, by massive references to the presence of Nazi scientists and advisers in Egypt and other Arab countries, to the on-going connections between Arab and Nazi leaders, and to the Nazi-like intentions and plans of the Arabs to annihilate Israel. The second means was systematic references – in the press, on the radio, and in political speeches – to the former Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin El-Husseini, his connections with the Nazi regime in general and with Eichmann and his office in particular. In those references he was depicted as a prominent designer of the Final Solution and a major Nazi criminal. The deeds of Eichmann – and other Nazi criminals – were rarely mentioned without addition of the Arab-Nazi dimension. (Zertal 2005: 100).

In other words, the trial minimized the role of Globke and inflated the role of the Mufti in the history of the German persecution of the Jews. In her famous coverage of the trial, Hannah Arendt had already noted the obvious, namely that “the former Ministerialrat of the Interior and present Staatssekretär in Adenauer’s Chancellery doubtlessly had more right than the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem to figure in the history of what the Jews had actually suffered from the Nazis.” (Arendt 1963/1994: 19).



Ben-Gurion personally made three changes to the opening speech of chief prosecutor Gideon Hausner “all aimed at protecting West Germany’s image and diminishing the guilt of the German people.” (Segev 1993: 346). Ben-Gurion told Hausner that crimes should not be attributed to “the Germans” but to “Nazi Germany”. Secondly, he suggested to omit the thesis that Nazism was inevitable, in order to prevent discussion of a specific developmental path in German history.<sup>32</sup> Thirdly, Ben-Gurion sought to emphasize the guilt of Hitler, apparently so as to reduce possible discussion of the collective guilt hypothesis.

The Germans perceived these efforts positively. The report of the German observer delegation to the trial noted the “efforts of the prosecutor to never ascribe the crimes against Jews to the Germans as such. Whenever the context permitted, he spoke of Nazi-Germany, Nazi-criminals etc., in order to show the difference to present-day Germany. This was not a coincidence. We later found that the chief prosecutor consciously drew a clear distinction between the criminal German state elite and the German people as a whole.” (PA AA, B1, Bd.81, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1961).

The Eichmann trial shows the intersections, as well as the causal relationships, between a number of complex historical processes and ideological-discursive re-framings: the process of German postwar whitewashing and rehabilitation, the consolidation of the Israeli state in the Middle East, as well as the framing of Arabs-as-Nazis. In political language games, historical fact suffers. To close the circle of projections, let us consider the following closing remarks of the above-quoted report of the German observer delegation to the Eichmann trial:

One of the strongest impressions left on the European visitor is the novel and very advantageous type of the Israeli youth. This youth exhibits almost none of the features which one was used to view as Jewish. Of great height, often blond and blue-eyed, free and self-determined in their movements with well-defined faces, the offspring of the German Jewish immigrants represent a new type of the Jew that was unknown until now. (PA AA, B1, Bd.81, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1961).

Here, Jews seem to finally have become German. This perhaps rather astonishing type of openly racist German over-identification with Israeli Jews starkly illustrates how continu-

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<sup>32</sup> See chapter five for a discussion of the Goldhagen Debate in Germany.

ities of German antisemitism can express themselves in a pro-Israeli attitude. In this case, Israel is represented in terms of German self-descriptions of a distinctly pre-1945 era: Israel becomes aryan. The German identification with Israeli military capacity in terms as these is a corollary to the fact that in their formative phase under consideration in this chapter, German politics towards Israel served not to confront the past but to white-wash its continuities, a rationale accepted by Israel in return for the means to build the state.

*Business friends: did the FRG finance Israel's nuclear project?*

In 2015, Hans Rühle, an expert on nuclear proliferation who had held high positions in the BMVg and NATO, published an article in the conservative newspaper *Die Welt*, known for its staunch support support of Israel. The article claimed that the FRG had financed Israel's nuclear project with the 'Business friend' loan in the 1960s, promised to Ben-Gurion at the Waldorf-Astoria and paid out after the Eichmann trial. Rühle argues that while the French technical help for Dimona is well-known, the question of who paid for the project had remained a riddle, as the costs far exceeded Israel's budget at the time. Contrary to normal development loans, the 'business friend' was never explicitly tied to any specific projects. The Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), the state-owned German development bank in charge of the loan, has not disclosed its files on the topic to this day. For Rühle, the strongest indication that the 'business friend' financed Dimona is that both Israeli and German officials involved in the matter used the same code-words in their communications. In New York, Adenauer and Ben-Gurion spoke about 'development projects in the Negev', subsequent documents on both sides refer to 'nuclear-powered desalination plants' or a 'textile factory'. Of course, no water was desalinated in the desert and the 'textile factory' is a well-known codename for the Dimona plant. Rühle also refers to a discussion of Ben-Gurion with the editors of major Israeli newspapers in March 1963, where he spoke about the need to avoid confrontation with the Adenauer government, in order not to disturb "the construction of a deterrent weapon whose significance for the security of Israel and the prevention of future wars cannot be valued highly enough" (Rühle 2015).

It is improbable that decision-makers in Bonn were not informed of French support for Israel's nuclear project. After all, France and Germany were Israel's most important military supporters at the time. The archival research undertaken for this thesis suggests the plausibility of Rühle's argument, but does not verify it. To give one of multiple indications supporting Rühle's argument, the first German ambassador to Israel, Rolf Pauls, wrote about the "nuclear desalination plant" in fairly dramatic terms. Pauls wrote to his superiors in Bonn that this project had "epochal" meaning and that a German contribution to it would be a "positive memorial" of Germany to Jews everywhere. These are surely big words for a desalination plant that never existed. Pauls wrote that the FRG could expect from such a contribution a more forthcoming Israeli view on German unification and a softer position on the finality of Germany's Eastern border – which at the time was disputed by Bonn (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8824, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1965). Nevertheless, that Bonn financed Israel nuclear bomb remains, until now, only a plausible story for which definite proof does not exist.

### **3.3 The Middle East Crisis: A German Dilemma and a Changing of the Guards**

From 1962 to 1965, the German arming of Israel became a crucial factor in the Israeli attainment of military hegemony in the Middle East, which materialized in 1967. As detailed in the introductory pages to this chapter, the deliveries agreed upon in August 1962 included heavy artillery, aircraft and submarines. In 1964, 150 M48 'Patton' tanks were added to the list upon American instigation. This part examines German arms deliveries to Israel between 1962 and 1965 in the context of overall American geostrategy in the Middle East. The 1964-65 'Middle East Crisis', as it was called in the corridors of the AA, provides excellent study material for such a purpose.

Before moving towards the analysis of this diplomatic crisis, the question of German rocket scientists in Egypt must be addressed. From 1962 to 1965, a number of German scientists were employed in Egyptian rocket-engineering programs. These were mostly former Nazis. Foreign minister Golda Meir and Herut opposition leader Begin agitated against Ben-Gurion's 'New Germany' policy in the Israeli Knesset and public. The central claim was that again, Germans were plotting the destruction of Jews. The rocket episode

is well researched (see relevant chapters in Jelinek 2004, Sachar 1999, Segev 1993) and thus necessitates only a brief summary here. Jelinek describes the episode as one guided by emotions (Jelinek 2004: 419). The rockets the Germans helped building, in fact, were never able to leave ground (Jelinek 2004: 422f.). Israel pressed for legal German measures against German participation in the Egyptian rocket program, efforts which were unsuccessful. The German rocket scientists gradually left Egypt by early 1965. The main reason for this was that Egypt could not afford the costly and largely ineffective program anymore. Other reasons were targeted Mossad attacks and the global publicity surrounding the program (Jelinek 2004: 429). The rocket crisis contributed to Ben-Gurion's downfall in 1963. This episode illustrates that Ben-Gurion's 'New Germany' policy was highly contested within the Israeli state and society.

In 1963, Franz Josef Strauss visited Israel, then as the former defence minister. A New York Herald Tribune article about the visit quoted Shimon Peres as saying that "Germany's importance to Israel's 'vital interests' is no less than that of France." The article continued by stating that "[i]t is known that France is a major supplier of weapons to Israel." Peres praised Strauss for having provided "the most substantial aid" to Israel's security. Not detailing what this "substantial aid" had consisted in, Peres said that "a day will come when the truth will be known." (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2314, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1964).

The 1962 arms deal, to which Strauss and Peres in all likelihood referred, emerged from their personal consultations which had started in 1957, as described earlier. What was the American role in the 1962 agreement? When Adenauer informed the chairs of the party factions in the Bundestag about it, he explicitly referred to American wishes. However, the German foreign minister Schröder and the American ambassador to Germany, McGhee, both concluded in February 1965 that the 1962 deal came to pass without American involvement (AAPD 1965/89). Thus, Adenauer's invocation of American wishes could also be read as a pretext – if the U.S. wished for the delivery of arms to Israel, what could the chancellor do? Nevertheless, it is highly improbable that Germany would deliver a major arms package without U.S. knowledge, especially given the fact that the U.S. principally supported the arming of Israel, only refraining from doing so itself for the reasons already outlined.

As Jelinek explains on the basis of Israeli and American archives, the Israeli government asked Washington for these tanks already in 1962. The wish was denied. In 1964, Israeli

prime minister Levi Eshkol visited Washington. The U.S. again refused to deliver these tanks directly to Israel, but Erhard, visiting the U.S. shortly after Eshkol, was informed that the FRG was to deliver the tanks, with the U.S. paying the bill. Erhard argued against the American wishes by pointing to the Hallstein Doctrine; he was told that the German-German dispute was irrelevant compared to the U.S. position in the Middle East (Jelinek 2004: 414). The events of 1964-65 are important, then, as they demonstrate how the U.S. began to take over the role as Israel's principal backer. The 'Middle East Crisis', explained in the following, is about this transition.

In autumn 1964, the German tank deliveries to Israel were discussed in the global press. The tank deliveries led to a crisis in German-Arab relations, specifically, German-Egyptian relations. The 'Middle East Crisis', as it was called in the corridors of the AA, was not a crisis of the Middle East, but a German crisis in the Middle East.<sup>33</sup> From late 1964 to spring 1965, the FRG faced most starkly the dilemma that hung over its Middle East politics since the inception of the Hallstein Doctrine. It could either trigger the Hallstein Doctrine, breaking off diplomatic relations with Egypt in order to be able to continue to arm Israel, or it could cease the arming of Israel, in order to stabilize its relations with Arab states. This was a choice between Israel and Egypt, and thus, between rehabilitation and *Alleinvertretung*.

By definition, in contrast to a problem, a dilemma cannot be solved. For a dilemma to disappear, the basis of its construction has to disappear. In other words, ending the crisis depended entirely on the U.S. As it was the U.S. which pressured the FRG into the tank deliveries, it was not possible to discontinue the deliveries without U.S. consent. On the other hand, the U.S. also made clear that it did not wish to see the Germans apply the Hallstein Doctrine. The German position in the Middle East needed to be held for the cause of overall Western interest, as defined by Washington. In other words, *Alleinvertretung* was a game Bonn was allowed to play only when it did not endanger American Cold War strategy. The German dilemma was finally solved by a changing of the guards: in early 1965, the U.S. agreed to take over outstanding tank deliveries, with the FRG now paying for them. This decision reflects a fundamental shift in U.S. Middle East strategy at

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<sup>33</sup> In his chapter on the crisis, the above cited Marcus Mohr refers to it as a "Stalingrad on the Nile". This terminology was originally used by Giseler Wirsing, a former Nazi propagandist and then influential journalist in the postwar FRG. It is a little unsettling to see such characterizations reproduced in present-day literature: Why use the decisive defeat of the Wehrmacht to describe a postwar diplomatic crisis?

the time. In tune with radicalising Arab nationalism, Washington now decided to openly arm the Israeli state. The beginnings of the U.S. – Israeli military alliance, so decisive to the Middle East especially after 1967, lie here. In consequence, Germany was able to offer Israel diplomatic relations on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965.

This is the German crisis in the Middle East explained in a nutshell. In fact, the crisis is a highly illustrative episode for the study of German-Israeli relations, especially for the question of the U.S. role in them. The 1964-65 episode in the Middle East was perceived by the German government as the gravest diplomatic crisis it faced since 1945 (AAPD 1965/125). The enormous volume of files dedicated to this episode in the AA archives attests to its significance. In the published archival editions of the AA, files dedicated to the crisis crowd out almost all other events in that period. However, a close descriptive reconstruction would be somewhat tiresome, as what the German handling of the crisis throws into stark relief is primarily the dogged attachment in Bonn to the Hallstein Doctrine and the claim over the GDR.

In November 1964, chancellor Erhard bluntly informed his Israeli counterpart Eshkol in a letter that Germany prioritized its claim to *Alleinvertretung* over its relations with Israel:

I may remind you that the policies of the German government are determined by our conscious responsibility for the fate and future of the whole of the German people. We cannot look at the German-Israeli relationship, which undoubtedly plays a role in this regard as well, as an isolated factor, but are forced to regard it in relation to the fateful question of the German nation, the reunification of all Germans in peace and freedom. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2361, November 4th, 1964).

Such statements demonstrate clearly that the FRG defined its policy towards Israel in terms of its own interests as it saw them. This fact needs to be underlined in response to those voices in Germany that frame German-Israeli relations as one-sided transactions undertaken out of guilt. This has never been the case.

The FRG has acted towards Israel as any sovereign state would, and, contrary to often-held views, never assumed the role of the penitent. In the following, we shall focus on the key issues of Germany's 'Middle East Crisis', comparing the perspectives and positions of the relevant actors in the crisis: Egypt, Israel, the FRG and the U.S.

In the section of his book devoted to the 'Middle East Crisis', Hansen writes disparagingly about Nasser, yet blurs the fact that it was the FRG which most clearly played a double-game in the Middle East: its military support of Israel contradicted its proclaimed policy of not delivering weapons into "areas of tension". The AA was clearly aware of this hypocrisy (PA AA B 130, Bd. 6402, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1964). It saw its criticism of military ties with Israel vindicated. A major reason for its Arab-leaning views, however, lay not in the Middle East but in Germany, as it feared for the West German claim over the GDR. It needs to be pointed out that Nasser had until this point in fact supported the FRG's claim to *Alleinvertretung*. At the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cairo in August-September 1964, shortly before German tank deliveries to Israel became public, Egypt, according to the German embassy in Cairo, "not only refrained from doing anything to harm our German policy, but...acted positively in our favour." (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2198, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1964, see also Blasius 1998). It is interesting to read through the reports of German embassies throughout the Middle East at the time. These reports underline that the revelations of German support to Israel fomented anti-German feeling. The reports speak explicitly of changing perceptions of Germany from a 'traditional friend' towards a 'colonial' power in the Middle East (see i.e. reports in PA AA, B130, Bd. 6402).

Thorough analysis of the crisis, also on the basis of GDR files, makes clear that Nasser had no intention to diplomatically recognize the GDR at any point (Blasius 1998). This was the case even when, on January 24<sup>th</sup>, he invited Walter Ulbricht, the first secretary of the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei – SED*), to visit Egypt at the end of February. Bonn knew of Nasser's intention to not diplomatically recognize the GDR even prior to the provocative visit (AAPD 1965/ 89). However, in the beginning of March, Bonn still toyed with the idea of utilizing the Hallstein Doctrine. In a meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March between chancellor Erhard and the American, British and French ambassadors to Germany, the chancellor was told by the American diplomat that it was against the U.S. interest for Bonn to break off diplomatic relations with Cairo. The brusque language used by McGhee reveals American exasperation at the German fixation on the claim to *Alleinvertretung*, which the U.S. clearly saw as subordinate to the overall Western position in the Middle East: "Germany has a good name in the Middle East. The Americans have little influence. The West needs this German influence." (AAPD

1965/112). The French ambassador was of the opinion that “no Russian could have ordered Ulbricht around more clearly as McGhee did with Erhard.” (AAPD 1965/112, footnote 16).

A solution to Germany’s diplomatic crisis had by then already been in the making. On February 18<sup>th</sup>, U.S. foreign minister Dean Rusk informed the German ambassador to the U.S., Karl Heinrich Knappstein that “[w]e will not let you in the foxhole” and that “we will draw away a considerable amount of heat from you” (AAPD 1965/85). Previously, the FRG had asked Israel to accept a cessation of weapon deliveries and offered financial compensation instead. This offer was flatly rejected. With the knowledge that the U.S. would take over outstanding weapon deliveries to Israel, the FRG was now able to offer diplomatic relations to Israel, which Erhard did on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965. As Erhard stated, offering diplomatic relations to Israel constituted a means for Bonn to act autonomously and in a forward manner that was also in accordance with U.S. interest (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8824, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1965). The FRG thus freed itself of the voluntary constrictions of the Hallstein Doctrine in the Middle East, throwing the ball into the court of Arab States.

When Germany and Israel formally agreed upon diplomatic relations on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1965, ten Arab states, including Egypt, broke off diplomatic ties with Bonn. The AA-files indicate that this move needs to be understood primarily as a face-saving gesture, necessary for domestic reasons alone, as by then the extent of German military aid to Israel had become public. Arab states subsequently communicated to the FRG their intention to not endanger trade relations and economic aid. The fact that no Arab state had diplomatically recognized the GDR created an opening for the eventual re-establishment of diplomatic relations. Quite fittingly, diplomatic relations with all Arab states were resumed between 1971 and 1975, the years following the 1967 war, which had pushed Arab nationalism towards its decline.

The year 1965 saw the end of the German *Sonderweg* in the Middle East. The beginning of diplomatic relations and the cessation of its role as a prime economic, financial and military supporter of Israel marks a caesura in the history of German politics towards Israel. If, however, we view German-Israeli relations from a broader perspective of the history of the modern Middle East, the turning point in German-Israeli relations is the 1967 war, as the German consolidation and arming of Israel until that point played an im-



portant role to the Israeli success that fundamentally altered the political landscape of the region.

### **3.4 Germany and the June War**

The FRG was implicated in the 1967 war due to its history of economic and financial support of the Israeli state, notably its military assistance extended from the late 1950s onwards. The first Israeli ambassador to Germany, Asher Ben-Nathan, told chancellor Erhard in their first conversation that an eventual war in the Middle East “would only last a few days. Israel thus had to always be prepared. German aid was a great contribution to the development of the country and military aid also played a very large role for the security of Israel.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8825, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1965). On June 8th, 1967, the day Egypt accepted a ceasefire, the German ambassador to the U.S. reported of the “satisfaction in the U.S. Congress over the military victory of the Israelis and thus the victory of the West, which was not expected to be of such magnitude and of such swiftness.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2604, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1967). Israel’s sweeping victory was a success for the Western bloc insofar as it sounded the death knell of Arab nationalism, thus severely weakening the Soviet position in the Middle East. The war demonstrated Israel’s usefulness as a “fortress of the West”, to again quote Konrad Adenauer. The interests of Israel, the U.S. and, we should add, the FRG, converged on the blow dealt to Arab nationalism. However, Israel also pursued a project of its own in the war with the subsequent occupation of the Sinai, the Golan, the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem (Achcar 2004: 20). On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1967, two days after the Six-Day War ended, the German ambassador to Israel, Pauls, sent a short but telling telegram to Willy Brandt, then the FRG’s foreign minister, informing him that “an officer of the general staff [highest army echelon] told me that the modernized, more heavily armoured tanks delivered by us proved their worth in excellent fashion.” (AAPD 1967/214). These tanks, equipped with up-to-date weapon systems, were central to the formation of the Israeli tanks corps. They played a vital role in the Sinai ground battle. The shared importance of France and Germany to Israel prior to 1967 can be seen in the ways in which the Six-Day War unfolded. While French Mirage jets won the decisive air campaign, the ground campaign in Egypt was

won with German-delivered tanks. Jelinek concludes his discussion of German-Israeli military ties until 1965 by stating that “the FRG has contributed in an important way to the arming of the Israeli army and, thus, to the defence of the Jewish State.” (Jelinek 2004: 417). Unsurprisingly, representatives of Arab states repeatedly complained to their German interlocutors that German help had greatly facilitated Israel’s war effort (see for example PA AA, B130, Bd. 2630, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1967 and PA AA, B130, Bd. 8827, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1968).

It is against this background that the official West German declaration of neutrality in 1967 has to be evaluated. In 1967, the FRG combined political-diplomatic efforts to appear as a neutral outsider to the Arab-Israeli conflict while secretly extending vital economic and military support to Israel. As Belkin rightfully suggested in the already cited U.S. Congressional Service report, “German success in maintaining relatively positive relations on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict has depended largely on its ability to avoid a high-profile leadership role in the region.” (Belkin 2007: 15).

Israel wanted Germany to openly declare its commitment. It is hard to otherwise understand the following footnote to the June War. At the end of May, Israel asked for the delivery of 20.000 gas masks to aid in the protection of the population against eventual Egyptian attacks involving lethal gas. Friedemann Büttner, formerly Professor for Middle Eastern Studies at Berlin’s Free University, remarked critically that “[t]o entreat the country which had gassed millions of Jews for gasmasks for the ostensive purpose of preserving the survivors from imminent extinction cannot be considered a serious appeal for help but only a calculated manoeuvre to force the Germans into compliance with Israel’s future wishes.” (Büttner 1977: 67). German ambassador Pauls was of the same opinion, writing to Bonn that “the danger of a gas attack seems to me very low.” The motive, Pauls wrote was “surely rather to nudge us towards other deliveries with a request that we could impossibly deny.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2576, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1967).

The gas mask episode is just one of the myriad of instances in which the history of the Holocaust intermingled with the situation in Israel prior to the war. The cruel statements of a number of leading Arab politicians are well-documented: “We shall hang the last imperialist soldier with the entrails of the last Zionist” (Damascus Radio), “There will be practically no Jewish survivors” (Shukeiry), “The Zionist barrack in Palestine is about to collapse and be destroyed” (Ahmed Said, Voice of the Arabs, Cairo), all cited in Morris

2001: 310. There was a widespread fear of extermination, especially among Holocaust survivors. The Israeli government and army, the U.S. and NATO states, however, were aware of Israel's military superiority over its Arab neighbours — especially in the event of a surprise attack. As Segev writes, “[t]he threat of ‘extermination’ had not...been real. But the fear of it had been real...More than any other factor, fear had prompted the war—the same fear that had contributed to mass immigration in the 1950s and to the Dimona project. Its roots lay in the Holocaust.” (Segev 1993: 392).

In the Bundestag debate on June 7th, 1967, parliamentarians of the SPD-CDU coalition declared that official neutrality did not mean emotional indifference towards Israel. Erhard Eppler of the SPD spoke of an “inner tension” gripping “our people”, a tension rooted in “the consciousness of our people that the State of Israel is not a state like any other.” Eppler complimented the German government for having expressed its sympathies with Israel, noting that if this had not been the case, the German people and its representatives in government and parliament would have needed to be considered “dead on the inside (*innerlich tot*)”. He ended his speech stating that Germany “of course wanted peace in the Middle East”, but a peace which “guaranteed...the existence of a state whose coming into existence we Germans were not quite uninvolved with in our history.”<sup>34</sup> Kurt Georg Kiesinger, chancellor of the 1966-69 grand coalition between the SPD and the CDU, was implicated in Nazism, yet escaped trial and denazification. Member of a conservative-catholic student fraternity, he radicalized early and became an NSDAP member by 1933. Kiesinger expressed his pro-Israeli positioning in the form of a propagandist critique of East Germany: “On the background of the most recent past of our people, it is truly tragic that those who hold power in the other part of Germany try to flame the conflict in each and every irresponsible manner. They evidently do so in the hope of finding a shred of recognition for their regime.”

Social-Democrat Helmut Schmidt, future chancellor and Germany's favourite elder statesman until his more recent death, also chimed in on the unavoidable anti-GDR rhetoric, but added that irrespective of the importance of the “traditional friendship between our people and the Arab peoples, we have to refute their intention, or, more precisely, the intention of their leaders, to annihilate Israel.” Rainer Barzel of the CDU laud-

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<sup>34</sup> This and following quotes from online documentation of the Bundestag, see <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/05/05111.pdf> (last access July 19th, 2018).

ed the “clarity” of German public opinion which “refrained from showing an indifference of the heart.”

A closer look at the “clarity” of German public opinion at the time is illuminating with respect to the reconfigurations of German national identity, the repression of the Nazi past and the question of German antisemitism after 1945. A comparative study of East and West German perceptions of the 1967 war may be a promising undertaking regarding the question of antisemitism in both countries, yet for the usual constraints of time and space, as well as the focus of this thesis, a short survey of West German reactions and perceptions must suffice. Büttner observed in a 1977 article on the topic that “[t]he particular pro-Israeli bias of the Germans in 1967...was without parallel even in the US.” (Büttner 1977: 70). The lack of knowledge about Middle Eastern history, intertwined with the long-standing history of German orientalism, Büttner argued, was insufficient to explain this bias, adding that the “unwillingness or even outright refusal to accept Middle Eastern realities is psychologically linked to Germany’s guilt or, rather, to its repression of guilt.” (Büttner 1977: 71f.). His quoting of the German liberal Ralf Dahrendorf describing that “mixture of theoretical humanitarianism and practical inhumanity, which makes Germany so unbearable at times” still rings true (cited in Büttner 1977: 76).

This mixture between theoretical empathy and the practical lack of it may be said to be rooted in what Achcar aptly called “narcissistic compassion” (Achcar 2002: chapter 1). This is a form of identification which only sees an idealized, wishful version of one’s own self in the other, while remaining incapable of taking a complex perspective that combines an objectively distanced evaluation of facts with an empathic compassion for human suffering, empathy in the sense of the capacity to adopt, as far as possible, the perspective of those who appear as strangers. While the ‘stranger’ in this case is represented by the Arab side in the Arab-Israeli conflict, an examination of the German perceptions of 1967 shows rather unmistakably that the Israeli side was also used as a replacement for negotiating the problem of German national identity after 1945.

“SIEG! Dajan — Der Rommel Israels”, titled the tabloid *BILD* of the publishing company Springer (cited in Sontheimer 2012). This headline probably does not require translation into English. The declaration of victory, written in capital letters, was followed by an equation of Israeli general Moshe Dayan with the ‘desert fox’ (*Wüstenfuchs*) Erwin Rommel, Hitler’s general in North Africa. Rudolf Augstein, founder of the *Spiegel*, Iron

Cross holder for his services in the Wehrmacht and one of the most influential postwar German journalists also wrote that Israeli soldiers “rolled like Rommel.” Augstein knew of the German contribution to the Israeli success: “An effective tank corps was the prerequisite for the lightning victory in the lightning war (*Blitzsieg im Blitzkrieg*). Germany delivered these weapons two years ago in a triangular trade with the U.S. and Italy.” (Spiegel, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1967).

To understand how it was possible to pay Israel compliments by comparing its army to the Wehrmacht, its military campaign to the 1939 invasion of Poland, and Dayan to Rommel, we need to return to some of the points made previously. Postwar West German society saw itself primarily as a victim of the war. Nazi crimes, if explicitly recognized, were generally attributed to a small circle of perpetrators, to Hitler and his entourage. While the Wehrmacht destroyed Europe, killed millions and made the death camps logistically possible, it was, in postwar Germany, generally perceived as having a ‘clean sheet’ until the Wehrmacht exhibition caused a public stir as late as 1995. While Erwin Rommel backed Hitler’s power seizure, he was implicated in the 1944 assassination attempt against him and consequently forced into suicide. Thus, Dayan could be ‘Germanified’ by inserting him into a specifically German ‘anti-Nazi’ tradition: that of Nazi supporters who turned against Hitler in 1944 because of looming defeat (see also Geisel 2015: 21-32).

The conflict constellation in the Middle East made possible two intersecting forms of German guilt-deferral: one was the identification of German soldiers with Israeli soldiers, thus effectively blurring the historical relationship between German perpetrators and Jewish victims. Secondly, in this play of projections, the role of the ‘true’ Nazis could be attributed to Israel’s Arab adversaries. The trope of Arabs-as-Nazis holds a particularly salient meaning in the German context. There, it cannot escape the suspicion that it is used for the purpose of relief: a transposition of the historical German role of the Nazi perpetrator onto ‘the’ present-day Arab. Invoking the prior German obedience to Nazism, the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* wrote on its title page on June 1<sup>st</sup> that “should the German public fail *again*, previous crimes would fall back on it (emphasis added).” (cited in Lewan 1970: 77).

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, Springer’s *Die Welt* spoke of the “second assassination attempt against the people of Israel in this century.” It explained:

The world began to remember. Germany did not need to. We know Europe's graveyards, over which no grass has grown in the past 25 years. These days, Germany was petrified. The hateful tirades of Radio Cairo were like a look into the mirror of our most recent past...This could never be allowed to happen: That the survivors of Hitler's massacres were annihilated in their ancient homeland. (cited in Lewan 1970: 87).

The reason why the Springer publishing house knew "Europe's graveyards" so well, of course, was because many of the journalists it employed helped digging them. In 2013, the Jewish Museum of Frankfurt curated a special exhibition about Axel Springer, founder of the Springer publishing house, and his relationship towards Jews and towards Israel. Drawing sharp criticism from the publishing house's newspapers, the exhibition detailed Springer's policy of employing former Nazis while pursuing an editorial line that was strongly pro-Israel. For example, journalists working for the publishing house had to sign a "constitution", whose second paragraph called for the "reconciliation between Jews and Germans, to which belongs support of the Israeli people's right to exist." (cited in Sontheimer 2012). In fact, Springer's simultaneous, interlinked reintegration of former Nazis and support of the Israeli state is analogous to the orientation of the postwar Republic under Adenauer.

According to *Die Welt*, the war had been like "a purging thunderstorm" to the "sultry attitudes" still existing in West Germany (cited in Lewan 1970: 88). This begs the question: did the war "purge" Germany of its antisemitism, or rather of its burden of an unacknowledged past? The same paper wrote on June 19<sup>th</sup>:

the basest infamies have been spread about the Jewish people:... without national sentiment; never ready for battle, but always keen to profit from somebody else's war effort. Now, however, we speak of the small, brave, heroic, genius people. We need to confess to the Jews of the past two millennia: We have been led...to believe in lies and prejudice...We need to revise the intellectual history of the last 2000 years. (cited in Lewan 1970: 134f.).

The *Stuttgarter Zeitung* was of a similar opinion:

an almost two-thousand years' old image of the type of man of Jewish derivation had collapsed...Naturally, the merchant and the intellectual as types do exist still today; they are outshone, however, by the image of the Jew as military strategist and brilliant soldier who, resolute in the face of death, plunges into the fire of tank-armies and reaches what is the secret yearning

of everybody: the victory of the small over the powerful, threatening, merciless. The desire to identify, guilt feelings rooted in history, flow into a wave of sympathy. (cited in Büttner 1977: 80).

Such statements almost do not require analytical scrutiny, they readily reveal their intentions. The “old picture” one had of the “human type of the Jew” is exchanged for a new picture. The structure of antisemitic prejudice, however, remains. This ‘new picture’ of the Jew, however, sounds like a wishful German self-description: the “brilliant soldier” who is not afraid of death, the “military strategist”, etc. German antisemitism did not end, but found relief in the thought that Jews had now also resolved to build a militarized nation-state. The media coverage of 1967 is another example for the historically cruel irony that Germany allowed for Jewish assimilation only in the Middle East. Turning Israeli soldiers into Germans and Arab leaders into Nazis had little to do with Middle Eastern realities, but much with German discourses about national identity and the Nazi past. The well-known journalist Matthias Walden of *Die Welt* returned to his former self when he wrote that “there will still be some who sympathize in fossil delusion with the grandiloquent, now grandiosely punished enemy of the Jews, Nasser. But they are mute, stooped away into the corners of their benighted frame of mind (*Gesinnungsnacht*).” (cited in Büttner 1977: 78).

German and English-language studies of antisemitism have in recent years focused on the question of left-wing antisemitism. In German academia, the study of antisemitism on the German left has almost become a veritable field of its own, which cannot be said to be the case for the object of the present study, which is the German state’s policies towards Israel and the Palestinians. It is without doubt that the mixture of old antisemitism with the brash philosemitism presented above was more relevant to the positioning of German majority society towards the Israel-Palestine conflict than the often more than problematic militant anti-Zionism which developed within Germany’s New Left after 1967.

The above presented mixtures of old and new stereotyped figurations of a Jewish *Other* are obviously also of incomparably higher relevance to the making of German foreign politics, seen as they stem from established, mainstream media. Jeffrey Herf, for example, in his recent study of the GDR’s and the West German left’s policies and positions towards Israel and Palestine, does not problematise these suspicious figurations. This al-

lows him to draw, if only by implication, a simplistic picture in which the GDR and the West German left are presented as anti-Zionist/antisemitic, whereas West German majority society is by implication exculpated because of its support of Israel (Herf 2016). Because of its politically charged nature, Herf's analysis runs dangerously close to involuntarily belittling National Socialism, when he asks in his introduction "whether the East German Communist regime was the second anti-Semitic dictatorship in Germany's twentieth century, whether parts of the West German radical Left constituted an anti-Semitic movement" (Herf 2016: 9). It is certainly a little overstretched to liken the petty dictatorship of the GDR and the West German student movement to Nazi Germany and the NSDAP.

As should hopefully be clear, the aim here is not to make equally simplistic, mirror-like counterarguments to such claims. It is beyond doubt that parts of the West German far left after 1967 adopted a worldview in which antisemitism played a role (cf. Ullrich 2013). Yet, in what is today often rather conveniently ignored, the German New Left initially derived some of its opposition to Zionism from the fact that Israel was supported by those revisionist forces in German society that represented most starkly the continuity of Nazism, against which the German left radicalised in the first place. This was a dilemma which parts of the New Left were unable to resolve (see also Weiss 2005). In July 1967, Ulrike Meinhof, a founding member of the Red Army Faction (RAF), wrote clairvoyantly in the popular left-wing, GDR-sponsored paper *konkret* about the "bloodlust" Israel's victory stirred in the West German press: "lightning war theories spread, BILD, after 25 years, finally won the battle for Stalingrad in the Sinai desert." Meinhof captured the reasons for Springer's identification with Israel well:

Not the realization of Jewish humanness, but the harshness of the war, not the recognition of Jewish rights to equality, but the use of Napalm, not the comprehension of one's own crimes, but the Israeli Blitzkrieg, solidarity with brutality, with displacement, with conquest, led to questionable reconciliation. (Meinhof 1967, cited in Vowinckel 2004).

Meinhof's moment of clarity was a brief one. Five years later, she would support the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics by the Palestinian organization Black September. Conflating both the FRG and Israel with Nazi Germany, she framed the



attacks as an act of resistance against an axis of fascism spinning from Washington to Bonn to Tel Aviv (cited in Herf 2016: 191, see also Weiss 2005).

What about the West German engagement with the Palestinians at this point? The 'Arab Palestine refugees' would again play a role in the political calculations of the AA in the aftermath of the German 'Middle East Crisis' discussed above. Following discussions with Arab League representatives, the German diplomats argued that symbolic-financial gestures towards these refugees would be helpful for the swift re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Arab states (see files in PA AA, B130, Bd. 2563). On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the German cabinet decided upon a "special German contribution" for the "Palestine-refugees" to the value of 50 million Deutsche Mark. As was noted internally in the AA, this aid was meant to "express our sympathy with the plight of the Arab refugees and furthermore serve as a gesture towards the whole Arab world in order to facilitate the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with the majority of Arab countries. For this reason, the projects that are to be realized must clearly be recognizable as German ones." However, the federal government "should avoid anything that could be perceived by the Arabs as a recognition of a special German responsibility for the Palestine-refugees." (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2797, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968). The instrumental humanitarianism displayed by the FRG towards the 1948 refugees of Palestine would soon, however, be forced into a more substantial political engagement. This, along with Germany's attempt to 'normalise' its relations with Israel, is the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter IV The Perils of ‘Normalisation’: Germany, Israel and the Palestine Question in a Transforming Middle East (1965-1993)

This chapter examines West German policy towards Israel and the Palestine Question until the end of the Cold War. It thus covers a period of significant changes in German domestic and foreign politics and the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, within the structure of the bloc confrontation.

In Bonn, the Social-Democrat and former Nazi resister Willy Brandt assumed chancellorship in 1969, taking over from the Nazi careerist Kurt Georg Kiesinger. The power shift towards the SPD was understood as an end to the Adenauer legacy in domestic and international terms. Sailing in the winds of Cold War *détente*, the SPD-FDP<sup>35</sup> coalition launched the *Ostpolitik* from 1969 until 1974. Whereas the FRG had so far combined its orientation towards the West with a confrontational “politics of strength” towards the East, Brandt’s government did not abdicate from the now firmly established Western path, but opted for a reconciliatory stance towards Eastern Europe and Moscow (Büttner and Scheffler 1982: 140). Domestically, the student-led revolt associated with the symbol of “1968”<sup>36</sup> set in motion an important societal confrontation with the immediate Nazi past, a past which, in the eyes of many of the protestors, was still embodied in the repressive institutions of the state (see also Gassert and Steinweis 2006).

The societal and political-governmental changes associated with the end of the Adenauer-state occurred, however, within a structural continuity for which Adenauer himself had laid the foundations, which is that of the rehabilitation and thus *normalisation* of the West German state after 1945.<sup>37</sup> As the need for international rehabilitation was no more comparable to that of the early 1950s, the FRG, now firmly integrated into the Western Cold War structures, sought a more autonomous, ‘normalised’ role in global politics, an ambition for which its policy towards Israel proved a test-case (Fink 2006, see also Hestermann 2016).

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<sup>35</sup>The FDP had since the mid-50s taken a turn from the political right to the political left-of centre, while remaining liberal in terms of economic policies.

<sup>36</sup>In Germany, it is the murder of student Benno Ohnesorg by the German police during the anti-Shah demonstrations in 1967 which, at least in retrospective, marks the beginning of the generational confrontations associated with 1968.

<sup>37</sup>For a critical analysis of German foreign politics through the lens of “normalisation”, see Hawel 2007.

A mutual loss of importance is thus clearly observable in German-Israeli relations after the establishing of diplomatic relations in 1965 and the June War. The U.S. became Israel's principal backer after 1967, an important factor in allowing the FRG to leave its Middle Eastern *Sonderweg*, examined in the previous chapter. With Israel demonstrating its regional military superiority in 1967 and consolidation of the American-Israeli alliance, the overall and relative importance of the FRG to Israel dropped significantly. While German military and financial support of Israel remains high to this day, secondary only to the U.S. support, it lost its pre-1967, crucial character.

The first part of this chapter captures in some empirical detail what it argues to be a transition phase in German-Israeli relations from 1965 to 1967. In this period, Bonn sought to place its relations with Jerusalem on what it regarded as a 'normal' basis. Israel, by contrast, continued to insist on a special, historically rooted German obligation towards the Jewish state. On the level of military cooperation and financial support, the bilateral relationship was stable. The FRG also played an important role in the deepening of Israeli-European economic ties, putting its weight behind the preferential trade agreements between the European Community (EC) and Israel of 1970 and 1975 (Weingardt 2002: 267f.). On the political-diplomatic level, the period under consideration was characterized by a tug-of-war between 'normal' and 'special' relations. In this dispute, the Palestine question played a central role. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in Cairo in 1964, gradually moved towards the centre of the Arab-Israeli conflict arena after 1967, returning the conflict to its pre-1948 Zionist-Palestinian character. As Benny Morris summarized:

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the crushing of the Arab armies in June 1967 reenergized the Palestinian people and put the Palestinian problem back on the international agenda...A desperate people both rediscovered its identity and found a means of expressing its political will through violence. (Morris 2001: 385).

The attack by PLO-affiliated Black September at the Munich Olympics in 1972 put the Palestinian problem on the German agenda in the terms described by Morris. However, German engagement with the Palestine question in the 1970s must be understood less in bilateral terms than in the context of European integration and European-Arab relations. After the 1967 war, France turned its previous approach to the Middle East on its

head, discontinuing its arms sales to Israel and becoming the Western European power most inclined towards Arab interests. For Israel, the FRG thus became the main advocate of its interests in the EC. While Bonn, mediating between its relations with France, the U.S., Israel, Arab states and the Soviet Union, never took the most openly pro-Israeli positions in Europe<sup>38</sup>, the German political-diplomatic weighing in for Israel curbed the pro-Arab leanings of Paris (Belkin 2007: 3). Conversely, Bonn was equally able to 'hide' behind France, formulating positions it would have refrained from taking in bilateral relations with Israel (Büttner 2003: 143).

The German and Western European interests in the Middle East which shaped engagement with the Palestine question in the 1970s are principally in place until today. One factor is oil. While it would be reductionist to see European interest in the Middle East as related only to oil, European-Arab relations after the 1950s cannot be properly understood without the oil factor. By the 1970s, the German economy depended on oil, having switched from coal to oil in tune with the rest of Western Europe: "In 1955, coal provided 75 percent of total energy use in Western Europe, and petroleum just 23 percent. By 1972, coal's share had shrunk to 22 percent, while oil's had risen to 60 percent—almost a complete flip-flop." (Yergin 1991: 545). German exports to Arab markets are another factor, as trade with Arab countries had increased significantly since before the oil shock of 1973 (Büttner and Scheffler 1982). Much more than the geographically distant U.S., Europe needed a stable Middle East, for economic reasons, yet likewise for fear of spillover effects from political conflict, such as terrorism, migration pressures, or tensions within immigrant communities in Europe. That the U.S. did not substantially rely on Middle Eastern oil for its own economy also contributed to the superpower's ability to play a much more directly political, imperial role in the Middle East in contrast to Europe. The overall Western European shift towards the Arab world was expressed not least by gradually taking up the Palestine question in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Chancellor Brandt declared "even-handedness" (*Ausgewogenheit*) towards the Arab states and the Palestinians in the Middle East already in his first government declaration (Büttner and Hünseler 1981: 130). 'Even-handedness' towards Arab states and the Palestinians and 'nor-

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<sup>38</sup>During the period covered in this chapter, this role was assumed especially by the Netherlands and Denmark. For obvious reasons of political relevance, their support of Israel was much less significant than the often more subtle German support.

malisation' towards Israel were thus logical counterparts in German Middle East policy at the time.

Next to those 'hard' interests one needs to also take into account a less tangible shift in Western European perceptions. The clichéd phrase of Israel's image turning from a David into a Goliath after 1967 still captures relatively well a shift in Western European governments and in European public opinion. While from a Palestinian perspective, 1948 and 1967 are two dates which form a continuum in a history of dispossession, those dates are clearly demarcated in the majority of European perception. In 1948, Israel was founded in the wake of the Holocaust, faced an Arab attack and provided a solution for the pressing problem of Jewish refugees. In 1967, Israel attacked first and dramatically expanded the territory under its control. It is in light of the interests presented above, as well as the re-emergence of the Palestine question and this shift in perception that the Israel-Palestine conflict gradually came to be seen as solvable in a land-for-peace, two-state scenario.

The bulk of this chapter analyses Bonn's 'even-handed' approach to the Middle East from the chancellorship of Willy Brandt onwards, covering the 1972 Munich attacks, the 1973 war and the declaratory-diplomatic engagement of the EC countries towards a recognition of the Palestine question as central to the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European "obsession" with the Palestinians and the PLO, as Henry Kissinger called it (cited in Persson 2015: 78), stood in contrast to the separate Egyptian-Israeli peace brokered by the U.S. in 1979, which practically excluded the question of the political future of the Palestinians. The 1980 Venice Declaration of the EC countries, which called for Palestinian self-determination and participation of the PLO in Arab-Israeli negotiations, marked both the peak and beginning of the subsequent demise of Western Europe's declaratory engagement with the Palestine question.

An aggravating factor straining European-Israeli relations in general and German-Israeli ones in particular was the political shift in Israel in 1977 with the electoral victory of the ultra-right Likud (previously Herut). Under Menachem Begin's premiership, Israel accelerated settlement construction, annexed East Jerusalem (1980) and invaded the Lebanon (1982). As mentioned in chapter two, Begin was staunchly anti-German. However, while Begin retained a sharp rhetoric towards Bonn, he did not endanger the substance of the political and military relationship with the FRG (Leber 2015).

When examining the frictions between the FRG and Israel from 1973 to 1982, it is important to keep in mind though that on the level of military cooperation and financial support, relations were stable (Shapiro 2003 and 2013). Whereas Germany's moves towards Palestinians were of declaratory nature, its support for Israel remained substantial. As will also be demonstrated, while willing to risk crises, Bonn saw to it that 'even-handedness' and 'normalisation' did not imperil the relationship with Israel to an irreparable degree (Büttner 2003). The year 1982 witnessed the return to power in Germany of the CDU and a realignment with U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. In the same year, Israel routed the PLO in Lebanon in an invasion made possible by the Egyptian retreat from the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict arena. The chapter closes by briefly considering how the onset of Helmut Kohl's chancellorship impacted the bilateral relationship.

#### **4.1 'Normalization begins Now': German Transitions after 1965**

*All generations of our people bear the consequences of a politics carried out in the German name between 1933 and 1945. The points of reference for the work of the 5<sup>th</sup> German parliament and the politics of the federal government shall nevertheless not be the war or the postwar period. The points of reference lie not behind us, but before us. The postwar period is over.*

(Chancellor Ludwig Erhard in his government declaration on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1965)

*[I]n the case of German-Israeli relations, foreign politics have to take up a forward-looking perspective and cannot be, or cannot be anymore, identified with the concept of reparations.*

(German ambassador to Israel Rolf Pauls, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966).

The previous chapters have understood the FRG's policymaking towards Israel as originating primarily from a postwar need for rehabilitation and whitewashing the past. Germany's Israel policy was read not as a thorough confrontation with the past, but as a means of leaving it behind, a way of engaging with it to eviscerate from it one's own involvement. By definition, rehabilitation is a finite process. At the end of a process of rehabilitation stands *normality*. The question of 'normalizing' relations with Israel is indelibly connected with the aim to leave the Nazi past behind.

As the official instructions given to the first German ambassador to Israel stated:

The federal government attaches great importance to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. The exchange of ambassadors between the two countries constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for our goal of the normalisation of the relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Israeli state. We hope that this step also opens up new possibilities for reconciliation with the Jewish people. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2635, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965, italics added).

With the forging of diplomatic ties in 1965, 'normalisation'<sup>39</sup> became a central term in German internal, governmental debates about Bonn's Israel policy. As a political goal, it is linked to two purposes. On the one hand, it expresses the wish to leave the *Sonderweg* of massive, secret support to Israel which was examined in the previous chapter. On the other hand — and more difficult to pinpoint — the question of 'normalizing' ties with Israel also links to domestic discourses on the question of putting the past behind, in the sense of the above quote from chancellor Ludwig Erhard's government declaration of November 1965.

In direct contrast, Israel perceived diplomatic relations not as a 'normalisation' of bilateral relations, but as one more link in the chain of moral responsibility stretching from the Nazi past into the future that tied Germany to the wellbeing of the Jewish state. On American television, the Israeli foreign minister Abba Eban expressed the Israeli view on relations with Germany after diplomatic relations in these terms:

The past still speaks to us with a terrible voice. We have not forgotten the cry of a million murdered children and of six million of our kinsmen done to death. We are haunted by this memory and it does cast a shadow. In our view it imposes responsibilities on Germany, a negative responsibility, to avoid doing anything which would weaken Israel's security and a positive responsibility to make a contribution to Israel's security and stability. (PA AA, B130, Bd.2566, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

The period after 1965 in German-Israeli relations can be read as a tug-of-war between the two contrasting visions of 'normalised' versus 'special' relations (see also Hester-

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<sup>39</sup>In the following, the term 'normalisation' will be used with quotation marks to signify analytical distance, as this term points to a specific and often problematic usage, context and self-understanding.

mann 2016: 145f.<sup>40</sup>). This difference of perception was not primarily about which name to give to the bilateral relationship, but what German-Israeli relations would mean in material terms. On the discursive level, the problem was solved during Willy Brandt's 1973 visit to Israel, where he coined the compromise formula of "normal relations with a special character" (*Charakter der Besonderheit*, Weingardt 2002: 223).

#### *A first instance of 'normalisation': the exchange of ambassadors*

The opposition between 'normalisation' and 'special relations' can be read off very clearly from the exchange of ambassadors. Rolf Pauls, the first West German ambassador to Israel until 1968, was a former officer of the Wehrmacht who had served on the Eastern front. His deputy was Hungarian-born Alexander Török, who had served in the Hungarian embassy in Berlin when the country was under the fascist, Nazi-installed rule of Ferenc Szálasi from late 1944 to 1945. Both had already aided in the negotiations over the 1952 Reparations Agreement. Unproven allegations existed that Török had not only served the Hungarian government, but that he was an early follower of the fascist Arrow Cross Party and had participated in making his Budapest university *judenrein* (Conze et. al. 2010: 936f.).

Why did Bonn choose two representatives of such a background? Less compromised candidates must have been available. In Israel, the name of Franz Böhm was brought up, who was respected for his role in the Luxembourg Agreement. The German weekly newspaper *Die ZEIT* called Pauls's post "the most difficult and most dangerous" in German diplomacy (*ZEIT*, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1966). Pauls's successive postings to Washington and Beijing indicate clearly the relevance of Israel to German foreign policy as well as Pauls's standing within the diplomatic corps — the Tel Aviv embassy was to be staffed by the best Germany had to offer.

The correspondence between Pauls and his superiors in Bonn makes for an insightful reading into the German conception of its Israel politics and the shifts these politics were to undergo after 1965. One topic of this correspondence was the critical attitude of the

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<sup>40</sup> This analytical frame undergirds the more recent work of German historian Jenny Hestermann (2016), who studied the visits of German officials to Israel. While her nuanced, careful critique of German visions of "normalisation" corresponds to some of what is said here, she remains on a largely descriptive level that focuses on the 'feeling' of individual German-Israeli encounters.



Israeli press towards West Germany. Articles deemed especially unforthcoming yet representative were translated and sent to Bonn. One such article, written by Shlomo Aronson<sup>41</sup> for *Ha'aretz*, deserves to be recounted here at some length, since it connects very well with several arguments brought forth in this thesis. In this article, Aronson wrote that the nomination of somebody like Alexander Török was symptomatic of the German foreign policy establishment's attitude towards Israel and the Nazi past. Aronson argued that Bonn appointed personnel without examining their past, because the Nazi past played no role in the German foreign office. He wrote that as long as a candidate was not in the SS or a convicted mass murderer, he was suitable for diplomatic service. The article angrily stated that having previously served a criminal, antisemitic, genocidal regime should prohibit employment at the German embassy in Tel Aviv.

Aronson's analysis captured well the German foreign policy establishment's mentality at the time. The writer also pointed out, here re-translated from the German translation, the "determination" and "polite coldness" of Pauls and his superiors which "could bring the blood of a Jewish correspondent to boil." (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2556, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1966). It needs to be stressed again that at the time, the pervasive complexity of German Nazi criminality was reduced, in the German public and by the German government, to a small circle of perpetrators. The Wehrmacht was not viewed as a criminal organization and neither was regarded as criminal the fact of working for the Nazi-allied Hungarian foreign office. This is how Rolf Pauls, who lost an arm and was decorated with the Iron Cross for his service on the Eastern front, became Germany's first ambassador to Israel. Yet wasn't this maybe a rather suitable ending of the Adenauer and Ben-Gurion period in German-Israeli relations; marked by a whitewashing of the 'New' Germany? While the obliviousness towards the past rightly criticized by Aronson possibly played the major role, there exists also the possibility that the AA's decision was more intentional than oblivious, a decision linked to the explicit aim of 'normalisation'. As the above-quoted *ZEIT* article concluded:

Not only in Israel were there doubts if foreign minister Schröder made the right decision last year to send a former major of the general staff and iron-cross holder of the Greater German Wehrmacht to be the ambassador in Tel

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<sup>41</sup>Aronson moved towards academia and has continuously been a relevant voice in Israeli public debate. He could not, however, recall this particular article.

Aviv. Today, these doubts are gone. After hardly five months we already know: If anybody, then Rolf Pauls was the right man to free many Israelis from the prejudice that only the resistance fighters against Hitler were decent Germans.

Whereas the German choice of ambassador expressed a wish for ‘normalisation’, the first Israeli ambassador to Bonn personified the idea that German-Israeli relations were to be framed in terms of a German obligation due to the Nazi past: Asher Ben-Natan came to collect a debt.<sup>42</sup> Austrian-born Arthur Piernikartz managed to flee from Vienna to Palestine after the *Anschluss* in 1938. Changing his name, he participated in the war-time effort to help persecuted Jews flee to Palestine against British immigration restrictions. After 1945 he continued organizing *Bricha* activities, the emigration of Shoah survivors to Palestine from the Displaced Persons (DP) camps of postwar Europe. In Israel, Ben-Natan rose fast in the military establishment, occupying the post of director-general of the IMoD prior to becoming the first Israeli emissary to Germany. Ben-Natan was key to Israeli weapon procurements in France and in Germany (as described in the previous chapter, he was also part of the original mission of three to the home of Franz-Josef Strauss in late 1957). The AA consequently feared that the appointment of Ben-Natan would confirm Arab states’ suspicions about the military character of German-Israeli relations. Interestingly enough, the AA also viewed critically the fact that while smuggling survivors out of Europe, Ben-Natan had collected evidence about Nazi war criminals, evidence used in the Nuremberg trials and which helped tracking down Adolf Eichmann (PA AA, B130, Bd.2566, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1965). However, the AA was aware that it was in no position to turn down the Israeli choice of ambassador. Given the “difficulties the Israeli government encountered when seeking the parliament’s approval for Herr Dr. Pauls, such a refusal would lead to negative reactions by the Israeli public and thus severely strain our relations with Israel. Under such conditions, the Israel government would surely not be able to agree to Herr Dr. Pauls.” (PA AA, B130, Bd.2566, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

Studying the files, especially those about the negotiations over the future of German financial support to Israel, one sees that Ben-Natan, just like Pauls, was a tough negotiator.

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<sup>42</sup>Based on an anonymous expert interview with an Israeli historian of Israel’s foreign relations and contemporary witness.

He demanded German support to Israel as an obligation because of the Nazi past – the past which the German side wanted to ‘normalise’. However, while Israel saw German obligations primarily as an obligation to build the Israeli state, it also displayed irritation at German deficits in confronting the past which did not directly affect Israel. For example, after assuming his post, Ben-Natan repeatedly criticized the German hesitation at the time to abolish the status of limitations on murder, thus preventing prosecution of Nazi criminals (after lengthy parliamentary efforts, limitations were fully abolished only by 1979).

*What did ‘normalisation’ mean?*

In 1965, ‘normalisation’ included the idea that Israel should support the West German claim over the GDR. The desirability of Israeli support for the German goal of unification is expressed often. It is formulated in the preparatory material given to Pauls as such:

The attitude taken by Israel towards the German question after the exchange of ambassadors is of fundamental importance to our approach to this question. Should Israel support our position, it would be demonstrated that our policy of self-determination is recognized also by a state which had before shown great reserve towards Germany...This support would doubtlessly also influence positively the attitude of the public especially in the United States, in Western Europe and in the Commonwealth countries, i.e. those countries where the image of Germany is fundamentally codetermined by the German-Jewish relationship. Pankow’s<sup>43</sup> anti-Israel policy hands you the best arguments for the idea that Israeli support of our policy towards the German question is in Israel’s interest (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2635, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1965)

What we find in this quote once more is the idea that Israeli-Jewish support is crucially important to the realization of a central goal of German policy. The “German-Jewish relationship” is seen as important first of all for the image of Germany that it produces in Western publics.

Secondly, the formulaic, state-sponsored anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist discourse of the East German regime was utilized as an argument for the West German claim to sole

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<sup>43</sup>The name “German Democratic Republic” or, by its acronym, “GDR” was taboo in official West German parlance, which referred to the ‘other Germany’ by various names, one of them being Pankow, the Berlin district where the East German government was seated, or SBZ (short for Soviet Occupation Zone)

representation of the German nation. Of course, this mirrored exactly the GDR's attempts to woo Arab states, by portraying the FRG as being part of an imperialist, anti-Arab axis that stretched from Washington to Bonn to Tel Aviv.

In the context of Israel's position on the German question, the instructions given to Pauls also note critically Israel's view on the postwar German-Polish border as final (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2635, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965). This is fairly harsh: to criticize Israel for not supporting the West German claim over its prewar Eastern territories.

It is unsurprising that the antisemitic trope of 'Jewish power' also influenced the way the AA considered its Israel policy at the time. Under the heading "reservations against being overly considerate towards the Arabs in our aid to Israel", Pauls opined:

It needs to be pointed out again that Israel and the Jews wield decisive influence in the decisive global centres of public opinion making. They will be of great importance for the goodwill extended to us, especially regarding the attitude of the global public towards the German question...The attitude of the *Weltjudentum* towards the German question, which is inseparable from the quality of German-Israeli relations, to my mind weighs heavier for the realization of our most important political goal than the...attitudes of a few Arab states. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8825, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

As already pointed out in the second chapter, *Weltjudentum* is in German part of the antisemitic jargon, evoking the essentialist notion of a singular, powerful global Jewish figure which exerts considerable influence on global opinion and thus, so it seems according to Pauls, on the future of the German nation-state.

Pauls, however, was also very critical about the Israeli attitude to Germany. He bemoaned the Israeli lack of "appreciation of the German goodwill and its practical expressions over the last years, which were a very substantial support for Israel in the struggle for its existence." He criticized the tame Israeli stance towards the "regime in Pankow", whose "anti-Israelism could hardly be surpassed." To this, Pauls added Israel's "repeated denunciations of Nazism" at the United Nations and the global public in general. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2632, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965). He found that

German-Israeli relations are not at the centre of Israeli political interest. On the contrary, one tries, also after diplomatic relations, to view relations from the perspective of Reparations, which includes the whole complex of German economic aid. Israeli policy towards Germany was and remains inconsistent

because it tries to benefit and profit, while ignoring the other side's existence. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2567, January 26th, 1966).

What appears rather clearly in this statement is the aggressive sentiment that Jews engage with Germans only to extract money. This is a key trope of German antisemitism after 1945, which evokes an image of Jewish greed, exploiting the Holocaust for personal enrichment. In the same report, Pauls related an incident whereby an Israeli interlocutor had told him that “[w]e are a small country, but versus Germany we are a great power.” To which Pauls replied: “Don’t overplay your hand.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2567, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966, English in the original). Again, in the same report, Pauls paternalistically defined his view of how to disentangle German-Israeli relations from the aspect of reparations:

reparations and foreign policy are two separate areas. Reparations, by their causality, direct the gaze backwards. Israel needs to learn that 1. reparations between the two states and governments are concluded and individual reparations are reliably paid out in accordance with German law; 2. that foreign policy, in terms of content and goals, must take up a forward-looking perspective and that also in the case of German-Israeli relations, foreign policy must take up a forward-looking perspective and cannot be, or cannot be anymore, identified with the concept of reparations. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2567, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966).

Pauls found that the way to approach this problem was by “silently supporting those Israelis who support a new relationship with Germany as it is today.” Those Israelis, Pauls found, were a “minority of young and old people of high quality (*hochwertig*) character and spirit.” It thus appears that a dislike of Germany, then, signified a ‘low quality’ character and spirit to the ambassador. A major problem in this regard was that since Ben-Gurion and others left the ruling Mapai party, “this biggest party had lost cooperative substance for our purposes. The nomination of Golda Meir, a very rigid, prejudiced, but strong personality, underlines this even further.” Of course, Pauls echoed the instructions of his superiors here as well. The German foreign minister was aware that Israeli public opinion was largely opposed to official relations with Germany. In his instructions to Pauls, he wrote that

the emphasis of your endeavours should be to familiarize the Israeli public with the picture of the new Germany and to improve the personal relations between our two peoples...[A]t first, a careful approach is advisable. Over the longer run, public relations and cultural exchange will be of highest relevance. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2635, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

The German expenditure on “public relations” and “cultural exchanges” in Israel until today is astonishing (see for example Belkin 2007). Israel is a prime destination for youth exchanges of political, historical or sportive nature; Germany funds research institutes on German history and culture, translations of the canons of German literature, and so forth.

Next to the above discussed specific German-Israeli dimension of the Nazi past, Israel also continued to be perceived in terms of a general Western interest. To the foreign policy officials, this was an obvious point in no need of much elaboration. The instructions given to Pauls speak of a general Western, strategic interest in a stable Middle East, considered to be of central geostrategic importance, due to its location connecting Europe to Africa, the Indian Ocean and the east Asia, as well as being an “important source of oil”. (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2635, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

The ambassador echoed “[o]ur obvious interest in the consolidation of the economic and political condition of Israel as a factor of the free world in the Middle East.” In his estimate, “[t]he next seven to ten years will be decisive in this regard. If Israel is given the opportunity to build up in the same speed and with the same results as until now, it will then be able to stand on its own two legs.” (PA AA, B130, Bd. 8825, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965).

### *The question of German support after 1965*

Whereas the aim of ‘normalisation’ made necessary a cessation of secret support, the importance attached to Israeli and Jewish ‘goodwill’ seemed to make continued high levels of support recommendable, as did the continued strengthening of Israel as a Western frontier state in the Middle East. This set of German interests and perceptions translated into the form military and financial support of Israel would take after 1965.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the first question on the German-Israeli agenda after the decision to enter diplomatic relations was the question of military support. Israel wanted to see this support continued, whereas for Germany, the main point of diplo-

matic relations was to put German-Israeli relations into the open and stop the weapon deliveries which had led to the German 'Middle East Crisis' of 1964-65. The result was a changing of the guards, with the U.S. taking over the crucial delivery of the tanks, as explained earlier.

The next question was that of German financial support. Israel's opening position was that Germany should continue with the secret 'business friend' loan and add to that official development aid as 'compensation' for the loss of German weapon supplies. Bonn wanted to discontinue secret support both military and financial. As discussed in the previous chapter, the 'business friend' was originally planned to amount to a payment of two billion Deutsche Mark over the course of 10 years, with yearly instalments of 200 million Deutsche Mark. By 1965, 644.8 million Deutsche Mark had been paid out. With less than half of the initially envisaged payments made, the operation was discontinued – a break from the Adenauer policy of secret support. However, what was paid afterwards as official development aid continued to be very substantial. According to numbers given by the federal government, between 1965 and 1997, Germany loaned Israel the equivalent of 2.306 billion Euros under highly favourable conditions. Long term repayment and low interest rates meant that the 'business friend' and subsequent 'development aid' were more akin to a grant than a loan (see footnote 27 for source).

The negotiations over military and financial support that lasted from March 1965 until May 1966 were lengthy, tedious and harsh. Their detailed reconstruction may be found elsewhere (see for example Hansen 2002). It is the harshness of tone, the certitude with which both sides presented their positions and the cool, superior, at times arrogant tone of the German negotiators that is the point here, for it runs counter to a commonly held view of German-Israeli relations in which the roles are clearly divided, between a morally repentant Germany and an Israel demanding historical reparation. Germany actually negotiated from a position of strength (AAPD 1965/173, also Hestermann 2016). In these negotiations, 'morality' was seen by the German side as an Israeli bargaining chip that was to be dropped from the negotiating table. As German special envoy Kurt Birrenbach wrote to chancellor Erhard early on:

As the massive demand for injecting morality into the financial aid was not repeated today, it seems that the opposite party has backed down on this

question as well. Yet even here, we only want to use the word 'seems', because this general clause will surely always be a diplomatic instrument of this country towards the Federal Republic. (AAPD 1965/172).

Carl Carstens, the influential state secretary in the AA and later president of the FRG, was also concerned with the Israeli evocations of morality: "I am bothered by the repeated use of the term 'moral responsibility'. What should we be morally responsible for? Surely not for the problems Israel has with its Arab neighbours." According to Carstens, Germany met its obligation for "making good the injustice inflicted on the Jews" already with the Reparations Agreement of 1952, as well as with the laws regulating individual reparations. He engaged a legal argument: The 1952 Reparations Agreement included a clause that Israel would thereafter not evoke demands based on Nazi persecution (AAPD 1965/173). German ambassador Pauls reported from Israel in the same terms: "We should...make clear to the Israelis that we see through their constant appeals to our moral obligation: That they say morality, but mean money, without being ready to give us the slightest bit of relief." (PA AA, B130, Bd. 2567, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1966).

Golda Meir, a long-standing critic of Ben-Gurion's 'New Germany' policy who was emotionally distrustful of postwar West Germany, was of the opinion that "one could cooperate without obscuring the past. However, there could never be a balancing of the accounts. It was not only the six million that were missing from Jewry and from Israel, but also all of their offspring... If the Germans denied what they owed to Israel only so that the country's mere existence could be upheld...she would tell Ben Natan to break off negotiations." (AAPD 1965/420).

Again, Germany was well aware of the obvious fact that in these negotiations, it was Germany that had something to give, not Israel (AAPD 1965/172). What seemed to be standing in the way of 'normalizing' relations, then, as already demonstrated, was not least a fear of 'Jewish power' rooted in an antisemitism that was at times also uttered in the language used by a previous Germany: Ambassador Pauls feared that should negotiations with Israel fail, "[t]he Jews will unleash the dogs from Jerusalem to London to New York." (AAPD 1965/439).

In 1966, Adenauer visited Israel, a visit which, despite him not being the German chancellor anymore, had all the appearances of a state visit (Schwarz 1997: 787). There, he



publicly declared that “I too, was a member of the Zionist movement” (Braach-Maksvytis 2011: 300). This was true in the literal sense that Adenauer had joined the *Komitee Pro Palästina* (“German Pro-Palestine Committee”) in 1927, a German organisation in support of Zionism (Braach-Maksvytis 2011: 299). Adenauer’s statement was also true in the much stronger sense that the former chancellor had possibly been the most important Western politician for Israel in its early and formative years.

During a table dinner in his honour, Israeli prime minister Eshkol insulted the chancellor by making statements to the effect that the FRG’s confrontation with the past and way to reacceptance into the international community were still far from finished. To this Adenauer replied that “[i]f goodwill is not acknowledged, nothing good can come out of that.” He threatened with immediate departure (Schwarz 1997: 790). What Hans-Peter Schwarz, Adenauer’s biographer did not add was what Adenauer also said on the occasion: “National Socialism killed as many Germans as it did Jews”, a rather peculiar reading of history already expressed vis à vis Ben-Gurion in the 1960 meeting (cited in Blasius and Jelinek 1997: 321). Rolf Pauls, correctly described by Schwarz as “an Adenauer man from the very beginning” (Schwarz 1997: 788) was satisfied: “The coincidence of the Adenauer visit and the conclusion of the negotiations over economic aid signify the end to an episode in relations...the actual process of normalisation begins now.” (cited in Blasius/Jelinek 1997: 323).

#### **4.2 What does “Even-Handedness” mean? The Place of Palestine in German-Israeli Relations after 1967**

In 1969, Willy Brandt, a former antifascist, became the first social-democratic chancellor of postwar Germany. Viewed in terms of a ‘working through of the past’, the Brandt chancellorship was a progressive development in the FRG.

The SPD not only looked back on a recent history of anti-Nazism. It was also, after the founding of the FRG in 1949, the party most outspokenly supportive of Israel. As we saw, the Reparations Agreement was ratified only because the SPD voted unanimously in its favour. Since the mid-1950s, the social-democratic opposition in the Bundestag had argued for full diplomatic relations with Israel, which the governing CDU opposed, for the

reasons outlined in the previous chapter. A certain romanticized perception of Israeli 'Kibbutz-Socialism' also played a part in the early siding of the non-communist West German left with Israel. Furthermore, the SPD and Israel's Labor party, which presided over the country until 1977 in its various incarnations, were linked within the Socialist International (SI). Judging from these facts, one could expect that the chancellorship of Brandt would have instituted an era of deepened German-Israeli ties. Yet, this was not the case.

While on a material level, German-Israeli relations were to remain stable, with Germany continuing to provide Israel with the above mentioned annual loan of 140 million Deutsche Mark and military cooperation evolving in new forms, Germany distanced itself from Israel on a political-diplomatic level over the question of Middle East peace in general and the Palestine question in particular. As will be demonstrated below, the German political-diplomatic distancing from Israel that lasted from the late 1960s until the early 1980s was principally shaped by deeper, political-economic interests, which the SPD, as the ruling party, was compelled to follow (Büttner and Scheffler 1982: 145).

Ironically, one could even argue that the fact that the Bonn government was less visibly staffed by former Nazis contributed to growing irritations relations with Israel. An episode like that of the Eichmann trial, as covered in the previous chapter, seemed much less probable now in a government that did not feature former high-ranking Nazis. As Egon Bahr, Brandt's foreign-policy advisor and co-architect of *Ostpolitik* told the Israeli ambassador Ben-Natan, relations were now to become "normal", as the new government had no links to the Nazi era, no sense of collective guilt and would not continue the "exaggerated" level of German support to Israel (cited in Fink 2009: 187).

Indeed, when comparing the SPD-led era in German-Israeli relations from 1969 to 1982 with the previous and succeeding CDU-led governments, one notices a soothing of relations at least on the more readily apparent discursive-political level under the CDU-led governments. This should not be overrated though. As will be demonstrated below, the year 1982 is associated with a number of significant changes in the Cold War, the Middle Eastern conflicts and U.S. strategy, just as the Adenauer era was marked by different overall interests. Against criticisms of the Brandt government's purportedly 'even-handed' approach to the Middle East, one may also note how the principal figures and forces responsible for the earlier, crucial support of Israel prior to the 1967 war per-

ceived Brandt and his *Ostpolitik*. Today, Brandt is a German most Germans can agree upon regardless of party identification; yet the reasons for the almost undivided latter-day respect accorded to his persona are the same which during his time led to his bedeviling by the political right (Münkel 2013). The height of anti-Brandt campaigning was reached in the 1961 and 1965 general elections, which Brandt lost against Adenauer and Erhard respectively. Brandt's years in Scandinavian exile — a direct consequence of his persecution by the Nazis — were then the principal target of attack. As the German historian Daniela Münkel succinctly put it in an article for *Die ZEIT*:

Brandt's opponents could be sure that their slander of his emigration to Scandinavia resonated well, since it spoke to firmly embedded prejudice against exile and helped to whitewash the perpetrator and fellow-traveller biographies of many Germans. Denunciation of Brandt as a "traitor to the fatherland" linked up with the historically well-known denunciation of the SPD as the party of nationally rootless vagabonds (*vaterlandslose Gesellen*), categorically questioning its ability to govern (Münkel 2013).

One of Brandt's fiercest opponents was Franz Josef Strauss, the instrumental German figure behind the military support of Israel. As he famously charged in the run-up to the 1961 elections: "We must be allowed to ask Mr. Brandt one question: What did you do during these twelve years outside? We know what we did inside." (Münkel 2013). Strauss surely knew what he did "inside"; pursuing his career under the Nazi regime and in its institutions, while also being a soldier of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern front, as mentioned previously. Konrad Adenauer, the other principal figure behind the German build-up of Israel, liked to refer to Brandt's original name, Frahm, which he changed in Scandinavia, in order to point towards his years in exile. Pressure on Brandt did not come only from the political right, but from the non-parliamentary radical left as well. In fact, even the "Young Socialists" (*Jusos*), the SPD's party youth, had after 1967 turned towards the Palestinians and southern liberation struggles.

Before examining the role of the Palestine question in German-Israeli relations during the 1970s, it is useful to look into Brandt's attitude towards Israel and the Palestine question. This is important also given the centrality of Brandt's legacy to the SPD and beyond. In a speech on the occasion of the Christian-Jewish 'week of brotherhood' in Co-

logne in March 1971, Brandt formulated his position on Israel and the Palestine question in these terms:

Israel is – and the slogans of radical groups can do nothing to alter this – the magnificent attempt to create a secure homeland for a long homeless people. It is bitter that the birth of this state had as its price new victims, and new suffering. Who would wish to deny this? Who would wish to deny the misery of the Palestinian Arabs? But in this as well, we have no right to appear as the arrogant moralists of the world. Rather, we must follow the chain of causality of suffering and injustice back to its origin: here in the heart of Europe. The Federal Republic, the more fortunate of the two German states that rose from the wreckage of the year 1945, acknowledged its obligations to the survivors. The reparations agreement reached then with Israel is an accomplishment of Konrad Adenauer and the Social-Democratic opposition of the time that we view as a cornerstone of our self-image as a state (cited in Schmidt 2014: 77f).

In this speech, Brandt acknowledges the discursive influence of the German New Left — he feels he has to defend Israel against the “slogans of radical groups”. He acknowledges the “misery of the Palestinian Arabs”, the “new victims” that emerged as a direct consequence of the founding of Israel. Brandt acknowledges German obligations towards the state of Israel — a responsibility which, in the form of the reparations agreement, is a “cornerstone” of the German “self-image as a state”. However, in what he frames as a form of modesty, an indirect form of German responsibility for the “new victims”, the “Palestinian Arabs”, is negated: “we” have to focus on where the “causality of suffering” originated, “the heart of Europe”. Brandt’s refusal “to appear as the arrogant moralists of the world” surely sounds reasonable from an inner-German perspective. From a Palestinian perspective, however, it must appear as unjust, for the simple fact that Palestinians bear no fault for Jewish suffering in Europe, which Brandt places at the beginning of the “chain of causality of suffering”.

One may add that the FRG also quite simply saw no interest in appearing as “the arrogant moralists of the world” in this particular instance. As the previous two chapters showed, Bonn sought, in its instrumental-humanitarian engagement with the 1948 refugees, to avoid giving the impression of taking ‘indirect’ responsibility for them. This would have opened the doors to Arab demands for equity in German political and economic support of Israel and the Palestinians.

### *The Palestine question in Germany: Munich Olympics, 1972*

On the morning of September 5<sup>th</sup>, eight members of the al-Fatah-linked Palestinian organization “Black September” entered the compound of the Munich Olympics, killing two Israeli athletes and taking nine hostage. The next morning, after a botched German rescue operation, all Israeli hostages, one German police officer and five of the eight Palestinians were dead. The hostage crisis put the Palestine question on the domestic German agenda. For the first time, it came to play a central role in German-Israeli relations

The Munich attacks and the Israeli retaliation mission in its aftermath have been covered in several documentaries (see especially the Oscar-award winning *One Day in September* by Kevin McDonald, 1999), a Steven Spielberg movie (*Munich*, 2005) and academic writing (Herf 2016, Large 2012, Schiller and Young 2010). However, a thorough historical study on how the hostage crisis affected German-Israeli relations and how it changed the FRG’s perception of the Palestine question does not yet exist. Here, only the most basic points of such a study can be outlined.

The 1972 Munich Olympics were minutely orchestrated to demonstrate to the world the novel, open, democratic and liberal character of West Germany, a demonstration which took place on the level of architecture, sloganeering (*Die heiteren Spiele* – “The Joyous Games”) and, ironically, extremely lax security measures (Large 2012). The Games, similar to awarding Brandt the Nobel Peace Prize a year earlier, bestowed legitimacy on Germany; they were also a symbolic act of reintegration into the circle of ‘civilized’ nations. Clearly, they sought to form a counterpoint to the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, which intended to show the world the strength of the Nazi regime, while simultaneously assuaging fears of Nazi aggression.

It is easy to read historical symbolism into the games. Hitler liked to refer to Munich as “the birthplace of the Nazi movement”. Dachau, the longest-running concentration camp of Nazi Germany, was just outside the city gates. In Israel, participation in the Games was however not a topic of public debate. As the Israeli team entered the Munich stadium under the Star of David banner, the stage was set for a display of the New Germany, including its ‘normalisation’ with Israel (Large 2012).

Inevitably, the Palestinian terror attack was thus also an attack on the political rationality behind the Games. Black September named the operation 'Ikrit and Biram', after two Palestinian villages whose inhabitants were expelled in 1948. Palestine, then, violently pushed itself into the picture frame of German-Israeli and German-Jewish relations. The attacks suddenly brought Ikrit and Biram, Munich and Dachau, into the same equation, a brutal conjoining of historically different events and ensuing narratives. Translated into the German context, a terror attack which needs to be understood in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict took on another meaning: Jews were murdered in the New Germany. Black September's and the PLO's aim behind the attack was to place the Palestine question on the global agenda. As the last remaining member of the squad, al-Gamashy, stated: "I am proud of what I did in Munich, because it helped the Palestinian cause enormously. Before Munich, the world had no idea about our struggle. But on that day the name of Palestine was repeated all over the world" (cited in an interview in the documentary *One Day in September*, 1999). The Israeli government was shocked by the disastrous German handling of the hostage crisis. Zvi Zamir, chief of the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, was present at the final shootout at the Fürstenfeldbrück airfield near Munich, which left all hostages dead and three of the Palestinians alive. Zamir reported back that the German police "didn't make even a minimal effort to save lives." He found that the German priority was to continue the Games as quickly as possible. In fact, they had remained uninterrupted for the most part of the hostage crisis (Israel State Archives 2012). At this point, Jerusalem's anger at Bonn was kept behind the scenes. Israeli cabinet protocols show that the government wanted to avoid a diplomatic fallout with Germany. According to the commented document collection by the Israel State Archives, published on the 40th anniversary of the hostage crisis in 2012, Golda Meir sought to maintain good relations with Brandt, whom she saw "as a friend and supporter of Israel in present and future political strategies." Israel relied on Bonn to convey messages to Moscow regarding the question of Jewish immigration. While Israel was sceptical about Brandt's Ostpolitik, fearing that a more conciliatory stance towards Moscow could translate into softer Arab policies as well, Jerusalem needed to use to its best advantage its hitherto close relations with a country whose importance on the international scene was growing. Bonn's influence in the EC was needed to deepen Israeli economic relations with the European Common Market. The Meir government wanted to avoid tensions al-

so to not harm Brandt's re-election chances in the upcoming general elections (Israel State Archives 2012).

Again, part of the story of German-Israeli relations in this era is that in terms of personal and political convictions, this was the best German government Jerusalem could have asked for. In terms of personal chemistry, relations between Brandt and Meir would, however, sour over the Palestine question and what Brandt perceived as too-stubborn an Israeli position on the territories occupied after the 1967 war (Schmidt 2014).

How did the FRG react to Black September's violent transfer of the Palestinian question onto German territory? The West German handling of events suggests that Bonn's priority was to rid itself of the problem. On November 20<sup>th</sup>, Black September hijacked a Lufthansa plane, en route from Beirut to Munich. Refuelling in Nicosia and Zagreb, the hijackers threatened to fly the plane to Munich and to explode it there if the three Palestinian terrorists were not freed. Israel, which had in fact warned Germany about the possibility of such a hijacking, urged the Brandt administration not to give in to the hijackers' demands. Contradicting Israel's counterterrorism policy, Bonn did the opposite. It freed the three Palestinians, who were given a hero's welcome in Libya, and never demanded their extradition from Tripoli. Now, the initially held-back Israeli anger burst. Politicians and press linked the events to the Nazi past. Brandt, personally offended, wrote a letter to Meir protesting the drawing of parallels to the Nazi era. In the Israeli cabinet, one minister picked up on suspicions uttered in the press, angrily wondering whether there was a "conspiracy here between the German authorities and the terrorists, in order to be swiftly rid of the murderers who weighed, not on the Germans' conscience, but on their peace and quiet and on their interests." The idea of a staged hijacking sounds fantastic, but it was in fact not ruled out by Meir (Israel State Archives 2012). Ulrich Wegener, an official of the German interior ministry at the time, founded the German special forces GSG 9 in response to the Munich attacks. Closely involved in all stages of the events, Wegener stated in *One Day in September* that the hijacking was indeed premeditated: Bonn would free the Palestinians and in return, the PLO would refrain from further attacks on German territory. That Bonn never tried the three last attackers and attempted to wash the whole affair off its hands so quickly was the topic of an investigative report by *Der Spiegel* in 2012, a report which sourced the relevant archives and was co-written by the in-house historian Klaus Wiegrefe. The article speaks of

West German “appeasement” towards Black September and the PLO. As Herf shows, the German secret service was clearly aware that Black September was linked to al-Fatah and the PLO (Herf 2016: 172). The *Spiegel* report shows that officials of the AA met with Black September members in the weeks following the Munich attack. For the PLO and Black September, even unofficial contacts with West German authorities meant an upgrading of their status, an important step towards more official forms of recognition. According to the *Spiegel*, the AA even struck a deal with Arafat directly. In return for a cessation of terror attacks on German territory, Bonn would allow Arafat to have a personal envoy in the FRG. While of course this envoy would not be given any form of official status, it was important for Arafat to secure PLO influence over Palestinian workers and students present in the FRG (Spiegel 2012). Interestingly enough, both within the AA (Spiegel 2012) and the interior ministry (Slobodian 2013: 207), Palestinian groups under the PLO umbrella were inter alia referred to as “resistance” groups. This indicates that a number of government officials in Bonn were more positively inclined towards Palestinians than could hitherto have been presumed.

According to Herf, who cites the public annual report of the *Verfassungsschutz* (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), 3000 Palestinian workers and students resided in West Germany at the time. Historian Quinn Slobodian gives the number of 800 Palestinian students in the FRG, with Palestinians thus being the most represented of Arab populations at West German universities (Slobodian 2013: 209). Palestinian workers were organized in the General Union of Palestinian Workers (GUPA), Palestinian students in the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). Both unions were subordinated to al-Fatah (Herf 2016: 173). Many among the Palestinian in Germany hailed from Jordan, having fled the country after the bloody anti-Palestinian crackdown from which Black September derived its name.

The conclusions drawn by the *Spiegel* regarding a German-PLO deal seem historically plausible, but they cannot be verified here. The question of sub-official FRG-PLO relations from 1967 until the onset of the Oslo Process in 1993 warrants further empirical research. This has been beyond the scope of this thesis. However, speaking of German “appeasement” of the PLO, as the *Spiegel* authors do, seems exaggerated in light of the German clampdown on Palestinian individuals and organisations following the attacks. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, then interior minister and later long-standing foreign minister,



signed a banning order of GUPA and GUPS shortly after the Munich attacks. Indications exist that Abdallah Frangi, leader of the GUPS, was knowledgeable about the attacks and that Palestinians living in the FRG were connected to the Munich attackers. Publications distributed by the GUPS endorsed guerrilla warfare and certainly opened themselves to the interior ministry's charge that 'their [GUPS and GUPA] political activity threatened the inner security and public order of the Federal Republic' (Slobodian 2013: 2012, see also Herf 2016: 173-189). Next to banning these two organisations, the FRG expelled almost 200 legal Arab residents from the country. 2,400 Arabs were already barred from entering the FRG in the month after the attack (Slobodian 2013: 211-213). Official documentation does not detail how many of the approx. 13,000 illegal Arab residents in the country were deported.

Outraged responses from within Arab states included the occupation of German diplomatic buildings and an 8,000 strong protest in Lebanon. Parts of U.S. news media even drew parallels between the FRG and the Nazi state (Slobodian 2013: 214-215). The banning order against GUPA and GUPS read that these organisations "understand violence as a means for political contestation, and they bring international issues occurring outside the space of West Germany into the Federal Republic" (Slobodian 2013: 213). Palestinian migration to the FRG engendered the transnationalisation of the Israel-Palestine conflict and Palestinian narratives of the conflict, which had not been part of societal discourses in the FRG prior to 1967. The Palestine question had thus entered domestic German politics

because of the delicacy of the West German relationship with Israel, the links between Palestinian activists and German students, and the increasingly militant nature of the movement. The interior ministry's conflation of foreigner political violence with anarchism and Maoism sought to reinforce a narrative link between foreigners and the hundreds of German Communist groups (K-Gruppen) that had emerged with the fragmenting of the leftist student movement after 1969. (Slobodian 2013: 207).

The Palestine question as posed within Germany after 1967 is thus linked to the question of antisemitism within the German New Left. This question is discussed in German academia with a thoroughness that is rather interesting in itself (see Ullrich 2014 for a helpful overview of the field). As the German New Left never influenced the formulation of Germany's

Israel policy, the question of how antisemitic it was is irrelevant to this topic. The question is to which degree the radical fringe of German society articulates more widely held, yet tabooed/repressed issues.

The anti-Jewish violence committed by fringe elements of the German New Left after its splintering has recently been minutely described by Herf (2016) for English audiences. This violence included, but was not limited to, a failed attempt to bomb a Jewish community centre in Berlin on the 30th anniversary of the November pogroms and the infamous 'separation' between Jews and non-Jews by German terrorists during the 1976 Entebbe hijacking. What may these chilling acts committed by German leftist extremists tell us about the contexts from which they emerged? In a text that became important to the (self-)critique of the German radical left, Moishe Postone convincingly criticized those perceptions of National Socialism that treated antisemitism not as a core aspect of Nazi rule, but as peripheral to it. Postone argued that the reduction of Nazism to a form of extreme capitalist normality made it possible to see Nazism everywhere. By tending to see the old Nazi state reincarnated in the FRG's institutions, the New Left exaggerated the structural continuities which the right both ignored and represented. This reduction equally allowed members of the New Left to identify with a whole host of struggles, identifications too easily branded as a learning from the past. As Postone wrote:

No western Left was as philo-Semitic and pro-Zionist prior to 1967. Probably none subsequently identified so strongly with the Palestinian cause. What was termed "anti-Zionism" was in fact so emotionally and psychically charged that it went far beyond the bounds of a political and social critique of Zionism. The very word became as negatively informed as Nazism, in the one country where the Left should have known better. (Postone 1980: 103, see also Claussen 1986).

### *Brandt in Jerusalem and the question of peace, 1973*

In June 1973, Willy Brandt became the first German chancellor in office to visit Israel, following an invitation extended already in January 1972. This was an invitation that could not be declined, also because it was made official by Israel without prior consultation with Bonn (Schmidt 2014: 14). For Germany, there was no obvious gain to the visit during a time in which it seemed to be successfully mending its relations with Arab states. It

was not least due to a more balanced positioning on the Palestine question, analysed further on, which allowed for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with all Arab states between 1971 and 1975 (Büttner and Hünseler 1981: 133).

Israel's interests in deepening ties with the FRG were more evident than vice versa, despite the bilateral crisis over Munich and its aftermath. Israel looked for political backing by a country that was by then the leading economic power in Europe and which, due to Brandt's Ostpolitik, also appeared as a much more independent and self-confident global political actor than before (Fink 2015 and 2009). Jerusalem counted on Bonn to provide an inner-European counterweight to France after its pro-Arab turn, as explained in this chapter's introduction. Lastly, in this context, we may also safely assume that Israel was interested in disturbing the German-Arab soothing of relations.

Brandt found the visit to have been one of his "most difficult tasks" (Fink 2015). Fink has provided a well-researched and carefully argued account of Brandt's visit. She reads the visit not as one of expiation, but of normalisation:

[O]n his visit to Israel, despite his repeated acknowledgments of the crimes of the Third Reich, Brandt was determined to use his personal prestige—and Bonn's overwhelming political and economic power—to put paid to Israel's demand that the past play a major role in West Germany's present and future policies. (Fink 2015: 513).

The similarity, or continuity, between the 1966 visit of ex-chancellor Adenauer and that of Brandt seven years later is that both were not visits of penitence, but of German national self-assertion (a difference in this regard was that Brandt, on a personal level, was not prone to the crude equations between German and Jewish suffering that Adenauer liked to make in the presence of Israeli counterparts).

State visits were a "key element of Brandt's diplomatic repertoire."<sup>44</sup> (Fink 2015: 503). An indication of which role the state of Israel held within the Brandt government's overall foreign policy, and, relatedly, of how the German government at the time positioned itself towards the Holocaust in the context of its reconciliatory policy towards Eastern

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<sup>44</sup>"Undertaken by a charismatic, self-confident leader untainted by the Nazi past, Willy Brandt's journeys manifested the new face of the Federal Republic as a strong and trustworthy diplomatic actor with a robust economy and a solid democracy, one that – at least for the time being – had accepted the consequences of the Third Reich's defeat in 1945 but was nonetheless determined to overcome Germany and Europe's division by patient, persistent, and peaceful means." (Fink 2015: 504).

Europe and the Soviet Union, was the difference between Brandt's famous genuflection in front of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in 1970 and the absence of such a gesture in Yad Vashem in 1973. A gesture of similar magnitude was hoped for by the Israeli hosts and spectators worldwide. However, Brandt's symbolic-political act in Yad Vashem followed clearly the policy of 'normalisation'. After laying down a wreath of roses wrapped in the German national colours, Brandt solemnly recited, in German, verses from Psalm 103 of the bible: "Merciful and gracious is the Lord...Not forever will he retain his anger...As far as day is from night, so hath he relieved us from our transgressions." (cited in Fink 2015: 509).

The visit was without lasting consequences for the Middle East, which a few months later became enmeshed in the next round of Arab-Israeli warfare. However, Brandt's Israel policy has provoked lasting ire. On the 40th anniversary of the visit, German historian Michael Wolffsohn and his Israeli colleague Hagai Tsoref charged in an article for the conservative *Die Welt* that "[c]hancellor Willy Brandt...could have prevented the murderous Yom-Kippur War of October 1973." (Wolffsohn and Tsoref 2013). The article drew a simplistic historical picture, according to which Israel sought peace with its intransigent Arab foes, but the road towards peace was blocked by Bonn. On the basis of Israeli files declassified at the time, the authors argue that Brandt refused a request by Golda Meir to initiate a secret "peace initiative" towards Egypt. Had Brandt been sensitive to Israeli wishes, the argument went, he would have pursued the initiative, thus preventing a war that "almost eradicated Israel's existence."

Had such a charge been brought forth by in-house journalists, it could easily have been dismissed as a belated right-wing attack on the first SPD chancellor in postwar Germany. However, Wolffsohn, who seemed to be mainly responsible for the gist of the article, is a professional historian. He has written extensively on the topic of German-Israeli relations notably in the late 1980s and early 1990s and continues to be a highly visible public commentator on questions pertaining to German Israel policy, as well as a proponent of the 'New Antisemitism' discourse as it appears in the German context. We would thus expect substantial new evidence to support such a sweeping accusation. The files Wolffsohn and Tsoref used as proof for their claims clearly reveal that Meir asked Brandt to transmit a message to Sadat. The authors quote Meir as asking Brandt to tell Sadat

the following: “Israel does not want the whole of Sinai, not half of Sinai, not the majority of Sinai”. Furthermore, Israel called for direct, bilateral negotiations.

There are two problems with the argument of Wolffsohn and Tsoref. Firstly, Meir’s “peace initiative” did not contain anything new. It was repeatedly, publicly stated that Israel would not return to the ‘Auschwitz lines’, in Abba Eban’s memorable phrase, of 1948. Egypt, as all states of the Arab League, had likewise made clear that its aim was to retrieve all of the lost territories, thus, the whole of Sinai. It would not negotiate from a position which affirmed the admissibility of annexation. There was thus no basis in reality as to how Brandt “could have prevented” the 1973 war. To this fairly self-evident point we need to add another. Even if Meir (or Sadat, for that matter) had proposed anything new, the FRG would not have been the external power to broker and guarantee any settlement between Israel and its neighbours. While one of the key aims of this thesis is to draw out the insufficiently recognized German role in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict arena, it is obvious that the U.S. had the first, and the Soviet Union the second role to play in any externally mediated agreement. As Fink argues, the Brandt government claimed “only a modest influence” over Middle Eastern actors, “deferring to the Superpowers to broker a Middle East peace” in order not to distract from the primary aim of pursuing Ostpolitik (Fink 2015: 504). Brandt’s modesty in this regard reflected not only the German interest in a low public profile in the Middle East, but also political realities (see also Schmidt 2014).

The charges brought forth in the *Die Welt* article illustrate well how German public debate about the German role in the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict works. These debates are less about the actual German role in the Middle East than about domestic German politics. The Arab-Israeli-Palestinian complex serves as a projection plane against which battles of German national identity and political orientation are fought out. This means that public debate about the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts in Germany does not necessarily advance knowledge about them, quite the contrary. Yet sometimes, political provocation can spark better scholarship. Wolfgang Schmidt, a historian affiliated with the public ‘Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation’, undertook a studious defence of Brandt against the charges of Wolffsohn and Tsoref. His study is based on an extensive knowledge of German and Israeli sources. In a language untypical for historical scholarship, Schmidt branded Wolffsohn’s charges and insinuations as “ludicrous”, “baf-

fling”, “baseless”, etc. Schmidt shows that Brandt was principally supportive of Israel, while joining wider criticism in Europe over what he saw as the Israeli government’s unwillingness to compromise for a possible peace with Arab states. In a thorough rebuttal of Wolffsohn, Schmidt painstakingly demonstrates that Golda Meir had never extended a serious offer for peace negotiations. Indeed, the Israeli government was rather more interested in enlisting Bonn’s support for its settlement project under the Allon Plan at the time. This plan initially foresaw incorporation into Israel of large parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Areas of high Palestinian population density would either be given a limited autonomy status or handed to Jordan. In accordance with the Allon Plan, the Meir government tried to lobby Brandt into increasing German support for Palestinian refugees in Jordan, aiding in their societal integration so as to allow their permanent resettlement. Brandt seemed initially responsive to the idea, which was shelved with the outbreak of the 1973 war (Schmidt 2014: 46f., see also Achcar 1994/2004: 205-222). Schmidt goes as far as arguing that “[t]he Israeli government was fundamentally less interested in Germany’s services as a go-between in the Middle East than in instrumentalizing the German government on behalf of Israeli policies.” (Schmidt 2014: 58). In defence of Brandt, Schmidt also demonstrates that it was due to Bonn’s efforts that Israel could sign a preferential trade agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1970. This was an important element to Israel’s foreign economic policy at the time. The ‘Dinstein Agreement’, concluded in 1970, added to the Reparations Agreement in that under it, 300 million Deutsche Mark were paid to long-term health-impaired Holocaust survivors in Israel. The German positioning towards the 1973 war must also be understood in light of the principal political, military and economic commitment towards Israel.

### *The 1973 war and the question of German neutrality*

The 1973 Arab-Israeli War, which brought Israel to the edge of catastrophe, was won with the help of crucial American supplies, delivered from air and sea during the fighting (Morris 2001: 433ff). As in 1967, Germany declared neutrality in the conflict, the Netherlands being the only European country officially in support of Israel, which was attacked by Syria and Egypt. German societal support for Israel in 1973 was clearly less enthusias-

tic than in 1967 (see previous chapter). Yet after the war, Brandt said to the Bundestag that there “cannot be a neutrality of heart and conscience” on the matter of Israel’s survival (Schmidt 2014: 63).

More interesting than declarations, however, is the question of what German neutrality did mean in practice. Martin Jander, lecturer at the Free University of Berlin, recently argued that the SPD moved away from its historically conscious support of Israel after it acceded to power:

during the 1973 Yom Kippur war the FRG under Willy Brandt did not allow American armed forces to use their military bases in the country to supply Israel with weapons. Israeli ships were forbidden to come to the harbour of Bremerhaven to collect weapons from American Naval ships. While the FRG government saw its refusal as a policy of ‘neutrality,’ most Israelis viewed this as support for adversaries committed to its destruction. (Jander 2017).

Jander correctly notes that the Israeli public perceived the German position on the war very negatively. The Israeli daily *Ma’ariv* stated: “This is a neutrality that indirectly encourages genocide in order to secure the uninterrupted delivery of oil from Libya. Once they have murdered for ideological reasons, this time for oil. The difference is not big.” (quoted in Büttner 2003: 145). There was a wider perception, in Israel and beyond, that Germany had now ridded itself of its historical obligations towards Israel in exchange for Arab oil (Büttner and Scheffler 1982: 139). This complex episode in German-Israeli state relations, however, requires careful historical scholarship in order to move beyond merely journalistic, politically guided judgements of the kind Jander seems to espouse — despite the element of truth contained in the *Ma’ariv* quote, which consists in the assertion that the German declaration of neutrality was linked to oil interests.

What Jander seems to suggest is that since the FRG *did not want* Israel to be supplied with crucial arms from German territory, the U.S. was also *unable to do so*. Both assumptions are counterintuitive. In fact, as the available historical literature on this episode shows (Schmidt 2014, Blumenau 2010, Gerlach 2006) and as the document collection of the AA Archives for the year 1973 also demonstrates, Bonn protested the shipment of weapons from the port of Bremerhaven only after the first ceasefire was declared on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. However, the German government knew of American resupplies from its territory already by October 16<sup>th</sup>, when German foreign minister Scheel was informed

about the matter by the American diplomat Hillenbrandt, to whom Scheel expressed understanding, but underlined that Arab states should not be informed about the resupply operations (Blumenau 2010: 127). In the words of German Middle East scholar Helmut Hubel, “[t]he protest thus had no practical significance but served as a conciliatory political gesture toward the Arab states” (Hubel 2004: 72). In fact, an official protest was issued by the AA only on October 25<sup>th</sup>, when two Israeli-flagged ships “had been loaded with U.S. equipment by a company in German government ownership and the media had gotten wind of the story.” (Schmidt 2014: 60f.). An open German consent on military supply of Israel from German ports would have undermined the German claim to ‘even-handedness’ in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Schmidt explains, already faced with the threat of an Arab oil embargo, a public charging of Israeli freighters would have cost Bonn “what shred of credibility” it still possessed via Israel’s Arab opponents. Brandt was especially piqued by the carelessness — or else — of the Americans using vessels openly discernible as Israeli. After this episode, American supply of Israel continued unabated via Bremerhaven (Schmidt 2014: 61).

In the course of the 1973 war, officials in the AA and Brandt himself internally complained of having been treated like a “colony” by Washington (Blumenau 2010, Schmidt 2014: 64). This impression was partly caused by Washington’s unilateral moves in the conflict. It had been rather lax in informing Bonn about the resupply operations on its territory and on October 25<sup>th</sup>, it put all its NATO troops on highest alert without prior consultation, including the nuclear forces, thus threatening to escalate a regional war into direct superpower confrontation. German exasperation with the U.S. also reflected the disappointment of a state which, in the course of its *Ostpolitik*, had gained political manoeuvring space on the international scene. The 1973 war reminded Bonn that this space was ultimately defined by the U.S.

A major factor that explains the differing U.S. and German positions on the 1973 war is that the FRG depended on Arab oil supplies, while the U.S. did not. As an internal report from the AA summed up at the time:

We have a big interest in an early end of the Middle East Conflict also since we import approximately 71%...of our oil from Arab producers including Libya and Algeria, which are parties to the conflict. We share this dependence with other Western European states and Japan while the US only imports 6%



of its oil from Arab countries. Europe and Japan, thus, depend more on an arrangement with the Arabs than the US. This is another reason why we and our EC partners are trying to convince the Arabs that Europe takes a neutral stance in this conflict and expects not to be hit by oil reductions. (cited in Blumenau 2010: 125).

The FRG was much more dependent on stable relations with all Arab states than the U.S., which, following the Nixon doctrine, worked to establish a system of regional alliances. The Arab oil boycott, utilized already during the war, was in fact beneficial to the U.S. The accordant rise in oil revenues

increased the income of its own oil companies as well as the petrodollar holdings of its protégés on the Arabian peninsula from which it was able to draw great advantages. At the same time it diminished the competitiveness of the rival German and Japanese economies, which are much more dependent than the United States on oil imports; and it considerably strengthened the position of the Saudi kingdom, Washington's main client and ally in the Middle East. (Achcar 2004: 23).

#### *'Even-handedness' and German-Israeli military cooperation in the 1970s and 1980s*

Whilst German neutrality in 1973 was primarily an instrument in relations with Arab states, the question of neutrality and of the policy of 'even-handedness' overall must be posed also in light of German-Israeli military relations. The move towards Arab states especially after 1973 is related to the end of the German role in the arming of Israel in 1965 and the making of the U.S.-Israeli alliance afterwards, as discussed before. However, this changed constellation did not mean that German-Israeli military relations were discontinued, but that they were transformed. After the 1973 war, Brandt confided to British Prime Minister Edward Heath, without further specification, that "the actual degree of support was greater than could be publicly admitted." Schmidt, in his all-out defence of Brandt, alludes to a somewhat mysterious "important electronic device" delivered by Germany on short notice that was helpful in the Israeli war effort (Schmidt 2004: 63). According to Shpiro, it was the German-designed "revolutionary new type of missile boat", produced in the French wharf of Cherbourg, which "formed the backbone of the astounding Israeli naval successes in the 1973 war." (Shpiro 2003: 321).

Shapiro, Nassauer and others have demonstrated that German-Israeli relations from the 1970s onwards moved, to mutual benefit, into the sphere of research and development. Shapiro details how, after the 1973 war, Israel was able to capture intact the latest Soviet T-62 tanks. Through Mossad-BND channels, exemplars of these tanks were secretly delivered to Germany. German tests showed that the new model of Soviet tanks could not be penetrated by standard-NATO cannons. Thus, the new German standard tank, introduced in the early 1980s, the LEOPARD II, was built using a “non-NATO-standard 120mm smooth-bore cannon”. This requirement, which caused grave consternation at NATO headquarters and was protested by the US, was a direct result of the technical evaluations of the Soviet armour provided by Israel. This development, in turn, informed the production of the Israeli MERKAVA III tank afterwards: “Thus a circle was closed, in which Israeli designers, who assisted Germany in the development of its main battle tank, adopted the German gun design into their state of the art armor system.” (Shapiro 2003: 323). The U.S. protest against the joint German-Israeli development needs to be read in terms of economic competition: with the joint development of these central weapon systems, Israeli and German companies extended market shares against American competitors.

Both German and Israeli experts on the matter (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003, Shapiro 2003 and 2013) place great importance on a project codenamed CERBERUS, behind which lay the Israeli development of a still-secret system of radar jammers, a key element in the development of the European TORNADO aircraft, which Brandt’s successor Helmut Schmidt called “the biggest armaments project since the birth of Christ.” (Shapiro 2003: 323). Developed without any parliamentary knowledge, Germany invested into CERBERUS about 2.2 billion Deutsche Mark (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003: 8, roughly €1.1 billion). Shapiro describes the significance of this project in terms of NATO strategy in Europe. The technological innovation of this project was to enable the TORNADO aircraft to overcome the Soviet anti-aircraft missile defences, penetrating deep behind the Iron Curtain with minimal losses in order to make possible the discharge of “tactical” nuclear warheads (Shapiro 2003: 324). The CERBERUS system would thus have played an important military role in the worst-case scenario of all-out war in Europe. Shapiro explains that “the technological advances of Project CERBERUS later formed the basis for Israeli airforce successes against the Syrians during the 1982 Lebanon campaign, when sixteen

Syrian missile batteries were destroyed on one day and over 120 Syrian aircraft shot down without a single Israeli loss.” Israeli “electronic warfare systems” were also used in Germany’s bombing campaign in the Balkans in the mid-1990s, while German tanks used Israeli-designed ammunition in the Kosovo campaign in 1999 (Shapiro 2003: 334). Thus, German-Israeli military cooperation played a part, ironically yet fittingly, in Germany’s first war after 1945, a war which, as will be discussed in the next chapter, was legitimized in spite, but in the name of Auschwitz.

As Shapiro argues, the stability and mutual importance of military relations has throughout the history of German-Israeli relations “contributed significantly to normalisation of relations in other fields.” (Shapiro 2003: 306). To the continuity of military relations, so important also to both countries’ military economic sectors, we need to add German support for Israeli economic integration with Europe. Due to its isolation in the Middle East, trade with Europe is crucial to Israel. The 1970 preferential trade agreement was replaced in 1975 with an agreement regulating further trade liberalisation. Tariffs on Israeli industrial goods exported to Europe were gradually dropped in consequence, tariffs on agricultural produce significantly reduced. Bonn put its weight notably against the interests especially of Italy, a direct competitor of Israel for Mediterranean agricultural produce. As tariffs for European goods exported to Israel were reduced at a slower pace than vice versa, the Israeli economy was allowed to adjust itself to further trade liberalization. This and other provisions in the treaty beneficial to Israel were realized due to German support (Weingardt 2002: 267f.). It is not a secret that the FRG has been seen and continues to be seen as the most important advocate of Israeli interests in the EC and subsequently in the EU. The stability and continuity of economic and military cooperation allows risking certain tensions on the political-diplomatic level. Yet without doubt, the period stretching from the aftermath of the 1973 war until 1982 was the most politically troubled one in bilateral relations until today. It was over the Palestine question that Germany encountered the limits of ‘normalising’ ties with Israel and adopting an ‘even-handed’ approach to the Middle East.

The 1973 war opened the way to the Egyptian-Israeli settlement six years later. It allowed Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat, portrayed as the 'hero of the crossing', to reach a compromise with Israel. Hit hard by the war, a land-for-peace scenario became desirable to the majority of the Israeli public (Morris 2001: 437). Sadat went to Jerusalem in 1977 and in 1979, the Israeli Likud-led government under Menachem Begin exchanged the Sinai peninsula for peace on the Egyptian front. To European dissatisfaction, this 'separate peace' sidelined the Palestinian question, preventing a more comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts.

From the aftermath of the 1973 war until 1980, the EC engaged with the Palestine question within their European Policy Cooperation (EPC) foreign policy mechanism. This diplomatic-declaratory engagement had no tangible effects on the Middle East conflicts. One of its main results was to transform the Arab-Israeli into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Western European perception. The six EC countries produced a first non-official Middle East paper in 1971. Known as the "Schumann paper" after its main author Maurice Schumann, French minister of foreign affairs at the time, it was based on the French text of UN Security Council Resolution 242, stipulating that Israel should retreat from all territories captured in 1967, without, however, explicitly mentioning the Palestinians. Germany backed away from the paper after Israeli protests, thus rendering it ineffective, much to French chagrin. After the oil boycott of the 1973 war, Bonn toughened its position. The declaration issued on November 6th, 1973, in the war's aftermath, was, in line with the recent, relevant UN Security Council resolutions on the conflict, based on the principle of land for peace. Reiterating the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force", it called on Israel to "end the territorial occupation" of 1967. It recognized Israel's "right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries" and, crucially, added that "in the establishment of a just and lasting peace account must be taken of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians." (cited in Büttner 2003: 145). This time, Bonn did not step back. Quite the contrary, in 1974, the German ambassador to the UN, von Wechmar, spoke of a Palestinian "right to self-determination" in the UN General Assembly, the first representative of a Western state to do so (Weingardt 2002: 276). This statement, however, needs to be understood in light of the 'right to self-determination'

the FRG demanded for itself, namely, the claim over the GDR (Jäger 1995: 3f.). In 1974, Brandt parted from office. Along with Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky, Brandt met Yassir Arafat in Vienna in 1979 during a meeting of the Socialist International. While Brandt, now party chairman of the SPD, took part in the meeting not in a governmental capacity, the encounter was celebrated by the PLO as a major breakthrough in its diplomatic efforts for recognition in Western Europe.

The London Declaration of 1977 and the Venice Declaration of 1980 marked further shifts of the EC states towards the Palestinian question. The 1977 document spoke repeatedly of a “Palestinian people”, stating that “the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to give expression to its national identity” would need to “take into account the need for a homeland” (Büttner 2003: 146f., see also Persson 2015: 89). The historical allusion to the Balfour Declaration, drafted 60 years earlier by the British Empire, promising a national home to the Jewish people, was not lost on anybody. The Venice Declaration, generally understood as a response to the U.S.-sponsored Egyptian-Israeli Camp David Peace Treaty of 1979, went one step further yet. It stated that

A just solution must finally be found to the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, and most provocative to Israel, the Declaration stated that the PLO needed to be associated with future negotiations. Based on archival research in the AA, German political scientist Hubert Leber, in a study on Germany-Israel relations during the premiership of Begin, found that the FRG “was neither a restrained nor a particularly pro-Israeli actor” in the drafting of the declaration. While Bonn prevented a stronger pro-Palestinian wording as espoused by France, for example demanding the inclusion of a recognition of Israel’s “right to exist”, the FRG backed criticism of Israel’s settlement project in the territories occupied in 1967 and opposed unilateral changes to the status of

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<sup>45</sup> The text can be found at [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/mepp/docs/venice\\_declaration\\_1980\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/mepp/docs/venice_declaration_1980_en.pdf) (last access December 20th, 2017.). It is the only one of the Declarations that is still available on the EU website. This suggests that the Venice Declaration is still considered to be the most concise, elaborate statement of the EC countries prior to the Oslo-Process and still holds validity (see also Büttner 2003: 147, footnote 89).

Jerusalem (Leber 2015). Israel's de-jure annexation of Jerusalem with the "Jerusalem Law" of 1980 can also be read as a response to the Venice Declaration (see also Leber 2015).

The short time period between the Venice Declaration and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was a low point in German-Israeli relations on the political-diplomatic level. During those years, the German drive to 'normalise' relations with Israel reached an impasse. In response to the Venice Declaration the Israeli cabinet produced a "harsh" communiqué which compared the declaration to "a Munich surrender, the second in our generation" (Weiler and Greilsammer 1987: 49). The framing of the PLO as a reincarnation of the Nazis and the Europeans as latter day Chamberlains blind to the dangers of Jew-hatred was a clear indication of what European diplomatic advances towards Palestine symbolized to many in Israel: an anti-Israel policy, in which growing recognition of the Palestine question was exchanged for the flow of Middle Eastern oil, an exchange greased by the deep history of European antisemitism. Mistrust of Europe, a special mistrust of Germany and constant Nazification of the Palestinians and the PLO was, of course, a hallmark of Begin's Likud government which came to power in 1977. Indeed, an especially harsh tone crept into German-Israeli relations with the respective chancellor- and prime ministerships of Helmut Schmidt (since 1974) and Begin. Schmidt, considered a cold pragmatist who was a former officer of the Wehrmacht and Begin, who lost most of his family in the Holocaust, the enemy of the Reparations Agreement with Germany, were hardly likely to get along. However, as Weiler and Greilsammer have rightly pointed out, the Venice Declaration was equally opposed by the Labor party, while the reaction of the Israeli public ranged from indifference to contempt (Weiler and Greilsammer 1984: 145).

Interestingly enough, the PLO also reacted critically to the Venice initiative. Since the declaration did not accept the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and since it did not rebuke the Camp David agreements as inadequate to a just solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the PLO saw in Venice not an alternative to, but a way of salvaging the Camp David Agreements (Weiler and Greilsammer 1984: 145f.) Washington was in fact not at all displeased with the Venice Declaration precisely because it saw in it a basic affirmation of Camp David (Weiler and Greilsammer 1984: 145).

Which effect, then, did European diplomatic engagement with the Middle East have on the question of peace? The short answer is: none, or very little indeed. It would be easy to sweep this whole episode aside simply by pointing to the pivotal role played by the U.S. and the “primarily derivative” (Garfinkle 1983: 17) interest the Europeans held in the Palestine question as a means to ease relations with the oil-producing Arab states.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the U.S. government had early delineated to the Europeans the limits to their Middle East engagement. Anders Persson, in a recent study on the subject, quotes Richard Nixon’s 1974 statement at length: in the context of the ‘Euro-Arab Dialogue’, initially planned as a mechanism for more concrete European-Arab cooperation on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the oil question, the former U.S. president reminded Europe in unmistakable terms of the American security guarantee over Europe: “we are not going to be faced with a situation where the nine countries of Europe gang up against the United States—the United States which is their guarantee for their security. That we cannot have.” (cited in Persson 2015: 77).

In conclusion, what set the European engagement apart was the role it accorded to the Palestine question. As Greilsammer and Weiler argued, “[t]he distinguishing feature of Venice was not in any action it proposed or precipitated, but rather in its insistence, at the level of premises and perception of the conflict, on this Palestinian dimension.” (Weiler and Greilsammer 1984: 122f.). The authors identified an implicit European consensus on the desirability of Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza at the time, yet also a hesitancy to recognize the PLO as the political representative of the Palestinian people prior to the PLO’s recognition of Israel. Büttner summarized well the perceptual change in Western Europe:

As reflected in the EPC declarations of the mid-seventies, the Europeans managed to develop their own position towards the Arab—Israeli conflict: from a refugee problem that was subordinate at first to Israel’s problem of being recognized, to the issues of sovereignty and secure borders, the Palestinian problem slowly moved into the very centre of any conflict solution. (Büttner 2003: 146).

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<sup>46</sup>The very common charge against the instrumentality of the European approach is characterized by Persson as “too simplistic”, view that the EC “had expressed a genuine disapproval of Israel’s continued occupation and particularly of the construction of settlements on occupied territory, which the EC/EU has always perceived as illegal under international law.” (Persson 2015: 76). This may be so, but then of course the question remains as to why this disapproval was translated into international engagement precisely when the oil-exporting Arab states decided to flex their muscle.

Again, however, if the PLO itself rejected what the Europeans saw as the peak of their diplomatic activity, the 1980 Declaration, what was this change of position good for? In order to salvage the European role, Persson (2015) moves into the conceptual sphere, arguing that what he calls, in capital letters, the 'Legitimizing Power Europe' served to frame the conditions of a 'just peace', conditions which were gradually accepted by the U.S., Israel and the Palestinians. The following chapter offers a more prosaic interpretation, covering the Oslo Process and the question of why this process has led away from, rather than towards, what could be considered the 'just peace' of the two-state solution. Adam M. Garfinkle, an American international relations scholar and U.S. government advisor, eloquently criticized the European engagement with the Middle East from a 'realist' perspective, representing the U.S. viewpoint at the time of the Venice Declaration. Garfinkle observed "a shift in European-elite attitudes away from the traditional 'power politics' perception of world affairs and toward a more diffuse and accommodative moral-legalistic amalgam." This critique may be seen to partly apply to the more laudatory literature on European peace efforts. Garfinkle detected a European "vacuum of responsibility" wherein

realism just never found its rightful place. There is something in the very style of European diplomatic thinking nowadays that has led the European Community to ignore almost totally the local realities, both within Palestinian nationalism and between it and the Arab states. Without a hardheaded understanding of these realities, EC policies can achieve their stated goals only by accident. (Garfinkle 1983: 54).

The author was *inter alia* alluding to the fact that at this point, the PLO charter did not explicitly recognize Israel's right to exist (see also Weiler and Greilsammer 1984, Büttner and Scheffler 1982). This text still makes for an interesting reading, problematising European hypocrisies from an American-imperial point of view. The problem, however, with such a self-described realist perspective is the problem inherent in realism, which is the positing as 'neutral' and 'objective' its own services for policies that are none of the two, thus effectively masking historically-specific power interests (see also Horkheimer 1937, Cox 1981). Garfinkle, at his time of writing, questions the ability of Palestinian nationalism to compromise. Just like Persson's, Garfinkle's analysis is problematised by the Oslo Process, in his case, of course, only retrospectively. With Oslo, the PLO recognized Isra-



el's right to exist, yet a Palestinian state in the 1967 territories did not emerge in return. The more complex, regressive realities of "Palestine" to emerge after Oslo, as well as the question of German responsibility for these realities, are examined in the next chapter. David Allen and Alfred Pijpers closed their 1984 edited volume on European foreign policy towards the Middle East, a volume offering much deeper research than many of the more recent works on the topic, with a few sobering remarks. They noted that, at their time of writing, regardless of national orientation, there were four basic interests which the West European states held in common vis à vis the Middle East. All of these can be seen to hold until today. Firstly, what the authors took to be the obvious commercial interest, the access to Arab oil and to Arab markets. Secondly, Europe's stake in a stable Middle East, the prevention and settlement of conflicts. Thirdly, less tangibly, but equally important, the commitment to the survival of the Israeli state, a commitment that does not, however, extend to Israel beyond its pre-1967 borders and fourthly, the European interest in maintaining the transatlantic alliance.

Allen and Pijpers found the EPC declarations between 1973 and 1980 to have stood in contrast to these goals, notably those of Israeli security and of stable relations with the U.S. The authors note that the declarations seemed to have placed the Israeli and the Palestinian right to a secure existence within mutually recognized state borders on a footing of equal political and moral importance. Yet, they cautioned, it would be "fallacious" to think that the EPC declarations truly meant an evenhanded recognition of both the Israeli and Palestinian right to a safe existence. While the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East has been, for Europe, an end in itself, a Palestinian state is not. Proof of this was provided during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The "déconfiture" of the PLO was not met with European disapproval, as Allen and Pijpers write, arguing that such a cool reaction would be "completely unthinkable" in a reverse scenario of Israel being invaded in the same way (to say nothing, one may add, of something similar to the Sabra and Shatila massacres happening to Jewish-Israeli citizens).

Recognition of Palestinian rights, the authors wrote, has always been "instrumental", derivative of more "fundamental" interests (Allen and Pijpers 1984: 242ff.). This chimes in with much of the analysis laid down in this thesis so far. As we have seen, the FRG consistently recognized the Palestine question only as means towards other ends. In the postwar period, when German reparations helped building the Israeli state, the FRG was,

of course, aware of the fact that the state they helped building was created on the basis of the displacement of another population. However, in a time of population transfers all over the colonized world and postwar Europe, there was no incentive to recognize the plight of a displaced people which did not have the means to make its situation heard. The first moves towards the Palestine question, in terms of publicized humanitarian aid to refugees, were a function of the FRG's interest in mending relations with Arab states after 1965. And so it was for Western Europe after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The gradually evolving position towards the recognition of a Palestinian right to 'self-determination' in a 'homeland' was shaped primarily in the context of European-Arab relations after the oil boycott. That these goals are still awaiting their realization must not least be explained by pointing to the deeper, shared European interests in a stable Middle East, the pivotal role of the transatlantic relations, and the interest in safeguarding Israel as a key ally in the region, interests which ultimately shape the European engagement with the Palestine question.

#### **4.3 Realignment: The Soothing of German-Israel Ties after 1982**

Bilaterally, German-Israeli irritations on the political-diplomatic level would ease only after the 1982 Lebanon invasion. Following Venice, the so-called 'Begin-Schmidt controversy' rocked German-Israeli relations from 1981 to 1982. This dispute was rooted in the German aim to 'normalise' its relations with Israel and needs to be understood in the context of European-Israeli tensions after the Venice Declaration. Both Venice and the 'Begin-Schmidt Controversy' demonstrated where the limits to 'normalisation' lie from an Israeli perspective.

During his chancellorship (1974-1982), Schmidt refrained from reciprocating Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's visit to the FRG in 1975. Schmidt's declared intention to follow a German Middle East policy "no longer...overshadowed by Auschwitz" (Wolffson 1993: 33) found expression in German plans to sell Leopard II tanks to Saudi Arabia. In the course of the controversy, Begin framed Schmidt as an unrepentant Nazi. German public opinion, sometimes in problematic terms, stood behind the chancellor, who himself refrained from escalating the war of words. Eventually, however, the tank deal with

Saudi-Arabia was not realized. According to historian Shlomo Shafir, this was partially due to SPD opposition in the Bundestag. The principle of German commitment to Israel played a key role (Shafir 2008, see also Leber 2015).

Schmidt's personal change in position towards Israel is representative of a wider German shift. According to Shafir's thoroughly researched account, Schmidt's attitude towards Israel after the 1967 war was positive, not least as he saw Israel as a staunch defender of Western interests in the Middle East. Schmidt's favourable inclinations cooled with the duration of Israel's occupation of the territories captured in the war (Shafir 2008).

The Begin-Schmidt controversy is generally remembered as a personal animosity. As Wolffsohn points out, Begin remains the only prime minister in Israeli history with personal experience of the Shoah (Wolffsohn 1993: 32). Begin had lost his family in the genocide; he fought the German army as a member of the Free Polish Army. Shafir pointed to Schmidt's suppression of his own biographical involvement in the Nazi past. Throughout his life, Schmidt clung to the legend of the Wehrmacht's clean sheet. Shafir remained diplomatic when pointing to the hardly credible nature of Schmidt's insistence that he 'could not have known'. In 2014, German journalist and scholar Sabine Pamperrien published a book, based on sound archival study, which established that Schmidt "was partly contaminated by Nazi ideology" (Pamperrien 2014). The book confirms what suggests itself, namely that a previous leader of the Hitler Youth and career officer of the Wehrmacht must have known about the Wehrmacht's war of annihilation and its involvement in the Holocaust. That it took until 2014 for a German scholar to assess the relevant files testifies to a societal hesitancy in tarnishing a figure so important to national identification.

It is difficult from an outside perspective to disentangle trauma from instrumentality in political speech. It is clear that Begin's emotional antipathy towards Schmidt was driven by the fact that Schmidt had actively supported a regime which had killed Begin's family and exterminated his people. Trauma formed part of Begin's politics. His opposition to Schmidt stood in continuity with his opposition to the Reparations Agreement of 30 years earlier. It is difficult to say how Begin would have dealt with the question of German reparations had he been in power at the time. Probably, the needs of consolidating the state and integrating it into the West would have overridden his personal convictions. Yet, in 1952 and also in 1982, his historical-psychological anti-German stance was based

on a somewhat more realistic view of German postwar society than the erstwhile views represented by Ben-Gurion.

German-Israeli relations reached a low on the societal level in the context of Israel's 1982 Lebanon invasion. The massacres against Palestinian refugees in the camps of Sabra and Shatila, perpetrated by Christian Phalangists under the Israeli army's oversight, led to a deterioration of Israel's image in the German public. To the degree to which images of Israel were already based on projections, they could easily be reversed for purposes of guilt relief. The 'Nazification' of Israel by parts of the German public in 1982 is regularly cited to illustrate antisemitism on the German left and the political mainstream. Büttner agreed in his dispassionate account of Germany's Israel policy that the perceptions of Israel which came to the surface in the FRG at the time testified to an uncoped-with past (Büttner 2003: 114f., see also Wetzel et.al. 1983). Begin's need to depict Arafat as a latter-day Hitler hiding in his Beirut bunker and an existing need in Germany to identify Israeli Jews as Nazis correspond insofar as historical memory leaves alone neither victims nor perpetrators, or their succeeding generations (see also Segev 1993: 400).

The Venice episode and the Begin-Schmidt controversy showed that the policy of 'normalisation' had run its course. The diplomatic fallout of the Venice Declaration demonstrated that Israel's toleration of German political moves towards Palestinians ended when it came to the crucial questions of Palestinian self-determination and the political legitimacy of the PLO. Israel's reactions against the German crossing of these limits consisted fundamentally of scandalisations drawing their ammunition from the Nazi past (see also Büttner 2003: 152f.). European positioning on the Palestine question from the aftermath of the 1973 war until the Venice Declaration crystallized a shared European view that a two-state solution, based upon a division of the territory along the 1967 demarcation, would be the desirable outcome of the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, Bonn's declaratory engagement came without corresponding substantial actions. For example, in contrast to France, Austria or Italy, the FRG had not given any significant diplomatic concessions to the PLO until that point (Jäger 1995: 5). As the next chapter explains, the PLO became an acceptable diplomatic actor for the FRG only after the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO as per the Oslo Accords.

The German realignment with Israel and the U.S. in the Middle East after 1982 occurred within broader political changes in the region. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 led to a

shift away in focus from the Israel-Palestine conflict arena. The effects of the Second Oil Shock in 1979 were gradually offset, for Europeans, by the diversification of oil imports. Oil prices stabilized as both Tehran and Bagdad increased output to finance the Iran-Iraq War. The Palestine question would impose itself again on the U.S. and Europe with the Intifada in 1987.

In Bonn, the Social-Democrats lost power to the Conservatives. Helmut Kohl's CDU/CSU – FDP coalition governed until 1998. In its framings and political usages of the Nazi past, the era of Kohl marked a return to that of Adenauer. In contrast to the postwar period, however, Kohl's policies of how to remember and how to forget the past were the stuff of public contention in a democratically matured republic.

Born in 1930, Kohl claimed for himself a 'grace of late birth' (*Gnade der späten Geburt*). While a Hitler Youth member, he was too young to have taken part in war and genocide. To the embarrassment of the left-of-centre of the German public, he repeatedly spoke of this 'grace' also during his first visit to Israel in 1984. Part of his delegation was Kurt Ziesel, a former Nazi and extreme right-wing journalist in the postwar republic.

The irritations Kohl provoked in Israel were no clumsy mistakes, but politically calculated discursive acts meant for a German home audience. However, Kohl's policy of making peace with the past showed itself most clearly not in Israel, but during the Bitburg affair. On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1985, Kohl and U.S. president Ronald Reagan laid down flower wreaths at the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen as well as the German soldier cemetery in Bitburg. Bergen-Belsen was included in the program visit only last minute, following protests especially in the U.S. The majority of the German public stood behind Kohl. The shared U.S. – German ceremony to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of German capitulation to the (Western) Allies led Reagan into a grave political crisis. Next to soldiers of the Wehrmacht, members of the Waffen-SS were also buried in Bitburg. These had participated in one of the worst civilian massacres in occupied France in the village of Oradour-sur-Glane. The leader of the CDU faction in the Bundestag, Alfred Dregger, escalated tensions with a letter to U.S. Senators opposing the visit. Dregger argued that the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS had fought a common Western war against the Red Army (Rabinbach 1988: 1821f.).

Brandt's key foreign policy act concerning the Nazi past was the genuflection in Warsaw. Schmidt's chancellorship was less iconographic, no comparable event marked it. The Bit-

burg visit, in contrast to Brandt's genuflection, was an act of normalisation, not expiation. The gesture of U.S.-German reconciliation turned Wehrmacht soldiers, Waffen-SS members and American soldiers all equally into victims of war. Those who were murdered in Bergen-Belsen were symbolically put on par with the Waffen-SS.

In the Bundestag, only the newly-formed Green party opposed the visit to Bitburg. Its emergence from the 1970s new social movements was also reflected in its views of the Israel-Palestine conflict. A visit by a Green party delegation to Israel and the OPT created an outrage, as it took an unequivocally pro-Palestinian position (Weingardt 2002: 314-15). The visit was heavily criticized in both Israel and Germany, putting a stain of anti-semitism on the party, which it has managed to wash off since then in tune with its gradual political de-radicalisation and move towards the centre of German parliamentary politics.

The influential speech by German president Richard von Weizsäcker on May 8<sup>th</sup>, three days after the Bitburg visit, is a key document of German public memory culture. Meant also as a counterpoint to Bitburg, it was received positively internationally, including in Israel. Weizsäcker's speech was accepted throughout German society because it addressed groups of diverse political and cultural affiliation, serving an integrative function (Beljan and Lorenz 2015). Its greatest importance lay in framing May 8<sup>th</sup> not as a day of defeat, but of liberation. While the majority of German society *did* in fact experience the end of the war as a defeat, reframing it as liberation established unequivocally the criminality of the Nazi regime. Weizsäcker also made clear that the crimes of Nazism were visible to the German public at the time. He thus refuted the so-familiar excuse that one 'could not have known'; a step of major importance. However, Weizsäcker framed as perpetrators the Nazi leadership alone. The majority of German society appears as guilty only because it chose to ignore the crimes, not because it actively or tacitly helped committing them. While Weizsäcker rebuked the idea of collective guilt, he spoke of the responsibility history inferred on succeeding generations. The following passage of the speech is important for the topic of this thesis:

The Jewish nation remembers and will always remember. We seek reconciliation as human beings. Precisely for this reason we must understand that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance. The experience of millionfold death is part of the very being of every Jew in the world, not only be-

cause people cannot forget such atrocities, but also because remembrance is part of the Jewish faith.

"Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer; the secret of redemption lies in remembrance." This oft quoted Jewish adage surely expresses the idea that faith in God is faith in the work of God in history. Remembrance is experience of the work of God in history. It is the source of faith in redemption. This experience creates hope, it creates faith in redemption, in reunification of the divided, in reconciliation. Whoever forgets this experience loses his faith.

If we for our part sought to forget what has occurred, instead of remembering it, this would not only be inhuman. We would also impinge upon the faith of the Jews who survived and destroy the basis of reconciliation. We must erect a memorial to thoughts and feelings in our own hearts.<sup>47</sup>

Weizsäcker's speech presaged German public memory culture as it developed after unification. After unification, the importance of Israel to German foreign policy grew. Furthermore, the FRG inserted itself as an important financial and political actor in the Israeli-Palestinian 'peace process'. The next and final chapter examines these developments.

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<sup>47</sup> Official English translation, see [https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2015/02/150202-RvW-Rede-8-Mai-1985-englisch.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2015/02/150202-RvW-Rede-8-Mai-1985-englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile) (last access August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

## Chapter V Germany, Israel and the Palestine Question from Unification until Today

This chapter first analyses the deepening of German-Israeli ties after the Cold War. It then examines the German financial and political role in the Oslo Process (1993-2000) and its afterlife. Why has Germany increased its support of Israel after the Cold War? How can we explain the substantial German financial and political engagement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), notably given the fact that Palestinian prospects for viable statehood and economic development have continually decreased since the breakdown of the peace process in 2000? These questions are necessarily intertwined, for the chasm between the repeatedly expressed German commitment to a two-state solution and the politically oppressive and economically de-developing reality in the OPT needs to be put into the context of Germany's Israel policy. This policy, in turn, must be placed within a wider frame of international relations as they transformed after the Cold War from superpower competition to American global hegemony.

This hegemony was starkly impressed upon the Middle East in the 1991 Gulf War, which re-established a permanent, direct American military presence in the region, asserting American control over Gulf oil flows. The FRG hesitated to participate militarily, preferring to help payroll the war effort (Achcar 2004: 29, see also Hollis 1997).

The incorporation of the GDR and the lifting of the Iron Curtain returned Germany from a hyper-dependent Western frontline state to its position of Europe's quintessential 'middle power', which prompted fears of German nationalism and great power ambitions abroad. From both a 'realist' perspective and the historical-structuralist perspective adopted by this thesis, however, the fact of American hegemony rendered those fears rather theoretical. Washington supported German unification on the condition that the newly enlarged Germany was to remain in NATO.

Furthermore, the national identity debates setting in after unification demonstrate that the question of how to create a German national identity after Auschwitz expectably remained unresolved. Israel continued to serve as a projection plane in this context. As the introductory chapter to this thesis has already suggested, the question of why German commitment to Israel has attained the level of *Staatsräson* since the early 2000s



needs to be addressed in the context of how, over the years following unification, German efforts at publicly commemorating the Holocaust have greatly increased. Commemoration of the Holocaust has become integral to liberal constructions of German national identity. The FRG's deepening of relations with Israel should also be read as a means to express continued adherence to 'the West'. This need was felt not least in order to indicate distance from the Nazi past over European misgivings regarding unification (see also Barkawi and Laffey 2006: 341). Germany's opening of its doors to post-Soviet Jews in the 1990s needs to be explained also in this light (see also Brenner 2010). Israel initially showed apprehensions about German unification. As German companies had participated in Iraq's chemical weapons program, Iraqi scud rocket attacks on Israel in the first days of the Gulf War evoked the spectre of the Holocaust in close connection to the Germany of the present. Both events presented Germany with a need for moral legitimation. It is in this context that the FRG stepped up its military support of Israel, most notably via the delivery of the DOLPHIN submarines.

The general picture of German-Israeli relations after unification is one of ever-closer cooperation in all fields. Trade between the two countries increased in volume over the whole period studied in this chapter. Germany remained Israel's second-largest trading partner after the U.S. until 2009, when this position was taken over by China. Reflecting the size of both countries' economies, Israel was less important to Germany, moving from 40th to 47th place on the list of German importing countries (Asseburg and Busse 2011: 699 and 705). Scientific cooperation is another important factor in bilateral relations, one that overlaps with the field of military relations. To this picture we may add the various forms of youth exchanges, organized predominantly from the German side. The more recent Israeli hype about Berlin has also attracted scholarly attention (see for example Oz-Salzberger 2016). For lack of space, cooperation in these fields is again not covered in this chapter, which focuses on political and military relations. Overall, the FRG remained Israel's second most important ally following the U.S. The German involvement in the Oslo Process (1993-2000) and its afterlife needs to be analysed with this in mind.

The Oslo agreements were a relief to the FRG, apparently offering a way out of the "dilemmas of even-handedness" (Büttner 2003), outlined in the previous chapter. Mutual

Israeli-PLO recognition made possible a more than declaratory German involvement in the conflict. It is indeed only after the Accords that we can speak of a 'triangle' of German-Israeli-Palestinian relations in a concrete-political and not predominantly normative-historical sense. The role reserved for Europe in the Oslo Process was that of the main funder of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Germany contributes most to European aid and is an important bilateral donor too.

The main paradox of donor engagement in the OPT, at least if measured by its own standards, is the inverse relationship between money spent and political goals achieved. An "independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, existing side by side with Israel in peace and security"<sup>48</sup> is now a much more removed possibility than at the beginning of the Oslo Process in 1993 (see for example Haddad 2016, Roy 2007, Le More 2008 and 2005). The depth of the German engagement in the OPT in fact suggests the question to what degree Germany can be seen to have contributed to the failure of realizing a viable Palestinian state. This chapter advances four interrelated observations or arguments relating to this 'contribution'.

Firstly, the FRG does not problematise the occupation and the settlement project as the key impediments to Palestinian statehood in the OPT. This, however, effectively leads to an entrenchment of these impediments. If the occupation and the settlement project are not confronted, the danger exists that donor aid and the two-state discourse incidentally provide a cover for them.

Secondly, this aversion to political confrontation is related to a neoliberal approach to 'peacebuilding' (1990s) and 'statebuilding' (post-2000) which presents itself as economic, technical and apolitical. However, while 'Oslo' has made possible the enrichment of individual Palestinian actors, leading to a so far modest reshuffling of the socioeconomic structure in the OPT, an encompassing 'economic dividend' of Oslo did not materialize, quite the contrary. It thus seems that the conditions for economic development are political. Foremost of these would be an end to the occupation.

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<sup>48</sup> As translated from the website of the German foreign office (<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/regionaleschwerpunkte/nahermittlererosten/01-konfliktnahest/israelischpalaestinensischerkonflikt-node>, last access April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

A third characteristic of German engagement closely related to the two just mentioned is the German will to preserve the 'process' or 'negotiations' irrespective of their chances of success.

Fourthly, relating to all of the above, the simple and obvious fact that Germany values its relations with the U.S. and Israel far more than those with Palestinians explains a lot of the seeming contradictions of the German engagement in the OPT. As the chapter argues in closing, the current modalities of German engagement in the OPT are reflective of the overall set of German interests as well as the objective and subjective constraints of the German position in the 'triangular relationship' with Israel and the OPT.

### **5.1 After Unification: 'Normalisation' of the German Nation?**

Nationalism is a phenomenon of capitalist modernity, generally seeking to construe a primordial foundation for itself. The term 'reunification' conveys such a quasi-natural sense of belonging, suggesting the coming together of what had previously only been artificially separated. Had it been up to the rest of Europe and the crumbling Soviet Union, this separation may well have continued. Apprehensions concerned German power ambitions and revitalized nationalism after unification, which would turn Germany into the dominant European power. Due to organized pressure from expellees, chancellor Kohl stalled on the question of Germany's Eastern borders. Poland, lying economically shattered on the other side of the Danube, was disquieted.

Just as nobody in the 1980s would have predicted the fall of the Berlin wall anytime soon, nobody expected unification to be completed less than a year after November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989 (Wiegrefe 2010). As explained above, Washington approved of unification on the condition that the enlarged Germany was to remain in NATO, for which there was only some 20% support among the West German population. The Soviet Union, busy managing its demise, was ultimately won over in a humiliating exchange for a German development loan. The rest of Europe had no choice but to acquiesce (Wiegrefe 2010).

Unification evoked the spectre of the past in Israel. Continuing the rhetorical anti-German line of his party, Likud prime minister Yitzhak Shamir was one of the few politicians to utter his reservations in public: "The great majority of the German peo-

ple...decided to kill millions of Jewish people" and if it becomes "the strongest country in Europe, and maybe in the world, they will try to do it again." (Wiegrefe 2010: 2). As Hestermann (2014) showed, Israeli apprehensions concerned the possible revival, as clearly indicated by Shamir, of rabid German nationalism and antisemitism. Secondly, it feared that the anti-Israeli political stance of the GDR would affect the future Germany's foreign policy.

Regarding the latter problem, the GDR had gradually softened its adversarial position since the mid-80s. This development was accelerated under its last governments led by Hans Modrow and Lothar De Maizière. After the March 1990 elections, the newly constituted GDR parliament asked "the Israeli people to forgive us the hypocrisy and hostility in the GDR's official policy towards the State of Israel, to forgive us the persecution and degradation to which Jewish citizens were exposed in our country even after 1945." (cited in Voigt 2008). With unification occurring soon after, this change, accompanied by a distancing from the PLO, was ultimately of little import. As unification occurred on Western terms, Israeli misgivings about East German influence turned out to be unwarranted. The question of German nationalism after unification is more complex, yet it ultimately turned out in Israel's favour too.

'Normalisation' is not new to the vocabulary of German foreign policy or domestic debate. As argued in the previous chapters, it was embedded within the very idea of rehabilitation, the major initial factor in West Germany's Israel policy. The question of normalisation posed itself again radically in the wake of unification. Territorial enlargement and the replacement of Soviet military presence in the East by weak, western-oriented states returned Germany from a status of hyper-dependent Western frontline state to its central European position, investing it with an immense new power potential. (Asmus 1992: vii). As a RAND analysis for the U.S. army on German post-Cold War foreign policy noted, the question of German "geopolitical maturation" (Asmus 1992: v) was related to historical-psychological and cultural factors, which needed to be accounted for to explain Bonn's military abstention from the 1991 Gulf War (Asmus 1992: vi). In a tone of surprise, the study noted

the almost total lack of any discussion about German strategic interests in the Gulf and how they should guide policy. Instead, the terms were set by

such issues as whether Germans ‘owed’ the United States political support in the Gulf in return for American support during the unification process, or whether Germany’s historical obligation toward Israel required it to act in a specific fashion. German policy was often passive—a sharp contrast to Bonn’s role in Europe when vital German interests were at stake. (Asmus 1992: vi).

As this observation seems applicable even today, a brief look at the key characteristics of German identity debates after the Cold War seems in order. Flag-waving Germans, pogrom-like anti-foreigner violence, the national anthem chanted in the *Bundestag*— it is hardly surprising that unification evoked a Nazi imagery in the eyes of more critical on-lookers, especially outside the country. As the German left wing polemic Eike Geisel wrote at the time, the fall of the Berlin Wall erased the last reminder of what was experienced as the WWII defeat (Geisel 2015: 44). Would November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989 now replace November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1938, the night of anti-Jewish pogroms presaging genocide, in collective memory?

Doubtlessly, German nationalism asserted itself more confidently after unification. However, it would be wrong to assume that German nationalism had been dormant prior to the early 1990s. It is more helpful to look at the transformations of German ideology. The ferocious, at times almost manic national identity debates continuing unabatedly after unification still evinced an unaccounted-for, repressed postwar guilt, demonstrating that the question of how to construct a German national identity vis à vis the Nazi past remained unsettled (Zuckermann 2004, Evans 1997). To restate a question posed in chapter one: how to positively formulate such an identity, when the immediate Nazi past seems to prohibit its very re-emergence?

One means of coercively levelling this contradiction continued to be the call for putting a closure to the past, prominently articulated by Martin Walser during a prize ceremony at the Paulskirche in 1998. The German author spoke against what he saw as the “moral cudgel” of Auschwitz and braced himself against the “permanent presentation of our shame”. Receiving much public support, Walser was opposed by Ignatz Bubis, then president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

The German debate about Daniel J. Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, published in 1996, is especially interesting in the context of this identity question. The historian Jürgen Kocka wrote about the historiographical *Sonderweg* debate: “To determine the

proper place of National Socialism in German history and in a universal context continues to be one of the most crucial problems, perhaps the most crucial problem in German historical self-understanding.” (Kocka 1988: 10). Goldhagen’s variant of the *Sonderweg* thesis sought to explain the Holocaust on the level of perpetrator motivation. According to Goldhagen, the Shoah was a German national project, driven primarily by German antisemitism. In positing the genocide as the act of “ordinary Germans”, he took position against, amongst others, Christopher Browning’s prior work *Ordinary Men*, which integrated individual, social-psychological and sociological factors into a multi-layered analysis on the basis of the same empirical material used by Goldhagen.

Goldhagen tried to break down established structuralist, complex historical explanations of Nazism and the Shoah in order to again pose the simple and yet still so pertinent question: Why did so many Germans willingly take part in the extermination of Europe’s Jews? Goldhagen thus moved the discussion towards long and collectively repressed questions of personal, individual motivation and responsibility. This explains why his book was at first vehemently criticized in the German media in a form of defensive, national reflex against a (perceived) accusation of collective guilt. Upon the book’s publication in German, however, the author’s reading tour was triumphant. Yet, the book was as harshly criticized by American and Israeli historians as it was by German scholars and the divide between professional critique and public endorsement could also be observed for the American context (Herbert 1999). Is there thus anything specific that can be observed for the German case?

The Goldhagen debate created an interesting impasse in Germany. On the one hand, professional historiographical critique of Goldhagen ran the risk of being portrayed as a form of guilt evasion (which, indeed, is why right-wing historians decided to abstain from the debate altogether). On the other hand, the unquestioning embrace of Goldhagen’s thesis was able to serve the exact same psychological need of dissociating the Nazi past from one’s own historical self. The reduction of Nazism’s and the Holocaust’s causes to the single factor of German antisemitic motivation enabled especially younger generations of Germans to adopt a critical posture towards the Nazi past, while simultaneously making it possible to embrace a national identity in the present, since German “eliminator antisemitism” was firmly boxed into a specific, closed historical period. Thus, even

though Goldhagen touched a raw nerve, his argument could be utilized rather easily to meet a desire of closure and guilt-relief (Zuckermann 2004: 123-144).

The debates of the 1990s show the ubiquitous uses to which Auschwitz as a symbol could be put (Zuckermann 2004). For example, the initial debates about the Berlin Holocaust Memorial indicate how 'Auschwitz' can be integrated as a positive part of German national identity. Gerhard Schröder, the German chancellor who oversaw the memorial's construction, wanted it to be "a place where one likes to go." (Leggewie and Mayer 2005). The German historian Eberhard Jäckel, one of the key figures in making the memorial possible, publicly said on the fifth anniversary of its construction that "some in other countries envy the Germans for this memorial" and that it helped Germans "to walk upright" again (cited in Thünemann 2013). These comments may sound absurd. Yet what they express is a phenomenon that gradually emerged after unification, which is German national pride in how Germany is confronting its past.

The German utilization of the Holocaust for state purposes eventually reached a peak in the Red-Green coalition's justification for the German participation in NATO's intervention in Kosovo. As foreign minister Joschka Fischer famously argued during a Green Party convention in January 1999, Germany was to participate not despite, but because of Auschwitz. According to Fischer, the Balkan wars transferred upon Germany a responsibility to combat fascist and Nazi tendencies not only at home, but also to act militarily against "ethnic warfare" and "displacement" whenever it made its return to Europe.<sup>49</sup> That the first German military intervention since 1945 was legitimized in the name of Auschwitz by the Green party's foreign minister Fischer, who had based his prior pacifism also on the Nazi past, demonstrates how this past can be turned from an obstacle into a vehicle for military 'normalisation'. However, interventionism in the name of Auschwitz was not an exclusively German affair. As Barkawi and Laffey note, Western-liberal interventionism of the 1990s defined its legitimacy very much against the historical example of Nazism, reinforcing an "image of the West as the preventer of genocide and the punisher of violators of human rights" (Barkawi and Laffey 2006: 341). German

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<sup>49</sup> For the most important parts of the speech see <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/wortlaut-auszuege-aus-der-fischer-rede-a-22143-druck.html> (last access June 19th, 2018). A full transcript of the speech can be found under <https://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~naeser/kos-fisc.html> (last access June 19thth, 2018).

participation in NATO's intervention needs to be read also as a form of further Western integration.

## **5.2 The Strengthening of the German-Israeli Alliance after the Cold War**

Contrary to the above cited apprehensions, one Germany on western terms turned out to be more beneficial to Israel than two locked in a systemic opposition of which the question of Israel-Palestine formed part. The Kohl government initially displayed irritation at the Israeli misgivings about unification. A flurry of visits by German officials sought to calm the turmoil and Bonn promised increased support (Pallade 2005: 136).

It was the 1991 Gulf War which placed the Holocaust squarely back into the centre of German-Israeli relations. German companies had previously contributed to Iraq's chemical weapons program. The Scud rockets fired on Israel during the first days of the war, combined with Saddam Hussein's rhetoric of annihilation, unavoidably fused into a Holocaust-Germany-gas association. Tom Segev, who finished *The Seventh Million* in 1991, describes the image of Israelis with gas masks in sealed rooms as an alienating, traumatic experience, ending his study with this sentence: "Never before had so many Israeli shared so Jewish an experience." (Segev 1993: 507).

As immediate redress for German industrial participation in Iraq's ballistic and chemical weapons program, the German foreign minister travelled to Israel and signed a cheque for humanitarian aid to the value of 255 million Deutsche Mark (approx. €82 million today). Two American PATRIOT missile batteries stationed in Germany were also delivered. Israel handed Germany a detailed wish list of military goods. The most important items delivered in the Gulf War context were eight FUCHS tanks, a grant for an improved PATRIOT battery and three DOLPHIN submarines, which were delivered at the end of the decade (Pallade 2005: 151-155). Israel planned to buy these specifically designed submarines already in the 1980s, but needed to pull out of an already signed deal for financial reasons. The DOLPHINs were to radically transform the capabilities of Israel's navy. Israeli military analyst Reuven Pedatzur summed up the whole episode well:



Ironically enough it was the ruler of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, who rescued the navy by attacking Israel with Scud missiles during the Gulf War of 1991. This assault, which occurred on the background of information about the massive German assistance to Iraq in developing its missiles and also in building its chemical and biological arsenal, led the German government to try to 'compensate' Israel, and improve Germany's image in the West, by agreeing to build Israeli submarines in a German shipyard in the summer of 1991. (Pedatzur and Shiek 2002)

Furthermore, the DOLPHINs also bridged a production gap in Germany. With domestic orders lacking due to unification and Gulf War costs, deliveries for Israel were still justifiable, thus helping maintain production stability in the naval sector of the German arms industry (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003: 21). The importance of keeping production steady should be seen not only in purely economic terms of preventing unemployment or indirectly subsidising an important sector of German industry. The German arms industry is politically relevant. On the one hand, the stronger the German arms industry is, the higher is Germany's potential degree of military independence. On the other hand, arms exports are an instrument of German foreign policy. Furthermore, large-scale projects such as the DOLPHIN submarine construction allow for the testing of new technologies, helping Germany to keep its qualitative, competitive edge in the naval-military sector.

According to Nassauer and Steinmetz, the delivery of the first three DOLPHINs constituted the most costly German arms export to Israel so far. The costs cannot be calculated with absolute certainty. However, the two experts are sure that the FRG took over at least 85% of the production costs for the three submarines, amounting to about 1.1 billion Deutsche Mark. Nassauer and Steinmetz estimate that the remaining 15% were paid in kind by German arms procurements in Israel, thus sparing Israel from touching its state budget (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003: 20). Pallade estimated German aid to Israel in the Gulf War context to total 2 billion Deutsche Mark. Aid to Israel came second to that extended to the U.S, which received German contributions to the value of 8 billion Deutsche Mark, the rough equivalent to €2.58 billion today (Pallade 2005: 153).

In 2005, on its last day in office, the Red-Green coalition government signed a deal for two more submarines. In 2006, the delivery of a sixth was agreed upon. Germany contributed a third of the costs to those latter three DOLPHINs. One of the main purposes of

the submarines is deterrence against the Iranian nuclear program. It is an open secret, ritually denied by Germany, that the submarines can be equipped with nuclear missiles. They have been especially equipped with enlarged cannon tubes for this purpose (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003). Political scientist Oz Aruch adds that Germany, by providing the submarines, is simultaneously able to ease eventual pressures of being dragged into direct military confrontation with Iran in the case of an Iranian-Israeli war (Aruch 2012: 16).

At the time of writing (April 2018), a deal over three further submarines is pending due to a corruption scandal reaching into the Israeli prime minister's office. It is unlikely that the deal will be cancelled, however. In 2015, Berlin agreed to the sale of four corvettes, which will be used to protect Israeli gas extraction off the Gazan and Lebanese coast. Initial considerations of making this sale dependent on Israeli concessions regarding settlement construction were dropped, with Berlin carrying 27% of the costs (Bergmann and Stark 2017, Nassauer 2017).

One auspicious characteristic of the large-scale projects is that Germany either practically pays for them (as in the case of the first three submarines) or substantially contributes to their financing (as in the case of the subsequent submarines and the corvettes). A popular explanation for these facts would be that Germany subsidises the arming of Israel out of historical guilt. It is true that in part, German subsidies are identified with an idea of 'reparations'. This is the case especially for the first three submarines delivered after the 1991 Gulf War. As Oz Aruch shows, much more explicitly from the Israeli side, German subsidies for the submarines are also seen as being in continuity with the 1952 Reparations Agreement (Aruch 2012: 17). Indeed, as Aruch shows on the basis of WikiLeaks files, the Israeli government sought to link the submarine deliveries to what it saw as outstanding reparations from East Germany, which had refused payment in 1952 (Aruch 2012: 17). However, as should already be clear from the above, there is no single, causal explanation for the German military commitment to Israel, whose gains, even if not always on a directly observable material level, are generally mutual.

Another factor one needs to take into account in this context is the pivotal military relationship between Washington and Jerusalem. Israel's military budget depends to a crucial degree on U.S. contributions. Since the mid-1980s, annual U.S. military and economic aid to Israel has stood at about \$3 to \$3.5 billion (Odlum 2002: 2). Israel is the highest

recipient of U.S. military aid and the only among those recipients that is allowed to invest part of this aid into its own military industries. Since Israel's military coffers are largely filled with U.S. Dollars, buying arms from Germany would constitute an indirect American purchase of German arms. This is part of the reason why Germany is largely responsible for financing large projects such as the DOLPHINs. The towering nature of the American-Israeli military relationship also means that by definition, German-Israeli military relations operate in the spaces not filled out by the U.S.-Israel relationship, such as the naval sector.

### *Submarines and Holocaust projections*

The submarine deliveries are indeed debated very differently in both countries, revealing disparate perceptions of what German-Israeli relations mean in light of the past. A Jerusalem Post editorial in 2006 stated on the occasion of the second submarine agreement:

The stance of the German government underlines a radical transformation for that country's people. While their grandparents' generation perpetrated the Holocaust, and the previous generation paid for the Holocaust with reparations to its victims, the current generation is helping prevent a second Holocaust by providing the [Israel defence Forces] with some of the most important defensive weapons systems in its arsenal. As far as corrective steps go, that's a huge one. (cited in Achcar 2010: 395).

While obviously this does not represent 'the' Israeli view on the question, the editorial radicalises the logic espoused by Ben-Gurion in his 1960 conversation with Adenauer, when he argued for German help in building the Israeli state as one step towards the *impossible* goal of repairing for the Holocaust. Here, however, it seems as if reparations for the 'original' Holocaust in the form of arms deliveries is possible, since they are seen to prevent a "second Holocaust". The German military commitment to Israel should be understood as giving material expression to what Angela Merkel framed as the German *Staatsräson* – the German commitment to Israel's security.<sup>50</sup> Nothing exemplifies better

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<sup>50</sup> This impression was also related to me in a number of background talks and by two German interviewees wishing to stay anonymous. These interviewees were intimately involved in German-Israeli relations, both worked in Israel, one in official function for the German government.

the idea that the FRG stands in for Israel's security than by providing it with nuclear-capable submarines, depicted as deterrence, as the ultimate life-insurance.

How are the submarine deliveries debated in Germany? One would assume that there is no easier way out of the past than "preventing a second Holocaust" through arms deliveries. Yet, the German government seeks to avoid public debate about military ties with Israel (see also Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003). One reason for this is a German culture of relative military restraint, as it evolved after the experience of defeat in two world wars. However, the issue is more complicated in the case of weapon deliveries to the Jewish state. The controversy about the late Günther Grass's poem *Was gesagt werden muss* ("What must be said") demonstrates these complications well.

The poem, which appeared in 2012 in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, as well as being published in Italy and Spain, was about the German submarine deliveries, Israel and Iran. It ostensibly sought to criticize German weapon deliveries to Israel which would enable it to "destroy an Iranian people".<sup>51</sup> Grass's poem was swiftly criticized by the majority of German public commentators as antisemitic, his genocidal attributions to Israel read as a form of perpetrator/victim inversion by somebody who had only shortly before admitted his participation in the Waffen-SS during the last moments of WWII.<sup>52</sup>

It is unnecessary to warm up an altogether predictable debate over Grass's memory, a debate which integrates seamlessly into prior and subsequent similarly-structured debates. Grass's heavy-handed, moralistic poem, difficult to read without an acute sense of embarrassment, had nothing new to add to the questions it purportedly sought to tackle and could easily be interpreted in terms of what in Germany and Austria is referred to as 'secondary antisemitism', a concept discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. More interesting than the poem itself were the reactions it stirred in German public debate. If reactions to critique are one indicator of the quality of critique, the poet was unable to pass the minimal threshold of avoiding applause from the extreme and Neo-Nazi right (as well as, one may add, from the Iranian regime).

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<sup>51</sup> The original German poem was published on April 4th, 2012 in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Here, the English translation by *The Guardian* is used (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/apr/05/gunter-grass-what-must-be-said> (last access April 17th, 2018)).

<sup>52</sup> Grass depiction of Israel as a danger to "world peace" was found to link to previous antisemitic notions, his allusions to a German taboo on the critique of Israel was criticized as summoning the idea of a Jewish lobby powerful enough to stifle German debate. One of the most eloquent critiques of Grass was written by Frank Schirrmacher, co-publisher of the *FAZ* (Schirrmacher 2012).

While Grass was partly ostracised in the public sphere, he received support from private citizens. This provides yet another indication of the often-noted divide, addressed in the conclusion of this thesis, which exists between the governmental discourse on German-Israeli relations and public attitudes towards the relationship (see for example Asseburg and Busse 2011: 710-711). What the Grass controversy ultimately shows, at least in light of the questions pursued here, is that debates about German foreign policy are often started from, or if not immediately move towards, the terrain of national identity and the Nazi past.

While Grass found German submarine deliveries to make possible a genocide against the Iranian people, the *Jerusalem Post* editorial thanked Germany for aiding Israel in preventing an Iranian genocide of the Jews in Israel. Projections and instrumentalisations thus prevent a more rational debate.

Chancellor Merkel refrained from commenting on Grass's poem, preferring not to enter the debate it provoked. By contrast, it is revealing to ask what types of debates the German government *actually* wants concerning its relations with Israel. The 2015 anniversary of 50 years of German-Israeli diplomatic relations is rather illustrative in this regard. That year also marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and of German surrender to the Allied forces. Yet, it was for the anniversary of diplomatic relations that celebrations and events were organized in Germany throughout the year, events which resonated, however, only with small parts of the German public. The anniversary did not arouse any interest in Israel beyond that which was demanded by diplomatic courtesy. Events in Israel were co-organized with Germany and paid for with German money. Indeed, as a number of anonymous interviewees, including German government officials involved in the matter disclosed, the anniversary was a rather German affair also in Israel (see also Zimmermann 2016: 49). As the above quoted *Jerusalem Post* editorial indicates, the dynamic is opposite in the case of the submarines, which are openly and publicly framed as a continued form of German reparation. Indeed, this opposite dynamic shows rather well what Germany *also* seeks to invest in when contributing to Israel's military force: Jewish gestures of absolution. This German desire gives birth to notions such as 'friendship' and 'reconciliation', so preponderant in the German governmental framing of bilateral relations, so absent from Israeli discourse.

### *Other forms of military cooperation*

In 1991, the BMVg replied to a parliamentarian's request that "since the beginning of our cooperation with Israel, it has been the practice of all governments to keep this cooperation informal, out of the public eye." (cited in Nassauer, Steinmetz and Pallade 2002). Nassauer, Pallade and Steinmetz find this statement exemplary for the whole duration of military cooperation (Nasser, Steinmetz and Pallade 2002). Available information is difficult to verify, only leaks and political scandals brought much of the current knowledge to light (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003:5).

The confidentiality of German-Israeli military relations frustrates descriptive and analytical ambitions. Furthermore, the problematic characteristics of German public discourse turns this into a particularly unwieldy topic, enabling facile scandalisation on a perforce thin and unreliable empirical basis. Mordechay Lewy, a former Israeli ambassador to Germany, commented drily on Pallade's somewhat bulky 2005 study that had the author focused on intelligence and military cooperation only, "such a work might even have been a commercial success, given the public's insatiable appetite for anything associated with the Mossad and secrecy." (Lewy and Newman 2007: 138). The question, of course, is whether this is the sort of success one wishes to look for, especially in Germany. Thus, and on the basis of the available empirical evidence, authors such as Shpiro, Nassauer or Pallade all take care to emphasize the mutual benefits of military cooperation, in order not to feed into perceptions according to which Germany constantly gives and Israel ceaselessly demands.

Apart from the large-scale submarine deliveries covered above, military as well as intelligence cooperation occurs on a steady, everyday basis. Military, intelligence and scientific exchanges are closely interlinked. Pallade, who is very supportive of what he observes, has provided an exhaustive account of this cooperation throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. He finds military and intelligence to be stable, built on mutual trust and working "quite independently of the current political situation and changes in government in both countries." (Pallade 2005: 243).

Building upon the analytical accounts of Shpiro, discussed in the previous chapters, Pallade places high importance on intelligence cooperation, which, as with military relations, he finds to be on par with intra-NATO cooperation (Pallade 2005: 128), with the Mossad

having operational freedom on German territory (Pallade 2005: 244). The BND has played a mediating role for example in prisoner and corpse exchanges with Lebanon's Hezbollah (Pallade 2005: 90-101). Overall, intelligence relations covered information exchange about third countries (for example on armament levels) and, as Pallade writes using the vocabulary of the time, "[j]oint actions against terrorism and rogue states". One such action, for example, was the German banning of the Hamas-linked al-Aqsa charity in Germany in 2002 (Pallade 2005: 86-88).

As Nassauer and Steinmetz (2003) and Pallade (2005: 136-240) write, military cooperation between the two countries covers joint research and development, armament provision and production, as well as training between the two armies. As one example of joint development and research, Nassauer and Steinmetz, who emphasize the importance of Israel's delivery to the FRG of Soviet-made weapons for inspection after the 1967, 1973 and 1982 wars, recount how, in a reciprocal gesture, Israel was given large stockpiles of GDR weaponry and military material after unification. These camouflaged deliveries, which were accidentally uncovered by the Hamburg coast guard, proved helpful to research and development leading to the German and Israeli modernization of their air-to-air missiles (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003: 12).

The delivery of components for integration into larger weapon systems is another dimension of cooperation. For example, Israel's Merkava 4 tanks are equipped with German 400 MTU motors (Nassauer and Steinmetz 2003: 23). As component deliveries do not appear in Germany's official arms export statistics, published since 1999, they can easily be kept secret.

Regarding the more direct industry-to-industry cooperation, relations also deepened. As Pallade writes: "[o]n an industrial and commercial level, partnerships with German arms producers allowed the Israelis to get a foothold in the EU's industrial defence sector, which was largely closed to outsiders through bilateral agreements and internal alliances." (Pallade 2005: 241f.).

As regards cooperation between the two armies, training of Israeli soldiers on German weapons is, of course, a corollary to the German production of these weapons for Israel, yet the interlinking of Bundeswehr and IDF is deeper and more complex than that. In a rare occurrence, leading figures behind this cooperation partly lifted the veil in a German

radio interview in 2002. Israeli General Reuven Benkler, who at the time worked as the military attaché at the Israeli embassy in Berlin, stated in the interview that

[t]here are few secrets between the two armies. Everything is on the table and we almost permanently and directly share everything with the German army about what we learn from the practical experiences of our army. And we are an army with very rich experience. The German army is one of the few which gets a comprehensive picture of us: how we fight, what we do, what we learnt from our missions and what we did right. As a result, the Bundeswehr takes part in everything we develop...in all insights and consequences derived from praxis.<sup>53</sup>

Benkler's German counterpart, Helmut Willmann, had previously served as the inspector of the Bundeswehr and counted among his many medals an "honorary citation" from the IDF, the first non-IDF soldier to get one, for his efforts in bringing the two armies closer together. Willmann explains his ambitions also in historical terms. For example, a tour of Yad Vashem is obligatory for German army delegations visiting Israel. After having "experienced Yad Vashem" German soldiers were then to "also experience the Israeli army":

I was...fascinated by the [Israeli] army. This is an army that is always in action. This is a country that basically always fought for its physical existence. This means: We, who were at that moment, in the 1990s, changing the German army from a peacetime army to a combat army, were of course looking for contacts with armies that had more experience than we did. And from a professional point of view, I was very impressed with the Israeli army. And I knew that cooperating with the Israeli army is of course of professional benefit to us.

Not wanting to disclose more precisely what this cooperation entailed, Willmann stated that it is comparable in level only with that of the American, British or French armies, estimating the Bundeswehr to be the "most important partner of the Israeli army after the U.S. army." Benkler confirms the impression of close relations: "Relations are on a daily basis. Without disruption. These are working relations between allies."

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<sup>53</sup> All quotes from Deutschlandfunk, April 10, 2002 ([http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/die-geschichte-ist-immer-im-hintergrund.724.de.html?dram:article\\_id=97329](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/die-geschichte-ist-immer-im-hintergrund.724.de.html?dram:article_id=97329)) (last access 17 April 2018). See also Pallade 2005: 240-243, whose selection, translation and interpretation of quotes from the interviews however differ from those given above.



At the time of this interview in spring 2002, media reports surfaced claiming Germany was withholding the delivery of important material to the IDF because of the Israeli crackdown on Palestinians during the Second intifada. In contrast to France or Britain, this was not legitimized by the German government on human rights grounds or its own federal export laws, which would have made an embargo necessary. Chancellor Schröder however ended the debate early in the Bundestag in April 2002: “I want to say it very clearly: Israel gets what it needs for maintaining its security, and it gets it when it needs it.” (cited in Nassauer, Steinmetz and Pallade 2002). That the Israeli defence minister had before openly threatened Germany with a new Holocaust debate may have helped (this, after all, is the flip side to the rehabilitation argument). Yet, as the statements of Benkler and Willmann quoted above indicate, the German military establishment seemed to have by then already acquired a sufficient self-interest in military relations and in seeing the IDF ‘in action’.

### **5.3. Germany, Israel and Palestine after the Oslo Accords: Perpetuating the Occupation?**

An initial problem one confronts when writing about the German role in the Oslo Process (1993-2000) and its afterlife is that the two-state discourse the German government upholds is detached from the reality of Israeli sovereignty over the OPT. This divide incidentally relates to a methodological problem encountered when doing fieldwork for this chapter. German aid workers and political representatives interviewed in both the OPT and ‘Israel proper’ generally offered me two options for the interview. I could either have an ‘official’ version which I was allowed to record, or an ‘unofficial’ one which I was not. This indicates a much heightened sense of the sensitivity of the topic, as interviewees hesitated to risk transferring locally generated knowledge to the German public sphere. Although the Oslo-framework officially guides German foreign policy towards the conflict, interviewees displayed irritation or laughed when I mentioned the Oslo terminology as if it still held any meaning. What we may call a problem of two audiences, in which two conflicting sets of knowledge are produced, to some degree applies to all contexts of Western intervention in formerly colonized areas, where ‘statebuilders’ are confronted with local facts and demands not necessarily in synch with perceptions and

exigencies of donor governments (Schlichte and Veit 2012). However, this problem is exacerbated and holds special characteristics in the German-Israeli-Palestinian context.

The methodological problem of transparency and reconstructability incurred by always having opted for the ‘unofficial’ interview version is somewhat offset by the fact that after direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations under the auspices of former U.S. State Secretary John Kerry failed to produce a result in 2014, only few illusions about the prospects for a two-state solution continued to exist in the academic and policy-advisory literature (see for example Asseburg and Busse 2016, Lovatt 2017, Thrall 2017). In this light, it is interesting to take note of a German language introductory overview of the Israel-Palestine conflict, published in 2016. The book’s two authors work for the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* (SWP), a major German foreign policy think tank which advises the Bundestag and the federal government on international politics. Interestingly enough, there seemed to have existed a demand on the German book market for such an overview. Surely, the facts the authors present are not really central to the German public debate about Israel and Palestine. In their last chapter, they describe what they see as a “one state” reality of unequal rights in Israel and Palestine. Aware that there are presently no prospects for a two-state solution, they outline the current situation, well-known to any observer of the conflict, of direct and indirect Israeli control over the OPT. While short on the grossly unequal access to economic resources, the authors describe the system of unequal civil rights to have developed in the OPT and ‘Israel proper’, a system which in their views fits the definition of Apartheid in international law (Asseburg and Busse 2016).

Nevertheless, the CDU-SPD coalition treaty of early 2018 reiterates the German commitment to a two-state solution. Echoing the Oslo agreements, the coalition parties call for all final-status issues to be “solved in negotiations”. The treaty also repeats the traditional criticism of further settlement construction, viewed as contradicting international law and the two-state solution.<sup>54</sup>

Instead of providing a descriptive reconstruction of the German engagement in the Oslo Process and beyond, the following pages take the current reality of direct and indirect Is-

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<sup>54</sup> See treaty text under [https://www.cdu.de/system/tmf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag\\_2018.pdf?file=1](https://www.cdu.de/system/tmf/media/dokumente/koalitionsvertrag_2018.pdf?file=1) (last access April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

raeli control over the OPT and what appears as the end of the two-state solution as their starting point, in order to enquire into the German contribution to this outcome. It must be added that I developed a number of the following arguments and interpretations in the course of six months of work for the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation (FES) in East Jerusalem. The FES is a political foundation affiliated with the German Social-Democrats. In retrospect, this work functioned methodologically as a type of participant observation for the purposes of this thesis. Needless to say, all views presented in the following are my own.

### *Early critics and current outcomes*

The main faults of the Oslo agreements have been identified early. They were consequently perpetuated by international donor aid unconditionally aimed at financing the 'process'. The main structural problem which accompanied the Oslo Process and its afterlife until this day are, at least from the perspective of a viable two-state solution in accordance with international law, that the PLO agreed to an arrangement which effectively made the minimal Palestinian demand of statehood in the 1967 territories negotiable. In light of developments after 1993 and in view of what has by now become consensual knowledge, it is revealing to re-read what the erstwhile critics of Oslo had to say. In an essay for the London Review of Books titled *The Morning After*, Edward Said drew out some of the core problems of the Oslo framework simply by reading the 1993 Declaration of Principles (DOP) and placing it into the recent history of the conflict as well as the power relations between the three actors involved in its drafting; the U.S., Israel and the PLO. Unsparingly critical of the PLO's corruption, nationalism and statism at all costs, Said called the Oslo Accords "a Palestinian surrender", in which the PLO exchanged its recognition by Israel for opening the way to compromise on the minimal Palestinian demand of statehood in the 1967 territories:

by accepting that questions of land and sovereignty are being postponed till 'final Status negotiations', the Palestinians have in effect discounted their unilateral and internationally acknowledged claim to the West Bank and Gaza: these have now become 'disputed territories'. Thus with Palestinian assistance Israel has been awarded at least an equal claim to them (Said 1993).

What Oslo offered to the PLO in practical terms was “getting a foothold on the ground in exchange for limited autonomy without enforceable guarantees that this would not be a permanent arrangement.” (Haddad 2016: 264). In accepting this arrangement, Arafat broke the national consensus that had emerged within the PLO among the major factions: statehood in the 22% per cent of Mandate Palestine that Israel did not control before 1967 (Achcar 1993/2004: 197, see also Thrall 2017).

In other words, the only outcome the PLO would have been able to put forward to the Palestinian inhabitants of the OPT as a permanent settlement was a state in all of the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Yet this outcome was not in the cards. For both strategic and ideological reasons, neither Labour nor Likud contemplated, in the course of developments after the 1967 war, a full return of the occupied territories. Short of extremist ‘transfer’ solutions, Israeli OPT strategizing basically revolved around the question of how much land to keep with how many Palestinians in it. Both the Likud and the Israeli Labour party cannot be faulted: their strategic and ideological adversity against full Palestinian statehood and unwillingness to return the territories in their entirety were always openly formulated (Achcar 1994/2004: 205-223). The fact that settlements continued to grow unabated after the signing of the DOP indicates as much. Between 1993 and 2017, the number of settlers in the West Bank tripled, now amounting to well over half a million (Wildangel 2018: 53). Accordingly, for Israel, Oslo was essentially about redeployment and limited Palestinian self-governance in areas of population density (Le More 2005: 985f.). From a very basic perspective then, the discourse of the ‘two-state solution’ obfuscates the fact that there has never been even the broadest common understanding between Israel and the PLO regarding such a solution (Thrall 2017: 53).

That the Oslo Accords and the Venice Declaration, discussed in the previous chapter, seemingly both pointed into the direction of a two-state outcome led Anders Persson to conclude that Europe had played an important role in framing a ‘just’ solution to the conflict, a framing then gradually adopted by all relevant actors (Persson 2015). This reasoning reflects a wider European academic and political thinking which, due to the lack of more readily perceptible European contributions, stresses Europe’s normative role. This perception cannot, however, account for the current outcomes of the Oslo Process, simply too far removed from an outcome which might be considered just. Thus, the

more plausible interpretation is that Israel decided to recognize the PLO when it was sufficiently weak to accept an agreement that was non-committal enough to allow the stronger side to shape the direction, duration and outcomes of negotiations. The ferocity of Israel's opposition to the 1980 Venice Declaration, covered in the preceding chapter, only seemingly contrasts with Jerusalem's endorsement of the Oslo-Process. True, the 1993 DOP is much more forthcoming towards the PLO in terms of recognition than the Venice Declaration. The latter had not recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. With the DOP, Israel recognized the PLO as such, following the PLO's recognition of Israel's right to a secure existence in 1988. Yet, what is rather more surprising is not the Israeli switch from opposition to Venice to the endorsement of Oslo, but rather the PLO's. The Venice Declaration, which the PLO snubbed, explicitly called for an end to the 1967 occupation. It declared settlements in the OPT to be illegal and opposed unilateral changes to Jerusalem's status. The DOP provided none of these commitments.

Key to understanding the PLO's change in position was its much weakened status following its 1982 ouster from Lebanon and the cessation of Gulf funding due to its backing of Iraq in 1991. It was the PLO's weakness which led it to accept a settlement it would not have assented to under different circumstances. Seeking to use the first intifada's momentum, Arafat accepted the Oslo gamble primarily for reasons of organizational survival, speculating, as did Rabin and Peres, that the Oslo momentum would make possible an Israeli-Palestinian peace, albeit with expectations as to the conditions of this peace differing between the two sides. For Israel, as the First Intifada drove home the costs of the occupation and with the U.S. pressuring for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, the Oslo agreements likewise constituted the best possible option under the given circumstances.

### *The German relief*

In his initial assessment of the Oslo Accords, Noam Chomsky questioned the discrepancy between an American public opinion easily swayed towards a rather diffuse view of Oslo as leading almost necessarily towards peace and what was actually stated in the Oslo

agreements themselves (Chomsky 1999: 533-569). A similar discrepancy can be observed for the German parliamentary debate following the signing of the DOP.<sup>55</sup>

The mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO afforded relief. As CDU parliamentarian Karl Lamers put it, Germany's "special relations with Israel" had at times led to a "painful discrepancy" because "it seemed as if the wellbeing of Israel was connected to the continued homelessness of the Palestinians." Cross-party consensus existed that in order to maintain the historical momentum; proponents of the peace process would require generous support and detractors needed to be discouraged.<sup>56</sup> In order to signal German support for the Oslo Process, foreign minister Klaus Kinkel accordingly announced German support for Israel's association with the EU and the willingness to further deepen bilateral relations.

Germany would consequently be the driving force behind the 1994 Essen Declaration, which defined EU-Israel relations as "special" (Wildangel 2018: 50). According to political scientist Patrick Müller, Bonn's engagement was "critical" for the drafting of the EU-Israeli Association Agreement in 1995 and Germany "functioned as Israel's chief advocate regarding preferential trade and access to research and technology programs in the EU." (Müller 2011: 393). The Association Agreement was a direct reward for the Oslo agreements, which seemed to create positive movement in a key area of European foreign policy (see also Hollis 1997: 20).

The foreign minister then spoke of the need to further increase German aid for the OPT, already exceptionally high in per capita terms. This financial aid, discussed below, was supplemented with bestowing some of the symbolic insignias of statehood on the PLO. Arafat was invited to an official visit, the PLO representation in Bonn was upgraded to diplomatic status and the FRG was one of the first Western countries to open a representative office in the OPT (Müller 2011: 393f., Frangi 2002). It is fairly clear that a vision of Palestinian statehood, albeit underspecified, existed in Germany and Europe. As Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters write, despite the fact that the Oslo Accords never stipulated

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<sup>55</sup> Bundestag, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 1993. See <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/12/12176.pdf> (last access April 26th, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> The only voice that was more cautious about the Oslo Process was that of Hans Modrow of the Socialist-Democratic Party (PDS), one of the last overseers of the Eastern German regime's demise, under whom, as described above, the GDR's anti-Israel stance was partially reversed: "We understand the worries of those who fear that the compromise now achieved will be set as the status quo, blocking further steps towards a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East."

such an outcome, the European view at the time was that a Palestinian state would be the “necessary, desired, and inevitable outcome of the peace process” (Pardo and Peters 2010: 17).

### *The European and German role in the Oslo Process*

Europe was invited as a funder into a process it did not decide upon. This is why the European role calls for a separate examination compared to those of the U.S., Israel and the PLO (see Haddad 2016: 36). Funding the Oslo Process was the only role Europe was able to play in what was then the Middle East’s central conflict arena. This is crucial for understanding what is examined here, which is the German role within Europe and towards Israel and Palestine. The American and Israeli policy of keeping the Europeans out of political negotiations between Arab states, Israel and the Palestinians extends from the 1978 Camp David Agreement up until the 2014 negotiations under the auspices of state secretary Kerry. Instruments such as the ‘Middle East Quartet’, composed of the U.S., Russia, the UN and Europe, are the exception that proves the rule, primarily created to absorb European political ambitions (see also Persson 2015: 119).

It was important both to Washington and Jerusalem to put Europe on the political sidelines of the Oslo Process. The U.S. sought to reserve the role of an ‘honest broker’ to itself while Israel, rightly, expected a much more forthcoming stance from its American ally than from the EU countries. As Rouba al-Fattal summarized, Europe’s role as a funder “was not only needed but also welcomed by all parties. For their part, the Palestinians were in dire need of assistance to kick-start their economic activities, whereas the Israelis and Americans were happy that the ‘Old Continent’ would pay the bill while being alienated from further political aspirations in the region.” (al-Fattal 2010: 7, see also Hollis 1997: 21). It is rather telling that by 1996, Germany had phased out its annual ‘development loan’ paid to Israel since 1996 and re-channelled it, with Israeli approval, towards the newly-formed PA.

The financial nature of Europe’s role has led to the by now clichéd characterization of Europe as a ‘payer’ and not a ‘player’. Yet the underlying idea of this framing, namely of donor aid being apolitical, is fallacious and works to relieve donors of responsibility, implicitly assuming an unlikely political naiveté. Furthermore, this idea mirrors a neoliberal

discourse, in which aid becomes purely ‘technical’ precisely because it is portrayed as being without alternative. As Haddad puts it, “despite their frequent depiction as tangential actors observing an ancient irrational power play they are helpless to stem despite their noble efforts, the Western donor community has played an important role in devising a series of self-described ‘peacebuilding’ and ‘statebuilding’ policies which are heavily implicated in the reality to have emerged as a consequence of the DOP’s signing, in all its unseemly manifestations.” (Haddad 2016: 2).

The German government’s conception of the role it should play in the ‘peace process’ was formulated by chancellor Schröder upon assumption of office in 1998 as such:

We cannot play the role of godfather in the peace process between Israel, the Palestinians and the neighboring Arab states...This role falls to the U.S. and to the international organizations. However, we Europeans can and should contribute to making the peace process irreversible by targeted economic aid, by opening the markets and by providing infrastructure. This is how we can meet our historical responsibility — especially and directly for Israel and for peace.<sup>57</sup>

While Schröder’s description of the German role mirrors neatly Anne Le More’s often-quoted characterization of donor engagement that “the US decides, the World Bank leads, the EU pays, the UN feeds” (Le More 2005: 995), it also conveys a specifically neoliberal understanding of political progress. Here, economic aid, provision of basic state structures and market openings are, so it seems, expected to quasi-naturally lead to economic growth, which in turn would make peace “irreversible”. It is neoliberalism with a German touch, as Schröder embeds this market-based approach to peace within German historical responsibility.

#### *How much money and where does it go to?*

Indeed, Germany has been a key driver within the EU for an ‘economic’ approach to peace- and statebuilding (Müller 2011). The effects specifically of neoliberal peace- and statebuilding in the OPT have recently become the subject of more sustained study (see especially Haddad 2016 and Turner and Shweiki 2014). The expectations expressed by

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<sup>57</sup> Bundestag, November 10th, 1998 (<http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/14/14003.pdf>, last access April 26th, 2018).



chancellor Schröder do not correspond to economic and political developments in the OPT. It is especially Sara Roy (see for example 2007 and 2016) who has extensively studied the economic devastations wrought upon Palestinians following the Oslo agreements. The EU has been the largest donor to the OPT since the Oslo Process and the post-Oslo period of 'statebuilding', with Germany having contributed most to EU aid (Müller 2011: 393). The FRG is also a major bilateral donor. The OPT have received some of the highest German per capita distributions. Altogether, German aid has amounted to €1.1 billion so far.<sup>58</sup> EU aid to the OPT currently averages €300 million per year (Wildangel 2018: 51). Interestingly enough, while the EU's role as the main payer is not in doubt, there are no generally agreed numbers in the literature. The standard estimate is that the EU has provided about half of overall aid to the OPT (Persson 2015: 130). According to Persson's research, judged plausible by Hollis (Hollis 2015), European aid to the OPT in the framework of Oslo has totalled about €10 billion until 2010, including individual contributions by member states. This number fits well with the data provided by Constanza Musu (Musu 2010: 132-133).

By the mid-1990s, the majority of EU aid to the OPT had already shifted towards covering the PA's running costs and providing humanitarian relief (Le More 2005: 992). Musu's data illustrates this well. Between 2000 and 2006, support of the PA and humanitarian aid (including contributions to UNRWA) together dwarf, for each year, disbursements for infrastructure or institution building (Musu 2010: 132-133). Contrary to ex-chancellor Schröder's vision, economic aid did not make the peace process "irreversible". What it did, however, was to perpetuate a process without peace, on the backdrop of a constantly de-developing Palestinian economy, settlement growth and closure policies.

The Oslo Process started to derail in the mid-1990s with the Goldstein massacre in Hebron, the assassination of Rabin and suicide attacks by Hamas. The return to government of the Likud in 1996 led to European frustrations about the discontinuation of the peace process. As Müller observed, this was exactly when Germany markedly increased its commitment within the EU towards this process, emphasizing the importance of Israeli security and close alignment with both Washington and Tel Aviv (Müller 2011: 394).

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<sup>58</sup> Data from the German ministry for cooperation and development, [http://www.bmz.de/de/laender\\_regionen/naher\\_osten\\_nordafrika/palaestinensische\\_gebiete/zusammenarbeit/index.html](http://www.bmz.de/de/laender_regionen/naher_osten_nordafrika/palaestinensische_gebiete/zusammenarbeit/index.html) (last access April 20th, 2018).

Germany's traditional commitment to Israel's security translated directly into its support for the PA, constituted to take over from Israel the task of policing the Palestinian population in the urban areas of high Palestinian population density ('Area A' under the 1995 'Oslo II' agreement, which today comprises about 17% of the West Bank). With the interim agreement having turned permanent, the initial critics of Oslo have been proven to be on point. What the aid focus on humanitarian relief and the upkeep of the PA plainly reveals is that funding the Oslo Process has meant taking over the policing and humanitarian tasks of the occupation. This is a widespread perception among German aid workers and political representatives working in the OPT.<sup>59</sup>

On the basis of interviews in the AA, Müller found that increased German engagement in the late 1990s also sought to counteract wider European frustrations with the first Netanyahu government and "to avoid a situation in which Berlin would face pressure to adapt to an increasingly ambitious European policy that did not reflect its national preferences and that did not pay sufficient attention to its special allegiance to Israel." (Müller 2011: 395). It is in light of the German government's goal to preserve the status quo and to keep alive the process that one needs to read the 1999 Berlin Declaration, in which Europe openly stated its support for the creation of a Palestinian state for the first time, yet in a somewhat non-committal wording: "The European Union reaffirms the continuing and unqualified Palestinian right to self-determination including the option of a state and looks forward to the early fulfilment of this right."<sup>60</sup> Drafted in close cooperation with Washington and the strong backing of Germany, which held the EU Presidency at the time, the main aim of the declaration was to *prevent* Arafat from unilaterally declaring a state of Palestine, with the declaration emphasizing that such a state must be the outcome of negotiations. Viewing the declaration as one step that could actually be forthcoming for a Palestinian state in the future, Israel nevertheless protested harshly against it, evoking the Holocaust in doing so (Pardo and Peters 2010: 17).

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<sup>59</sup> US and EU development of the PA's internal security and policing capacities is carried out by the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) and the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPSS). While the U.S. focuses on the PA's armed security forces, the EU focuses on policing, its work including "rebuilding prisons, detention centers, and police stations. Other types of assistance include providing the Palestinian police with IT equipment, training prison officers, holding gender workshops with the Palestinian police, and study trips to various places in Europe for judges, lawyers, prosecutors and police officers." (Persson 2015: 127).

<sup>60</sup> Declaration text under [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/ber2\\_en.htm#partIV](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/ber2_en.htm#partIV) (last access April 26th, 2018).

The Camp David Summit of 2000 showed the irreconcilability between Ehud Barak's 'generous offer' and the PLO's minimal demands of statehood in all of the OPT. The militant uprising that was the Second Intifada needs be understood in the context of Oslo's failure to realize these minimal demands.

As was shown above, the FRG continued its military support throughout the Second Intifada and it is in this context that the German government began to elevate its commitment to Israel's security to the level of *Staatsräson* (see also the introductory pages to this thesis). Well before Merkel's well-known speech to the Knesset in 2008, this notion was developed by the Social-Democrat Rudolf Dreßler, German ambassador in Tel Aviv during the Second Intifada. The way he lays out this notion in a short essay<sup>61</sup> is so representative for a dominant perspective on Israel and Palestine within the German political elite that it merits a more detailed reconstruction.

Dreßler begins his essay by detailing the horrors Palestinian suicide bombings inflicted on Israeli society. Extrapolating the Israeli death toll, he asks his readers how Germany would have reacted to a comparable situation on its own soil. Dreßler mentions Palestinian deaths in only one sentence, relativizing that these included suicide bombers. Without attempting any contextualization, let alone explanation of the intifada, the ambassador moves directly to the Nazi past, explaining that it was the Holocaust which had led him into politics. He then situates his plea for a continued confrontation with the past into the context of German-Israeli relations which were "never closer, never better". Dreßler's readers are then informed that he was the first German ambassador ever to have been invited to the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony in Yad Vashem. He continues by writing about military relations, recounting how German marine soldiers trained with their Israeli counterparts in a "friendly" atmosphere and how he personally acquainted himself with the Israeli military's view of the intifada. He then speaks of a day spent, on his own initiative, with Ariel Sharon on the electoral trail. Depicting Sharon as a thoughtful, earnest man, he describes this day as "an experience of a special kind".

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<sup>61</sup> The essay was published in a 2005 publication for the Civic Agency for Political Education, see <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/29118/gesicherte-existenz-israels-teil-der-deutschen-staatsraeson-essay?p=all> (last access April 26th, 2018).

Dreßler spends the last part of his essay summarizing German-Israeli relations in all fields, noting that Germany is considered Israel's closest ally after the U.S. Even in the military sphere, he adds, relations are as close as with a NATO ally.

He ends with an emotional appeal as to why Israel's security should be made part of the German reason of state:

Never in my life did I have to think about my country's right to exist, even though Germany twice brought the world to an abyss in the past century...No daily threat! No denial of the right to exist! No fight for one's own state! This is why I use the word 'security' as the key term for a constructive rebooting of the Middle East process. The community of states must work for Israel's security...*The secured existence of Israel is in the national interest of Germany, it is therefore part of our reason of state.* (emphasis added).

The first thing to note about Dreßler's essay is that it uses the intifada primarily as an entry point for its actual topic, which is German responsibility for Israel's security due to the Nazi past. This leads to an overlapping of historical roles, which obscures that the diplomat is actually proposing to make the security of the strongest military power in the Middle East part of the German *Staatsräson*, a move deeply embedded within Germany's strategic outlook on the Middle East, within which Israel plays a central role.

Secondly, what is quite striking about the essay is how it reserves empathy exclusively for one side. Dreßler's tone is highly emotional when he speaks about German-Israeli relations, within which Palestinians do not play a role of their own. With no words expended on the everyday violence of the occupation or the detrimental effects of the Oslo Process, not to speak of the historical roots of the conflict, Palestinian violence as it manifested in the Second Intifada appears as wholly irrational and timeless.

It goes without saying that from an outsider's perspective it is perfectly legitimate to deplore Palestinian suicide attacks against civilians, which peaked dramatically during the Second Intifada. But the exercise in empathy becomes somewhat peculiar when it is so selectively practiced. The way Dreßler frames his Israeli interlocutors also speaks in favour of reading the essay as being less about Israel and Palestine than about Germany. For example, German readers of the ambassador's text would not know from his emphatic writing that Ariel Sharon is the same man whom the Kahane Commission, the official Israeli enquiry into the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres, had found to bear per-

sonal responsibility for not preventing the killings. Furthermore, the diplomat published his text at a time when Sharon was quite explicit about his intent to freeze the very same 'peace process' that Germany was ostensibly supporting and when Israel's re-invasion of all of the West Bank had destroyed much Palestinian infrastructure built with European money (Wildangel 2018: 53).

Making Israel's secured existence part of the German *Staatsräson* forecloses reflection of what standing in for Israeli security means for the security of those living under Israeli occupation. It is a notion which weaves selective empathy into the national fabric of the German state. Dreßler's essay, as well as Merkel's already discussed 2008 Knesset speech make it clear that this selective empathy is, in fact, in the national interest of the Federal Republic.

The problem of selective empathy has wider implications, connecting also to the problem of knowledge transmission touched upon above. It opens up the problem of whose narrative of the conflict can at all be heard in Germany. Of course, the Israeli state is much more capable when it comes to transmitting its viewpoint to Europe than a fragmented Palestinian population without access to state resources. However, the perhaps more decisive question is whose narrative one is disposed to listen to in the first place. It seems clear that Israeli narratives of the conflict fit much better into the stories the German state likes to tell about itself; they also integrate better into its overall set of interests. The question of whose voice can be heard, then, is decided less in the periphery but in the centre.

A telling example for how knowledge about the Israel-Palestine conflict is selectively produced and transmitted to German policymakers are the ways in which the frequent visits by German parliamentarians to Israel and the OPT function. State visits below the level of chancellor or foreign minister are usually organized by the party-affiliated political foundations active in the OPT and Israel. The usual structure of these visits leans heavily towards the Israeli side, with about three days spent in Israel and about one day in the OPT. In Israel, delegations would typically visit Yad Vashem, possibly also the Tel Avivian start-up scene and meet Israeli parliamentarians. The day in the OPT would probably be spent talking to a PA official and maybe a short visit to a refugee camp. The result, quite often, is confusion and information overload; an overlapping of German, European and Middle Eastern histories that many German political visitors quite simply

find a bit overwhelming. Back in Germany, this confusion is then gradually resolved according to the demands of national narrative, public discourse and state policy.

One should not overstate the novelty of making Israel's security part of the German *Staatsräson*, a framing that is in line with the historical trajectory explored in this thesis so far. Still, it is uncommon in the world of international politics for one state to make the security of another its own. Furthermore, there are concrete political consequences to this intensified commitment. Following the second intifada, Germany would adopt the Israeli line on the question of security and simultaneously start to engage in Palestinian 'statebuilding' after the American expression of support for a Palestinian state in 2002. Developments after the 2006 Hamas victory in the elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the PA's parliament in the OPT, illustrate this double strand of German policy. Hamas's win at the ballot box has different sources, reflecting increased funding, improved organizational capacity and, importantly, the boosting of the Islamic Fundamentalist variant of the anti-Zionist struggle following Israel's unconditional retreat from Lebanon in 2000 in the face of the Lebanese Hezbollah. It is important, however, to also read the victory as a rebuke to the failed model of liberation that the PLO stood for in the eyes of the majority of the OPT population — a corrupt PA, engaged in policing its own population on behalf of the occupier, from which it was unable to wrest even minimal concessions (see also Haddad 2016: 273f.).

Having deemed the elections free and fair, the EU chose not to recognize their outcome, a move which expectably dealt further blows to its credibility in the region (Wildangel 2018: 53). The FRG adopted almost verbatim the Israeli position on the electoral victory of Hamas (Asseburg and Busse 2011: 703) and was "a key advocate within the EU of isolating the Hamas-led government" (Müller 2011: 396f.). Moreover, during the first Gaza war of 2008-09, the Merkel government adopted the Israeli line, drawing upon itself criticism from the opposition in the Bundestag, and consequently also rejected in its wake the Goldstone report, which found both sides responsible for war crimes.

Thus, instead of interpreting the rise of Hamas as a product of the failure of the Oslo Process, Germany became a driver for salvaging this very process by sidelining Hamas and focusing on the *West Bank first* approach, where there still was a 'partner' to do 'statebuilding' with (Asseburg and Busse 2011: 708).

How to evaluate European statebuilding efforts? The perennial critique levelled against European engagement in the OPT, which can be heard in everyday development discourse ‘on the ground’ as well as in the policy advisory literature is that the declared European commitment to a Palestinian state in the OPT is not backed up by more concrete political measures. While the EU does not fail to regularly reiterate its support for a Palestinian state, so the criticism goes, it does not use its political and economic leverage to enforce it. René Wildangel, a former director of the Ramallah office of the German Green Party’s Heinrich Böll Foundation in the West Bank, has summarized this gap between declaration and action in a 2018 SWP analysis. He illustrates it with four examples: the European approach to Palestinian reforms under the Fayyad government; its approach to Israel’s claims over Area C; the differentiation question and the Gaza blockade. After the West Bank / Gaza split, the EU became a staunch supporter of Salam Fayyad’s government (2007-2013) in Ramallah. The former IMF official embodied the European approach to ‘technical’ statebuilding along neoliberal lines. Yet, while the EU was ready to lavish Fayyad with financial support, it was not prepared to politically recognize a Palestinian state even after the UN deemed the PA’s governance institutions fit for statehood (Wildangel 2018: 53f.).

As for Area C, i.e. 60% of the West Bank’s territory which fell under Israeli ‘interim’ control in the 1995 Oslo II agreement, a 2011 EU report was cognizant of the fact that without this territory, a Palestinian state could only consist of “islands”<sup>62</sup> Likewise, the World Bank asserts that the Palestinian economy is losing \$3.4 billion annually by not having access to Area C (cited in Wildangel 2018: 56). The majority of Area C is closed to Palestinian access. Only 1% of the area is theoretically open for Palestinian construction, yet also here, the approval rate for building permits is practically zero. Sections of the Israeli right have become vocal about officially incorporating large parts of Area C into Israeli state territory (Wildangel 2018: 57). According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Israeli destruction of Palestinian buildings peaked in 2016,

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<sup>62</sup> See [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing\\_note/join/2013/491495/EXPO-AFET\\_SP\(2013\)491495\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2013/491495/EXPO-AFET_SP(2013)491495_EN.pdf) (last access April 26th, 2018).

including destruction of EU-funded projects.<sup>63</sup> It is thus no surprise that most German development work focuses on Areas A and B.

On the background of earlier Israeli demolitions of EU-funded structures in Area C, the EU debated preventive steps. In this context, relates Wildangel, the AA prepared a working paper in early 2012. This paper developed a number of benchmarks for Palestinian development in Area C, yet concluded by emphasizing that “these ideas should be developed with Israel” and that Germany intends to promote a “non-confrontative approach” towards Israel over Area C (Wildangel 2018: 56). The results of such an approach are clear before the eye: EU practice amounts to statebuilding without a contiguous territory on which the Palestinian state is supposed to be built.

Regarding the question of differentiation, while the EU had always formally distinguished between the OPT and pre-67 Israel, no practical political consequences have so far followed from this. This was seen to change in 2013 when the EU published “guidelines” for differentiation, which barred Israeli settlements in the OPT from EU funding. Persson (2018) shows how the guidelines led to a shock within the Israeli government, which saw them as potentially leading towards a full-blown anti-Israeli boycott policy. However, the diplomatic earthquake settled soon. One example suffices: the 2013 guidelines were linked to Horizon 2020, an extensive EU program for scientific cooperation, from which universities and research institutions beyond the Green Line would have to be excluded. Interestingly enough, the Horizon 2020 agreement between Israel and the EU allowed Jerusalem to insert a clause stating that Israel did not recognize the guidelines. This, of course, defeats the purpose of the exercise of differentiation, effectively turning occupied territories into disputed ones, true to the spirit of the Oslo Accords, as explained above. What can again be observed here is a ‘technical’, non-confrontative approach to differentiation, in which Germany plays an important role (Persson 2018: 199, see also Wildangel 2018: 60). It is a fact that the EU has never been willing to put its economic relations with Israel at risk over political disagreements regarding Palestinian self-determination. According to Neve Gordon and Sharon Pardo, the EU’s characteristic separation between the economic and normative sphere in fact makes possible the “incessant discursive reiteration of the EU’s normative position regarding the Israeli-

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<sup>63</sup> See <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/sharp-increase-west-bank-demolitions> (last access April 26th, 2018).



Palestinian conflict and the settlement project.” This “discursive reiteration”, the two authors argue, is primarily internally directed towards the EU’s construction as a normative actor in world politics (Gordon and Pardo 2015: 267).

As regards Gaza, the ever-deteriorating conditions of life in the sealed-off strip are not in dispute: only a few hours of electricity per day, a dysfunctional sewage system leading to a severe shortage of potable water, an aid-dependent economy, regularly re-destroyed in wars since 2008-09, an entire generation growing up without experience of life outside. The UN predicted Gaza to be ‘uninhabitable’ by 2020 in a report written in 2012, before the last Gaza war of 2014. A current 2017 UN report found that living conditions for the two million inhabitants of the strip were worsening “further and faster” than originally predicted in 2012.<sup>64</sup>

While the Bundestag called for a lifting of the blockade already in 2010 and while the EU and the FRG have pledged €568 million for Gaza’s reconstruction after the devastations of 2014, there have been no attempts to ease the restrictive import regulations, not to speak of a lifting of the blockade (Wildangel 2018: 61f.).

#### **5.4 Married to the Process: Closing Remarks on the German Role in the Triangular Relationship between the FRG, Israel and the OPT**

In January 2018, then German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel addressed his hosts in a speech at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in the following terms:

...as a friend of Israel and as the foreign minister of a country with a special commitment to your country’s security, I am sincerely worried about Israel’s mid-to long-term options...I ask those who oppose a Palestinian state: how do you want Israel’s future to look like?...Are you willing to bear the consequences of fully fledged annexation – a one-state reality of unequal rights? Or are you ready to accept a single democratic state between the sea and the river? I admit that I am worried by these questions and especially by the lack of convincing answers so far. Until I have heard any, I believe that the path to security and peace can only be found in two states.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For the press release of the 2017 report compiled by the UN country team in the OPT see <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/07/561302-living-conditions-gaza-more-and-more-wretched-over-past-decade-un-finds> (last access September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> See <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/Newsroom/gabriel-inss/1426618> (last access April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

As Gabriel was by then already parting from office, with a new government forming in Berlin, the weight of his critique should not be overemphasized. Couched in the typical language of friendship and principled commitment (see also Berenskötter, forthcoming), Gabriel's criticism made public the frustrations of many, especially younger diplomats in the AA. Indeed, as interviews undertaken for this thesis conveyed, what Gabriel publicly evoked as the spectre of a "one-state reality of unequal rights" is called 'Apartheid' behind the scenes by German diplomats, and indeed Gabriel himself used the term also publicly on occasions, drawing heated criticism in Germany. The FRG would dread to be seen as backing such a reality. However, such a reality would become clearly apparent if the Oslo framework was to be disbanded. As the German government does not seriously entertain the second possibility pointed to by Gabriel, whereby Israel would lose its Jewish majority yet be seen to retain its democratic character ("a single democratic state"), the FRG continues to adhere to a negotiated two-state solution.

Of course, Israel does not need German reminding of the choice faced between either Jewish minority rule over a Palestinian majority or a democratic state of equal rights in which Palestinians would eventually form the majority. The contradiction between universalist egalitarianism and tacit discrimination, a constant feature of modern democratic systems harking back to the historical roots of democracy itself, was posed to Zionism when it "targeted a territory already inhabited by a non-Jewish population" (Achcar 1994/2004: 206). Whereas the flight of most of the Palestinian population in 1948 initially solved this problem, it was posed again in 1967, when the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza stayed put.

International Crisis Group (ICG) analyst Nathan Thrall has recently remarked on the warning that Israel would 'soon' need to decide between its Jewish and democratic characters that this decision can be endlessly deferred as long as the notion of 'negotiations' is upheld. As is also argued by right-leaning analysts in Israel and abroad, albeit for different reasons, the current situation of a low-intensity, managed conflict is the best outcome Israel can wish for under the given conditions:

It was, is, and will remain irrational for Israel to absorb the costs of an agreement when the price of the alternative is so comparatively low. The consequences of choosing impasse are hardly threatening: mutual recriminations over the cause of the stalemate, new rounds of talks, and retaining con-

trol of all of the West Bank from within and much of Gaza from without. Meanwhile Israel continues to receive more US military aid per year than goes to all the world's nations combined and presides over a growing economy, rising standards of living, and a population that reports one of the world's highest levels of subjective wellbeing. (Thrall 2017: 68).

The U.S. is the only power that has the power to move Israel towards a two-state solution in accordance with international law. Whereas Israel continues to structurally depend on the U.S., it does not depend on the EU. As regards FRG-Israeli relations, 'structural dependency' seems to be a plausible description only for the time period from after the Suez War in 1956 until the cessation of postwar military support in 1965, covered in the third chapter of this thesis. During this time, Israel depended on German reparations, military support and the secret 'business friend' loan. Furthermore, the European history of antisemitism, against which Zionism was born, means that Europe is much less in a position than the U.S. to assume towards Israel the position of an advisor. This, of course, is especially true for Germany, a fact the FRG is acutely aware of.

Nevertheless, an often-heard recommendation in the European policy-advisory literature is that Europe should back up its dedication to a solomonic division of the land with some of the economic instruments at its disposal. For example, the above quoted SWP analysis from 2018 argues that Germany and the EU should act more forcefully towards differentiation at the Green Line, while simultaneously extending security guarantees to 'Israel proper', in order to assuage Israeli apprehensions and preempt the charge of antisemitism (Lintl 2018, see also Hollis 2004). An unconvincing, rather skewed argument one can sometimes hear in this context is that because Germany commits to Israeli security, it should act against Israel's will to force the two-state solution into reality, as such a solution would be the best guarantee of Israeli security.

However, enforcing differentiation along the Green Line by for example economic sanctions or boycott measures would mean a direct confrontation with a close ally over a Palestinian population which has nothing to offer in return. The FRG has repeatedly made clear that it rules out anti-Israeli sanctions, most notably boycotts. It is hard to imagine a scenario wherein which Germany would engage in punitive measures against Israel to keep open the possibility of a Palestinian state in the OPT. It is equally improbable that Germany would step to the head of the negotiating table with parameters for a

two-state solution. Evidently, if Germany would back up its declaratory commitment to a Palestinian state in the OPT with economic measures, it would incur the harshest Israeli protest, which would paint the FRG in the very same colours it has tried to wash off in its relations with Israel; those of the Nazi past. A disturbance of German-Israeli relations along these lines would constitute a direct attack on the German state's identity, running counter to the desire for rehabilitation, which stands at the historical core of (West) German Israeli policy. Secondly, the clear preference Germany has shown for its relations with Israel over those with Palestinians throughout the Oslo period is equally linked to Berlin's interest in securing a key Western ally in the region, which in turn seamlessly integrates into the FRG's overriding transatlantic orientation.

However, a mutually accepted two-state solution and thus pacification of the Israel-Palestine conflict is clearly in German and European interest. Given European financial and political engagement for a Palestinian state, should one not assume Europe to want to see a return to its investments? The contradictory and hardly credible role German and Europe play in the OPT brings us back to the question posed at the beginning of this examination of the German role in triangular relationship: Why stick to a process whose professed outcome will not be realised?

It may be noted here that many among German aid workers and political representatives arriving in the OPT fairly quickly find that what they see corresponds neither to the development templates they had in mind, nor to the two-state discourse they hear from Berlin. The problem is that, usually, Palestine is but a step in the career of so many Western aid workers and political representatives. It is a highly visible yet very 'well-managed' and 'safe conflict', at least if one is a European living in East Jerusalem or Ramallah. After all, we are talking about a well-established occupation that is over half a century old at the time of writing and shows no signs of receding, to the contrary. That most German representatives leave after a short number of years, according to the rotational system within the development jetset, also helps explaining why the knowledge gained on the periphery does not seem to make it into the decision-making centre. Learning processes are started anew every couple of years.

Moving up from the local level, we already saw above that the role of the funder to the Oslo Process and beyond was the only one available to play for Germany and Europe. This was the only stake Germany/Europe could have in what was at the time the Middle

East's central conflict arena. In this perspective, investing into Palestinian peace- and statebuilding can also be read as investing into the German footprint. Viewed in this light, it was in fact a fairly successful venture so far, as the FRG entertains good relations not only with Israel and the U.S., but also with the PA and the Palestinian population of the OPT, at least if one is to follow a recent large-scale survey of the CDU-affiliated Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, which found that Palestinians view Germany as more of an 'honest broker' than the U.S. (Konrad-Adenauer Foundation 2016). This is of course unsurprising: Given the choice between the U.S., Israel and Europe as interlocutors — those powers who decide upon their fate — Palestinians would undoubtedly always choose Europeans. There is, however, a tendency on the German side to portray a relationship marked by dependency as a partnership. One can observe a formalistic equality between German relations with Israel and those with the PA. For example, the regular government consultations between Israel and the FRG have their counterpart in similar consultations between the German government and the PA; the German embassy in Tel Aviv finds its counterpart in the German representative office in Ramallah, and so forth. Yet, evidently, the relations Germany entertains with Israel and the PA are weighted much differently and follow very different aims. Again, this coupling of formal equality with practically highly unequal power relations and aims can be observed from the local level upwards. German party-linked political foundations, for example, 'cooperate' with 'partners on the ground' on both sides of the 1967 demarcation. In the West Bank, these German foundations have access to the top echelons of the PA-Fateh apparatus. This, expectably, is not the case for them in 'Israel proper' and reflects the fact that Europe and Germany are the main financial backers of the PA. The language of cooperation and partnership does not describe well this structure of dependency. According to World Bank data, about 25% of the Palestinian population in the OPT rely on the PA for their livelihood (cited in Persson 2015: 131). As Haddad shows in his study, donor aid has led to a complex figuration of dependency, in which what he calls "Palestine Ltd." is ever further geared towards a rather dystopian "negative peace" (Haddad 2016: 260f.). Now, just as dependency is confused for partnership, the reconfiguration of the occupation and intensification of the settlement project that lay at the heart of the Oslo Process is still officially framed as supposed to be leading to a negotiated two-state outcome in some distant future. To gloss over a reality which many already find to be a *de facto* one

state with unequal rights, Germany is willing to uphold the 'process', calling for 'negotiations' when the territory to negotiate over is ever-shrinking and no base for 'compromise' whatsoever exists between occupier and occupied. This constant re-framing of unfolding realities 'on the ground' serves both their perpetuation and the denial of German and European co-responsibility for them.

## VI Conclusion

This thesis sought to address a peculiar gap in the academic literature. What was missing was a critical, empirically oriented study of Germany's Israel policy from the postwar period to the present, able to adequately take the Palestinian question into account. This absence contrasts with the centrality of Israel to German foreign policy and to domestic discourse, as well as the significance of Germany to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, notably in its formative period until the 1967 war.

What were the key drivers of Germany's Israel policy over time? Why has Israel sought relations with Germany, or rather: what has been the impact of German material support of Israel? What was the role of the Palestine question in Germany's Israel policy and why? Whilst the historical chapters addressed these questions in interwoven fashion, the following summarizes the key findings thematically, emphasizing the main contributions this thesis sought to make and bring into the academic and political debate.

### *Driving factors of Germany's Israel policy: the inseparability of identity and interest*

The scant academic literature on Germany's Israel policy exhibits a lack of historical research, tends to uncritically reproduce the official political discourse and is characterized by a misleading conceptual dichotomy between morality and interest. In contrast, this examination looked at how the FRG's political framing of the Nazi past and its principal foreign policy goals congealed in the postwar turn to Israel. It questioned which conceptions of 'morality' the FRG developed in its early Israel policy, why, and how the display of this morality became a state interest in itself. The second chapter showed empirically what seems evident by way of deduction. The West-German state, a creation of the Cold War, relied on the 'reintegration and amnesty' of former Nazis into its administration as well as into the functional elites of society. Overall societal functioning rested on mechanisms of repression and guilt-evasion. Thus, the turn to Israel forcibly blurred the structural continuities of the Nazi era in postwar Germany. Conversely, the Reparations Agreement brought to speech the Jewish genocide in the postwar republic, albeit in limited fashion.

In their origins, German-Israeli relations can thus be conceptualized as an exchange between rehabilitation and consolidation. In other words, the two states, founded one year apart, constituted each other as states in both political-economic and political-symbolic terms.

While the aims of rehabilitation and whitewashing were linked to the overarching goal of integrating Germany into 'the West', the Cold War soon informed Germany's Israel policy in a more concrete sense. Israel, in the words of Adenauer, was a "fortress of the West". The AA files show that Israel, especially after the 1956 Suez War, was supported as a bulwark against Arab nationalism and Soviet influence in the Middle East. However, the support of Israel was not an unconditional goal in itself. The German 'Middle East Crisis' of 1964-65 illustrates both the place of Israel within wider German foreign policy goals and the fact that German autonomy in the Middle East was delimited by the overall Western interest as conceived by the U.S.

Up until 1964, Germany extended economic, financial and military aid to Israel for the reasons just outlined. In mid-1964, Washington pressured the FRG to deliver tanks to Israel on its behalf. Bonn now faced a dilemma that it had created for itself with the Hallstein Doctrine, the foreign policy tool to isolate the GDR. Triggering the doctrine would have enabled the continued arming of Israel, but would have risked breaking off diplomatic relations with the Arab states. Washington made clear that it did not want the German claim over the GDR to negatively affect the Western position in the Middle East. The German dilemma was undone, according to the nature of its creation, by a changing of the guards: in early 1965, the U.S. agreed to take over the delivery of tanks, with the FRG footing the bill. This decision reflects a fundamental shift in U.S. Middle East strategy at the time. Confronted with a leftwing radicalisation of Arab nationalism, Washington now decided to arm the Israeli state. The beginnings of the U.S. – Israeli military alliance, so decisive to the Middle East especially after 1967, lie here. Consequently, Germany was able to offer Israel diplomatic relations in March 1965.

Having left its Middle Eastern *Sonderweg*, the FRG now embarked on the 'normalisation' of its Israel policy. 'Normalisation' should be read as both a break with and a continuation of the previous history of crucial support of Israel, as 'normality' is the outcome of a successful process of rehabilitation. After 1967, 'normalisation' was pivotally expressed via declaratory moves towards the Palestine question and paid for by continuing military



cooperation which, it must be stressed, benefitted Germany as well in direct military terms. German foreign policy realigned with the U.S. and with Israel after 1982. Commitment to Israel increased in discursive and material terms after unification. Like the growth in memory culture, this renewed commitment needs to also be read as one means to exorcize the Nazi past in the context of dramatic German power expansion. Indeed, the question of German power in international politics remains tied to the question of how Germany positions itself towards the Nazi past. This linkage between power and memory, created with the 1952 Reparations Agreement, remains the deeper nexus from which Germany's Israel policy derives its purpose and orientation.

### *The German contribution to the consolidation of Israel*

The relevance of Germany to modern Jewish history is existential. Germany meant death to European Jews. It has also meant life to Israel. This is written with a descriptive purpose and not in a balancing, redemptionist sense. A central aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate the key role the FRG played in the early consolidation of the Israeli state. The FRG's support to Israel was at its most crucial when the FRG was still most immediately marked by the Nazi past. This fact is explained by the structure of exchange between rehabilitation and consolidation.

Indeed, the question of why Israel sought relations with the FRG and the question of German support are almost synonymous. One third of Israel's founding population consisted of Holocaust survivors. Most Israelis were related to or knew others who perished. This was a country built by traumatised refugees from Europe. What other reason than obtaining the means for its consolidation could this state have had for entering relations with the FRG, the state in which the majority of the perpetrators lived unscathed? It is the fact of German economic, financial and military support, about which the German political discourse tends to remain remarkably silent, which explains the 'miracle of reconciliation', a trope that, by contrast, features rather prominently in the German foreign policy discourse about Israel. Beyond the question of material interest, the Israeli rationale for accepting German support can be summed up as such: if antisemitism is an ever-persistent fact of history and if building the Israeli state constitutes the best, or only, effective response against antisemitism and persecution, then it is possible to accept

substantial support from the postwar FRG, a state that had incorporated war criminals, countless NS-party members, profiteers and enablers in its institutions and society.

From 1956 until 1965, the FRG was the only one among the Western powers to extend to Israel all three forms of support: economic, financial and military. During this formative period of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the FRG was thus more important to Israel than France, Great Britain or even the U.S. The Reparations Agreement provided the Israeli government with the capital it needed to bridge its trade deficit and to put its doubled population to work in a targeted program of industrialization. The 'business friend' loan, extended until 1965, was an important financial injection to the value of 644,8 million Deutsche Mark. In contrast to French weaponry, which was also crucial for Israel's military build-up, the weapons and correlated material provided by the FRG came free of charge.

Looking at the overall history of German support to Israel until 1965, one can plausibly argue that the military force displayed by Israel in the decisive war of 1967 could not have been developed to this level without the FRG's prior support. The period from 1956 to 1965 is thus a key one for an overall comprehension of the German-Israeli relationship. The U.S. took over its role as Israel's pivotal external backer only after 1967 – when Israel's status as a regional hegemonic power had already been demonstrated, due to German help.

That German support lost its crucial nature for Israel afterwards can be read off the ways in which the next round of Arab-Israeli warfare unfolded. In the 1973 war, while FRG territory was used for American resupplies of Israel and German military support contributed to Israel's naval superiority, the war's outcome was determined by the two global superpowers.

This loss of importance thus needs to be understood relative to the exceptional nature of the U.S.-Israeli military alliance. After the 1965-67 transition period, the FRG assumed the role of Israel's 'second best friend', which it holds until today. The 'business friend' loan was transformed into a more regular annual development loan, which later merged into German support of the Oslo Process. The FRG became Israel's most important backer within an integrating Europe, notably in regard to trade relations. Military and intelligence cooperation was institutionalized, while joint research and development, component deliveries, information exchange about Soviet weapon systems and other forms of

cooperation formed a stable undercurrent of bilateral relations. This relation contributed to the military strength of both countries.

The comparatively well-known submarine deliveries, decided upon in the context of the 1991 Gulf War and still ongoing until the time of writing, have dramatically enhanced Israel's naval military strength. The 2015 decision to supply Israel with four corvettes to protect its Mediterranean gas extraction demonstrates Germany's commitment to upholding Israel's military and economic power status in the region.

This examination was partly built on original research until the 1965-67 transition in Germany's Israel policy. For the analysis of German-Israeli military cooperation after the 1967 war, the thesis relied on the work of a limited number of authors who managed to study the topic in spite of the secrecy in which it is shrouded. The findings presented here suggest that historical scholarship of the Arab-Israeli conflict and international relations of the Middle East needs to give much more attention to the FRG's role in the region. The historical importance of Germany to the Middle East policy is usually hidden from view. The present-day relevance of the 'German question' in international affairs, however, suggests that it might not only be of academic relevance to make this importance more visible.

### *The Palestine question in Germany's Israel policy*

For most readers, the question of Palestine within Germany's Israel policy would firstly seem to raise normative questions about the extent of historical responsibility (see for example Krell 2008). Does German responsibility, assumed for the Jewish state, reach downwards towards those who had to make room for its creation? The predominance of normative-historical considerations again relates to the fact that the political and academic debate about Germany's Israel policy is marked to a high degree by posterior embellishments and mystifications, characteristics explained in this thesis as emanating directly from German policy itself, geared towards rehabilitation and whitewashing.

By framing its relations with Israel in terms of responsibility for the Nazi past, Germany discursively creates a direct moral-political link between the two countries. Israel is 'linked' to Palestinians in the concrete historical and present-day sense that their dispossession is the condition of Israel's existence. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict essentially

stems from the fact that Palestinians have until today not acquiesced to their initial dispossession of 1948 and that Israel has until now fought down this resilience with equal decisiveness.

When considering the historical links between Germany, Israel and Palestine from a German perspective, it should be made clear, first of all, that the ‘victims of the victims’ trope is especially problematic in a German context. It seems to suggest a comparability or even equation between Jewish extermination in Europe and Arab-Palestinian dispossession in Palestine. This trope, in all of its variations, is thus part of what in the German context is denoted as guilt-deferring ‘secondary antisemitism’. It should be self-evident that the Shoah and the Nakba are intrinsically different in scope, character and logic. Inescapably, however, these different histories are drawn together in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Here, a politically forced relationship exists between the histories of Jewish persecution in Europe and Palestinian dispossession (see also Bashir and Goldberg 2018, as well as Deutscher 1967, Weiss 2011).

The aim of this study has not been to consider how these two histories should be negotiated from a German perspective, but instead how the FRG has historically engaged with the Palestinians in the context of its Israel and Middle East policy. The German government was aware that Israel’s founding depended on the dispossession and the barred return of approximately 750,000 inhabitants of Palestine. The question of the 1948 refugees, however, did not feature in German considerations about the Reparations Agreement. The core of the Arab-Israeli conflict was thus ignored, yet anything else would have been surprising. After all, if the turn to Israel was not due to ‘moral’ considerations in the first place, why should there have been a moral linkage forged downwards towards those who had to make room for the state to which Germany paid reparations to? Prior to the Israeli occupation of the 1967 territories, Western German engagement with the Palestine question can be subsumed under the rubric of ‘instrumental humanitarianism’. The so-called “Arab Palestine-refugees” were not regarded as a political collective. Financial contributions to UNRWA, dating back at least to the mid-1950s, were limited. Aid was given to create goodwill among Arab states and to offset the negative effects of Germany’s support of Israel to German-Arab relations, especially after the above-described German ‘Middle East Crisis’. Care was taken, however, to avoid any impression of a German assumption of ‘indirect responsibility’ for the 1948 refugees.

The Palestine question forcefully entered Germany with the 1972 Black September attacks. The German handling of the attacks suggests that the FRG's priority was to keep the Israel-Palestine conflict outside its territory, a priority over which Bonn was willing to risk grave diplomatic tensions with the Israeli government. Western Germany undertook declaratory moves towards the Palestine question in the context of European attempts to find a common foreign policy stance in the Middle East distinct from that of the U.S. The European transformation of the Palestinian question from a humanitarian into a political one, solvable via self-determination within the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, needs to be explained within the overall set of European Middle East interests. Europe seeks political stability in order to prevent war and its spillover effects, such as migration, as well as to ensure functioning economic relations. It thus has a more directly 'economic' Middle East orientation compared to the U.S. which, due to geographical distance and lesser energy dependence on the region continues to be able to play a more detached 'political', imperial role.

The Oslo Process (1993-2000) led to palpable German relief, as it seemed able to dissolve the "dilemmas of even-handedness" (Büttner 2003) incurred by needing to navigate between Germany's Israel policy and its wider Middle Eastern interests. The FRG has been a main funder of the Oslo Process and presently of subsequent Palestinian 'statebuilding'. Overall, both the 'peace process' and statebuilding efforts have led away from, rather than towards, a two-state solution. Valuing its relations with Israel and the U.S. higher than its commitment to Palestinian statehood, the FRG has effectively helped to preserve a 'process' which has led to an entrenchment of the occupation and the settlement project.

#### *Material flows and discursive shifts: on the changing images of Germans, Arab and Jews*

The empirical material collected by this research raises the question of how and to which extent antisemitic thinking influenced Germany's Israel policy in the postwar period. While Adenauer's ideas about 'Jewish power' are better known, this examination has also shown, on the basis of archival work, that such ideas have influenced German foreign policy making until 1967. During the short transition period of Germany's Israel policy between 1965 and 1967, the FRG sought to 'normalise' its relationship with Israel. The

communications between Rolf Pauls, the FRG's first ambassador to Israel and a former decorated Wehrmacht officer on the Eastern front, and his superiors in Bonn, revealed at least two aspects of antisemitic thinking during this important transition phase. Firstly, Jews tended to be imagined as a powerful, collective-singular figure yielding inordinate power over the German position in the world and thus over the German ability to realize key foreign policy goals, such as the claim to sole representation over the territory of both German states. Secondly and not in contradiction to this perception, German foreign policy makers aimed to 'liberate' their policy towards Israel from the reparations paradigm. This striving was mixed with impatience, even anger, at the Israeli insistence upon German special obligations to it because of the Nazi past.

Moving further, the maybe more interesting question to ask is how the FRG reframed its Jewish *Other* in its relations with Israel. Amnon Raz-Krokotzkin wrote that [p]aradoxically, the exodus of the Jews from Europe enabled their assimilation into Europe" (Raz-Krokotzkin 2015: 294). While Raz-Krokotzkin reads Zionism as a project that has internalized Christian conceptions of Jewishness, this study lends itself to a complementary argument about the other side of the equation: that the FRG allowed for Jewish assimilation only after the Jewish exodus from Europe.

Public reactions to Israel's 1967 victory or the admiration of 'Jewish' military power along Prussian-Aryan lines indicate a rather bitter historical irony. As the introduction to this thesis stated, Zionism can be conceived as an attempt to emulate European nationalism in order to defend Jews against it. In other words, Zionism appropriated the tools of Jewish national emancipation from the instruments of Jewish oppression in Europe. Post-Nazi Germany was able to incorporate Zionism into its own national identity not least because of the fact that the Jewish state resembled so little the Jewish victims of Germany in the Nazi period.

Today, the fact that the far-right in Germany can oppose Palestinian opposition to Zionism by declaring it as driven by antisemitism is darkly absurd. In fact, the present German discourse of 'Muslim antisemitism' needs to be viewed in the historical context of Germany's Israel policy.

As this examination showed, Germany accorded to Israel the power of absolution and the Israeli state used that power in order to acquire material support for its consolidation. As was discussed notably around the issue of the Eichmann trial, the symbolic ex-

culpation of Germany corresponded with the 'Nazification' of Israel's Arab adversaries. This double-move is well entrenched today. In fact, it reached a grotesque peak in 2015, when Israeli prime minister Netanyahu declared publicly that Hitler had not initially intended to kill the Jews, but that it was the Mufti al-Husseini who inspired him to perpetrate the genocide. Had the German chancellor said this, a truly unlikely scenario, she would rightly have been accused of the crudest form of Holocaust distortion and of excusing Nazism. Instead, the German government officially reminded Israel, not without the slightest hint of pride over how well Germany has confronted its past sins, of who the original perpetrator was.

### *Current situation and prospects*

"The two M's – Merkel and military support" answered one interviewee during fieldwork for this thesis, somebody well connected with both the German and Israeli political elites, to a question about Germany's relative popularity in the Israeli public and government. As detailed in the introduction, the political commitment to Israel is part of the German state's self-understanding. Thus, any political party that aims at state power must at least tactically adhere to this commitment. However, there is little reason to doubt Chancellor Merkel's sincerity when she portrays her commitment to Israel as a matter of principle. For Merkel's CDU and all parties to the left of it, this commitment forms part of a memory culture which, in Europe, is unique. German memory culture as it presently stands may be criticized for paradoxically turning the ways in which the past is confronted into a source of national pride. It may be criticized for avoiding confrontation within the spheres where it would hurt most, namely in the private realm of the family and monetary compensation. Yet, in relative terms, the levels of shame and seriousness with which the Holocaust is publicly debated in Germany compares favourably with the more complacent attitudes towards past crimes that can be found in other Western nation-states.

When Germany opened its borders to a million refugees in 2015, international media was quick to explain this decision and the population's acceptance and even partial embrace of it as a token of 'lessons learnt'. Doing fieldwork for this thesis, Israeli interlocutors exhibited mixed reactions to the German refugee intake. On the one hand, a Ger-

many welcoming of refugees surely signifies a renunciation of Nazi ideology. On the other, many also warned of Arab and Muslim refugees ‘importing’ antisemitism into Germany. Such apprehensions are ironic, as Germany certainly has no need to ‘import’ antisemitism, an ideological product which it is quite capable of producing on its own. The idea of ‘Muslim antisemitism’ influencing German attitudes towards Israel also omits that whatever attitudes refugees and migrants seeking better living conditions may or may not hold, their voices are at any rate structurally excluded from the German public sphere. The situation as it stood in 2015 has by now dramatically flipped. Anti-refugee sentiment predominates, driven by inflammatory rhetoric on the far-right, which now also includes the Bavarian CSU. The result is mounting anti-foreigner violence.

The recent far-right trend in Europe points towards the more complex ways in which German majority society creates its figurative Jewish and Muslim *Others*. Overall in Europe, antisemitism is rising, along with the much more open articulation of anti-Muslim racism in the political and societal mainstream. However, the common struggle against both forms of hatred is a marginal phenomenon. As Ben Gidley and James Renton write, “[a]ntisemitism and so-called Islamism—not Islamophobia—are twin and, in the Western official mind, connected enemies of the West.” They point to the heart of the matter when they ask: “How can it make sense to talk about a relationship between antisemitism and Islamophobia in this context, in which the figures of the persecuted Jew and the political Muslim are on opposite sides of a war waged by the West?” (Renton and Gidley 2017: 4).

As one can observe in Germany, as well as in Europe and the U.S., figures of ‘the Muslim’ and ‘the Jew’ are by now routinely played out against one another. As already stated, the German far-right party, the AfD, has embraced the trope of ‘Muslim antisemitism’, which is said to have ‘no place’ in Germany. This can rather easily be read as a double-move of whitewashing this party’s closeness to *völkisch*, authoritarian and antisemitic thought, while simultaneously legitimizing its currently constitutive anti-Muslim racism. However, the mere fact that the AfD – as the far right across ‘the West’ – deems such transparent tactics as potentially successful reveals much about the ways in which the German liberal mainstream discourse is structured.

Israel and, by implication, Palestine, remain highly charged displacement objects for questions of German national identity construction. The rather ritualized discourse of



the German government about the historical commitment to Israel contrasts with highly emotive, often problematic debates in the German public sphere about Israel and Palestine. The majority of German society does not seem to share its government's commitment to the Israeli state. Angela Merkel noted this fact in her 2008 address to the Knesset, telling her audience that such popular sentiments would not translate into foreign policy.

Indeed, all of the more recent, major studies on this subject, from those of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to the Bielefeld-based studies on "group-focused enmity" indicate that, next to a relatively stable percentage share of 15-20% of respondents holding more easily identifiable antisemitic attitudes, German support for the 'special responsibility' towards Israel is waning. Referring to the available large-scale surveys, Asseburg and Busse summarized in 2011 that less than half of the German population feel Germany should be specially committed to Israel. This attitude can be found especially among the younger generations, East Germans and voters of the Left. Given the German framing of Israel's security as being part of the reason of state, it is interesting to note that the popularity of Israel drops especially when Israeli violence escalates, such as in the wars on Gaza (Asseburg/Busse 2011: 711).

This divide between societal attitudes and governmental policy can be seen to partially hark back to Adenauer's decision to pay reparations to the Israeli state, which likewise was not demanded for by the majority of German society. It does seem obvious that any explanation of the government/public divide today has to take the complicated issue of German antisemitism after 1945 into account. However, this divide is not particular to Germany alone, but can be observed across Western publics. The rather predictable German governmental discourse does not explain, but rather accentuates, a cognitive dissonance. This discourse's basic image is that of 'the Jew-as-victim'. The core idea of Zionism was to overcome this image and its European historical reality. The images produced by the Israel-Palestine conflict, however, are those of occupation, siege and warfare between the powerful and the powerless.

As the Israel-Palestine conflict is more and more openly moving back to its 1948 origins, German-Israeli military cooperation continues. The latest major military deal closed between the two countries concerns the German leasing of Israeli-made Heron Drones for a period of four years to the value of €900 million. The modalities of this deal need to be

viewed in the context of previous subsidized sales of DOLPHIN submarines and corvettes. By selling or leasing weaponry to Germany, Israel can pay its own industries in Shekel and pay the FRG in Euros, which means that it does not have to resort to paying from its chronically low level of foreign reserves.<sup>66</sup> This continuity of military relations between Germany and Israel helps to cover fundamental political disputes between the two countries. Presently, these rifts concern the questions of Iran and Palestine. Berlin was strongly involved in the 5+1 negotiations over the Iranian nuclear agreement, which was recently scrapped by the U.S. administration of Donald Trump. German opposition to the Trump-Netanyahu line is informed by business interests in Iran and by well-founded fears that unilateral abdication of the deal will strengthen Iran's hardliners. Israel was remarkably quiet about German participation in the negotiations over the Iranian nuclear deal, whereas it was openly hostile towards the Obama administration at the time. Again, this needs to be primarily explained in the context of military cooperation. Whilst negotiating with Iran, the FRG also continued to supply Israel with DOLPHIN submarines, whose nuclear capacity provides deterrence against Iran. The closeness of military cooperation, then, continues to cover political rifts. As regards Palestinian self-determination, the FRG supports a two-state solution, based on the 1967 borders, which the Israeli government opposes. That this rift has as of yet not escalated is, next to all of the factors analysed in the last chapter of this thesis, also due to the fact that Palestinians have dropped down on the list of German foreign policy priorities. Berlin is concerned more with Syria, the Iranian-Saudi regional rivalry, transatlantic relations after Trump, the so-called 'refugee crisis' and relations with Russia. How Germany will deal with all of these issues is determined also by a domestic situation of unprecedented instability. Whereas German society after 1945 was evidently marked by National Socialism, the thoroughness of defeat, Allied occupation and the fact of American hegemony over Europe ensured that the FRG would develop along liberal-democratic lines. Of course, history does not simply repeat itself, yet its returns can be worse than farcical. Postwar Germany has arguably never been less immune to fascism than it is today.

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Otfried Nassauer.

For now, it looks as if Germany will continue to play its part in sustaining an untenable situation between Israelis and Palestinians, one it has historically contributed to in so many ways, some of which were examined in this dissertation.

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