

Anti-Semitic Attitudes in Europe: A Comparative Perspective

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The article uses available survey data to depict the depth and spread of anti-Semitic attitudes across Europe. The main assumption is that European anti-Semitism, both currently and historically, is closely tied to issues and crises of national self-identification; for this reason, social identity theory is employed to study the varying configurations of anti-Semitic prejudice. In most European countries, Jews are a small and socially integrated minority. Attitudes toward them are determined less by concrete experiences of cultural differences, or conflicts over scarce resources, but rather by a perceived threat to the national self-image. This leads to an accentuation of the pertinent prejudices that blame Jews to be responsible for that threat. This perspective brings to light considerable differences between Eastern and Western Europe and the continuing influence of national traditions.

Surveys on anti-Semitism have been continually conducted in the United States since the end of World War II (Dinnerstein, 1994). In Europe, if at all, this is the case only for West Germany, Austria, and, with greater gaps, France. In the remaining countries, from 1945 until 1990, there are only a few occasional studies available at best, in many cases none at all (see Bergmann, 1996). It was not until the collapse of the Eastern bloc that opinion polls were conducted throughout Europe asking about the populations' attitude toward national minorities and in particular toward Jews. Since then, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) have commissioned a number of surveys based on comparable questions in several European countries.¹ These data allow at least

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¹ The series of surveys commissioned by the American Jewish Committee based on a representative national sample in each country (between 1,100 and 2,000 respondents, accurate within \pm three

a tentative comparative analysis. The rise in the number of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe over recent years has once more put the problem of anti-Semitism in the public spotlight, prompting surveys to be conducted in countries such as Sweden, Switzerland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Hungary. However, there are no data available for many other European countries.

Given this patchy database, a valid comparative analysis of the scale and structure of anti-Semitism in European countries is a difficult task. The following analysis is based primarily upon the AJC and ADL sources and complements them with additional data taken from particular countries. However, the analysis can only furnish conclusions on the distribution of attitudes across the range of the whole population; the data do not allow a comparative analysis of the influence on attitudes toward Jews by age, education, religion, political orientation etc.

The theoretical perspective follows the social identity approach, not least because European anti-Semitism is closely connected to issues and crises of the national self-identification, both today and in the past.

Theoretical and Historical Considerations

In the social identity approach, cognitive categorization processes generate intergroup differences and similarities. In-group favoritism emerges, for categorization processes not only serve to structure the environment, but also possess emotional and motivational functions. Through identification with the in-group, group members partially gain a sense of their self—their social identity. Accordingly, they strive for an image of the in-group as positive as possible that is in part reached through a negative classification of out-groups. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), the tendency to draw negative distinctions increases when (a) social identity is perceived as being under threat and (b) when there is a conflict of interests between groups or when a conflict of interest makes group membership more salient. In keeping with these theoretical assumptions, persons who are especially inclined to utilize prejudices as a means of stabilizing their social identity are those who

- (a) identify very strongly with their in-group and therefore draw a large part of their individual identity from group membership,
- (b) perceive a threat to their social identity, and

percentage points). The face-to-face interviews were conducted by experienced national survey institutes. The surveys commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League based on telephone interviews of about 500 people in each country (margin error is ± 4 at 95% level of confidence). The fieldwork was done by Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS).

- (c) perceive a conflict between the in-group and out-group.

The available data on anti-Semitism do not allow an examination of the connection between attitudes and personality structures. More important for the current analysis are the social functions of prejudices: (a) they accentuate differences between groups (social distinctions); (b) they provide for justification for the social treatment and judgment of specific social groups (social legitimacy); and (c) they offer implicit explanations for social conditions and events (social causality; see Zick, 1997).

From this perspective, this article will examine

- (a) how Jews are categorized in European countries (stereotypical ascriptions) and the differences this is supposed to accentuate;
- (b) whether there are in fact any real conflicts of interest between Jews and non-Jews and in which areas these conflicts are perceived;
- (c) to what extent Jews are felt to threaten the social identity of the majority; and
- (d) for which social conditions or events anti-Jewish prejudices provide an “explanation” or “justification.”

Do Jews Differ? Anti-Semitism and its Historical Impact

According to the results of a series of studies from different countries, anti-Semitism correlates closely with xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia, and the like (Ambrosewicz-Jacob, 2003; Bergmann & Erb, 2003; Heitmeyer, 2007; Kovács, 1999, 2005; Living History Forum & Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, 2004). Nonetheless, the analysis starts with the hypothesis that the attitudes toward Jews in Europe differ from those toward immigrant minorities and national minorities whose ethnic background lies in neighboring nations. We advance this hypothesis because the categorization of Jews is based less on the current group position and social contact in the respective country but rather on their past situation. This means that the category *Jew* gains its salience primarily when the past is activated as a reference point. This category is therefore essentially symbolic. Available empirical studies show that in countries where anti-Semitism was not very widespread prior to 1945, such as in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Czech Republic, the population today is less anti-Semitic than in those countries with a more deeply rooted tradition of anti-Semitism, such as Germany, Austria, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. The role the country played in the Holocaust is decisive for the content of attitudes toward Jews, naturally above all, in Germany and Austria. But this factor also strongly influences attitudes in Latvia, Lithuania,

Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary (partially in Poland as well), and more recently, in Switzerland.

If this hypothesis is correct, then the negative classification of Jews does not primarily employ categories like religion, race, current economic status or competition, or any other terms covering social problems. Rather it refers to the specific social position that Jews held historically. The national anti-Semitism that evolved in the 19th century did not view Jews simply as “aliens,” as immigrant members of another nation, but rather as a group that stood outside the national order of the world. Jews were both outside and inside at the same time, and therefore embodied the counterprinciple of a “national nonidentity” (Holz, 2001). This ambivalent position predestined the Jews to become perceived as the embodiment of supranational modern phenomena like international finance markets, Communism, and liberal values. Their rapid social advancement in most European societies and their continuing connection with the money economy were interpreted as a confirmation of these “myths about the Jews,” the core of which is the insinuation that Jews secretly dominate the economic and political world. The founding of Israel has not changed this ambivalent position. The misconceptions that identify Jews with international financial power and world domination remain, because Israel (Zionism) is now included into this image as a kind of “Jewish agency.”

From this specific position, the core of the anti-Semitic prejudice can be defined as follows:

Jews are seen not as individuals but as a collective, putting their own group before all other commitments. Jews remain essentially alien in the surrounding societies, and they bring disaster into their “host societies” or the whole world, and they are doing it secretly (Bering, 2002, p. 474).

In line with this structure of an envious prejudice, Jews are perceived as a powerful and threatening group that is not part of the national collective.

The damage Jews are alleged to inflict on their host societies covers a number of fields:

- (a) They can undermine a society’s religious and cultural cohesion, for example, through secularization or endangering the national culture through universal values and ideas;
- (b) They can harm a society economically through financial exploitation or manipulating international financial markets;
- (c) They can destabilize and threaten politically by acts of betrayal to ones country, by acting as a revolutionary force, or by controlling a country’s political system; and
- (d) They can damage a society morally by utilizing their role of victim in the Holocaust to portray a negative image of the country or to demand restitution payments (See b.)

Whether one views the Jews as a group that damages the nation in the present or has damaged it in the past depends greatly on the individual's identification with the in-group. A strong national identification forms the core of this attitude, and politically it is preeminent in the right-wing conservative spectrum. Bergmann and Erb (2003) showed with a multivariate analysis of anti-Semitic attitudes in Germany that the factors with the highest explanatory power are those on the level of ideology and value orientation (right-wing political orientation, conservative value orientation, and, above all, nationalistic pride and authoritarianism), whereas the fear of economic crisis expresses itself today only very weakly in the form of intolerance toward Jews. Studies in other countries confirm this connection (for Hungary, see Kovács, 2005; for Poland, see Krzemiński, 1996, p. 302).

Stereotypical Categorization

Jews as Targets of Envious Prejudice

According to the ethnic hierarchies model (Hagendoorn, 1993) and social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), stereotypes and racist arguments serve to justify differences in group positions, an assumption first stated by Allport in 1954 (see Bobo & Hutchings' group-position model, 1996). Thus, immigrant minorities and Gypsies are classified at the bottom of the hierarchy. This perception is manifested in greater social distance toward them, resistance to their equal treatment, more negative judgments about them, and accusations that their behavior is normatively deficient. In contrast to these out-groups, Jews are placed far up the hierarchy, experiencing clearly less social distance (AJC, 2001, Table 10; AJC, 2002) and enjoying equal treatment before the law. This status, together with the fact that the Jewish minority is in most countries extremely small (see Table 4, below), means that conflicts about jobs, housing, and social security support are rare. It is their special skills and capabilities that are perceived as a threat to the in-group. Although the threat is perceived as real, it resides on a higher level of abstraction as a kind of ominous symbolic menace, replicating fears and prejudices especially widespread in Central and Eastern Europe prior to 1945 (e.g., Jews control the press, the economy, etc.).

On the one hand, Jews are socially integrated and perceived to be successful. But, on the other hand, they are also seen as an integral part of the respective national society, or rather perceived as a closely knit group that primarily looks after itself, less concerned with the welfare of the nation in which they live (see Table 1). If we follow the stereotype content model (SCM), which divides stereotyped out-groups into two clusters, Jews belong to the envied groups due to the high societal status ascribed to them. The SCM asserts that "out-groups often fall in two mixed clusters: paternalized groups liked as warm but disrespected as incompetent . . . and envied groups respected but disliked as lacking warmth." (Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske,

Table 1. Categorization of Jews as Lacking Sociability/Jewish Power in Business (% Agree)

Country	Items			
	Jews Are More Loyal to Israel Than to This Country	Jews Don't Care What Happens to Anyone but Their Own Kind	Jews Stick Together More than Others (Italians, Dutch ...).	Jews Have too much Power in the Business World
Austria	46	29	70	24
Belgium	46	20		33
Denmark	37	14		11
France	28	15		25
Germany	50	30		20
(Hungary)	(37)			(55)
Italy	57	24	73	33
Netherlands	44	15	37	18
(Poland)	(52)			(43)
Spain	48	23	47	45
Switzerland	46	30	64	26
United Kingdom	40	18		14

Source. ADL, 2004; figures in parentheses (), ADL, 2005, Table 1.

2005, p. 35) Groups admired for their competence (intelligence, industriousness, and discipline), embodied for example by Jews and Asian Americans, are described as lacking sociability with the dominant group and are therefore disliked. The presumed competence of the envied out-group engenders a sense of threat and competition among the in-group. Anti-Semitism can be seen as the ideological form of an envious prejudice, which is “a crucial mediator of scapegoating” (Glick, 2002, p. 114)

The accusation of a lack of sociability is exacerbated in the case of the Jewish out-group by history. For centuries Jewish communities, marginalized in Christian societies, were extensively self-administered up until the 19th century, giving rise to the widespread impression that the Jews formed a “state within the state.” The “knowledge” about the Jewish claim to be the “chosen people” further encouraged the image of arrogant segregation. In international comparisons this dimension of prejudice is addressed with three items focusing on the question of double loyalty and in-group favoritism.

Table 1 shows that the Jews are placed in a close relationship with Israel by a large section of the population in European countries, and that they are viewed as forming a cohesive and separate group. This may not necessarily indicate a negative attitude, for it can instead be meant as a simple observation. The lower percentage approving the statement that “Jews don’t care. . .” is an evidence of this; at the same time however, a section regards the close connection of the country’s Jews with Israel negatively as an expression of clannishness. In the following paragraphs, several indicators that reveal the stereotyping of Jews are discussed. Further on, the special position ascribed to Jews compared to that of other minorities, who are targets of contemptuous prejudice (Glick, 2002), are demonstrated.

Religious Stereotyping

Religious difference, which into the early 20th century was a key dimension of disapproval of Jews, is hardly articulated in the surveys² (Cohen & Golub, 1991, Table 11). Yet about one-fifth of Europeans still agreed “strongly or somewhat” with the statement, “The Jews are responsible for the death of Christ” (ADL, 2005; Gudkov & Levinson, 1994). The fact that this religious prejudice is limited mostly to older, poorly educated people, living mainly in rural areas or small towns, as Krzemiński (1996) has observed for Poland, indicates that its significance will diminish in the future. Moreover, I think that we may interpret agreement with the aforementioned statements as an expression of common historical “knowledge,” which is likely to be of little consequence for the respondents, rather than being a sign of religious hatred or scapegoating.

The Dominant Stereotype: International Jewish Power

The items typically selected in the surveys to measure attitudes toward Jews refer to the stereotypes “power or influence” (see Tables 1 and 3), “money and greed connected with dishonestly earned wealth,” “slyness,” and “clannishness” (for Russia: Brym, 1996; Krichevsky, 1999; for Hungary: Kovács, 1999, Tables 1 and 3; and for Slovakia: Bútoravá & Bútorá, 1995, pp. 5f). In its survey to gauge “anti-Semitism in Europe” (2002), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) used an anti-Semitism index that contained the following four statements: (a) Jews do not care what happens to anyone but their own kind; (b) Jews are more willing to use shady practices to get what they want; (c) Jews are more loyal to Israel than to this country; and (d) Jews have too much power in the business world. These stereotypes indicate an asymmetrical group relationship, where the Jews are categorized as powerful, while the self-characterization is that of a weaker group threatened by the might of the other. The cause for this superior strength can be seen in part in the abilities of Jews, who are ascribed intelligence (frequently in the negative sense of cunningness) and an ethos of hard work. But they are also alleged to use unfair practices (deceit, preferential treatment for their own group). The “stereotype of the Jews” differs greatly from that associated with the lower strata of society and ascribed to immigrant minorities. Table 2 shows that a certain proportion of the population believes that Jews possess too much influence in the country. At the same time however, other social groups or organizations are far more frequently ascribed such influence.

These figures show that respondents in most Western European countries hardly perceive a continuing Jewish influence in their own country, while the

² In contrast to the United States (Glock & Stark, 1966), the influence of denomination, religious practice, and particularism have yet to be systematically investigated in Europe (cf. König, Scheepers, & Felling, 2001).

Table 2. Influence in Society “Do You Feel that the Following Groups Have Too Much, Too Little, or the Right Influence in Our Society?” (Too Much Influence,%)

Country	Groups							
	Jews	Journalists/ Media	Politicians/ Political Parties	Businessmen/ Entrepreneurs	Intellectuals	Workers/ Trade Unions	Civil Servants	Other Nations/ Groups
Austria (2001)	19	41	61 58	22*	18	3	38	26 ^a
Belarus (1992)	15	42	28	63*	29	10	72	42 ^b
Czech Republic (1999)	8	53	70	42	26	4	39	
Germany (2002)	20	70	42	68 ⁺	16	32 [#]	—	51 ^a
Great Britain (1993)	8	77	—	60 ⁺	—	26 [#]	—	36 ^d
Hungary (1991)	17		58		29	2	32	24 ^b
Latvia (1992)	8	19	25	31*	12	3	36	12 ^b
Lithuania (1992)	11	58	28	30*	38	25	39	22 ^b
Poland (1995)	16	32		43		12 [#]		27 ^a
Russia (1996)	14	35	62 39	57*	10	4	75	43 ^c
Slovakia (1999)	15	39	76	62	23	3	29	
Sweden (1999)	2	59	50	36 ⁺	13	21 [#]		
Switzerland (2000)	17	53	39	31 ⁺	20			
Ukraine (1992)	9	33	35	33*	17	11	51	11 ^b

Sources. Cohen & Golub, 1991, Golub & Cohen 1993, Table 16; AJC, 1996, Item 20; Gudkov & Levinson, 1994, Items 6–20; AJC, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2002.

Note. * entrepreneurs; + big business, business leaders, or foreign business men; # trade or labor unions; ^a = Americans; ^b = foreigners, ^c = Caucasians; ^d = Japanese.

proportion is slightly higher in a few Eastern European countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Russia, and Belarus). It reaches its peak in Germany and Austria traceable largely to coping with their national historical burdens. Respondents see the Jews as using this past as a lever to exert moral pressure publicly. There is no reference here to a general Jewish influence in business and politics. If, due to the small size of their group and because only the small minority perceives a disproportionate influence, the prejudice of “Jewish power” has no factual basis in the real situation of Jews in the respective country, so what does it link into?

Markovitz (2003) claimed that European anti-Semitism has changed to the extent that expressions of prejudice and hate against the “powerless” European Jews are still regarded as illegitimate, but that such expressions against the “powerful Jews” in Israel and the United States are permitted. Presumably, one might say, this type of anti-Semitic prejudice finds a kind of “environmental support” in the pro-Israeli policy of the United States, which is “explained” by the power of the Jewish lobby in the United States and Israel’s influence on American policy. This fits well the basic structure of the anti-Semitic stereotype that Jews form an international, closely networked, powerful group, and we may expect that “Jewish power” is conceived in the form of a worldwide influence. This prejudice serves less the

Table 3. International Jewish Influence

Country	“Now, as in the Past, Jews Exert Too Much Influence on World Events” (%)				
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don’t know or No Answer
Austria (2001)	12	28	23	13	24
Czech Rep. (1999)	9	25	39	12	15
Germany (2002)	14	26	21	17	22
Latvia (1992)	12	19	21	7	41
Lithuania (1992)	12	22	22	7	36
Russia (1996)	8	24	31	8	28
Slovakia (1999)	23	30	20	4	23
Sweden (1999)	2	12	11	64	11
Switzerland (2000)	13	20	32	23	12
Ukraine (1992)	7	10	27	11	40

Sources. AJC, Austria, 2001, Table 12; Gudkov & Levinson, 1994, Item 72.

purpose of drawing social distinctions, but rather furnishes a pattern for implicit explanations of social conditions or events. Because Jewish influence is conceived as being exerted “behind the scenes” it is possible to project responsibility for any kind of threat, disaster, and negative phenomena onto the Jews.

Table 3 shows that, a good one third (and more) of the respondents are in agreement with the statement “Now, as in the past, Jews exert too much influence on world events.” In some places, more than one half of the respondents agree with this. The only exception is Sweden, where only 14% agreed with the assumption. A familiar pattern is once more discernible in this distribution: respondents in Germany, Austria, and Slovakia agree most frequently, closely followed by Lithuania, Latvia, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic, while in the remaining Western European countries, like Sweden, respondents are again less inclined to subscribe to such a view. In the ADL survey of 2005 the question concerning international influence was reframed to concentrate on the “business world” because Jewish “world power” is allegedly often located in the economic realm (see Table 1).

Conflicts of Interest

The second of my core questions refers to the role of group competition as a possible explanation of anti-Semitism. Perceptions of threat can be related to the quantitative relationships between groups. Threat might thus, for example, emerge from minorities being very large or continually growing through immigration. After the Holocaust, however, most European countries are faced with “anti-Semitism without Jews”; Jews merely form a diminishing minority of a few thousand people (nowhere more than 1% of the population—see Table 4), with the only notable immigration country being Germany. Meanwhile, in Eastern European countries, the Jewish population is decreasing because of emigration. Table 4 shows

Table 4. Jewish Population and Anti-Jewish Prejudice

Country	Total Population (N)	Jewish Population (N)	Prefer not to Have Jews as Neighbors (%)	Jews Are Willing to Use Shady Practices to Get What They Want (%)
Russia	147,000,000	350–450,000	17	
France	60,000,000	600,000		15
United Kingdom	58,400,000	283,000	12	13
Germany	82,000,000	100,000	22	22
Hungary	10,300,000	60–140,000	17	
Belgium	10,300,000	35,000		14
Spain	40,000,000	20–40,000		24
Italy	56,300,000	30,000		10
Netherlands	16,000,000	30,000		8
Sweden	8,900,000	18,500	2	
Switzerland	7,100,000	18,000	8	21
Austria	8,000,000	8,000	18	23
Denmark	5,300,000	7,000		14
Czech Republic	10,400,000	5,000	17	
Poland	38,800,000	5,000	30	
Slovakia	5,000,000	3,000	16	

Sources. Anti-Semitism Worldwide 2000/2001; AJC, 2001, Table 10; ADL, 2004.

that a systematic connection between the numerical strength of the minority and anti-Semitic attitudes or social distance toward Jews is not discernible. In countries with a larger Jewish proportion of the population like the United Kingdom, anti-Semitic attitudes are less widespread than in countries with very small Jewish minorities such as Poland, Slovakia, and Austria.

One might presume that Jews arouse animosity and make enemies by showing hostile behavior. But the data do not confirm that anti-Semitic attitudes evolve from this cause. In response to the question, "Which of the following groups behave in a manner that provokes hostility in our country," Jews were specified as follows: 14% of the respondents in Austria named Jews, 4% in the Czech Republic, 6% in Germany, 8% in Great Britain, 6% in Hungary, 23% in Poland (for conflicts of the "victim rivalry" type, see below), 4% in Russia, 9% in Slovakia, and 3% in Sweden. Most accused of provoking hostility through their behavior are groups that are regarded as being embroiled in more or less real cultural, economic, or political conflicts. In Russia for instance, this kind of reproach is directed above all against Chechens (71%) and members of those former Soviet Republics where independence was accompanied by conflict (nationalities of the Baltic States 16%, Armenians 25%, and Azerbaijanis 31%); in Western Europe, it is the larger Muslim minorities, of whom the working immigrants or asylum-seekers especially are accused of hostile behavior. One exception from this explanation are the "Gypsies"—they are rejected all over Europe.

Today, other characteristics of historical animosity toward Jews than the racist dimension, or professional competition, are rare in Europe. We still find anti-Semitic sentiments among the extreme-right population or in circles strongly influenced by folk religious ideas and practices. Meanwhile, during the last few years, the conflict in the Middle East has become a key reference point for anti-Semitism. This new context currently serves—on the international level at least—as the main focus for hatred of Jews. It is more pronounced in Western, Northern, and Southern Europe than in Eastern European countries. For Russia and the Ukraine (Gidwitz, 2003) and also for Bulgaria, Croatia, etc., “the Middle East conflict is certainly not producing anti-Jewish sentiment” (AJC, 2005). Old anti-Semitic accusations of “biblical revenge” are now attributed to Israel. By accusing Israel of perpetrating the worst crimes of the National Socialists—apartheid, ethnic cleansing, or genocide—an opposition to Nazism and racism goes along with opposition to Israel and the Jews and backing of the Palestinian cause. While this mode of legitimacy is to be found predominantly among the extreme left and right in Europe, Israeli politics might be an important cause for anti-Jewish attitudes among other sections of the population as well. This connection between the perception of Israel and anti-Semitic attitudes has yet to be empirically researched in greater detail (it has only been investigated empirically in Germany, France, and Switzerland: Heyder, Iser, & Schmidt, 2004; Mayer, 2005; Schweizerische Gesellschaft für praktische Sozialforschung, 2007).

Jews as a Collective Threat to Social Identity

If the Jewish minorities represent no actual danger to either the religious or cultural identity or the political or economic system, then from where does the threat perceived by anti-Semites evolve? A threat to group identity emerges, on the one hand, in those countries that were in some way involved in the Holocaust, for the Holocaust attacks national “honor.” And on the other hand, it emerges in those countries that consider themselves to be victims of National Socialism, for this generates a “rivalry for claiming victim status” with the Jews, which confuses the national self-image. This means that the Jewish minority in a country is at once a legacy and instance of remembrance. After the political transformations of 1989, there are signs on the European level that the Holocaust is increasingly entering into the construction of the respective national histories, as has been the case in Germany and Austria since 1945 and in many Western European countries in the last two decades. Eastern European states are beginning to face up to and study their own involvement in the Holocaust, after remembrance had been suppressed for a variety of reasons during Communist rule (Orla-Bukowska, 2004; Zuroff, 2005). With the political transitions marked by the year 1989, the question of restitution of Jewish property has become a topical issue in these countries because it is closely tied to issues of reprivatizing state-owned property, economic reforms, and

Table 5. Jews and the Holocaust “Jews Still Talk Too Much about What Happened to Them in the Holocaust” (% Yes)

Country	Year		
	2002	2004	2005
Austria	56	56	46
Belgium	38	40	41
Denmark	30	29	35
France	46	35	34
Germany	58	56	48
Hungary			46
Italy	43	43	49
Netherlands	35	35	34
Poland			52
Spain	57	57	46
Switzerland	52	52	48
United Kingdom	23	31	28

Source. ADL, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005.

national identity. In Western European countries, too, restitution raises difficult and awkward questions about the role played by governments and companies in World War II in collaborating with the Nazi occupying power that touch on national self-image and material interests. This situation could become a source of real conflict.

One indication of how an emphasis on the Holocaust generates a negative defense reaction is the reproach that Jews exploit the Holocaust for their own purpose. In four surveys conducted by the ADL in 2002, 2004 and 2005, the question was posed in nine European Union countries and Switzerland whether “Jews still talk too much about the Holocaust.” Although a positive response to this statement does not necessarily indicate an anti-Semitic attitude, it does appear that this issue represents a certain emotive potential out of which resentment could grow.

Table 5 summarizes the results. As expected, this statement finds especially high levels of approval in Germany and Austria, those countries where anti-Semitic attitudes are particularly motivated by issues of guilt and responsibility for the murdering of European Jews. And yet, in Spain (57%) and Switzerland (52%), countries not or only indirectly having been involved in the persecution, the majority of the population clearly shows its “annoyance.” In other Western European states almost one-third of respondents agree with this statement.

Table 6 shows that anti-Semitic motivation is more clearly evident in the suspicion that the Jews would exploit the Holocaust for their own purposes. As was to be expected with this “harder” item, approval is far lower; only answers in Germany, Austria, and Poland are conspicuous. In these countries a large section of the population suspect other “Jewish interests” behind the demands for remembering the Holocaust. While strong agreement is very low in the listed countries, when

Table 6. Exploitation of the Holocaust “Jews are Exploiting the National Socialist Holocaust for Their Own Purposes” (% Yes)

Country	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know or No Answer
Austria (2005)	12	30	29	22	7
Czech Republic (1999)	6	17	43	17	17
France (2005)	10	22	28	37	3
Germany (2005)	16	26	34	15	9
Great Britain (2005)	8	16	30	35	11
Poland (2005)	14	33	30	13	10
Slovakia (1999)	7	18	32	15	29
Sweden (2005)	4	30	28	30	8
Switzerland (2000)	9	30	27	20	13

Source. AJC, 2001, Table 9; AJC, 2005; in Hungary (1995) 26% agreed (Kovacs, 2005).

taken together with the category “somewhat agree,” which tends to represent an evasive response to awkward questions, 16%–39% of the respondents reproach the Jews for exploiting the Holocaust. In Hungary, even 20% agreed completely and a further 25% partly to a similar statement: “Jews try to gain profit even from their persecution” (Erös & Fabian, 1995, p. 353). A similar question, which however does not refer directly to the Holocaust, was posed in 1992 in the Commonwealth of Independent States: “Jews greatly overstate their misfortunes, sufferings, and sacrifices.” In Russia, 35% of respondents agreed with this statement, 39% in Ukraine, 54% in Belarus, and 24%–27% in the Baltic States, while only 16%–30% rejected this statement explicitly (Gudkov & Levinson, 1994).

Among the causes for the rise of anti-Semitic attitudes in Russia and other former Eastern bloc states, Gorvin (2003) named the attempts undertaken by Jewish organizations to reclaim the property of Jewish communities that had been expropriated during Nazi occupation or Communist rule. In this case, there would be a realistic group conflict over scarce resources. In the context of the Polish debate, Stola (2003, p. 217) pointed out that the restitution mainly entails returning property to Jews who today live overseas, a circumstance that creates xenophobic and anti-Semitic reactions against Jews and foreign pressure.

The Swiss population’s reaction to the “Raubgold controversy” is a further illustration of this issue.³ After all, 39% of the respondents (Table 6) accuse the Jews of exploiting the Holocaust, while at the same time a majority of the Swiss think that “Switzerland does not have to apologize for its behavior toward Jews during World War II” (agreed to by 45% of respondents, while 39% rejected it—Schweizerische Gesellschaft für praktische Sozialforschung [GfS], 2000). Thus, for the GfS study, the “controversy about Switzerland’s behavior in World War II is

³ During World War II, the Swiss National Bank accepted gold from the German Reichsbank as payment for exports. This gold was, however, confiscated from occupied countries or Holocaust victims by the Nazis.

the crucial issue for anti-Semitic thinking.” In turn, this is primarily mobilized by currently prevailing “prejudices on Jewish world domination,” about which 33% of the Swiss respondents are more or less convinced.

In Hungary, 47% did not share the opinion in 1995 that “Jews are right to ask for compensation from the Hungarian government for their persecution during the War,” although 52% readily recognized the responsibility Hungary bore “for what happened to the Hungarian Jews during the War” (Kovács, 2005, p. 213). Kovács pointed out that the refusal to pay compensation is not necessarily motivated by anti-Semitism. In many European countries, the question of Jewish suffering gives rise to controversies about the relationship between Jewish victims and their own victims of persecution and war. As already evident in the attempts by Germans and Austrians to set off Jewish suffering against that of their own victims of bombing and expulsion, something like a victim rivalry is observable in many Eastern and Central European states since 1990. This phenomenon functions as an important defense motive against any specific emphasis granted to Jewish victims. There is a tendency to align cases of suffering of one’s own nation to the Holocaust narrative, which, in turn, leads to a rivalry between these narratives of suffering (“competitive martyrology” of the Holocaust and the GULAG; Raportul Comisei, 2004). Orla-Bukowska (2004) feared that any preference given to the Jews as a victim group, when coupled with a simultaneous lack of attention to other victim groups, could lead to a rise in anti-Semitism. An additional problem in this context is recognizing the suffering inflicted on countries under the Stalinist regime, which are more present in the public awareness than the Holocaust (Orla-Bukowska, p. 340).

The AJC investigated this phenomenon in its surveys in Poland and Slovakia. Regarding the question, “In your eyes, who was the main victim of the Nazis during the Second World War,” the answers of the Polish respondents were nearly equally distributed. In 1995, 26% of the Polish respondents viewed the Poles as main victims, 28% named the Jews, and 28% named both the Poles and the Jews (Golub & Cohen, 1995, Table 12). Asked to respond to a direct comparison (“Which group suffered more from Nazi persecution during the Second World War: the Poles or the Jews?”), 28% said Poles, 29% Jews, and 40% decided that both had suffered roughly the same. Asked if the Jews had suffered more than the rest of the population in World War II, 60% of the Slovakian respondents answered “yes” and 18% “no” (19% were insufficiently informed; Bútoravá & Bútorá, 1993). In Hungary, 67% agreed with the statement “Hungarians suffered just as much as Jews during the War” in 1995 (Kovács, 2005, p. 126). In comparison with Poland, it becomes clear that victim rivalry is less pronounced in the populations of those states once allied to the Third Reich than among the prime victims of the war (Poland, Russia); on the other hand, however, large sections of the population lack a critical stance toward these war-time governments. In Slovakia only 37% affirmed joint responsibility of the Slovak population for the deportation of the Jews (AJC, 1999b), and in Romania nationalist politicians and historians attempt to scale down

the numbers of Jewish victims during the “Romanian Holocaust.” to exonerate political leaders like Antonescu and Codreanu and to present Romanians as victims of “Judeo-Communism” (Hausleitner, 2004, p.188). According to Braham, it is evident in Eastern Central Europe that, although there is only a fringe group of Holocaust deniers, there are “the history cleaners who denigrate and distort the Holocaust,” and these are frequently “respectable” public figures (Braham, 2001, p. 198).

Anti-Semitic Prejudices as Explanations and Justifications

Similar to conspiracy theories, anti-Semitic arguments are used today to explain a variety of phenomena, ranging from the social problems caused by globalization and neoliberal capitalism, such as unemployment and economic downturns, to the Iraq war and terrorism. For example, 25% of German respondents regarded “Jewish influence” on American politics as one main reason for U.S. military action against Iraq (AJC, 2002). Jews were seen as actors and profiteers behind threatening structural and political developments for which no conclusive explanations can be given. Furthermore, phenomena such as Islamic terrorism are seen as a logical, almost unavoidable consequence of Israel’s policies, which a majority of Europeans regard as a threat to world peace.⁴ The Middle East conflict has also reinforced the traditional linkage between anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism, a strain of resentment that became particularly virulent with the portrayal of the United States as Israel’s protector and servant, acting under the dual influence of an alleged Jewish/Zionist lobby.

These anti-Semitic prejudices not only provide “explanations” for recent problems, but are also projected “backwards” to justify behavior toward Jews in past conflicts. In this context, anti-Semitic arguments today frequently serve the purpose of rejecting guilt and responsibility for the persecution of the Jews. People holding anti-Semitic prejudices seek to document evidence of wrongdoing by Jews, whether accurate or not. This defensive mechanism takes two forms: either the Jews are ascribed a joint responsibility for what happened by insinuating that they had behaved in a hostile and damaging way in the past. That Jews were themselves responsible for their persecution was agreed to by 30% in Russia, 27% in the Ukraine, 35% in Belarus, 31% in Lithuania (Gudkov & Levinson, 1994), and 17% in Germany in 2004 (Heitmeyer, 2007, p. 24). Or they are turned into the “scapegoat” for the political developments in their country. Here the old anti-Jewish “Judas motif” of betrayal and collaboration with the enemy is exploited. In

⁴ In a Eurobarometer survey, a list of countries was presented to participants, who were asked which of them presented a danger to world peace. On average, Israel was named most frequently with 59%. Multiple choices were possible. (Flash EB No. 151: “Iraq and Peace in the World” (08/10/2003–16/10/2003)—Report p. 78.).

this way, the Holocaust is connected with the crimes of Stalinism in some Eastern European countries. The most predominant stereotype activated in this legitimacy strategy is that of “Judeo-Communism.” According to Gorvin (2003), anti-Semites in the Baltic States legitimate the Holocaust by claiming that the Jews acted as Soviet collaborators in 1940–1941 and were actively involved in deporting Balts to Siberia. This interpretive pattern of Jewish betrayal and collaboration with the Soviet occupying forces also emerged in the debate in Poland on the Jedwabne pogrom. Moreover, in Romania, high-ranking politicians and historians are endeavoring to legitimate the war against the Soviet Union as “just,” namely as a defensive operation against the Communist threat, and to present “dangerous minorities,” such as the Ukrainians, Russians, and Jews as Soviet collaborators. The figure of “Judeo-Communism” represents a classical example of the scapegoat motif of anti-Semitism that allows the national collective to acquit itself of responsibility and to shift the burden of guilt for Stalinist crimes and Communism onto the Jews. Because the argument of Stalinism as a kind of foreign rule does not fit for the Soviet Union, this attitude is not widespread in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Gudkov & Levinson, 1994, item 96).

Conclusions

The attitude toward Jews correlates strongly, on the one hand, with other expressions of group-focused enmity, while, on the other, it shows a different structure of prejudice than that directed against immigrant or national minorities. Far less social distance is shown toward Jews, the proportion of Jews in the overall population has no correlation with the extent of anti-Semitism, and Jews are neither accused of refusing to integrate culturally, nor of not adhering to the host society’s normative values, or of provoking animosity by their behavior.

The role the Jewish minority plays in any particular country is obviously of less significance than the historically transmitted image of the Jews as an internationally interconnected group that is insinuatingly presumed to exert a far-reaching and corrosive influence on the world economy and politics. In this respect, Jews are regarded as not belonging to the national collective, although in most cases they have been citizens of a country for centuries. A second prejudice complex is tied to the persecution of the Jews in the Holocaust and the negative repercussions this has for the sense of national esteem and self-confidence today. Here, anti-Semitism is tightly interwoven with right-wing, nationalist attitudes. A third prejudice complex, yet to be thoroughly researched, emerges from the association between Jews and the state of Israel, in a way that opinions and sentiments about the Middle East conflict influence attitudes toward Jews. At the same time however, the reverse interconnection also applies: anti-Semitic patterns of thought determine perceptions of Israeli policy. This last aspect must be of special significance for the Muslim population in Europe—who here have been left out of our considerations.

In terms of European comparison, differences emerge in these three complexes between Eastern and Western European countries. Germany and Austria represent unique situations, however, with anti-Semitism motivated by a defense mechanism against the burden of historical responsibility being very pronounced. In Eastern Central Europe, hostility toward the Jewish minority was and continues to be more intensive and widespread than in Western Europe, simply because this minority was far larger and entangled in competition with the lower middle classes aspiring to climb the social ladder. This long tradition of prejudice has to be taken into account when analyzing these countries. Second, the Holocaust and the collaboration of certain sections of the nation during the Nazi persecution were initially suppressed from public consciousness after 1945 in Eastern European countries. These issues could be addressed and discussed only after the breakup of the Communist bloc in 1989, leading to confusion and irritation in national self-identification. In the Western European countries, in contrast, it is Israel's politics toward the Palestinians, which risks conflict and triggers a mobilization of anti-Semitic attitudes.

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