Impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on antisemitism in Germany: Evidence from a natural experiment

Katrin Brettfeld, Peter Wetzels (University of Hamburg), Thomas Richter (German Institute for Global and Area Studies)

Who we are

MOTRA is a network of 9 research institutions, pursue the goal of contributing to an interdisciplinary and comprehensive analysis of radicalization and political extremism in Germany. This is done by (a) a systematic monitoring of politically and religiously motivated radicalization and (b) the creation of an infrastructure for the exchange of knowledge and experience between science, practice and politics.

Related findings from other MOTRA-Partners

Colleagues at the Berlin Social Science Center showed that in Germany, protests related to the Gaza war accounted for almost 14% of all protests in 2021. Compared with protests on other topics, these showed a relatively high degree of radicalism: Nearly 40% of protest events were confrontational or violent.

Colleagues from German Institute for Global and Area Studies examined in cooperation with the Bundeskriminalamt whether escalations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are systematically associated with an increase in antisemitic hate crime registered by the Federal Police in Germany between 2010 and 2021. The results show that an escalation of the Gaza war 2021 leads to an increase in antisemitic crimes by more than one third.

1. Hypotheses

1. Individuals who perceived the escalation of the Gaza war show stronger antisemitic attitudes (significant differences of the prevalence of antisemitic attitudes before conflict vs. after conflict escalation).

2. This effect is stronger among Muslims than Non-Muslims (stronger identification with inferior Muslim group)

2. Data and Methods

As part of the MOTRA research network, the University of Hamburg conducts annually repeated representative surveys.

- Survey of population aged 18 and above (n=2 000)
- Oversample Migrants (n=1 000)
- Oversample Muslims (n=1 000)
- MID 2021 (“People in Germany”):
  - 23.6% response rate
  - N=4 483 respondents
  - Of which n=1310 Muslims

2.1. Israel-Gaza conflict 2021 and Time schedule of MID2021

The escalation in Gaza war 2021 occurred four weeks after the launch of our survey. So part of the sample was interviewed before and another part after the escalation of the Gaza war in May 2021.

3. Results

3.1. Hypothesis I

Hypothesis I confirmed

Jews have too much influence in Germany

Jews cannot be trusted

OR = 2.34 *** OR = 2.01 ***

Before April 13, 2021

After May 10, 2021

Before April 13, 2021

After May 10, 2021

Hypothesis I rejected

Figure 3: Antisemitic attitudes: Comparison of Muslims, Non-Muslim Migrants and Non-Muslim Natives - Effects of time of particippation in the survey

3.2. Hypothesis II

Hypothesis II rejected for both items

Jews have too much influence in Germany

Jews cannot be trusted

Non-Muslim

Muslim

Non-Muslim

Muslim

Natives (non-Muslim)

Migrants (non-Muslim)

3.3. Hypothesis III

Hypothesis III confirmed

Jews have too much influence in Germany

Jews cannot be trusted

OR = 1.90 ** OR = 1.44 *

Before April 13, 2021

After May 10, 2021

Before April 13, 2021

After May 10, 2021

Figure 4: Antisemitic attitudes: Comparison of Muslims and Non-Muslims

4. Conclusions

The perception of the Gaza conflict has an influence on antisemitic attitudes in Germany. However, this does not affect the native German population. The effect is primarily evident among migrants, especially the Non-Muslim migrants.

There are some open Questions: 1) Why do the effects differ so clearly between the two items? and 2) Why do the effects appear especially in the group of Non-Muslim migrants? The findings of our colleagues at the University of Munich suggest that German right-wingers adopt philosemitic positions in such constellations like the Gaza war. This would explain the non-significant effect of German natives. To test this, subsequent analyses will examine political orientation and anti-Islamic attitudes in more detail.