Anti-Sorosism: Reviving the "Jewish World Conspiracy"

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Abstract
This chapter presents a Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA) of the antisemitic conspiracy theory at the heart of 'anti-Sorosism'. Anti-Sorosism is a term used to label the global campaign against George Soros, a Jewish US-American philanthropist of Hungarian origin, launched by extreme-right activists (see Wodak 2020a). We argue that anti-Sorosism is a modern synecdoche of the antisemitic 'Jewish world conspiracy'. In addition to extreme-right individuals and organizations, several mainstream right-wing politicians have blamed George Soros for many complex global and local phenomena such as migration, the political decisions of the EU, the COVID pandemic, and so forth. Indeed, the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán has instrumentalized Soros time and again as a *Feindbild* [enemy image] when campaigning against the rules and regulations of the European Union as well as when justifying and legitimizing his restrictive immigration policies.

In this chapter, we will first briefly trace the origins of this archetypical conspiracy theory throughout the 19th and 20th centuries up to the present. The chapter then turns to a case study examining posters produced by Hungary's governing party Fidesz. Following a summary of the DHA and contextualization of the politics of Fidesz, and its leader Viktor Orbán, we then proceed to the multimodal discourse analysis of a series of posters produced and displayed in Hungary. We conclude by arguing that conspiracy theories help to simplify complex issues and to provide clearly separated Manichean divisions of the 'innocent' and of those 'to blame'. In doing so, they help achieve a strategic political function for the Orbán government.

Key words: Critical Discourse Studies, Discourse Historical Analysis, Multimodality, Antisemitism, anti-Sorosism, Hungary

Introduction
In August 2020, John was taking an evening walk near his home in Nottingham, and he happened upon a piece of graffiti, recently painted on a fence:

Figure 1: Antisemitic Graffiti, Nottingham (2020)

The piece shows the number 666 within three six-pointed stars, positioned over the words 'Men of Steal'. Though very rudimentary in execution, the combination of words and symbols, and the homophonic pun in particular, suggest that this was not an impromptu act of vandalism but a planned action. The graffiti was reported to Nottingham Police Constabulary, who recorded it as a hate crime.

The six-pointed star – the Star of David, or Magen David – is a generally recognized symbol of modern Jewish identity and Judaism. The vandal sprayed three stars on the fence in order to include a numerical six within each, giving 666, the number of the Beast – the Devil. This possibly references the medieval antisemitic belief that Jews were children of the Devil and followers of the Anti-Christ (Trachtenberg 1943), an attitude which draws its theological strength from a misinterpretation of the biblical verse John 8:44. Though some may consider such Christian antisemitism anachronistic, in fact it continues to motivate the most extreme antisemitic violence. For example, Robert Bowers – the terrorist who murdered 11 people at the Or L'Simcha Synagogue in Pittsburgh, 27 October 2018 – used a twisted summary of the verse, that "Jews are the children of Satan", on his Gab profile.[1]

The slogan underneath the stars needs to be understood contextually and multimodally. The graffiti was painted about a mile away from the Nottingham Liberal Synagogue and, appearing underneath the three Stars of David, we are clearly meant to interpret 'Men of

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[1] See: '"Jews are the children of Satan" and the danger of taking biblical passages out of context', 31 October 2018 https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jews-are-the-children-of-satan-john-8-44-danger-of-taking-biblical-passages-out-of-context/ (accessed 29 January 2021)

Steal' to refer to *Jewish* men. 'Steal' (a homophone of steel, and a pun on Superman's soubriquet 'the man of steel') entails criminality in general and the unlawful appropriation of someone else's property in particular – actions that are predicated as qualities, or characteristics, of Jews. This predicational strategy moves beyond associating Jews with acts of theft, whether in a specific or more general sense (e.g. that 'a Jew stole [x]' or that 'Jews steal [things]'). Rather, the construction here elevates the relationship between Jews and theft to that of an essence: Jews are 'Men *of* steal'. That is, Jews are here *constituted* by theft ('of'); they are defined by a *predisposition* to steal, they are by nature 'greedy'; and, so, expropriating other people's property is advanced as *a fundamental biological nature* of Jews – the basis of the 'blood-sucking' antisemitic falsehood.

These antisemitic ideas are not limited to street level hate speech. In fact, conspiracy theories linking Jews, finance and exploitation are now shared by those in the highest levels of government. They "have dominated elite discourse in many parts of the world" (Uscinski 2019: 1) and are shared by, amongst others, former US President Donald Trump, the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and the former Italian minister of interior affairs, Matteo Salvini. Such conspiracies are not only radical simplifications of complex historic and political-economic processes, they are also personifications: the fault lies with (Jewish) people, rather than systems (Byford 2011). In this way, conspiracy theories are particularly "seductive because they frame the complexities of capitalism in personal terms. Instead of examining abstract notions that show that accumulation is functional to capitalism, they generate a personal enemy with a human face who can be challenged" (Wall 2003: 120–21). In this chapter, we example a specific example of this antisemitic conspiracy theory, focused on the political and economic power that George Soros is assumed to possess.

The antisemitic stereotype of the 'Jewish Capitalist' is closely related to three other antisemitic stereotypes: the 'anti-national', the 'intellectual Jew', and the 'Jewish Bolshevik', which has its origins in the Russian civil war. Each of these are what we might refer to as *systematic* antisemitic conspiracy theories. With such systematic conspiracies, "a single conspiratorial entity carries out a wide variety of activities with the aim of taking control of a country, a region, or even the world" (Evans 2020: 4). Here, Jews are identified as the arch conspiratorial group, using any means to achieve world domination – even a combination of capitalism and communism. While this might seem contradictory at first glance, it turns out to be another manifestation of antisemitism as an ideological syndrome, as a worldview characterized by a combination of contradictory elements, that is, *syncretic antisemitism* (Billig 1978; Richardson 2017, 2018; Stögner and Wodak 2015; Wodak 2018). A second type of conspiracy theory is the *event conspiracy*, in which a particular group is believed to have been responsible for (or ultimate beneficiary of) a single event, such as the JFK conspiracy or the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As Evans (2020: 4) points out, "conspiracies imagined in this case are usually short-term" and relatively self-contained. However, the two variants are also linked, in that "an event conspiracy may be thought of as one expression of a systematic conspiracy" (ibid.).

George Soros, the Jewish US-American philanthropist of Hungarian origin, is a part-for-whole synecdoche for *both variants* of antisemitic conspiracy theories: he is believed to be behind systematic conspiracies *and* the coordinator of particular events.[2] At once capitalist

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[2] George Soros is a Hungarian-born American financial trader, author and philanthropist. In 1973 he established the Soros Fund (later Quantum Endowment Fund), a hedge fund, whose success made him one of the wealthiest men in the world. Soros is known as an influential supporter of liberal social causes, particularly relating to refugees. In 1984, he used some of his profits to create the Open Society Foundation, a

and progressive, a "currency speculator who made billions in secret financial transactions […] a prominent proponent of a democratic 'open society' […] and political fund-raiser for the liberal left" (McLaughlin and Trilupaityte 2012: 432), conspiracy theorists have blamed him for complex global phenomena such as financial destabilization and general patterns of migration, in addition to local and specific crises such as the COVID pandemic. Orbán has instrumentalized Soros time and again as a *Feindbild* – an *enemy image* – when campaigning against the rules and regulations of the European Union as well as when justifying and legitimizing his restrictive immigration policies. In this context, anti-Sorosism is the term used to label the global antisemitic anti-Soros campaign launched by extreme-right activists (Wodak 2020a).

In our chapter, we will first briefly trace the origins of this archetypical conspiracy theory throughout the 19th and 20th centuries up to the present. We will briefly discuss some examples showing the rise of Soros-as-*Feindbild*, and its sedimentation as 'anti-Sorosism', before offering a more detailed multimodal discourse analysis of posters produced by Orbán's Fidesz party, as part of an ongoing antisemitic campaign against Soros.

History of the 'Jewish World Conspiracy'
As historical contexts change, ushering in new crises, so the specific dimensions of antisemitic conspiracy theories shift and change. Simonsen (2020: 360) suggests that a shift from religious antisemitism, wherein Jews were considered allies of the Devil, to the modern, political notion of a 'Jewish world conspiracy' "can be traced back to the attacks against the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. In 1797, the French Jesuit priest Abbé Barruel published a four-volume book wherein he described the French Revolution as planned and initiated by a conspiracy consisting of the Philosophes, the Freemasons and the Illuminati" (see also Oberhauser 2020).

However, one continuity that exists between premodern/religious and modern antisemitic conspiracy narratives is the idea that the Jews pursue secret aims to the benefit of their own group and to the detriment of others (Heil 2012: 61–3). Across Europe, from around the second half of the 1800s, the uneasy tolerance of Jews changed. In France, perhaps encouraged by the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, an economic depression and the provocation of the Paris commune, a new anti-Jewish mobilisation developed, exemplified by the so-called *Dreyfus Affair* (Hyman 1989, 2005). The *Rothschild family conspiracy theory* – a myth that a single European Jewish banking family has the power to control world events – also originated in France around this time and was quickly adopted in other countries (Rosensaft 1976). An 'anti-capitalist' author called Georges-Marie Dairnvæll produced a pamphlet entitled *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, Roi des Juifs* in which he alleged that Nathan Rothschild knew the outcome of the Battle of Waterloo in advance, and used this information to make a significant profit speculating at the London Stock Exchange.[3] Using this vast amassed wealth the Rothschilds were then allegedly able to control world events via controlling international banking and financial institutions, a conspiracy that lives

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philanthropic organization that continues to support democracy and human rights across the world. The Foundation's initial work focused on then-Communist eastern Europe – including Hungary, where he awarded scholarships for studying abroad, including one to Viktor Orbán to Oxford.

[3] The pamphlet is available at:
https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=IKVPAAAAcAAJ&hl=en_GB&pg=GBS.PA5 or as a German translation 'Erbauliche und seltsame Historia von Rothschild I. König der Juden' here:
https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=c69DAAAAcAAJ&hl=en_GB&pg=GBS.PA3 (both accessed 3 February 2021)

on to this day, despite the significant drop in family fortunes.[4] In 2018, the French publisher Hachete Livre republished Dairnvæll's pamphlet and it remains on sale.

In Germany during the Nineteenth Century, antisemitism became more structured, with political parties and associations founded to fight against the supposed 'Jewish influence' in German economic and social life (Pulzer 1988). Soon after German unification, writers such as Willhelm Marr denounced Jewish control of finance and industry, blaming the Berlin stock exchange collapse in 1873 (amongst other things) on Jewish manipulation. In 1879, Marr founded the 'Anti-Semitic League' (so coining the term 'antisemitism') and declared that winning the fight between Jewish and Teutonic 'races' was crucial to the future of the country. He proposed a pogrom, expelling all Jews from the country.

In Austria during the Nineteenth Century, "antisemitism became a pronounced and firmly established aspect of Austrian life" (Rosensaft 1976: 57). Simultaneously, "Vienna was internationally famous for its cultural sophistication. […]. The Austrian capital had a pronouncedly Jewish character during this period." (ibid.). Vienna had a very diverse Jewish minority: intellectuals, artists, writers, doctors, journalists, on the one hand; bankers and rich industrialists, on the other; and, thirdly, poor Jewish immigrants from the Polish shtetls who fled the many pogroms in Ukraine and Poland (regions which still belonged to the Habsburg Empire until 1918).

Three distinct types of antisemitism could be observed in the period from Austrian fascism in 1934 to the so-called 'Anschluss' to Nazi Germany (12 March 1938): a traditional religious antisemitism drawing on medieval tropes of ritual murder and Jews as killers of Christ; a socio-economic antisemitism directed against so-called 'Jewish influence' (through the Christian Social Party and the well-known mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger); and a racial antisemitism. The latter was the most dangerous one, launched by Georg Schönerer's pan-Germanic, nativist nationalistic Party. This racist antisemitism was also the source of Hitler's white supremacist murderous Nazi ideology. These three kinds of antisemitism finally all merged into one widely accepted syncretic antisemitism which can be still triggered when deemed politically opportune via the "*Iudeus ex machina*" strategy (Wodak 1989; 2018; Wodak et al. 1990). Modern forms of antisemitism continue to fuse together these different forms – for example, the belief, widespread amongst the far- and extreme-right, that Jews use political and economic power to weaken immigration laws and so encourage miscegenation of 'the white race' (Wodak and Richardson 2013; Richardson 2017).

Opposition to 'alien influence' in British life was a central rallying call of the British radical right from the last decade of the Nineteenth and into the Twentieth Century. 1901 saw the formation of The British Brothers League (BBL), a 'muscular Christian' organization which, for the next 5 years, conducted a very successful agitation against Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. The Jewish refugees arriving in Britain from Tsarist Russia were escaping the "waves of anti-Jewish violence [that] occurred between 1881–1884, in 1903 and again between 1905–1906" (Simonsen 2020: 360). It was in this context – antisemitic sentiment was canalised, and antisemitic violence was functionalised, in the service of autocratic and reactionary Tsarist political interests – that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was produced. *The Protocols* were first published in Russia in 1903, in a newspaper edited by a far right-journalist and antisemite called Pavel Krushevan (Evans

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[4] The richest Rothschild – the banker Baron Benjamin de Rothschild – was 'only' the world's 1,851st richest person, when he died on 15 January 2021. See https://www.forbes.com/profile/benjamin-de-rothschild/?list=billionaires&sh=1472b4cd6454 (accessed 3 February 2021)

2020: 23; Langer 2007: 34–5). The main message of *The Protocols* is that a Jewish conspiracy to control the world exists: "That the Jews are working systematically and in secret, with the aim of achieving world power. Economic crises, revolutions, wars, capitalism, socialism, liberalism and democratic and anti-religious ideas are all claimed to be invented by the Jews as a part of this plot" (Simonsen 2020: 361-62).

The Protocols were translated into German and published by Müller von Hausen in January 1920, achieving instant success in the violent post-revolutionary atmosphere of the country at that time (Evans 2020: 25). It was reprinted five times in its first year alone and had gone through 33 editions by 1933 (ibid.). It retains its significance for antisemites even nowadays. The full text of *The Protocols* was included in *Subverted Nation's Basic Training for Revolutionaries* (2009), a book compiled by Adam Austin, a member of American extreme-right 'Oath Keepers'. That book is specifically intended to incite violence, directing the reader to take up arms and defend US liberty from a conspiracy of powerful Jews: "Now is the time where you either buck up and get with the program, or you are not one of us. You are either with your people and working for their freedoms; or you are with the tyrants and oppressors […] This enemy has tormented mankind for thousands of years, and if you refuse to face them, you condemn yourself and your people to whatever fate they chose" (p.74).

Simonsen (2020: 364) points out that "antisemitism as a legacy still influences conspiracy literature, even when the writers seek to distance themselves from anti-Jewish sentiments". This influence is particularly marked when viewing conspiracies regarding financial or political control (Richardson 2017). As stated in our introduction, even systemic conspiracy theories are personalised: the fault lies, not with structures but with particular (Jewish) people: it is "The association of Jews and money [that] fuels related pernicious myths about Jews' disproportionate political control" (Lockwood 2020: 5). In the case of anti-Sorosism, this is compressed still further: the fault lies not with Jews (plural) but with George Soros specifically.

Functions of antisemitic *Feindbilder*
Oppenheimer (2006: 271) defines the 'Jewish world conspiracy' as a "specific form of a negative stereotype", whereas Volkan (2013: 216) perceives such conspiracies as "reservoirs of permanent externalization", implying that every form of guilt or any problem could continuously be shifted/externalized towards an outsider – in our case, Jews. In the same way, Zamperini (2012: 330) maintains – while defining the functions and meanings of *Feindbilder* from a purely socio-psychological perspective – that "the collective violence towards the hostile group is made possible and justified through specific psychological delegitimization processes", i.e., through derogatory and exclusionary rhetoric, legitimized *inter alia* by appealing to the common-sense *topoi* mentioned above (e.g., Pörksen 2005). In sum, the following important functions (and stages of the discursive construction) of *Feindbilder* could be distinguished (see Table 1):

☐	Targeting a specific minority group as enemies/outsiders (discursive strategies of *nomination* and *predication; Manichean division* of 'us' and 'them')
☐	Defining 'the enemy' by means of *propaganda* as allegedly cohesive group via *metonymies* and *metaphors*, fallacies *(hasty generalizations, straw man, argumentum ad exemplum, singularization,* etc.)
☐	Shifting blame by discursive strategies of *externalization, victim-perpetrator reversal*
☐	Employing means of *hate-incitement* (abuse, appeals to violence)
☐	Constructing conspiracy theories (*ideologies/narratives*)
☐	Institutionalizing measures of *identification, isolation, and exclusion*, i.e., the *racialization of space*
☐	Popularizing indifference by appealing to *common sense* (*topoi*) and discursive strategies of *justification/legitimation*

Table 1: Stages, functions and means of the discursive construction of *Feindbilder* (adapted from Wodak 2021)

The features and political functions of antisemitic Feindbilder are summarized by drawing on previous research on the subject (e.g. detailed discourse-historical analysis of the so-called "Waldheim-Affair" 1986 [Wodak et al. 1990] and the discursive construction of Tal Silberstein, an Israeli spin-doctor advising the social-democratic Party in the Austrian national election 2017, as symbol of all evil [Wodak 2021]) as well as on the sociopsychological and historical theoretical approaches mentioned above (see also Byford 2011; Peham 2021). Obviously, not every feature and function can be detected or is politically instrumentalized in every case of an antisemitic conspiracy theory.

The emergence of a Feindbild – anti-Sorosism

On the radical right, Soros has been adopted as an antisemitic synecdoche – a part-for-whole argument, where a single case is presented as emblematic of a wider pattern (or, in this case, a conspiracy). Soros is taken as the exemplar of a powerful Jewish 'globalist', that is someone who is: 1) simultaneously a capitalist and socialist; 2) enriched through finance capitalism (in Nazi terminology, 'degenerate' capitalism); 3) gives financial support to liberal causes and, 4) is a supporter of 'open societies' (which many on the right interpret to mean 'open borders', leading to 'race-mixing').

Prior to our multimodal analysis, below, we briefly summarise a few early European examples of 'Soros as arch Jewish conspirator', to demonstrate the longevity and regularity of the conspiracy theory.[5] In 1992, for example, Istvan Csurka, the vice-president of the Democratic Forum, which was at the time the largest party in Hungary's coalition government, wrote a newspaper article in which he claimed Hungarian Jews were involved in a worldwide conspiracy against Hungary. This claim was then repeated by Gyula Zacsek, also a Democratic Forum MP, adding that "Gyorgy Soros" was part of the same plot (*Searchlight Magazine*, November 1992, p.22).

In 1997, on the anniversary of the November Pogrom (9 November), 120 members of the Swedish neo-Nazi organisation, the National Socialist Front, marched through Stockholm in uniform to demonstrate against "Jewish control of the media" (*Searchlight Magazine*, December 1997, p.21). After a brief fight with anti-fascist counterdemonstrators, the NSF marched to the Central railway station, where they held a 15-rninute public meeting. Bjorn

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[5] Many thanks to the Searchlight Archive, at Northampton University, for helping locate these examples.

Bjorkqvist – the then-chief of propaganda – promised a war on "international monopoly capitalism" and "the Jewish world order of finance magnates", citing George Soros as an example (Ibid.).

On 14 November 2015 a meeting was held at a London hotel, arranged by London Forum, a 'new right' discussion group. The purpose of the meeting was to raise funds for Horst Mahler, the neo-Nazi and Holocaust denier, who was then in jail. In addition to around 70 British far- and extreme-right activists, several members of the extreme-right German National Democratic Party (NPD; German: *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) also attended (*Searchlight Magazine*, Winter 2015-16, p.). The NPD speaker at the fundraiser was Karl Richter, who was a Munich city councillor and a European parliamentary aide to the MEP Udo Voigt. During his speech, Richter claimed:

> mass immigration from the Middle East to Central Europe is anything but an accident. On the contrary the mass immigration fits exactly into a cold-blooded calculation. In Greece there were found small pocket booklets in the luggage of so-called refugees with all necessary information about the best travel routes to Germany […] You want to know who did the printing of those practical booklets and who paid the money for distributing them to the refugees, you are confronted in a very unexpected way with an old friend: the multibillionaire and so-called philanthropist George Soros, with his Open Society Foundation. (Ibid.)

Here, foreshadowing an almost identical claim regarding the 'migrant caravan' moving towards the US three years later, Richter explained that Soros and his Foundation "plan to destroy Europe as well as Germany by millions of immigrants. To bring civil war, ethnic war to Europe in order to eliminate Europe" (Ibid.). As we show below, this narrative continues in the official and explicit propaganda produced by the Hungarian party Fidesz.

There are also several historical instances where Soros was singled out for particular criticism in the US. In the late 1990s the neo-fascist American conspiracy theorist and perennial US presidential candidate, Lyndon LaRouche, published articles in his Executive Intelligence Review accusing Soros of a range of crimes, including an attempt to start World War III. On 09 November 2010, the television host Glenn Beck aired an hour-long television programme on Soros, titled *The Puppet Master*, in which he alleged that Soros planned to create a "shadow government" under the guise of providing humanitarian aid, prior to taking control of the mass media and electoral systems in the US.[6]

The conspiracy theory has also inspired political violence in the US. For instance, when the 'migrant caravan' story was a significant news story in the US, on 22 October 2018, a pipe bomb was sent to Soros' home, in addition to the homes of other 'liberals' (including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama). On 25 October 2018, Chris Farrell of Judicial Watch, a guest on the Fox News show 'Lou Dobbs Tonight', said that the refugee march was happening under the influence of the "Soros-occupied State Department."[7] Two days later, Robert Bowers murdered 11 people at the Or L'Simcha Synagogue – ostensibly attacking the Hebrew

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[6] Michael Wolraich, Beck's bizarre, dangerous hit at Soros, CNN, 14 November 2010 http://edition.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/11/13/wolraich.beck.soros/index.html (accessed 2 February 2021)

[7] Justin Anderson, Blaming 'Both Sides' for Hate Plays Into Hands of Right-Wing Media, 31 October 2018 FAIR https://fair.org/home/blaming-both-sides-for-hate-plays-into-hands-of-right-wing-media/ (accessed 2 February 2021)

Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) for bringing "invaders in, that kill our people".[8] Prior to this act of terrorism, Bowers had written regular social media posts referring to a conspiracy theory that Soros was bankrolling the 'migrant caravan' of 5,000 Honduran refugees via organisations like the HIAS.

There exist many more examples of this antisemitic prejudice being used today, such as the Austrian extreme-right monthly magazine *Alles roger?* which instrumentalizes antisemitic stereotypes by, on the one hand, referring to George Soros as a "locust speculator" (March 2017: 22) and on the other hand, presenting him as the "favourite child of circles like the Rothschilds" (May 2018: 9) (Feldner 2019).

Multimodal Discourse-Historical Analysis

For the remainder of this chapter, we examine political posters produced by the Hungarian party Fidesz. Fidesz is a right-wing, national-conservative party that, under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, has consistently opposed migration into Hungary, opposed taking any refugees (particularly Muslim refugees) and have taken an extremely adversarial approach to the EU, as a supposed menace to national/border integrity. Further, they argue in favour of a 'Christian-based', illiberal democracy, maintaining that everything should be done to ensure the survival of 'the Hungarian nation' – as a racial, ethnic and religious mono-culture (*jus sanguinis*) (Wodak 2020a).

The Discourse-Historical Approach to CDS aims to triangulate insight from the social, political and historical contexts within which discursive events are embedded (Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Wodak 2020a, 2021). Systematic qualitative analysis in the DHA takes four layers of context into account:

• the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres and discourses,
• the extra-linguistic social/sociological variables,
• the history and archaeology of texts and organizations,
• and institutional frames of the specific context of a situation.

In this way, we are able to explore how discourses, genres, and texts change due to socio-political contexts. "Discourse" in DHA is defined as being

• related to a macro-topic (and to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity which involves social actors who have different points of view).
• a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action;
• socially constituted as well as socially constitutive;
• integrating various differing positions and voices.

Furthermore, we distinguish between "discourse" and "text": Discourse implies patterns and commonalities of knowledge and structures, whereas a text is a specific and unique realization of a discourse. The DHA suggests six discursive strategies used by speakers/writers in these texts, which can be applied in analysis (Richardson 2017). A discursive strategy refers to a more or less intentional plan of practices adopted to achieve particular social, political, or semiotic goals, which can be expressed, and achieved, linguistically, visually and

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[8] *Ibid*.

multimodally. We map these strategies out in Table 2, below (see also Reisigl 2018, Reisigl & Wodak 2001, Richardson 2017 and Wodak 2020a for discussion of these strategies).

Table 2: Discursive Strategies of the DHA

Discursive Strategy	Linguistic mode	Visual/Pictorial mode
Reference	Individualisations/collectivisations – i.e. that things can be named in a variety of equally accurate ways, but that each have different (i.e. positive vs negative) connotations	Individualisations/collectivisations, via membership categorization devices, inc. metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche
Predication	Assigning (positive and/or negative) qualities through denotation or connotation	Mise-en-scène (inc. subject interactions), facial expressions, symbolism, visual metaphor, caricature
Process representation	Choice of process; choice of paradigm; choice of syntagm (inc. transitivity and valency of process)	The 'decisive moment' representing movement, subject interactions, gaze & viewer engagement, symbolisation /visual metaphor, montage
Argumentation	The expression of opinions and reasoning within a context of disagreement	Visual expression of opinions and reasoning, within a context of disagreement
Perspectivisation	Whose perspective is communicated; to what extent is perspective acknowledged (e.g. quotation) or elided (e.g. plagiarism)	Point of view, framing, montage, particularly the 'Kuleshov Effect'
Mitigation /Intensification	Emphasising & amplifying particles, emphasising & amplifying morphemes (e.g. 'super-', 'mega-'), exaggerating quantifiers, modal verbs	Mise-en-scène, close/mid/long shot, colour (de)saturation, colour 'spotting'/ splashing/ washing out, shapes/arrows

First, there are referential, or nomination, strategies, by which people, processes, events and all other things (concrete and abstract) are named. Nomination can be achieved through individualisation, collectivisations (of diverse types) and several categorization devices, including metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. This can occur visually as well as linguistically - a cartoon of The White House functioning as a metonym for the US President; or (in particular contexts) a red rose representing the UK Labour Party.

Second, predicational strategies serve to describe people, events and all other things (material and abstract) linguistically. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) state that predication is "the very basic process and result of linguistically assigning qualities to persons, animals, objects, events, actions and social phenomena" (p.54). Predicational strategies may, for example, be realized as evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates, or visually through more socio-culturally situated signifiers. Visual predication can also be achieved through setting, symbolism, mise-en-scène (eg clothing, props, staging) and caricature.

Third, there are process representation strategies, through which actions and relations of being are represented (Richardson 2017). Choices in the way to represent the participants in a process are covered through referential and predicational strategies; choices in the way that

the process itself is represented, are reflected in the principal verb of the clause and its conjugation. Process representation strategies entail three inter-related choices: between the type of process (verbal, mental, existential, material, etc); between a range of lexemes (e.g. a verbal process may be represented as you 'stating', 'revealing', 'accusing', etc.); and between transitivity and valency of a process (e.g. through agent deletion). Processes can be represented visually in a variety of ways, for example in the 'decisive moment' capturing movement at a particular instant, representing gesture, subject interactions, symbolisation /visual metaphor, and through montage.

Fourth, there are argumentation strategies, through which people may offer, justify, legitimate or criticise points of view. An argument can be defined in the loosest sense as the expression of opinions and reasoning within a context of disagreement. Sometimes this reasoning can be explicit, with all the premises supporting a conclusion neatly laid out; more typically, understanding and analysing argumentation will require some reconstruction of the presumptions that have to be made for the steps between two discursive points to be understood. Images can contribute to complex communicative acts which advance and defend standpoints; these can be revealed through a comprehensible and charitable reconstruction of the implicitly advanced argumentation.

Fifth, there are strategies of perspectivization, or discourse representation, asking: "From what [or whose] perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?" (Reisigl & Wodak 2009: 93). Through framing, speakers/writers express their involvement in discourse, and position their point of view in the reporting, description, narration or quotation of relevant events or utterances. In pictorial communication, such perspectivization can be communicated via the positioning of the viewers' gaze and, more specifically, through the meaning potentials inherent in framing, proximity and the angle of interaction. Sixth, there are strategies of intensification and mitigation. These help to qualify and modify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of utterances or the modality of pictorial representations. In visual communication, this can be achieved through framing (extreme close up vs mid or long shot), colour (de)saturation, colour 'spotting' or selective emphasis, the use of shapes/arrows.

Single-shot printed party materials – either displayed as posters or reproduced as A5 leaflets – can be regarded as a sub-genre within political discourse (Cairns 2009). Political posters are a form of multimodal discourse, which work up meaning potentials through a combination of visual and linguistic means (Richardson & Colombo 2013, 2014). We would agree with Klymenko (2018: 441) that political posters/billboards "deserve broader attention as they remain among the more widely used communication genres of political parties". Alongside political leaflets, posters/billboards have a significant reach amongst the electorate, particularly in countries "where legislation restricts the use of other media, or where political parties cannot afford to buy expensive television air-time" (ibid.: 442).

We assume that it is possible to advance and defend standpoints visually, and that if we are to understand the impact of anti-immigrant rhetoric on the electorate, analysing parties' visual propaganda is particularly important. Indeed, visual propaganda constitutes a key element in political campaigns, as communicated through party logos and 'brand identity', photographs of party members, the ways party leaders are photographed or filmed (involving the choreographing of public events), the multi-modal design of printed party materials (including layout, font, consistent use of colour, framing and perspectivization, etc) amongst many other signifiers. Political posters generally contain very few words; the meanings of visual features (images, colours, party logos) are typically accompanied by a brief slogan which helps to

disambiguate their meanings. Their brevity, and semiotic simplicity, mean that they can be read, and their meanings construed quickly, by the public/electorate as they pass by the poster, on foot or in transport.

We analyse three posters/billboards that were produced and publicly displayed across Hungary. Our translations were checked by a native speaker of Hungarian. The first two posters appeared in July and September 2017 and the final example in February 2019. The ostensible political function of these political adverts differed: the first was part of a 'national consultation' produced by Fidesz in the year preceding an election for the National Assembly.[9] The second poster was part of another 'national consultation' regarding migration and refugees; and the third formed part of an electoral campaign, launched ahead of the European Parliament election, in May 2019. We acknowledge that political posters – like any discourse – are context dependent and, as such, "are situated in, shaped by and constructive of circumstances that are more than and different to language" (Anthonissen 2003: 297). However, the meta-functions of each poster were the same: they each achieve their discursive, rhetorical goals by attacking Soros.

Analysis

Context

In Hungary, George Soros serves as scapegoat. In his campaign speeches and weekly interviews (every Friday), Orbán viciously blames George Soros for a variety of complex socio-political problems. In Orbán's and Fidesz's worldview, Soros is allegedly pulling the strings to force all migrants and refugees from the East to come to Hungary and Europe – a typical antisemitic stereotype of world conspiracy. A new bill was passed that criminalizes anyone helping so-called 'illegal' migrants in Hungary and thus threatens to send activists, lawyers, NGO workers, volunteers and so-called 'Soros agents' to jail (Walker 2018). A weekly journal close to Fidesz even published a list of the first 200 individuals on a 2,000-person so-called 'Soros list', including scholars, journalists, intellectuals and NGOs who are trying to help refugees in Hungary (Verseck 2018; Wodak 2020a: 238-39; Feldner 2019).

In a speech in 2018, commemorating the revolution of 1848-49 (against the Habsburg Empire), Orbán characterized Soros as follows, employing a plethora of traditional antisemitic stereotypes, such as "the greedy Jew", "the capitalist Jew", "the homeless Jew", the "revengeful Jew", in sum: Soros is 'different' and remains an extremely powerful and dangerous stranger. These predications are employed time and again throughout Orban's campaigns against Soros, sometimes just as explicitly, sometimes more coded as insinuations:

> "[He is] different [...] than we are. He does not fight with an open visor, he hides, he is not straightforward, but cunning, not honest, but malicious, not national but international, he does not believe in work, but speculates with the money, he has no home of his own because he has the feeling that the whole world is his. He is not

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[9] In Hungary, National Consultations are nationwide surveys that ostensibly seek the views of Hungarian citizens but do so using leading questions designed to elicit responses conducive to government policy. They are a leading tactic of the Fidesz government to generate statistical support for their political agenda. At time of writing, Fidesz has recently announced the 10th national survey since they came to power in 2010, in which the government is "looking for backing from the public" on a range of issue relating economics, migration and post-Covid recovery (see 'PM details new government measures', 10 June 2021, *The Budapest Times* https://www.budapesttimes.hu/hungary/pm-details-new-government-measures/ [accessed 14 June 2021]

generous, but vengeful and he always attacks the heart, especially when it is red, white and green". (Orbán 2018)

In 2019, Orbán evicted the Central European University (CEU) from Budapest in spite of strong international protests, as part of his anti-Soros campaign, directed primarily against the education of liberal intellectuals – CEU has now moved its European campus to Vienna and resumed classes in September 2019.

Posters

As stated above, Poster 1 in Figure 2 was displayed across Hungary, in early July 2017:

Figure 2: "Let's not allow Soros to have the last laugh!"

The poster contains four elements, imposed on a blue background. The upper right corner of the poster contains two linguistic elements: the title "Nemzeti Konzultáció 2017", accompanied by the Hungarian flag and, on the right, the message, "99% reject illegal immigration." This particular "Nemzeti Konzultáció", or National Consultation, ran from April 2017 and was completed by May.[10] In between the two linguistic elements are two arrows >> which entail a causal, or hierarchical, link between them: they suggest 'from this to this', or 'this produced this'. The poster is therefore announcing part of the results of this National Consultation, and specifically opposition to "illegal immigration".[11] The precise wording of the question that this Consultation used on 'illegal immigration' is not currently available, but it is rather unsurprising that a very large percentage of the population would apparently oppose something that is specifically labelled "illegal", given the word's negative connotation.

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[10] This website shows a request for the raw data from the consultation, sent to the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister https://kimittud.atlatszo.hu/request/2017_evi_nemzeti_konzutacio_adat (accessed 5 May 2021). The request was rejected.

[11] It should be stated that 'illegal migrant' is not the official term: migration policies and studies refer instead to 'irregular migrants' (*sans papiers*). Migrants are – legally speaking – only illegal if their application for asylum is rejected and they – nevertheless – remain in the country.

The heading also draws on a discourse about democracy, and majoritarian rule, given that the consultation summarized the (seemingly overwhelming) opinion of the Hungarian public. The poster therefore implicitly suggests that he is smiling/laughing about something that is both illegal and opposed by 99% of the Hungarian population (who answered the consultation). The more specific sense that Soros is laughing *at our expense* is introduced by the idiomatic phrase "the last laugh". This usually indicates an antagonistic social interaction, between two (or more) parties, where each enjoys the others' misfortune. It constructs a narrative in which Soros is currently laughing at us, perhaps for something he has encouraged, but that if we act – in an undefined way – we will prevail and be able to laugh at him instead. The poster doesn't go as far as to explicitly state that 'Soros supports illegal immigration' or, more specifically still 'Soros is responsible for illegal immigration in Hungary' but then it doesn't have to. Soros' beliefs or actions are not described, but Hungarians are encouraged to dislike him regardless. The government reportedly spent 5.7bn forints (€19m; £16.3m; $21m) on this campaign message.[12]

Soon after being put on public display, many of the posters were defaced with graffiti. Orbán and the Fidesz government were clear that they didn't consider the poster to be antisemitic; the Jewishness of Soros was, of course, not mentioned in the poster itself. However, it is notable that much of this graffiti *was* antisemitic, highlighting or vilifying Soros for being Jewish:

Figure 2a: Antisemitic graffiti, over Soros poster

In Figure 2a, above, someone has written 'dirty Jew' over Soros' face. This addendum provides a further, multilayered, signifier to the multimodal poster: the insult is, first, a clear indication of the antisemitic beliefs of the person who wrote it (that is: 'I believe this man to be a dirty Jew'). Further, defacing the poster in this way points out, to anyone unaware, that Soros is Jewish, thus making explicit an understanding that previously required contextual knowledge. This predication also provides an overt reconstruction of the warrant of the

[12] Nick Thorpe 'Hungary vilifies financier Soros with crude poster campaign', BBC News 10 July 2017 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-40554844 (accessed 6 May 2021)

poster's argument: that you/we should not allow Soros to have the last laugh – *because* he is a (dirty) Jew, who is pleased by (and/or responsible for) illegal immigration in Hungary. The graffiti therefore not only reveals the antisemitism of the person who wrote it, it also indexes the wider antisemitic conspiracy theory – that Jews, and Soros in particular, are responsible for so-called 'illegal immigration'.

Poster 2, below, was displayed across Hungary from September 2017:

Figure 3: "The Soros Plan"

This poster campaign announced another "Nemzeti Konzultáció" – National Consultation – this time on the so-called 'Soros Plan'. Alongside the same image of Soros smiling/laughing, the poster read: "National consultation on the Soros plan Let's not allow it without having a say!"

For this consultation, the Hungarian public were asked their views on George Soros' proposals for managing the so-called refugee crisis of 2015/16. However, the government deliberately misrepresented Soros' remarks in order to, again, generate the kinds of findings from the consultation that they desired. First, referring to "The Soros-Plan" entails that such a strategic "Plan" exists. It elevates Soros' public remarks, and publications, on the need to respond in a humane way to the increased number of refugees to "a grand and elaborate scheme in which the 'Brussels Commission' and Soros are in cahoots to dismantle the EU's nation states and impose immigrants, i.e., Muslim terrorists, on them".[13]

Second, the Hungarian public were sent the National Consultation questionnaire on the 'Soros Plan', including a letter of introduction from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán which, amongst other distortions and fabrications, claimed:

> "On the basis of the Soros plan, they would settle 1 million immigrants in Europe per year and they would distribute the settled migrants among the member states. Hungary would also have to take part in this. According to the plan, they would give each immigrant 9 million forints from the money of the taxpayers.

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[13] Benjamin Novak Here are the "Soros Plan" national consultation questions! Budapest Beacon 28 September 2017 https://budapestbeacon.com/soros-plan-national-consultation-questions/ (accessed 6 May 2021)

The fact that numerous leaders in Brussels support and represent this plan makes it truly dangerous. If it is implemented, Hungary's culture and population would change in an irreversible way.

[…]

The Soros plan endangers our communities and our traditions. It endangers Hungary and all of that Europe with which we have become acquainted and which we love." [14]

These claims exaggerate numbers to emphasise the financial 'burden' upon Hungary represented by refugees. Further, by stressing that these refugees endanger "our communities and tradition", Orbán implies that their cultures and traditions are dangerously different to those of Christian Hungary – again, insinuating the racist trope of the Muslim terrorist, in anti-migrant rhetoric.

These distortions were continued in the body of the consultation itself, which confuses categories (immigrant and refugee, for example) and refers to migrants in such a way that presumes them all de facto 'illegal'. For example:

"It is not by accident that dismantling the border-protection barriers is one of the important goals of the Soros plan. In this way, the borders would be opened to illegal immigrants. The billionaire put it this way, 'our plan treats the protection of refugees as the objective and national borders as the obstacle' (Bloomberg Business, 10-30-2015)." [15]

Here Soros is clearly referring to refugees, but Orbán simply changes the noun phrase, renaming them "illegal immigrants", even though it is not illegal, in any country in the world, to apply for refugee status. According to data from the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister, "the government paid 7.25 billion forints (23.5 million euros) for the three publicity campaigns it conducted" during the spring and summer of 2017, up to and including this anti-Soros National Consultation. [16]

Orbán also launched anti-EU campaigns in 2018 and 2019, choosing to depict the then President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker with Soros:
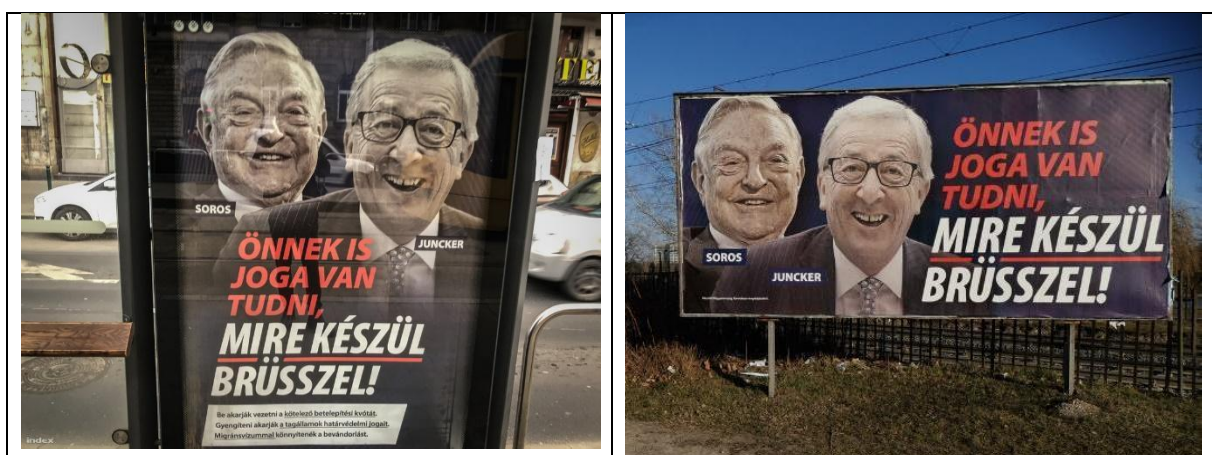
Figures 4a and 4b: 'anti-Brussels' posters

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[14] Quoted in National Consultation on the "Soros Plan", https://theorangefiles.hu/national-consultation-on-the-soros-plan/ (accessed 6 May 2021)

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

Next to images of Soros and Juncker – significantly, both are again shown laughing – is the slogan: "You have a right to know what Brussels is preparing to do!" Interestingly, the posters also include two captions, showing the names of Soros and Juncker. This suggests that, despite the now years of vilification, Fidesz still doubts that the Hungarian public will recognize Soros and Juncker from their images alone.

The poster in Figure 4a was designed to be displayed at bus stops and other locations where pedestrians may walk or wait and have more time to read its message. As such, it includes more detailed information not incorporated into the roadside billboard, in Figure 4b. Specifically, Figure 4a spells out "what Brussels is preparing to do", which was introduced in the main slogan:

> They want to introduce a mandatory settlement quota.
> They want to weaken the border rights of the Member States.
> Immigrants are facilitated with a migrant visa.

Needless to say, these claims are all false. Margaritis Schinas, Juncker's then-chief spokesman, stated: "There is no 'they', only the European Union with Hungary sitting at the table. It is not true that the EU supports or undermines border protection. Quite the contrary. And there are zero plans for so-called humanitarian visas. Member states decide to what level they want to accept legal migration."[17]

However, the truth or falsity of these claims is only half of the issue with this poster. The villain identified in the poster's slogan and the additional accusations is the EU, represented through both metonym ("Brussels") and synecdoche (Juncker as a part-for-whole representation of the European Commission). Why, then, does Soros feature at all? Why include a photograph of him smiling if the enemy being attacked is the EU? Here, two factors are salient: first, the political issues addressed by the poster are again migration and Hungarian border rights. Since becoming the Prime Minister, Orbán has repeatedly – indeed *incessantly* – argued that Soros is plotting to destroy Hungary, and the rest of 'Christian Europe', through an alleged mass immigration. The campaign against the imagined 'Soros-Plan' (discussed above) not only tied Soros and (illegal) immigration together, it also pushed the specific lie that Soros plots to remove borders entirely, so encouraging unconstrained migration, particularly from Muslim countries to the East. Such arguments directly echo the antisemitic conspiracies we summarized earlier in the chapter: the internationalist Jew, enemy of the nation. Through including an image of Soros in the poster, Orbán can recontextualize that recent campaign, and its specific claims regarding the existential threat that non-Christian refugees represent to Hungary, into a wider campaign against the EU: thus, the "They" used in the poster refers to both the EU/Brussels/Juncker and Soros, seemingly united in these aims.

However, there is a further dimension to the way that Soros is visually included: he is positioned *behind* Juncker. Soros could have been positioned next to Juncker but, in both the portrait and landscape versions of the poster he is placed behind him, indicating that this is a deliberate decision (rather than a space-saving design solution). To say that someone is 'behind' someone, or something, is to claim that they are ultimately responsible for them – they are in charge, or somehow controlling and manipulating, the people or phenomena that

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[17] Jennifer Rankin 'Brussels accuses Orbán of peddling conspiracy theory with Juncker poster', 19 February 2019, *the Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/19/brussels-orban-jean-claude-juncker-poster-george-soros-hungary (accessed 6 May 2021)

we can see. If someone is behind something, they are ultimately to blame for it. The poster visually works up this sense of culpability by placing Soros behind Juncker (as synecdoche for Brussels/the EU) and so also 'behind' (responsible for) his actions. In this way, Orbán constructs an ever-wider link to his world conspiracy theme; he accuses Soros of not only having manipulated Hungary, but of manipulating EU institutions.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have examined the continued presence of antisemitic conspiracy theories in politics, through analysing the ways that George Soros is invoked as a *Feindbild*. Soros has become the symbol of all 'evil', allegedly responsible for very complex socio-political and economic problems, a scapegoat, strategically employed and instrumentalized whenever it serves specific political aims, not only of extreme-right but also of mainstream national-conservative politicians.

In this way, the "*Iudeus-ex-machina* strategy" (Wodak 1989) enters the political stage, time and again, and is – obviously – instrumentalized successfully to evoke antisemitic attitudes while drawing on traditional stereotypes and conspiracy theories. To capture, deconstruct and explain the continuous impact and influence of such antisemitic *Feindbilder,* of the many insinuations, symbols, stereotypes and tropes, a critical discourse-historical analysis suggests itself. Of course, the question remains why such virulent antisemitism has retained its manipulative force – after the *Shoah* and specifically also in countries from which hundred-thousands' of Jews were deported to extermination camps and murdered during the Second World War. Why do such conspiracy theories and *Feindbilder* persist?

Unfortunately, there exists no simple answer to this question. Freyenhagen (2020) while drawing on Horkheimer and Adorno's theories on the persistence of antisemitism (1947a) maintains that "One crucial point in all of this is that for antisemitism what matters is the image of 'the Jews' (i.e., the projection), not the actual make-up of those who self-identify as Jewish or are categorized as 'Jewish'". In "The Meaning of Working through the Past" (1959), Freyenhagen argues, Adorno already expressed huge skepticism that face-to-face encounters – and similar measures – would work for counteracting antisemitism. Indeed, one should not expect too much from the recourse to facts, which antisemites most often will either not admit or will neutralize by treating them as exceptions (ibid.). *Feindbilder* obviously express the inability or unwillingness to cope with the complexity of political phenomena.

As a simple narrative with a simple plot, conspiracy theories help to simplify complex issues and to provide clearly separated Manichean divisions of the 'innocent' and of those to 'blame'. In doing so, they fulfil a strategic political function.

The brief case study presented in this paper involves Viktor Orbán, leader of Hungary's governing party Fidesz (e.g., Feldner 2019; Szombati and Szilágyi 2020, Wodak 2020a). Sociologist András Kovács states that Orbán's government is not per se antisemitic; however, governing politicians frequently use antisemitic stereotypes and court people who trigger and support antisemitic attitudes.[18] The fact that antisemites are being tolerated fits the revisionist policy of the Orbán government. Fidesz has repeatedly tried to relativize Hungary's role in the Holocaust, whether with statues, monuments or museums. Antisemitic authors such as Albert

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[18] Felix Schlagwein 'Hungary: Orbán's anti-Semitism problem', 16 December 2020, DW.com https://www.dw.com/de/ungarn-orb%C3%A1ns-antisemitismusproblem/a-55952114 [accessed 15 June 2021]

Wass, who was sentenced to death in Romania as a war criminal, have long been recommended reading in Hungarian schools. That Viktor Orbán and Israel's previous prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu are close friends should not come as a surprise as they both endorse far-right populist politics and target the same 'enemies': the left, the liberals and Muslims.[19]

As Peter Kreko, Director of the liberal Hungarian think tank 'Political Capital' summarizes, "a 'siege mentality', a feeling that everyone is against Hungary, is deeply rooted in Hungarian nationalist identity because of its past, the memories of the Trianon Treaty in 1920 (when Hungary lost 72 per cent of its territory), and the conflicts with the Allies in general and the neighbours in particular. Therefore, it is easy to fuel these sentiments in domestic discourses, and the right-wing camp is extremely receptive to such rhetoric" (Political Capital 2012).

The result of these and many other discursive and material practices is the constant erosion of democratic institutions and liberal democratic values, the monopolization of many areas and an increasingly authoritarian rule in Fidesz' Hungary (e.g., Wodak 2020a, Feldner 2019). Even if the *Feindbild* George Soros cannot alone be blamed (as scapegoat) for such developments, it certainly facilitates such policies, like a catalyst. Orbán's imagined dystopia is the alleged threat to Christian European culture from Muslim migration, which is, he fallaciously claims, brought about by George Soros and his "network". In this sense, the recourse to a *Feindbild* is an expression of far-right nativist politics that reduces complex issues to a simplistic Manichean narrative of "us" and "them", of good and evil.

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[19] Ibid.

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