

The Mideast Coverage of the Second Intifada in the German Print Media, with Particular Attention to the Image of Israel

The following report summarizes the findings of a project carried out by the Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung (DISS) on behalf of the American Jewish Committee, Berlin (AJC). This study examined the German print media discourse on the second intifada from September 2000 to August 2001.¹

Revival of Resentment? The Research Agenda and Its Impetus

German media coverage of the Mideast conflict has expanded appreciably since late September 2000, in response to the violent clashes there. The German press, with few exceptions, describes the trigger for the renewed violence as the "visit" of the former opposition leader and current Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000. His visit was followed by a series of spectacularly violent events, and was used by the Palestinians to justify a second intifada, also known as the Al-Aksa intifada.

In the view of most journalists, the September 11 terror attacks in New York and Washington further exacerbated this conflict. Some of them suggest that people who feel outraged and humiliated may see terror as the only way the weak can successfully resist the strong. On the other hand, they write that Sharon may now feel legitimated in taking even tougher action against the Palestinians and especially against Arafat personally. In a few cases, such speculation has gone so far as to blame Israel — at least partially — for the attacks in the US.²

According to the media, the eruption of terror is routinely countered with counterviolence. Thus, the "spiral of violence" — as it is called in the media time and again — continues to turn following the terror attacks and may have even accelerated.

Due to recent German history, the German media follow the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians with special attentiveness, and occasionally with perplexity. National Socialism and the Shoah shape the German-Israeli relationship and the historical debate within Germany. As various scholarly studies have shown, anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist prejudices still exist in Germany — albeit partly in latent form and strongly taboo in public.³ This study thus asked whether and how current media coverage of the Mideast conflict takes this factor into account.

Moreover, reportage on this conflict, particularly when emphasizing its religious motivation, may make connections with the current immigration discourse — especially the discourse on the immigration and presence of Russian Jews in Germany, which foregrounds religious orientation.

Against this backdrop, this study proceeded from the following research agenda:

How is the image of the conflicting parties, and particularly of Israel, constituted in the

1 The following researchers participated in this project: Margarete Jäger, Siegfried Jäger, Gabriele Cleve, Ina Ruth, Frank Wichert, Frank Jessen, Jan Zöller, Alfred Schobert, and several interns at DISS. Barbara Fried (AJC) discussed with project members the discursive context and the historical background of the second intifada, particularly regarding German-Israeli relations. The AJC has a copy of the full-length project report in German.

2 This is the result of an additional, cursory analysis of the media coverage between September 12 and 19, 2001, in the newspapers FAZ, FR, TAZ, TAGESSPIEGEL, and SZ. If a certain intensification of the discussion is already evident here, it increases further yet in the subsequent coverage.

3 See especially Bergmann / Erb 1991, Dichanz / Hauer / Hölzle / Horn (eds.) 1997, Bergmann 1995, Bergmann 1997, Erb 2001, Rensmann 2000, Lichtenstein 1992, Hub 1998. In 2001, the University of Zurich's research unit on the public sphere and society carried out a quantitative study of two months' German and Swiss coverage of the second intifada between September 28 and November 30, 2000 (print and television media).

German media?⁴ Does media coverage of the second intifada contain anti-Semitic discursive elements (stereotypes) that could revive resentment against Israel and the Jews in view of the violent clashes between Israel and the Palestinians?

In addition, the study pursued the question of how the so-called Mideast conflict is analyzed and documented by journalists today, and with which "biases" and subjectivities.⁵

Extensive Space in the Discourse: The Study Design

The Material

The study material encompassed articles that appeared between September 28, 2000, and August 8, 2001, in the following print media (daily newspapers and weekly newsmagazines): FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU, DER SPIEGEL, SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG, DER TAGESSPIEGEL, DIE TAGESZEITUNG, and DIE WELT.⁶

Four Discursive Events

In order to comprehend the second intifada as richly as possible, the analysis concentrated on four important discursive events in this time period.

We speak of discursive events when they take up extensive space in the discourse and are thus apt to "reshuffle" the evaluation and judgment criteria of the discourse. These are events that can permanently alter the course of the discourse.⁷ This definition resulted in four research dossiers, which incorporated all articles that reported mainly on these events, as well as those that mentioned the events only briefly in their argumentation.

The dossier on the first discursive event, "Ariel Sharon's Temple Mount visit" (September 28, 2000), encompassed 183 articles. The discursive event "the death of the Palestinian boy, Mohammed al-Dura" (September 30, 2000) comprised 49 articles. Coverage of the "lynching of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah" (October 12, 2000) was drawn on as the third discursive event; it encompassed 85 articles. Finally, the dossier on the "suicide attack in front of a Tel Aviv discotheque" (June 1, 2001) comprised 110 articles. A total of 427 articles were subjected to qualitative analysis.⁸

4 The analysis must also examine the image of the Palestinians inasmuch as the image of Israel in the context of the Mideast conflict comes into relief only when contrasted with that of the Palestinians. Only by comparing the various characteristics attributed to the actors in the Mideast is it possible to determine which specific clichés are ascribed to Israel and the Jews.

5 Beyond the analysis, we have also developed suggestions on how to avoid reproducing and reinforcing resentment.

6 These print media are grouped in a roughly equal distribution around the so-called political center. Extreme positions of the right- and left-wing media spectrum were not considered. A total of 2505 articles were included.

7 In this regard, discursive events can always also mark rupture lines within a discourse. The Chernobyl atomic accident, for example, represents an especially striking discursive event. This accident was the point of origin for fundamental changes in the evaluation of atomic energy in nearly all discourses (ranging from specialized scientific discourses to political and everyday discourses). The analysis of such discursive events is thus especially helpful in comprehending both the "normal" courses of discourses and their potential for turning and changing.

8 The remaining articles in the research material — that is, those that did not mention the analyzed discursive events — form the overall discursive context of the second intifada up to the end of the period of study. This discursive context was taken into account as the background to the coverage but not systematically analyzed.

A Supporting Pillar of Christian Western Culture: The Political and Historical Background

Anti-Semitism in German Discourses

Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are firmly entrenched in (historical and current) German discourses. Connected to and saturated with Christian anti-Jewish complexes, anti-Semitism — together with discourses that fatally entwined with it — provided application guidelines for the genocide of the Jews.⁹ Such positions by no means disappeared with the end of National Socialism. After 1945 so-called secondary anti-Semitism developed in Germany, accusing the Jews of intransigence or even of using the Shoah to make (allegedly unjustified) demands on Germany and the Germans. As Braun/Heid write in their edited volume *Eternal Anti-Semitism (Der ewige Judenhass, not available in English)*: "It is certain ... that hate of the Jews permeates the Christian Western world in a bloody trail: anti-Semitism as a supporting pillar of Christian Western culture." (von Braun/Heid, eds., 1990, 8)¹⁰

Due to these deeply rooted latencies and preconceptions, an analysis of German media coverage must account for them and attend to whether anti-Semitic moments in the discourse might be covert and hidden in vague allusions.

This does not mean that Germans must refrain altogether from criticizing Israeli policy. However, it demands that critics be aware of their own entanglement in the pertinent German discourse, and that they reflect especially intensively on their own preformed discursive positions.¹¹ In Mertens' formulation: "Justified criticism of the Israeli government is just as legitimate as criticism of other governments' actions that violate international legal norms and conventions. However, one must apply the same standards and avoid drawing false historical parallels, especially in a negative sense." (Mertens 1995, 91)

The discourse on the Mideast and especially on Israel must moreover be seen against the backdrop of the specific German-Israeli relationship, which has been decisively shaped by the Shoah. One must assume that this discourse is currently attempting to normalize the German past, with the goal of consigning it to the history books. An example of this can be seen in the debate on Germany's new post-unification role.¹²

Rejection and Marginalization: Attributions of Meaning that Shape the Image of the Mideast

Terms used in attempting to comprehend different forms of anti-Semitism fluctuate considerably in their content, depending on the scholarly school and the national or historical context. This study thus uses the terminology for which there is currently a relatively strong consensus in the German scholarly discourse.¹³ Accordingly, we distinguish among racist anti-Semitism, Christian anti-Judaism, secondary anti-Semitism, and anti-Zionism.

In order to define racist anti-Semitism, the notion of racism must first be clarified. Racism is present when humans and/or groups of humans are discursively constructed — on the basis of ostensible biological/genetic and/or cultural traits — as "races" or "ethnicities," and negatively (or even positively) evaluated. This evaluation need not be explicitly stated; it can already be connoted — and firmly entrenched cognitively — in the designation of these

9 For details, see e.g. S. Jäger 2001b, S. Jäger/Paul (eds.) 2001, or also von Braun/Heid (eds.) 1990, and Bauer 1992.

10 On anti-Zionism, particularly in the GDR, see Kloke 1990.

11 On this term and discourse theory in general, see below.

12 On the so-called Walser debate, see Dietzsch / Jäger / Schobert (eds.) 1999. On Norman Finkelstein's allegation that a Holocaust industry exists, see Dietzsch / Schobert (eds.) 2001. On normalization more generally, see Link 1997. On present-day anti-Semitism, see also Rensmann 2000. Regarding Finkelstein, it should be said that he argues primarily in anti-Zionist terms.

13 Here, we rely on the research literature, including: Miles 1991, Gutman (ed.) n.d., Bergmann / Erb 1991, Erb 2001, Dichanz et al. 1997, Benz / Graml / Weiß 1998; Benz (ed.) 1995, Benz (ed.) 1992.

groups of people.¹⁴

Anti-Semitism is customarily classified by its various manifestations; all of its forms and their justifications pertain to the rejection and marginalization of Jews.

Ugly and Intransigent: Racist Anti-Semitism

Racist anti-Semitism is present when (anti-Jewish) prejudices are applied to Jews as a group with common parentage.¹⁵ According to the available empirical studies, the following attributes dominate this conceptual field:

Regarding the body and "biological" traits (biological determinism): ruled by instinctive urges, ugly, weak, crooked nose, flat feet, fat, thick-set, short, black-haired, curly-haired, etc.

Regarding culture and character (cultural determinism): greedy, money-grubbing, usurers, profiteers, scheming, blood-sucking, cowardly, fanatical, vengeful, ruthless, aggressive, militaristic, unpredictable, intransigent, power-hungry, destructive, arrogant, sneaky and underhanded, creepy, radical, conspiratorial, fundamentalist in their religious beliefs, homeless, cosmopolitan, corrosive, cunning, sly, intellectual, unseemingly careerist, enterprising, parasitical, unforgiving, capitalists, proletarian rabble-rousers, wealthy, etc.

Particularly referring to East European Jews: dirty, loud, coarse, idle, lazy, unproductive, culturally backward, poor, etc.

They Are Exploiting the Shoah: Secondary Anti-Semitism

Secondary anti-Semitism is present when Jews are accused of exploiting the Shoah or Auschwitz for monetary gain, to assert their interests, to justify their own deeds, etc. — for instance, when there is talk of a "Holocaust industry."¹⁶ Further attributions of this sort may include: intransigent, unforgiving, greedy, conspiratorial, mendacious, cunning, sly, acquisitive, money-grubbing, etc.

Child-Murderers: Christian Anti-Judaism

Christian anti-Judaism is present when racist anti-Semitism appeals to specific Christian or biblical motifs, images, incidents, or legends in the historical Christian discourse.¹⁷

One should thus carefully scrutinize allusions and denotations such as: Christ-killers, vengeful, poisoning the well, child-murderers (blood libel), ritual murder, Ahasverus — the Wandering Jew, human sacrifices, host desecration, Satan (because not baptized), Jewish swine, eye for an eye.

Anti-Zionism as a "Magic Formula"

Anti-Zionism is present when the state of Israel's right to exist is disputed or Zionist policies are rejected categorically, as well as when the state of Israel is called into question as a Jewish state. It must be categorized as anti-Semitic especially when Israel's right to exist is contested on anti-Semitic grounds. Thus, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism overlap when it is asserted that charges of anti-Semitism are used as a bludgeon to stifle criticism of Israel in Germany."¹⁸

14 This is the case for designations such as *Zigeuner* (gypsy) or *Neger* (Negro or nigger), which are already negatively charged (connoted) in the German discourse even when no additional negative characterizations are made explicit. This is less true, or not at all the case, for American, Spaniards, or Danes.

15 This is contingent on the term "Jew" itself already having a specific negative connotation. For more on this, see below.

16 On this point, see the criticism of Norman Finkelstein (Finkelstein 2001) in Dietzsch/Schobert (eds.) 2001 and Schobert 2001 a and b.

17 See e.g. Schoeps/Schlör (eds.) n.d. and also Benz/Bergmann (eds.) 1997.

18 Claussen deals with left-wing anti-Zionism, and not only that of the Soviet Union and the GDR (on its coat-tails); he also refers to the anti-Zionism of "many leftists" of the 1968 movement when he writes: "Anti-Zionism serves many leftists as a magic formula for freeing themselves from the political and cultural legacy of European anti-Semitism without have to work to acquire critical distance."

Anti-Zionist attributions are present, for example, in the following statements:

The powerful Zionist lobby guarantees support for Israel by imposing an order of “political correctness” regulated by an Orwellian “thought police”. Or: The State of Israel is an “artificial construction” or a “test-tube baby state.” Statement such as, “I am not an anti-Semite, but I find the occupation policy of the Israelis evil; the extermination of European Jewry carried out by Germany is reprehensible, but it does not justify the Israeli military actions against the Palestinians,” also belong in this camp.

A Form of Racism: Anti-Islamism

Anti-Islamism must be understood as a specific form of racism. It is present when racist argumentation appeals to physical and cultural traits and behavior patterns that are ostensibly specific to Muslims. These include, for example: fanatical, fundamentalist, hysterical, atavistic, backward, hypocritical, childish, militant, violent, dirty, dark, black-haired, cloaked, creepy, etc.

Collective Symbolism

Of special importance to this analysis is the collective symbolism used in the media. Collective symbols are linguistic images and other images that have — in addition to their direct meaning — a second, indirect meaning. They thus simultaneously convey a particular (second) sense. Collective symbols include linguistic images as well as photos, caricatures, and the like. Crucially, this symbolism immediately elicits an “intelligibility” effect among most readers and seems to “make sense” to them. For example, when a “conflagration” is said to have developed in the Mideast, everyone immediately understands that this does not mean a “real” fire, but instead refers to the danger of the conflict spreading.¹⁹

Analysis of collective symbols can show how subjects interpret themselves and their environment and surroundings, and/or how they receive interpretations.²⁰ Most notably, the collective symbols deployed in the text should never be reduced to their ornamental, decorative function. In fact, they substantially structure the interpretation and comprehension of realities.

Especially important to war discourses and conflict discourses are those symbols that (can) code the areas inside/interior and outside/exterior. Here, characteristic differences can be observed: The interior world and one's own system are often symbolized, for example, as an airplane, car, ship, or house. In contrast, symbols applicable to the exterior world include vermin, storms, floods, poison, etc. One's own frame of reference is thus seen as manageable and guidable, while the exterior is regarded as uncontrollable.

Theoretical and Methodological Background

The Perspectivity of Interpreting Reality

Objective or even true coverage is, in general, ultimately impossible — and this thus goes for

(Claussen 1995, 171) On anti-Zionism among German leftists in the Federal Republic of Germany and the former German Democratic Republic, see also Kloke 1990 and Mertens 1995 and the (copious) additional literature listed there. As Mertens puts it: “Anti-Zionism appears only ostensibly as an autonomous mentality. In reality, it is only a new, disguised form of a latent anti-Semitism that — in contrast to the handed-down enmity toward Jews — has not so much religious as political and economic grounds.” (89)

¹⁹ So-called “pragmasymbols” can also function as collective symbols. These are terms that at first glance appear in their direct meaning, such as “tanks.” But in particular contexts, such a word can very well also mean superiority or advantage, e.g. when there is talk of tanks against stone-throwers.

²⁰ On collective symbolism, see especially Link 1982, as well as S. Jäger 2001b, 133 ff., and M. Jäger / Cleve / Ruth / S. Jäger 1998.

the Mideast, too — because each author interprets reality according to his or her learned ideological and discursive position.²¹

True coverage is thus impossible as a matter of principle. Media, like individuals, are not capable of eliciting "truths" from reality or assigning "truths" to reality. For reality is not reflected in consciousness; it is always only *interpreted* in the discourse (often quite variously, and often extremely subjectively — thus from a certain perspective) with the help of words, terms, or even entire texts. In this process, meanings are *attributed* to reality, and reality is thus produced.²² This fact is significant inasmuch as the concomitant *knowledge* that is transmitted in communication represents the basis for societal and individual action and construction, however much it may aim to be partial or objective. Discourses produce the application guidelines for the construction of reality.²³

Due to their own entanglements in the discourse, practicing journalists are involved in reproducing and reinforcing it, but also in modifying it. Of course, their views, knowledge, and political perspectives (in the form of their discursively-induced interpretative framework) thus shape their reporting, intentionally or not.

Analysts, too, occupy a particular discursive position. Thus they too can never claim absolute objectivity. But it is their responsibility to lay out their interpretations systematically, to make them comprehensible in their details — and to subject them to discussion.

Accordingly, this study will show how societal knowledge about Israel and the Mideast is produced and by what means subjects are formed by the media. It does not accept the verification of reality — or even the accuracy of representations of circumstances as measured against reality — because reality is always primarily *interpreted* reality.²⁴

This problem should be kept constantly in mind when this study evaluates attributions to Israel, Israelis, Jews, settlers, and also Palestinians as to whether they are anti-Semitic and/or racist and thus negatively impact the German discourse.

This also means that there is quite a variety of "images" of Israel. There can be no such thing as the single true — or even merely correct — image of Israel. Even so, one must ask how Israel and the Mideast as a whole are viewed, and from what perspective they are portrayed. To more precisely state the question of Israel's image in German print media: What forms of representation exist that are apt to defame Israel and the Palestinians, and to criticize them unfairly? Do these forms of representation contain anti-Semitic and/or racist stereotypes? And if so, are they then apt to draw on certain existing prejudices and stereotypes in the German discourse, and to reproduce or reinforce them?

The Flow of Knowledge through Time: Discourse Theory

Discourse is the flow of societal knowledge through time. This knowledge is institutionalized to the extent that its expression is subject to certain rules. Discourses are conjoined with the

21 On this fundamental philosophical problem, see Foucault 1992. — We understand "discursive position" to be the imaginary place from whence individuals, groups, and institutions participate in a discourse and evaluate it. Determining it allows one to ascertain the perspective from which certain events are perceived and evaluated. The discursive position is the result of working through particular discursive entanglements that are fostered by the previous and present life situations of participants in a discourse. It is thus the result of being entangled in various discourses (on this, see especially M. Jäger 1996). Systematic attention to the discursive position in discourse analysis permits one to identify subjective and collective entanglements in each discourse as a precondition for more precise reflection on existing entanglements, in order to be able to resolve them when appropriate.

22 The construction of reality, too, occurs on the basis of interpretations; or to put it another way, it can be understood as a form of interpretation because it is undertaken on the basis of knowledge.

23 All events and all societal materialities have their discursive a priori.

24 This also touches on the question of whether it is possible to criticize the respective interpretations. Criticism can only be broached within a discourse and is thus also always subject to criticism in return. In doing so, one can appeal to constitutions, human rights, or common morality. But this, too, always occurs only *within* the discourse. On this problem more fundamentally, see Foucault 1992 and S. Jäger 2001b, 215-232.

effects of power, inasmuch as actions result from them. They connect to historical a priors, carry them forward, and alter them in constant discursive contestations.²⁵

This study elaborates which *speaking abilities* and *fields of the speakable* specifically regarding Israel, the Israelis, and the Mideast structured the German media discourse during the second intifada (up until August 2001). We asked *which knowledge is currently valid and speakable* — that is, capable of being expressed in the German media without sanctions. Inquiry into the currently valid speaking abilities always also raises the question of what is not speakable — what is, for example, masked by societal taboos. In the present context, this refers primarily to anti-Semitism, which is taboo in Germany in view of the Shoah, but also to racism, which is widespread here with regard to immigration, refugees, and asylum-seekers.

The (media) discourse is conceived as a reality of its own, which does not primarily *reflect* — much less objectively reproduce — "reality," but instead is already material itself and thus deploys power.²⁶ This study therefore also emphasizes the power effects that the coverage of the second intifada and the resulting image of Israel and the Palestinians, exert on German subjects and the collective consciousness of the populace.

Findings of the Study

Analysis of discursive events is capable of identifying the rupture lines and/or points of change in the course of a discourse. But because such ruptures occur against the backdrop of existing dominant structures of the discourse, it is also possible to draw out the general aspects of that discourse.

The following summary of findings therefore identifies the characteristic traits of the entire discourse as well as those of the analyzed discursive events. It further shows that this discourse connects to other discourses, how this occurs, and what effects (can) result from such connections.

The aim here is not to evaluate or criticize individual newspapers, much less the events themselves. The analyzed articles should be seen as *components of a discursive context*; it is this very context that influences the individual and collective consciousness.²⁷ Accordingly, this study is concerned with evaluating the *entire discursive occurrence*, that is, the field of speakability within which *mainstream* German print media coverage of the current Mideast conflict is situated.

The Structure of the Discourse and the Research Dossiers

Total Number of Articles Analyzed

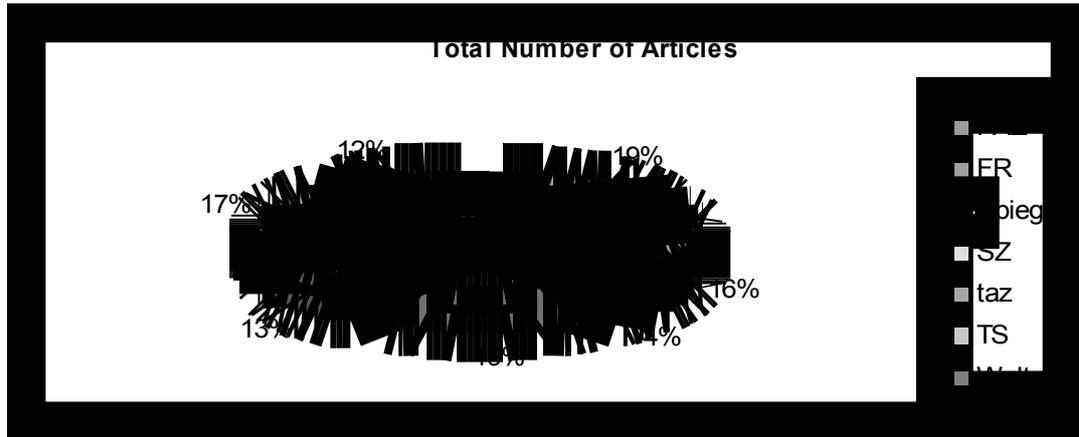
Of the 427 articles that were included in the dossiers, 84 appeared in the FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG, 69 in the FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU, 81 in the SÜDDEUTSCHEN ZEITUNG, 71 in the TAGESSPIEGEL, 54 in the TAGESZEITUNG, 52 in the WELT, and 16 in SPIEGEL. This shows that coverage of current events in the Mideast is not as extensive in the TAZ and the WELT as in the other papers. Their discursive positions thus exerted less influence. The same cannot be said for SPIEGEL. Its weekly publication frequency means that its small number of articles (16) was relatively significant. In addition, its editorial policy is oriented more toward background

25 For more detail on the foundations of discourse theory, see Jäger 2001b, 113-157. "Knowledge" is understood as referring to all sorts of contents of consciousness that are (re)produced by subjects at all levels of discourse. Knowledge is thus by no means conceptualized as proper knowledge or cognition. Sense and nonsense play tricks in discourse. On the question of the respective validity and speakability of knowledge, see Foucault 1992.

26 Jürgen Link describes discourses as materialities sui generis; see Link 1992, 37ff. and S. Jäger 2001b, esp. 144.

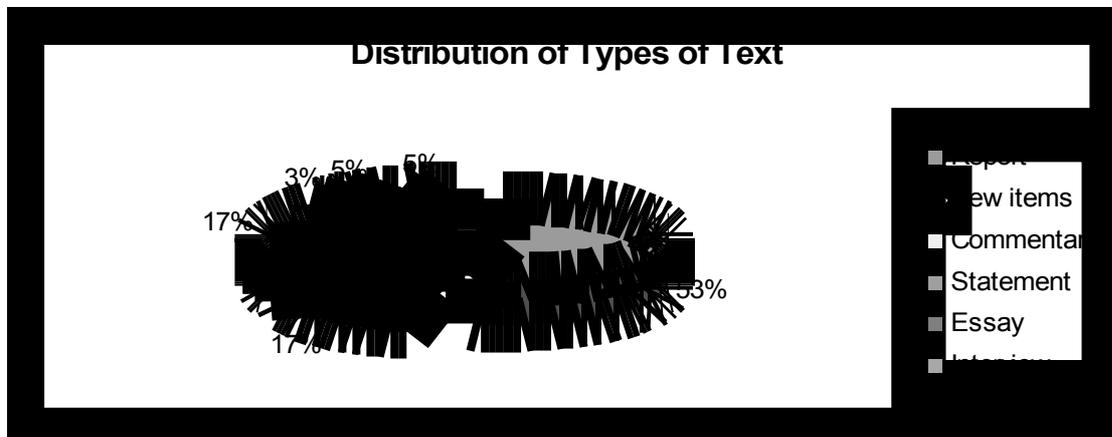
27 Such differences do, of course, exist. But the differences are minor. The entire spectrum is relatively homogeneous, and in this homogeneity, overall pictures crystallize from the interplay of only slightly varying discursive positions. This is particularly the case for the hegemonic discourse. Significant and consistent deviations from this can be found solely among political fringe groups and their news organs, which are not objects of study here.

reports and reflection on political events than is the case for the dailies.



Weight in the Discourse: The Distribution of the Types of Text

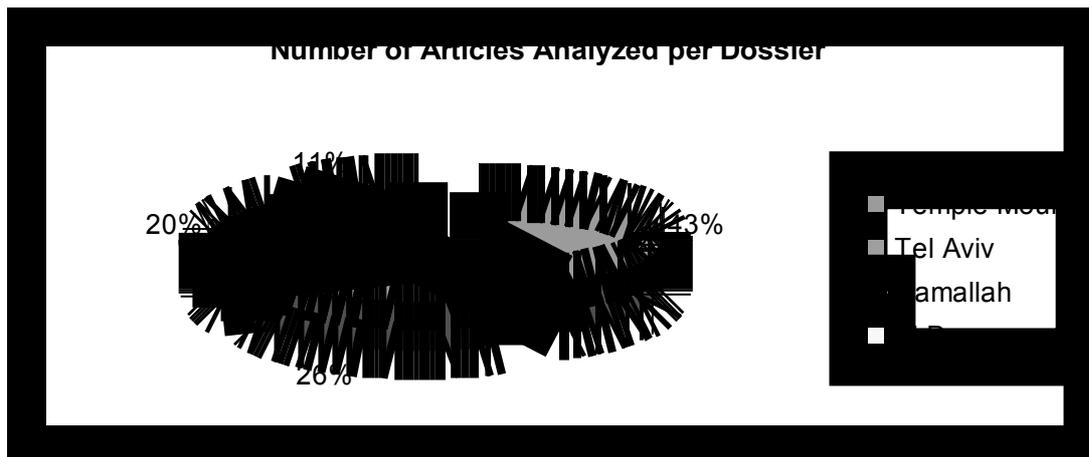
Reports (including in-depth ones) are by far the most common type of text within the coverage of the discursive events. This is as one would expect. It also indicates that the Mideast conflict carries weight in the discourse. While the number of news items (73), which concentrate mostly on "facts," is not insignificant, it is markedly outweighed by the 226 reports. In 73 commentaries, the events were either the main topic or one component. This, too, indicates the major significance of coverage of the second intifada within the German print media discourse. The remaining text types are divided among essays, interviews, and statements (e.g. letters to the editor); this shows that the coverage makes use of all common types of texts and thus is an integral component of the general media coverage in Germany.



Number of Articles Analyzed per Dossier

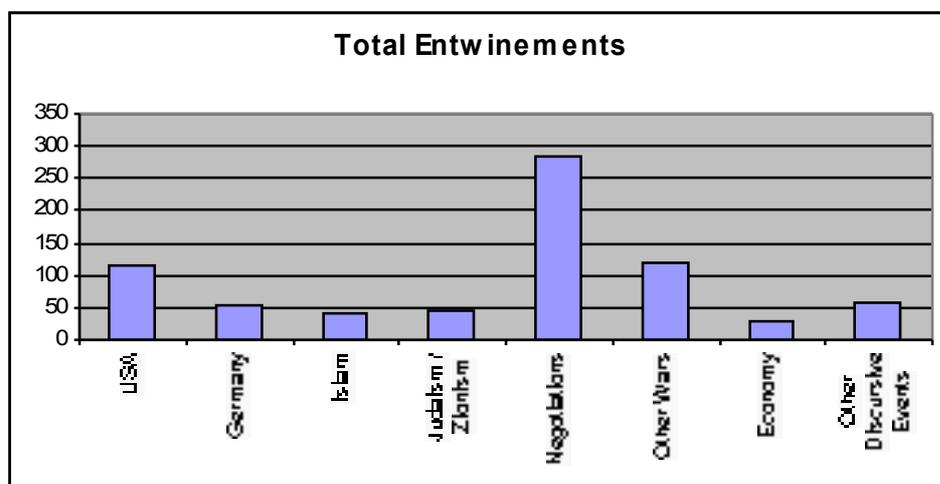
The most extensive dossier, with 183 articles, is the one on "Sharon's Temple Mount visit." The "Tel Aviv attack," with 110 articles, should also be regarded as very extensive, when one considers that this event occurred on June 6, 2001, and the period of the study extends only into August 2001. This indicates its discursive significance. The reason for this was that Germany's Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, was visiting Tel Aviv, a circumstance that caught the attention of the German media.

In comparison, the dossiers on the "lynching of Ramallah" (85 articles) and on the "death of Mohammed al-Dura" (49 articles) are significantly smaller in size. Considering the strong entwinement of the first three discursive events analyzed, taken together they exerted a strong influence on the course of the discourse.



In the Context of the Peace Process: Entwinements with Other Discourses

The frequent appearance of peace negotiations and mediations as a theme indicates that the events of the second intifada are placed in the context of the ongoing peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. America plays an important role in this peace process; accordingly, Israel's relationship with the US is frequently mentioned. The appearance of past military conflicts as a central theme also shows that the second intifada is historically embedded. Together with the entwinements of the discursive events analyzed here, this historical embeddedness expresses the dynamic and the danger of escalation of events in Israel and the Palestinian territories. However, on balance, Germany's special relationship to Israel, which appears as a theme particularly in the discursive event of the suicide attack, does not (yet) play a prominent role in the period studied.



The Function of the Analyzed Discursive Events in the Overall Course of the "Second Intifada" Discourse

Each discursive event has a more or less complex historical a priori, and this background must be kept in mind during analysis. The discursive events studied here are components of the overall *German* discourse on Israel and the Jews. They mold and influence the collective and individual consciousness in Germany. They make connections to historical German discourses and must be read against the backdrop of such discourses. This goes not just for the discourses of National Socialism and the post-1945 period — which were and are saturated with anti-Semitism — but also for the entirety of Jewish-Christian history in Germany. The special salience of this background is evident in that the current discourses contain anti-Jewish clichés that have accompanied the German discourse on the Jews since

time immemorial.²⁸

The discursive event "Temple Mount visit" marks the beginning of the so-called second intifada. It has exerted a lasting influence on the coverage of the entire second intifada by repeatedly and almost unanimously emphasizing Sharon as the *trigger* of the second intifada, if not its originator. In the German print media discourse there is unanimity that the renewed "flare up" of the clashes has a prior history: the Mideast conflict that has broken out repeatedly since the founding of the state of Israel.

As the trigger of new battles and conflicts, a special significance is ascribed to this event: in connection with the coverage of all the subsequent events, this trigger function is referred to repeatedly. Here one can see — in downright classic fashion — that discursive events (can) determine the further course of the discourse. Thus, the Temple Mount unrest is repeatedly portrayed in the German media as the immediate result of Ariel Sharon's Temple Mount visit. The death of Mohammed al-Dura is also taken up discursively as an additional such result. The lynching of Israeli soldiers, in turn, is understood as a reaction of the "incensed Palestinian masses" to Sharon's "provocation" and to the death of Mohammed al-Dura. The fourth discursive event, the "Tel Aviv suicide attack," connects back to this, as well. The intifada discourse thus appears as an escalation discourse, in which each of the four discursive events marks a further increase of the escalation, with the first of these events representing a clear break in the previously smoldering conflict discourse.

In the following, this discursive chain will be traced in detail.

The Discursive Event "Ariel Sharon's Temple Mount Visit"

Analysis of the media coverage of Ariel Sharon's Temple Mount visit on September 28, 2000, and its effects on the political situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories shows that this visit appears in the German print media discourse as an *enormous strain on the peace process* between Israel and the Palestinians. Statements on this range from the assessment that it has brought the peace process to a halt, to the view that it has now definitively failed.

In the course of the coverage, a unanimous perception crystallizes that Ariel Sharon *triggered* the second intifada with this visit. The entire German print media discourse scarcely considers the possibility that Arafat intentionally started the intifada instead of continuing negotiations with Israel. An optimistic assessment of Mideast relations is evidently no longer possible for the print media following the Temple Mount visit. From this point forward, the "Mideast peace process" discourse is pursued as an absolute problem and escalation discourse.

The person of Ariel Sharon becomes the symbol for this radical break, which also is said to have ushered in a domestic political turning point that comes to a tentative end with the election of Sharon as Prime Minister in February 2001. Sharon is portrayed in markedly negative terms: as a unscrupulous power tactician, an old war-horse (DIE WELT, October 7), a bulldozer, and a warmonger; he is also represented as a slaughterer, a "warrior," an old Likud war-horse, a "cooing hawk" (TAZ, October 2, 2000), as a "bull" (TAZ, October 2, 2000), as "Israel's best soldier," and as "unyielding." It is reported that some demonstrators compared Sharon "with Hitler at the top of their voices." (TAZ, October 2, 2000) He is said to be "Israel's highest-ranking arsonist" (SZ, October 2) for whom every means is justified. Allusions are also made to his past — such as the Lebanon war, in which he is also said to have shown himself as harsh and brutal.

Analysis of the discourse demonstrated that only two arguments mitigate this view of Sharon's Temple Mount visit as triggering the second intifada. The first argument is that the Temple Mount visit was arranged in advance, not only with the Israeli government (then headed by Ehud Barak), but also with representatives of the Palestinian Authority (see e.g. FAZ, January 4, 2001). Secondly, a handful of reports and commentaries indicate that the violence originated among Palestinian youths and that they "cast the first stone." Thus, one certainly can find the interpretation that however provocative the Temple Mount visit may

28 See e.g. von Braun/Heid (eds.) 1990, Schoeps/Schlör (eds.) n.d., Bauer 1992, Benz/Bergmann (eds.) 1997.

have been, it served as a welcome occasion for the Palestinians to call up the second intifada in order to extract concessions from Israel with the power and pressure of terror (TAGESSPIEGEL, April 23, 2001). However, the coverage does not mention that this could be part of a strategy of Arafat's.

Moreover, the analysis of the Temple Mount visit revealed an additional new accentuation in the Mideast discourse. The Palestinian side is positioned as the unequivocally weaker side in the second intifada by reports' consistently characterization of the Israel side as an occupying power, highly armed and violent — as a drawn-up force prepared to take "retaliatory measures" at all times and capable of doing so.

But this does not conversely mean that the Palestinian populace is characterized as peace loving and averse to violence. The Palestinians are held equally responsible for the fact that the "spiral of violence" — a formulation that appears frequently and includes both parties to the conflict — has continued to turn and the peace process has fizzled out. However, while the Palestinians are portrayed as a hysterical mass but ultimately impotent in the face of the Israeli military, the representation of the Israelis concentrates on their military and/or police functions, that is, on state organs that intervene in events in a manner ranging from harsh to brutal. For example, there is talk of "the Israeli army's excessive use of force" (TAZ, October 11), or of a "brutal massacre of the Palestinian people" (TAZ, October 2, 2000).²⁹ "The Israeli police stormed the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on Friday," writes the WELT (October 7). This is amplified with a historical comparison to the ravages of Roman legionnaires: "A troop of soldiers stormed through the Via Dolorosa like a cohort of Roman legionnaires." (DIE WELT, October 7) Significantly, this rampaging occurs in the Via Dolorosa, Christ's Way of the Cross, which places the Israeli soldiers' actions into an anti-Christian context.

In the discursive perception, the Palestinians are at an almost hopeless disadvantage against Israeli institutions and especially the military. In addition, their political representatives, seen primarily as Yasser Arafat in the diplomatic arena, are denied to have the necessary qualifications for continuing the peace process. Arafat is represented as an old, sick, stubborn, and unreasonable strategist who is destroying his lifelong dream of an independent Palestinian state. The authority of the former strong man is increasingly cast into doubt. It is discussed whether he still has the political power to curb the intifada. The dismantling of his political personhood and authority through the media discourse begins, at the latest, in connection with the reports on the Temple Mount visit.

Thus, with Temple Mount visit and its discursive effects, the Mideast peace process is marked as a failure; Ariel Sharon is constituted as the symbolic figure for this failure, and the Palestinian side is portrayed as the violent but ultimately weaker side in the conflict.

The Discursive Event "The Death of the Palestinian Boy, Mohammed al-Dura"

There were reports in all German media on the death of Mohammed al-Dura two days after Sharon's Temple Mount visit.

Analysis of reports on the event — which unanimously presumed that the boy's death was caused by Israeli soldiers — and its further discursive use in the Mideast discourse showed that both parties to the conflict were labeled with considerably negative attributions. This occurred particularly through the use of emotionally charged pictorial sequences as well as through collective symbols that heighten the drama.

With regard to the discursive effects, this leads to the Mideast as a whole being imagined as a "powder keg" about to explode. Both the Israelis (characterized as un insightful, aggressive, and militant) and the Palestinians (seen as atavistic and backwards) are constituted as the cause of this. Such coverage quite indisputably contributes to the cultivation of stereotypes.

Here, too, the image sketched of Sharon is exceedingly negative. He is described as a hardliner and warmonger, and also as a "verbal arsonist in the role of a honest man" who — in the words of a Palestinian — "loves ... to see blood." (FR) The semantic proximity to blood and retaliation, in particular, also fosters anti-Semitic effects. In addition, the suggestion that

²⁹ Even if this statement is marked as a quotation from Arafat or other Palestinians, its negative discursive effect persists nonetheless.

Sharon is pursuing a policy of selective collective punishment (e.g. in SPIEGEL) alludes to collective guilt in connection with the Shoah and can evoke secondary anti-Semitism.

Attributions of radicalism, fundamentalism, reluctance for peace, and vengeful feelings also shape the representation of the Palestinians: "The ... suicide attacks are meant to nip in the bud all impulses that could lead to peace." (FAZ, April 4, 2001)

For German readers, such characterizations lead to the construction of prejudices that apply to both sides in various ways. Both anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic resentment is fomented.

The death of the twelve-year-old boy turned the discursive gaze to the *role of children* in the intifada. It is pointed out that over 100 minors have already been killed (SPIEGEL, May 14, 2001). Most of these victims are said to be Palestinians, and their death is accordingly blamed on the Israelis: "The latest victims of the brutal actions of the Israeli army are two, ten, twelve years old," according to the FAZ of October 4, 2000, for example. Elsewhere, the death of a fourteen-year-old boy is noted, who was killed "just like that" (FAZ, October 18). But one can also read extensive descriptions of the brutal killings of Israeli children (see SPIEGEL, May 14, 2001). For the newspapers, this raises the question of the extent to which both conflicting parties accept that (their own) children will be injured or even killed in this conflict. Occasionally it is also alleged that the Palestinians systematically send their children into battle, thus producing martyrs.

The involvement of children and young people in battles and the impact of the violent clashes on them produces mostly bewilderment and perplexity in the discourse.³⁰

All in all, both sides are accused of abusing the death of children for propaganda purposes. In this respect Palestinians are said to have proven themselves to be "true masters." For example, SPIEGEL writes: "In the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, ever more children are dying. Even in death, they are abused for political propaganda." (SPIEGEL, May 14, 2001)

Using the media for propaganda purposes was also made possible by the fact that the death of the twelve-year-old was captured by a camera team; the film was broadcast not just in the Palestinian territories but all over the world. This circumstance was also heavily emphasized in the media's evaluation of the event. Thus, with the death of Mohammed al-Dura, there began a debate on the media's role in this conflict, which however referred only to the local media and scarcely considered German media. It particularly emphasized that the Palestinians depend on such support because it permits support to be mobilized both in their own camp (by producing martyrs) and in the whole world (by stressing Israeli harshness).

The Discursive Event "Lynching of Ramallah"

The lynching of Ramallah, which followed on October 12, 2000, were also captured on photos and film. This helped sustain the discussion on the role of the media in the Mideast conflict that began with the death of Mohammed al-Dura.

However, the coverage of these murders focused primarily on the *escalation logic* of the clashes as its central theme and problem. This is partly accounted for by the fact that these murders were committed just a few days after the death of Mohammed al-Dura. But this view of the Mideast discourse was also produced, in part, by immediately linking reports on the lynching with information on Israeli "retaliatory measures" that followed the murders. Newspaper reports agreed that these consisted of the Israeli army bombarding, on the very same day, the police station in which the soldiers were murdered. By printing chronicles that include the lynching, the media also make clear the escalation logic inherent in the conflict. The visual representation of the events — which was quite drastic at times — similarly helps underscore the escalation of the conflict. Photos of violent, stone-throwing Palestinians, usually appearing en masse, are juxtaposed with pictures of Israeli tanks and army helicopters, which simultaneously emphasizes Israeli dominance.

One additional circumstance alters the course of the Mideast discourse: as the lynching is processed discursively, attention is drawn to an impending rightward shift in Israel as a

30 This was clearly shown, most notably, through the close analysis of an article that is typical for the coverage.

domestic reaction to the escalation. A possible loss of authority and power on Yasser Arafat's part is more rarely treated as a theme; in particular, it is not invested with corresponding negative scenarios. This indicates that a more active role in a peace solution is assigned to Israel.

Action by a third party is increasingly demanded, in view of these assessments. The lynching and the events connected to it are understood as the expression and reproduction of an abnormal situation in the Mideast that urgently needs to be regulated by a "neutral" party. In this phase of the intifada, the local actors are not (or no longer) considered capable of producing normality without external mediation.³¹

The Discursive Event "Tel Aviv Suicide Attack"

In the representation of the suicide attack in Tel Aviv on June 1, 2001, the attributions to the main actors and parties generally resemble the other drastic representations. However, a certain amelioration is attempted by frequently emphasizing that Israel has "foregone retaliatory measures." Thus, the Israeli government is definitely viewed as ready for peace. However, Sharon continues to be apostrophized as a "strong man" — as prepared for war and unyielding, at his core. "Jewish settlers" are characterized as prone to violence, Arafat as weak. Overall, both sides continue to be seen in highly negative terms, so that the Mideast repeatedly appears as a "hot spot" with tremendous potential for conflict.

Central to the coverage of this event, however, is Europe's power to mediate in the Mideast, and especially Germany's. The demand for diplomatic initiatives, which was already virulent in the discourse and emphasized repeatedly, is sustained here and made more precise. The mediation efforts of German Foreign Minister Fischer, who was visiting Israel at the time of the attack, are unanimously emphasized in positive terms. However, the coverage asks numerous times whether Fischer ought to have acted as a German or as a European. The role of Germany in the Mideast conflict seems to electrify the media. After all, the question is in the air — if not directly addressed here — whether "normal" relations with Israel can foster a new German normality and a final farewell to the "special German-Israeli relationship" in view of Germany's guilt-laden past.

Along with the representation of Fischer's diplomatic efforts and his "success" — manifested in Sharon negotiating with Arafat and in the avoidance of a planned military strike — the discourse begins to include deliberations on the extent to which Europe should engage more intensively with the Mideast. These deliberations are connected with criticism of the US that accuses President Bush of not engaging with the Mideast in a sustained enough manner. This accusation once again accentuates the positive engagement of the German Foreign Minister.

Negatively Charged: Attributions in the Mideast Discourse on the Second Intifada³²

In all four analyzed discursive events, one consistently finds attributions that paint an exceptionally negative image of Israel and the Israelis, and also of the Palestinians. Along with the usual prevalent negative characterizations, others appear that are specific to the conflicting parties in the Mideast.

Negative Attributions in General

Both parties to the Mideast conflict primarily experience massive negative attributions in the

31 Of course, the necessity in the Mideast of mediation and moderation by international organizations and states has been discussed for years, and actions have been taken in accordance with this. In this respect, this statement must be qualified: after the outbreak of the second intifada and the failure of the peace process, this viewpoint was freshly accentuated as urgent. In so doing, the duty of the US to take action as a mediator here is taken for granted.

32 In the following, we use examples to give an overview of the attributions to Israelis/Jews and Palestinians elaborated in this study. Emphasis will be placed here only on the attributions that one must evaluate as negative, particularly since positive evaluations appear quite rarely. The project report contains a detailed presentation.

print media discourse. However, the emphasis differs for each side.

Israel is perceived as a state entity with various institutions and demographic subcategories. It becomes clear that Israeli citizens and institutions most definitely hold a variety of political positions with respect to the Palestinians.³³ The country's political leadership is also represented predominantly in neutral terms — with the exception of the symbolic figure of Ariel Sharon — although there is no lack of occasional negative representations.³⁴ However, on the whole, negative attributions to Israelis are attached primarily to soldiers and the military.

The main concentration here is on representing the military and political superiority of the Israeli side. This is evoked not only with pictures and a predominantly martial pragmasymbolic choice of language, but also by interpreting the motives of Israeli policy as "humiliation" of the Palestinian populace.

Israeli soldiers are characterized as "shooting soldiers," as occupiers of mosques, and even as Israeli "elements" (e.g. FAZ). They are portrayed as exceedingly "harsh" and as "soldiers who shoot back without mercy," who shoot down innocent believers (SPIEGEL) and destroy Palestinian residential houses (FR). The Israeli army is said to make use of a cynical military language policy when it speaks of "crossfire" killing Palestinian children (FAZ). The military is described as "occupation troops" (SPIEGEL) or as "colonists" (SZ). It is insinuated that the soldiers "shoot to kill" (SPIEGEL). They are also characterized as brutal and bloodthirsty by alleging that they break the legs of Palestinians with batons and deliberately shoot to kill. (TAZ)

Israel is regarded as an "occupying power" (TAZ); a "liquidation policy" is imputed to the country, and "excessive use of force ... against Palestinian demonstrators" is attributed to it (FR). A number of times, Israel is accused — by the Palestinian side — of a "brutal massacre of the Palestinian people" (WELT).

A negative characterization is also achieved by describing Israel's military actions principally as actions of machines: "Israeli military helicopters strafed with missiles ... Israeli tanks moved up ... helicopters shelled ... Israeli speedboats patrolled ... Israel sealed off ..." (FR, October 13). "Israel prepares for a counterattack: helicopters shell Ramallah ... tanks roll up. Fire is opened on ... symbols of the Palestinian Authority are deliberately attacked ..." (FR, October 13) "Israel continues its air strikes ... military helicopters attacked (FR, October 14)."

An overall impression is thus created of an absolutely unequal — and thus unfair — battle: tanks against stones.

Israeli settlers are represented in especially negative terms. As a rule they are called "Jewish settlers" and thus defined in terms of their religion. Moreover, they are not infrequently described as radical, as "extremist settlers," who are especially fanatical (TAGESSPIEGEL) and display extreme right-wing tendencies (SZ).

The most prominent negative figure is Ariel Sharon, who is multifariously and consistently characterized with pejorative terms. Not infrequently, these also carry an anti-Semitic charge. Accordingly, the media representations of Sharon allow anti-Semitism to develop and be reinforced in Germany, particularly since Sharon is the most important representative of the state of Israel.³⁵ Sharon is called an "advocate of noncompliance," a "slaughterer," a "political pyromaniac," a "potbellied old war criminal," and "nationalistic" (FAZ). He is further described as irresponsible and tending toward provocation in his actions, as hypocritical, as a "hardliner" and "warmonger," as a "bulldozer" and "catastrophe personified," and as a "war-horse" (FR). He is said to be a "bitter enemy of peace negotiations" (FR) and an archenemy of policy aimed toward peace; he allegedly intends to carve up the Palestinian territories.

33 This is frequently utilized in the coverage to have criticism of Israeli be formulated by Israelis.

34 Here one must mention Ehud Barak, most notably, who — the FAZ reports — has been called a war criminal in Palestinian radio. He is also attested to be partially responsible for the Temple Mount unrest. He allegedly had the Israeli soldiers shoot directly into the crowd and does not keep his promises. He, too, is said to bear some of the responsibility for the aggression against the Palestinians (SPIEGEL).

35 For details on anti-Semitism in the German print media, see below.

Sharon is an "unscrupulous shady man capable of anything" and an "agitator" (SPIEGEL). He is Israel's highest-ranking arsonist (SZ) and the most-hated man in the Arab world (SZ). He is an "extreme right-wing hardliner," a "hawk," an experienced "arsonist" who is torpedoing the peace process (TAGESSPIEGEL). In the TAZ Sharon is characterized as a "right-wing extremist," a "warrior," an old Likud war-horse, a "cooing hawk," a "bull," "Israel's best soldier," and "unyielding." It is also reported here that some demonstrators compared Sharon "with Hitler at the top of their voices." (TAZ) "A lot of blood clings to his hands, starting from his Kibiya days in the 1950s, to Sabra and Shatila, up to his most recent provocation in the mosque in October 2000" — as the WELT puts it.

The Palestinian side experiences similarly strong negative valuations. It is frequently characterized as an "amorphous" and "whipped-up hysterical mass," as insurrectionary, emotional, and backward. Palestinians are repeatedly represented allowing themselves to be goaded by a fanaticized leadership. Individuals are portrayed and their statements are cited in ways that appear atavistic from a Western perspective — such as when fathers of children who met their death celebrate them as heroes and martyrs, and inform the Western world that their sons are now in Paradise (see e.g. SPIEGEL August 6, 2001, or WELT June 6, 2001).

Most notably, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad organizations are viewed as menacing terrorist associations that Arafat does not really have under control. This also tends to be the case for Fatah, the organization under Arafat. Particularly its youth organization, Tanzim, is described as a movement no longer under Arafat's control. Its leader, Barghouti, who is also touted as Arafat's successor, can make critical comments on Israel in the German media discourse.³⁶ Along with this, the negative representations of Yasser Arafat must be mentioned; taken together, these depictions characterize the Palestinian side as tending to be unaccountable for its actions. Arafat is described as "weakened" and "controversial" (FAZ). He is said to lead a "foolish and corrupt regime." He is portrayed as an old combatant, but also as a sick, often palsied man, who is unable to give up his military dress, foments hatred, and wants to see more blood (FAZ). It should be emphasized, however, that Arafat experiences far less negative characterization than does Sharon.

Israelis and Palestinians as Critics of Israel in the German Media

Criticism of Israel and its policies frequently comes from Israeli and Palestinian critics. Criticism of Palestinian policy by Palestinians, in contrast, is found extremely rarely, if at all. This discursive tactic of German newspapers may be due to their shying away from direct criticism of Israel for the familiar historical reasons. There are no such considerations regarding the Palestinians in the German discourse.

This tactic of retreating behind seemingly unassailable critics appears in an especially obvious form in the FAZ, in which Israeli, Jewish, and Arab authors had their say, especially at the beginning of the intifada. Edward Said, presented as "Arafat's man in New York," is allowed to criticize Israeli policy in his piece, polemically and with anti-Semitic scent marks. In the article by German historian Dan Diner, a photo is mounted in which — as the caption notes — Edward Said is throwing "stones at the Israeli border guards" in southern Lebanon. (FAZ, October 12) Amoz Oz, the Israeli author and prominent member of the peace movement, had already had a chance to represent his position in this newspaper. Such an arrangement of contributions subjects primarily the Israelis to criticism.

One more example among many: The TAZ cites the head of the left-liberal Meretz Party as comparing Sharon with Emperor Nero "who fiddled while Rome burned." (TAZ, October 4) The demonstrators who compared Sharon with Hitler are also not criticized in the TAZ.

Israel as a Western Thorn in the Orient

Considered in terms of collective symbols, Israel is understood as a state entity that has a *negative* subject status. Its highly armed military is regarded as an escalation factor, albeit more guidable or manageable than the Palestinian "masses," who are seen as acting uncontrollably.

³⁶ As e.g. in the TAGESSPIEGEL of October 18. Barghouti is touted as Arafat's potential successor, in the FAZ of October 20, 2000, and elsewhere.

In contrast to cities in the Palestinian territories, the city of Tel Aviv, for example, is described as a "fun metropolis" with an "island status" (SZ, June 5, 2001), which enjoys a special status far from crisis areas. The people who live here lead a seemingly "civilized" and "normal" life. Western observers marvel: "This cannot be the Mideast here. ... This must be Rimini or Miami Beach." (TAGESSPIEGEL, June 3, 2001)

In this way, Israel is portrayed as a Western thorn in the Orient. Western culture is juxtaposed against Palestinian backwardness.

The Religious-Cultural Dimension

An additional structural element of the Mideast discourse is its stress on the conflict's *religious dimension*. This focuses on an antithetical between Islam and Judaism. Christians do not play a role (at least in the coverage of current events in the study period). "Hebron, the holy powder keg. Because it is full of historical buildings and holy shrines for both religions, the city of hate is revered equally by Muslims and Jews as a holy site. This holiness holds a great potential for hysteria." (SPIEGEL October 16, 2000) Closely connected to such attributions is an emphasis on the different "mentalities" of the two populations. These are frequently represented as irreconcilable with one another — although common interests are said to exist, as well as a mutual dependence, for better or for worse: "Jews and Palestinians are obstinate peoples, who need a lot of recognition; they both suffer from a refugee and victim complex from which they are unable to free themselves" (FR November 22). Or Israelis and Palestinians are said to be woven together like "strands of hair in a braid" (FR November 22).³⁷

Paternalistic Arrogance

In the view of the newspapers, such incompatibilities lead to the entire region being thoroughly *unstable*. The Mideast is situated in collective symbolic terms as a "powder keg" or a "hot spot." This creates the impression that incalculable risks and dangers emanate from the Mideast. Whether latently or acutely, threats arise here that make normality impossible.

In contrast to the coverage of other "hot spots" in the world, however — such as Yugoslavia or Afghanistan — no external military intervention is demanded; instead, there are consistent and repeated proposals for peace negotiations and intensified diplomatic efforts. However, against the backdrop of the racist or ethnocentric perspectives on the conflict in the print media discourse, such diplomatic efforts are quasi contaminated because paternalistic arrogance can arise from the position of the analysis' ostensible rationality.³⁸

No Balance in the Coverage, and German-Israeli Sensitivities

A conspicuous trait of the Mideast conflict discourse — as it is presented in the print media — is ostentatious striving for coverage that attempts to do justice to both sides, more or less. However, it cannot be said that this endeavor succeeds.

The background for this discursive effort is the German past (fascism, Shoah, Second World War); this is directly addressed with some regularity in the German discourse and stressed as decisive for Germany's special relationship to the state of Israel. At the same time, the Palestinian side is conceded to have a right to a territory of its own. It is more frequently emphasized, though, that due to its past Germany is not entitled to act as a mediator in the Mideast. The anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist reservations that are nevertheless present in the German discourse actually diametrically contradict this fundamental effort; such reservations indicate continuities in this sort of thinking.

Criticism of Both Sides Does Not Mean Balance

In the entire discourse, clear criticism is expressed of both conflicting parties. This criticism is effected with different means, however, which in turn creates a negative impact (as our

³⁷ It should be pointed out that statements such as those cited above come from Israeli authors.

³⁸ In contrast to racist attitudes, ethnocentric positions presume that the groups constructed as different can change and discard the negative patterns of behavior and properties imputed to them. The sole criterion for this change, however, is that they change in the direction of the norm and value concepts of one's own group.

analysis demonstrated). Thus, one side's atrocities are set against the atrocities of the other side; by this means, both parties are interpreted as uncivilized and rather barbaric. In many cases, this interpretation occurs through the presentation of photos, but also in the texts themselves: for example, the fatal shooting of the twelve-year-old Mohammed al-Dura — as it is repeatedly described — by Israeli soldiers is set against the fatal shooting of a ten-month-old Israeli baby by Palestinian sharpshooters: "Shalhevet Pas was the name of the girl, the victim of religious and political delusions. The child died before her life could really unfold" (see the WELT, March 28, 2001). Even where the coverage obviously strives for fairness, analysis showed that the German gaze thwarts this effort. It does not truly succeed in entering into the situation of both opponents; it fails, for example, to analyze the background — much less the genesis — of the conflict in a sophisticated manner, which would make it comprehensible.

"They Shoot to Kill": Anti-Semitic Discursive Elements

The analysis made clear that in addition to racist attributions to both sides in the German discourse, anti-Semitic discursive elements appear directly or in allusions, along with elements that negatively target Islam and Muslims.

While the image of the Palestinians often is depicted with racist discursive elements that are otherwise prevalent in Germany — so that we are dealing with quasi-"normal" media racism — a multifaceted anti-Semitic potential appears with regard to the image of Israel. This includes not only negative valuations of actual or ostensible Israeli-Jewish traits and behavior patterns, but also anti-Semitic discursive elements that are officially taboo in Germany.

Most notably, Ariel Sharon's body is frequently described in terms that borrow from anti-Semitic conceptions of "Jewish" corporeality. He is thus described in the FAZ, for example, as a "pot-bellied old war criminal". SPIEGEL, for example, as "constipated" and in the FAZ as "pot-bellied." Similarly, references to his body appear in the SZ, describing him as a "fat, lonely man" with the "sluggish gait of an elephant." Such descriptions evoke associations with familiar anti-Semitic caricatures. In addition, Sharon is described as "politically deranged" (FAZ), in the sense of unaccountable for his actions, crazy, unpredictable.

The "ugly Israeli" also appears a number of times (FR, SPIEGEL, October 9). This is more than just an anti-Semitic attribution: simultaneously, the "ugly German" who showed his face in fascism is invoked. The German past is invoked, and — with the association between the victims of the Shoah and its perpetrators — disposed of. The comparison of Sharon with Hitler has the same function. (TAZ)

A similar projection occurs when it is insinuated that Jews cast themselves as victims. This becomes clear in the following passage: Both peoples (thus the Jews, as well) suffer from a "refugee and victim complex from which they are unable to free themselves" (FR, November 22, 2000). One also finds projections that transfer criticism of National Socialism to Israelis and Jews, as in the suggestion that Sharon is pursuing a policy of selective collective punishment (SPIEGEL). "Collective guilt" in the face of the Shoah is alluded to here.

In addition, many culturally deterministic attributions appear that can be read as allusions to anti-Semitic stereotypes — e.g. that Jews are ruthless and radical, particularly brutal, unforgiving, fundamentalist, dissembling, overbearing, power-hungry and conspiratorial.

Particularly the representatives of the Israeli army are considered *ruthless* and *radical*. Harsh deployment of the Israeli police and military is treated as a central theme (SPIEGEL, 9.10.): they allegedly shoot back directly into the crowd (SPIEGEL). "Each dead person recalls the image of the ugly Israeli who defends his state ruthlessly" (SPIEGEL). There are reports of the "arbitrariness of the occupying army and settlers" (SPIEGEL) and the "Israeli army's excessive use of force" (TAZ).

The style of fighting is emphasized as particularly *brutal* when the Israelis (and Palestinians) are said to have fought with "nearly causal intransigence" (FAZ) — or even more drastically, "They [the Israelis] shoot to kill" (SPIEGEL); the soldiers are described as powerful and brutal, in control of the Palestinians (SZ). The brutality of the Israelis is "especially great" (TAGESSPIEGEL, October 23); Israeli soldiers killed "intentionally" (TAZ, October 4). Civilians are also mentioned in such contexts: "incensed Jews ... beat (Arabs) so badly they required

hospitalization" (TAZ, November 3).

The Israelis are said to have committed a "brutal massacre of the Palestinian people" (DIE WELT, October 2); the deployment of sharpshooters is called "premeditated murder" (DIE WELT, October 2); there are "excesses ... of violence by the Israeli army" (DIE WELT, October 10); both sides are "unabatedly harsh" (DIE WELT, October 2).

In some cases, Israel is characterized as *intransigent*: Israel appears as a mighty power that deals harshly with the Palestinians, particularly in the context of with soldiers who shoot back without mercy (FR). Israel's right-wingers are said to be abandoning the path of communication (FR). Furthermore, Israelis are said to barbarously hunt down unarmed Palestinians (SPIEGEL). Sharon is described as a "warmonger" (FAZ).

Religious Israelis are called "radicals" (FAZ, April 4); both sides are "squabblers" (FAZ, October 18) and obstinate peoples (FR); Israelis appear as extreme settlers (FR); there are said to be "6000 radical right-wing Jewish settlers" and also fanatical families of settlers (TAGESSPIEGEL, October 17; SZ October 4 and 6.); Barak (and Arafat) are called uncompromising (SZ, October 6).

Jewish settlers are compared to *fundamentalists* when they are sweepingly described as "national-religious" (FAZ). Ariel Sharon experiences the same attribution when described as a "fan of settlers and a revisionist politician" (FAZ).

Then again, Israelis are portrayed as *hypocritical* when it is insinuated that Sharon plays a "double game" (TAZ). Sharon's description as a "verbal arsonist in the role of an honest man" (FR) again invokes the hypocritical stereotype.

Sharon is described as *arrogant* when the FAZ speaks of him as an "advocate of noncompliance." His "cynical calculus" is said to have worked (TAGESSPIEGEL).

However, Israelis are also labeled with traits of weakness (e.g. in the SZ). This, too, carries an anti-Semitic charge. They then appear as by no means hungry for battle, but instead as passive or cowardly. They "hid themselves away" by raising a "drawbridge" and "became paralyzed." In connection with "Jewish settlers," it is emphasized that they are "keeping a lookout for fear of attacks."

A reference in the WELT (October 4) to a book title by Henryk M. Broder, *Die Irren von Zion* (*The Madmen of Zion* — not available in English), that instrumentalizes the title to describe Israeli actions, makes anti-Semitic readings possible: For one thing, Jews are described as crazy Zionists; for another, this phrase can allude to the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and thus to the construction that Jews are supposedly working on a world conspiracy.

More obvious are those attributions that portray the Israeli right wing as *power hungry* "because, together with the Americans, they want to teach the Palestinians a lesson" (FR). The same goes for the reference to a "Zionist campaign for expanding Jewish rights to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem" (FR).

One can also find allusions that allow Jews to be imagined as power hungry and conspiratorial, when SPIEGEL, for example, refers to the "strong Jewish lobby in the (US) Congress and the powerful right-wing religious organizations sympathetic to Israel" and emphasizes that President Bush fears them in part because he owes them his move into the White House. (August 6, 2001)

"Slaughterer" Sharon: Christian Anti-Judaism

In addition, a plethora of attributions appear that are connected to handed-down Christian prejudices. There are allusions to human sacrifices that Jews supposedly made: "the slaughterer Sharon" (FAZ), who has blood on his hands (FAZ and also WELT); "Israelis' barbarous hunting down of unarmed Palestinians" (SPIEGEL); "to drown in blood," "the bloody hands," "blood and terror" (FAZ); "bloody unrest," "bloodshed" (FR); "streams of blood," "blood flows" (SPIEGEL).

Christian anti-Judaism is also evident regarding the complex of child-murder, which can be associated with handed-down anti-Jewish legends of Jewish sacrificial rites. For example, "Whoever shoots at children with live ammunition and into human crowds with anti-tank missiles, risks forfeiting any claim to the term 'security force'" (FAZ). It is asked, "must one

shoot a child who holds a stone in his hand?" (SPIEGEL) Regarding their own children being sent into battle: "extremist Jewish settlers" abuse their children (TAGESSPIEGEL). Settlers' children would allegedly be sent to the front, should the settlements be removed (TAGESSPIEGEL). Very drastically, it is asserted that the murder of children has been ordered (TAZ, October 2). There is said to be "no justification in the entire civilized world for using live ammunition to shoot down young people who are throwing stones." (TAZ, October 4)

There are also allusions to Jews and Israelis as Satan or exterminating villains: Sharon as "arsonist" (SZ), Sharon quenching [a fire] with gasoline (TAGESSPIEGEL).

Bloodthirstiness is suggested or alluded to when there is talk of the "slaughterhouse of the religions," "bloody Thursday," (SPIEGEL), "thirst for blood and tears," "blood on [their] hands" (TAGESSPIEGEL), or "bathing in a sea of blood" (TAGESSPIEGEL).³⁹ The impact of such anti-Semitic attributions is amplified by stressing Israel's military strength vis-à-vis the Palestinians and describing it in detail. ("Attacks," "bombarding," "air strikes," "liquidate," etc.) SPIEGEL, in particular, draws on blood symbolism in speaking of "bloodshed" and "toll of lives" [the latter is literally "blood toll" in German].

In addition, the image of the (eternally) Wandering Jew who brings calamity is invoked together with the arsonist motif: "A pilgrim sets the land afire" (SZ).

All these allusions to elements of handed-down Christian anti-Judaism are embedded in additional recurrent patterns from the Bible. Thus, there is talk of afflictions and final battles. The SZ speaks of Israelis being "afflicted by tragedies" and "plunged into calamity" (Job), and of a "decisive battle" in which Israel and the Palestinians are caught up. The TAZ even refers to "apocalyptic final days." The image of *David against Goliath* appears often, directly or indirectly. But here — contrary to the legend — the Jews are cast as Goliath and the Palestinians as David, implying that the Palestinians will ultimately defeat Israel. SPIEGEL perceives "Israelis' barbarous hunting down of unarmed Palestinians ... who basically are only throwing stones."

It is evident that the anti-Semitic attributions vary widely and are sometimes even contradictory. Israelis/Jews are portrayed as brutal, murdering, bellicose, and intransigent — yet, at the same time, as cowardly, fainthearted, and full of fear. In both cases, they are represented in negative terms: if they fight, they are warlike and brutal; if they hold back, they are cowardly. It is evidently possible to draw the "image of the Jew" in a constantly negative perspective. Whatever they do, they can be endowed with available anti-Semitic attributions, or such attributions can be activated.

All of these examples show that the coverage contains a plethora of anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish discursive elements. Granted, this does not conversely mean that the coverage is thoroughgoingly anti-Semitic. However, clear anti-Semitic "scent marks" are placed, which can be decoded by those readers in Germany who have such "knowledge elements" at their disposal. In this way, the image of Israel, the Israelis, and the Jews is drawn in negative terms. In addition, the negative attributions adduced here turn up in other discourses, too, such as the debate on the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, the debate on compensation for slave laborers, etc. Their negative effects are thus further amplified.

In this respect, anti-Semitic prejudices enter into the image of Israel and the Israelis.⁴⁰ Moreover, even ostensibly simple negative attributions to Jews that do not initially seem to correspond directly to anti-Semitic stereotypes, can still contain an anti-Semitic connotation. This is because the term "Jew" as such can activate bias among non-Jewish Germans, as the Israeli ambassador Shimon Stein reported in an interview in the FR on March 9, 2002: "Even the word 'Jew' is difficult for Germans. It evokes memories. Thus, people avoid the word to this day. Members of the Jewish Community have also confirmed this to me:

39 Here it is irrelevant to their impact that such attributions refer to both Israelis and Palestinians in the concrete case. If racist effects become visible in the case of the Palestinians, these also result in anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic effects.

40 It is thus also not astonishing that in the phase of the Israeli army's Protective Wall military operation in early 2002, the anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist tones in the German media discourse have become distinctly more audible.

Germans are well and truly self-conscious about using the word 'Jew.' This speaks in favor of a bias."⁴¹ However, it should also be seen that this bias does not hold true for all German non-Jews.

Unpredictable and Dangerous: Anti-Islamic Attributions

The Mideast coverage of the second intifada in the German print media also contains many negative characterizations when referring to Palestinians, and moreover, anti-Islamic attributions.⁴² In these cases, cultural attributions, such as that of violence, are connected with Islam, which can then be interpreted as the reason for violent acts: religious Palestinians threw stones at the Israeli police (FAZ, September 30); Arafat is said to have turned the conflict into a religious war (FR); "the new uprising is led by Islamist zealots who deliberately add fuel to the fire ..." (DIE WELT, October 10).

Such representations cast all Palestinians as fanatical, hysterical, and certifiably insane people. They appear as unpredictable and thus as dangerous. It is clearly emphasized that this danger has a religious background. Hamas is said to be "radical Islamic" (FAZ, October 14). Designations such as "martyr" (FR, November 22) also make reference to Islam.⁴³

Pride and honor — traits frequently attributed to Islam and Muslims — are also frequently invoked, such as when the family of an attacker is described as "proud of their son's deed" (FAZ June 5, 2001). Such attributions can be found consistently and must be read as a well-established component of the discourse. Volunteers for attacks are described as "devout Muslims" and "fanatical nationalists" (SPIEGEL, August 6, 2001). A "terror export of the Islamist groupings" is mentioned, thus conjuring up the danger that the terror could spread to other regions. (TAZ, June 5, 2001) A concept that seems odd to Western recipients is frequently associated with Islam when martyrdom is said to motivate suicide attackers: "The martyr falls in the holy war and goes to paradise" (WELT, June 6, 2001).

All these attributions offer opportunities for interpreting the violence as being directly spawned by Islam. Associations of Islam and violence (or Islam and fanaticism), which appear repeatedly in the media discourse, also can connect to discourses in Germany such as those on crime committed by foreigners, and cater to prejudices and racism.

Collective Symbolism

Like other attributions, collective symbols can serve to characterize persons, groups of persons, situations, and events. Often they are read in both their direct and indirect meanings. This is especially the case for so-called pragmasymbols and for religious attributions, which usually also have a symbolic component (see above).

The coverage of the second intifada is endowed with rich collective symbols. Often, these are used to dramatize events. With them, persons may be not just negatively characterized, but also sometimes demonized and equated with animals.⁴⁴

Waves of Violence: Nature Symbolism

Nature symbols, in particular, represent the events as conflicts that cannot be humanly mastered, and as having a self-perpetuating dynamic. Here, terms such as *wave of violence*, *wave of terror*, *wave of hate*, *extensive fire*, *conflagration*, *wildfire* dominate in the coverage. There is talk of *violence blazing up again*. *War flares up* and a *spark* can lead to the *outbreak* of violence (WELT). The conflict is also characterized as a *quake*; hope for peace is *incinerated*.

41 Linguistically seen, the word can carry an anti-Semitic connotation, depending on its use and its user. It is then not a purely objective denotation, but instead emotionally charged.

42 For a detailed representation of these attributions, please see our project report.

43 Additional examples of attributions that convey unpredictability, propensity for violence, cruelty, and brutality: "the crowd maltreated ... corpses," "murderous crowd," "jeers," "raging mob" (FR, October 13), "amorphous mass" (SZ, October 13), "unleashed" demonstrators, "attacking mob" (all TAGESPIEGEL), "brutalized crowd" (WELT).

44 In the following analysis, the collective symbols are italicized.

Ariel Sharon, in particular, is dubbed a *hawk*, a *lion* about to pounce, and a *pyromaniac*. — symbols that deny him humanity and reason.

Technology Symbolism

Technology symbols are also used to underscore the events as having their own dynamic and being scarcely controllable. Here, the symbol of *pressure* dominates, and especially the symbol of *spirals* of violence and of terror. *Vents* need to be opened. There is talk of a *chain reaction of blind or calculated violence*. *High tension* rules the Mideast; its residents find themselves on a *powder keg*, which can *explode* at any time. Sharon is described multiple times as a *bulldozer*.

Thirst for Blood and Tears: Body Symbolism

Body symbols place emphasis on the vulnerable self, the lack of reason, the endangerment of life, etc. Thus, there is talk of the *heart* of the holy city (Jerusalem) and of *hearts* that are set aflame. The conflict is linked to *insanity*, thus denying reason to all those involved. The Al-Aksa mosque is described as "our *life*." There are references to the deep valley of *fear* and of *tears*, or the peace process that is drowning in *blood*. Allegedly there is still "an enormous thirst for *blood* and *tears*" (SPIEGEL). All in all, the blood metaphor is extremely prevalent, and this marks the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as especially brutal and atavistic.

The Palestinian populace is described as a heavily *breathing*, hard to predict monster, and as an "extended arm of the people's wrath." The Israeli settlements in West Jordan are characterized as a "*cancerous* spread." There are allegations of wanting to shatter the "*nerves* of the opposing side" (WELT).

Out of Balance: Symbols of Normalization

One rarely finds images of balance and normalization. They are most likely to appear when the Mideast is portrayed as a region of abnormality and instability, and when paths out of this situation are invoked. For example, there are calls for achieving a position of *balance* again, and taking a *path back* to normalcy; this should be accompanied by *measurable steps*. Other symbols that belong to this complex include *lull*, *calm*, *stabilization*, *truce*, etc.

Chess Moves: Game and Competition Symbols

The Mideast conflict is occasionally also played down as a game and competition. It is said that the *ante is upped*, a final *move on the chessboard* is made, or the *wrong card* is drawn. The conflicting parties are also dubbed *players*.

Missiles against Stone-Throwers: War Symbolism

Among the war and military symbolism that one encounters, the use of pragmasymbols calls for particularly close attention — for example, when words such as *tanks* or *missiles* not only denote the war materiel itself but also always connote the Israelis' superior power. The same goes for *airplanes*, *military helicopters*, etc. Terms such as *spearhead*, *disruptive action*, and *camp followers* (or *baggage train*) also stem from the military realm and also always contain symbolic components that dramatize the events. The symbolic charge becomes particularly evident when such pragmasymbols are confronted with corresponding symbols on the Palestinian side — as is the case of portrayals of "*missiles against stone-throwers*," which underscore the position of the strong against the weak.

Process in Flames: Dramatization with Symbol Chains

As a rule, these collective symbols appear in a chain of catachreses, or mixed metaphors. They meander, so to speak, through the texts, resulting in scenarios that are highly charged with collective symbols. The following example shows a particularly dense linkage of such symbols drawn from different realms of imagery; it demonstrates how their use allows a dramatic scenario to take form.

The headline of an SZ article from October 2 refers already to "*pyromaniacs*" who are making policy. The headline reads: "A *conflagration* is started in the Mideast and those responsible *pour fuel on the flames*." The article itself begins as follows: "*Plumes of smoke* drift over the

holy land, and the *peace process* between the Israelis and the Palestinians appears to be going up in *flames*. Unrest has *spread* over the Palestinian territories from Jerusalem's Temple Mount as if *fanned by a fast wind*. A *conflagration* threatens, and it has many causes: the *ground*, that is, the basis for peace, is much too *dry* and the *underbrush* is *withered*. But this *fire* did not *ignite* itself; it is no *accident* and no *natural catastrophe*. This *fire* was *kindled* by two sides. The *chaos* it precipitates thus arises from irresponsible *calculation*.

"There are political *pyromaniacs* on both sides who believe they will *profit* from the violence. In this case, the Likud leader Ariel Sharon has *distinguished himself* as Israel's highest-ranking *arsonist* with his visit on Thursday to the Temple Mount, with its Islamic holy shrines. This was an unheard-of provocation and thus the *initial ignition*. But at first no one on the *opposing side* thought to *extinguish* [the flames]. Instead, the Palestinians hastily hauled in the *oilcans*. For days no word came from their President, Yasser Arafat, on *containing* the violence." (SZ)

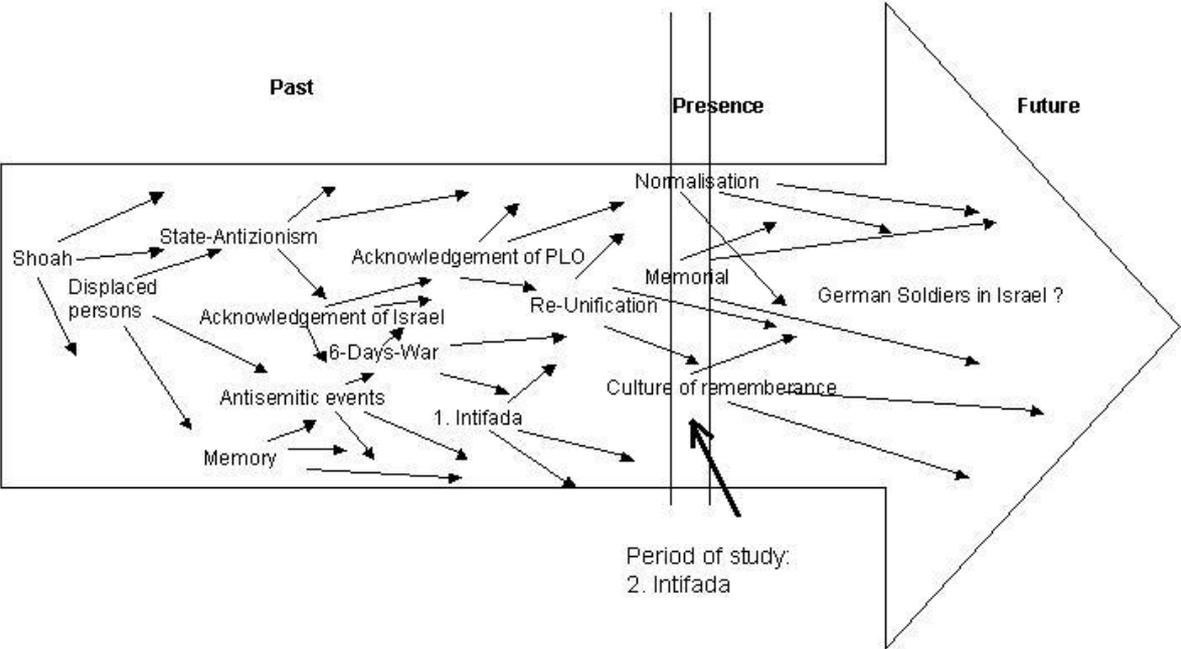
Even if the text itself disputes that this is a natural catastrophe, the collective symbolism nevertheless indicates that the conflict is similarly difficult to bring under control. Here, symbols of nature, technology, mathematics, and economics link together into a chain.

The following charts demonstrate the multifariousness of such attributions and the collective symbols that accompany them, and put them into the historical context of the Israel discourse that is relevant to Germany.

Germany – Mideast Discourse — Historical Discursive Development with Selected Discursive Events

Chart

Germany – Neareast-Discourse
historical development of the discourse with selected discourse-events



This chart shows the historical discourse of the past 60 years in Germany. The lines

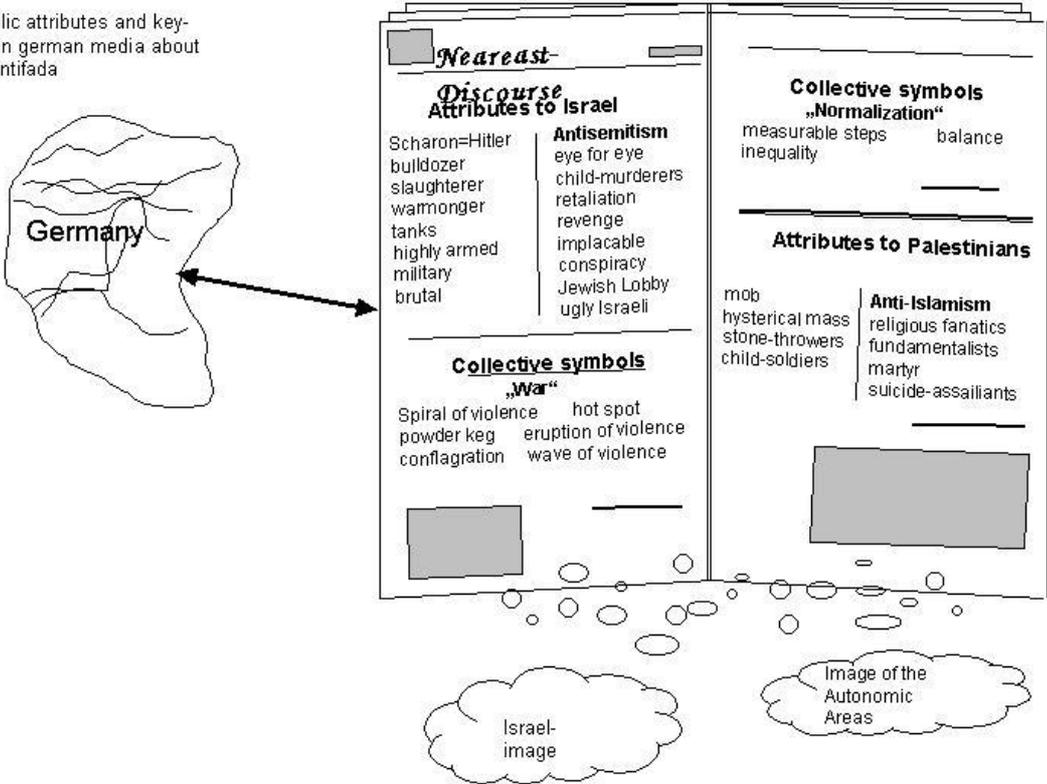
symbolize various strands of the discourse. Several themes important to our analysis are thereby emphasized. These themes are rooted in the past, and their entwinements and the concomitant effects continue to make an impact in the present (and into the future). They form the backdrop of present-day interpretations, and they are continuously interpreted anew in these processes of interpretation. Thus, the Shoah, for example, forms the backdrop for each and every engagement of the media with the current Mideast conflict in Germany. However, its role in this is by no means unambiguous. The Shoah can even be used as a metaphor — as a point of comparison — in leveling accusations against Israel. This, in turn, has retroactive effects on the interpretation of the Shoah.

The chart sketches the entire discursive context for reading statements on the second intifada in the print media discourse in Germany; the image of Israel (and the Palestinian territories) emerges within this context.

Symbolic Attributions and Key Terms in the German Coverage of the Second Intifada

Chart

Symbolic attributes and key-words in german media about the 2. Intifada



German coverage of the second intifada, symbolized by the "newspaper" on the right side of the chart, is structured by constant symbolic attributions and linguistic images. Examples of these attributions and images are listed here. The left side of the chart symbolizes Germany as it has resulted from its historical development; it shows a hypothetical synchronous cross-section of the historical course of the discourse (Chart xy). The double-headed arrow

between the two sides of the chart refers on the one hand to the continuing impact of this historically handed-down discourse in the current media coverage, and on the other hand to the effects of this discourse on the overall discursive constellation in Germany, which in turn will have exert its own effects on the future.

This should make evident that the image of Israel and the Palestinian territories is not a matter of a realistic or distorted reflection of the events themselves, but rather the result of discursive processing of these events that incorporates various perspectives and projections. In other words, there is no such thing as a direct and clear view of Israel and the Palestinian territories — thus, they are represented in the chart with open outlines (lower right).

The examples of attributions listed in the "newspaper" include some in the anti-Semitic tradition, and some that draw on anti-Jewish stereotypes. Next to them, symbols are cited that most notably pertain to Ariel Sharon and thus all Israelis.

The attributions to the Palestinians should be understood in part as anti-Islamic; in part, they are general negative attributions.

The "collective symbolism" rubric concentrates on some typical examples used to characterize the entire Mideast in negative terms.

Racism and Anti-Semitism: Connections of the Mideast Coverage and Mideast Discourse to Anti-Semitic and Racist German Discourses

In reflecting on the findings of the analysis of the discursive events of the current Mideast conflict, one must naturally remember that its discursive effects exert an impact in the *German* discursive context, and that they connect to themes and positions that are virulent here. The crucial lynchpin is the effect of the discourse on German readers with their respective discursive positions and discursive entanglements.

For example, the characterizations and attributions used to describe the Palestinians draw on racist and/or ethnocentric prejudices that are present in the current German discourse on immigration. In this discourse, major reservations exist regarding Muslims in general, as well as persons and groups whose appearance, customs, and traditions strike Germans as "strange" and "not normal."⁴⁵ They are also consistently denied to have the capability of solving conflicts in a Western (= rational) manner.

Yet, the print media discourse on the Mideast touches on more than just the complex of immigration and fleeing one's homeland as a refugee. It also alludes — in an enormously negative manner — to the German discussion on the potential and difficulties of an existing multicultural or immigrant society. The Mideast coverage supplies nourishment to critics of such societies. Against the backdrop of the Mideast discourse as it is situated in the current coverage of events, Samuel Huntington's thesis of a "clash of civilizations" can come back with a vengeance (see Huntington 1996).

The events in Israel — as they are interpreted and evaluated in the media discourse — reproduce and reinforce the anti-Semitism already present in Germany.⁴⁶ Conspicuously, the press makes an effort as a rule not to formulate its criticism of Israel as criticism of Jews. At the same time, one must assume that a portion of the readers receives the criticism as also criticizing *Jewish* policy and *Jewish* existence in general.

Yet, reinforcement of anti-Semitic prejudices is also to be expected because anti-Semitic ways of reading that appear within the Mideast coverage (can) connect to similar elements from other discourses. Anti-Semitic elements are present, for example, in the debate on the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, as well as in debates on compensation for slave laborers and the integration of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe — to name just a few neighboring discursive strands. Martin Walser's speech at the awarding of the German Book Trade's Peace Prize in 1998 and Normal Finkelstein's book on the "Holocaust industry" also cater to anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist reservations. All these debates serve especially to produce the

45 See Jäger 1996, Jäger et al. 1998, M. Jäger 1996; especially on attitudes toward persons with Islamic religious beliefs, see also Pinn / Wehner 1995.

46 On this, see also Jäger 1996, Bergmann/Erb 1991, Bergmann 1995, Rensmann 2000 et al.

notion of Jews as intransigent and unforgiving.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the discourse on the Mideast conflict also connects to discourses that deal with the formation of a *new German self-assurance*. An emphasis on a new German role in international mediation attempts, which dates back (at the latest) to Foreign Minister Fischer's interventions, supports those voices that see post-unification Germany as a "normal" state and that concomitantly intend finally to close the books on the German past.⁴⁸ The discussion initiated by Chancellor Schröder in early 2002 on dispatching UN soldiers to the Mideast with the possible involvement of German soldiers, shows once more how close together these two discursive strands lie.

A cursory analysis extending past the study period into April 2002, which examined individual articles by prominent people, showed that the negative representation of Israel (and also of the Palestinians) further intensified following the terror attacks in New York and Washington, with anti-Semitic stereotypes also entering into the criticism of Israel in many cases.⁴⁹ The general image that the media coverage currently assigns to Israel and the Israelis can thus be described overall as exceedingly bleak.

Summary

In general, there are conspicuous weaknesses in the German print media's coverage of the Mideast conflict, regarding both the image of Israel that is conveyed (and the image of Palestinians), as well as the impact of the reporting on the state of democracy in Germany (accentuation of racist and anti-Semitic tendencies). This is not to say that the entire coverage of Israel should be regarded as negative. It must be taken into account that the study was intended as an analysis of a "conflict discourse."

In particular, the analysis of the representation of Israel and the Israelis shows that they are portrayed in an extremely negative manner, especially regarding the depiction of the unequal balance of power between the Israeli army, which is characterized as ruthless, and the Palestinians, who are depicted as the hopeless underdogs (e.g., tanks vs. stone-throwers). The Palestinians are also viewed critically, but are clearly assigned the role of the victim.

In addition, negative characterizations of Israelis or the state of Israel unduly personalize and generalize the conflict. Such pejoratives strip individuals of their status as human subjects through comparisons with machines ("bulldozer") or animals ("hawk," "bull"). Notions such as "warmonger," "warhorse," "agitator," "catastrophe personified," and "fanatic" also fuel the discourse and demonize the persons or groups thus depicted. Finally, the portrayal of religious beliefs that depart from German-Christian normality as exotic and/or fundamentalist also leads to prejudice.

In contrast, there are significantly fewer cases of negative attributions to Palestinians, in terminology specific for this group ("Islamic zealots," "martyrs"). Many negative descriptions are not directly anti-Palestinian but invoke elements of the broad area of racism in Germany ("hysterical masses," backwardness).

47 On the Walser-Bubis debate, see Dietzsch / Jäger / Schobert 1999; on Finkelstein's reception, see Schobert / Dietzsch 2001, as well as Schobert 2001.

48 The discussion on a new German self-assurance is stimulated, of course, not only in connection with the Mideast. The idea and the effort (underway since 1990) that Germany should also intervene militarily once again, makes these positions strong in the discourse, as well. Shimon Stein says of this mentality of consigning the past to the history: "Whoever talks of drawing a final line deals with history in a biased manner, is perhaps afraid of being confronted with the topic. Whoever demands to draw a final line is still far from normality." (FR, March 9, 2002)

49 A stir was caused particularly by an interview with Günter Grass in the October 10, 2001, Spiegel (Spiegel on-line: "Amerikanische Politik muß Gegenstand der Kritik bleiben" — "American Policy Must Remain an Object of Criticism" and "Amerikakritik ist ein Freundschaftsdienst" — "Criticism of America Is an Act of Friendship"), an article by Christoph Dieckmann in Die Zeit, no. 46, November 14, 2001, and a commentary by Rudolf Augstein in Spiegel, no. 51, December 17, 2001. A commentary by the editor-in-chief of the WAZ, Uwe Knüpfner, on April 4, 2002, alluded to poisoned wells and a worldwide conspiracy.

In particular, the analysis of the representation of Israel and the Israelis showed that allusions to biblical events or aphorisms, as well as other classic anti-Jewish tropes (such as the ritual murder of children and the concept of "Old Testament vengeance") instill anti-Semitic elements into the discourse of the German media. This pattern also occurs when terms such as "Jew" and "Jewish" appear in negative contexts (e.g., in connection with "hardliner," "pyromaniac," and "arsonist") with the result that the term "Jew," which is neutral in principle, becomes negatively charged.

Such anti-Semitic discursive elements also always invoke the German past, frequently in the form of projections that shift criticism of fascism to Jews and Israel ("selective collective punishment," "the ugly Israeli," the comparison of Sharon with Hitler, etc.). These projections simultaneously relativize the German past.

The coverage of the Middle East in Germany is often paternalistic. Journalists' disparage those about whom they write by assuming a stance of cultural superiority, based on the achievements of German democracy. Israel (and the Palestinian territories) are thus perceived primarily from the vantage point of murder and manslaughter. The fact that Israel is a largely secular society receives scant attention, and therefore plays no role in the image of Israel imparted by the discourse of the German press.

Journalists frequently use direct or indirect quotations and/or interviews in order to express criticism or sympathies vicariously (for example, letting Israelis criticize Israelis). The negative symbols and attributions that occur in such texts have the same negative effects on readers as texts penned by a newspaper's own staffers. This discursive tactic appears chiefly in criticism of the Israeli side.

Insofar as efforts to avoid biased coverage entail the juxtaposition of one side's atrocities with those of the other, these efforts have negative effects, for they discredit both sides. All in all, only rarely do journalists seem to reflect on their own position within this discourse. This leads to partiality and partisanship that is not identified as such.

Furthermore, commonly used collective symbolism contributes to the dramatization and sensationalism of the coverage of the second intifada, which portrays the entire Mideast as a quasi primeval "source of conflagration." Israelis and Palestinians are both depicted within this symbolic framework as irrational and dangerous. Such symbolism suggests that social and political conflicts either have natural causes or function like mechanical processes, a comparison most commonly expressed in the term "spiral of violence."

Those of the texts analyzed in this study with negative attributions always must be seen in the context of historical and current German discourses. In this respect, they often tend to reproduce existing anti-Semitic and racist prejudices in German public discourses, or even to construct them anew.

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Summary

Coverage of the Mideast conflict in the German print media shows conspicuous deficiencies both in the image of Israel (and the Palestinians) that it presents and in its impact on the development of democracy in Germany (i.e., the strengthening of racism and anti-Semitism).

In particular, the analysis of the representation of Israel and the Israelis showed that allusions to biblical events or aphorisms, as well as other classic anti-Jewish tropes (such as the ritual murder of children and the concept of "Old Testament vengeance") instill anti-Semitic elements into the discourse of the German media. This pattern also occurs when terms such as "Jew" and "Jewish" appear in negative contexts (e.g., in connection with "hardliner," "pyromaniac," and "arsonist") with the result that the term "Jew," which is neutral in principle, becomes negatively charged.

Such anti-Semitic discursive elements also always invoke the German past, frequently in the form of projections that shift criticism of fascism to Jews and Israel ("selective collective punishment," "the ugly Israeli," the comparison of Sharon with Hitler, etc.). These projections simultaneously relativize the German past.

In addition, negative characterizations of Israelis or the state of Israel unduly personalize and generalize the conflict. Such pejoratives strip individuals of their status as human subjects through comparisons with machines ("bulldozer") or animals ("hawk," "bull"). Notions such as "warmonger," "warhorse," "agitator," "catastrophe personified," and "fanatic" also fuel the discourse and demonize the persons or groups thus depicted. Finally, the portrayal of religious beliefs that depart from German-Christian normality as exotic and/or fundamentalist also leads to prejudice.

In comparison, significantly fewer negative attributions to Palestinians are implied to apply to Palestinians as such ("Islamic zealots," "martyrs"). However, many negative attributions that are not directly anti-Palestinian do, in fact, evoke the discourse of racism, which remains prevalent in Germany ("hysterical masses," backwardness).

The coverage of the Middle East in Germany is often paternalistic. Journalists' ostensibly unassailable position of progressiveness, presumably based upon the achievements of German democracy, devalues the objects of their reports. Israel (and the Palestinian territories) are thus perceived primarily from the vantage point of murder and manslaughter. The fact that Israel is a largely secular society receives scant attention, and therefore plays no role in the image of Israel imparted by the discourse of the German press.

Journalists frequently retreat behind quotations and/or interviews, thus expressing their own criticism or sympathies vicariously. The negative symbols and attributions that recur in such texts have the same negative effects on readers as texts penned by a newspaper's own staffers. This discursive tactic appears chiefly in criticism of the Israeli side.

Insofar as efforts to avoid biased coverage entail the juxtaposition of one side's atrocities with those of the other, these efforts have negative effects, for they discredit both sides. All in all, only rarely do journalists seem to reflect on their own position within this discourse. This unreflective participation in the general media discourse on the Middle East leads to partiality and partisanship.

Furthermore, commonly used collective symbolism contributes to the dramatization and sensationalism of the coverage of the second intifada, which portrays the entire Mideast as a quasi-natural "fire source." Israelis and Palestinians are both depicted within this symbolic framework as irrational and dangerous. Such symbolism suggests that social and political conflicts either have natural causes or function like mechanical processes, a comparison

most eloquently expressed in the term "spiral of violence."

The texts analyzed in this study always interact with historical and current German discourses. In this respect, they often tend to reproduce existing anti-Semitic and racist prejudices in German public discourses, or even to construct them anew.