Presenter: Florian Markl, MENA Watch

Title: "'Israel threatens to defend herself': The Depiction of Israel in the Media"
Panel: Israel Studies

The title above, taken from the website of one of the major German weekly news magazines (*Focus online*), unintentionally put in a nutshell the problem Israel presently faces in the media. Since most Europeans get all their information about Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from the media, the way the Jewish State is depicted in the media's reporting exerts a tremendous influence on the European's attitude towards Israel.

Israel-related antisemitism seems to be the most wide-spread form of antisemitism nowadays. According to a recent report about contemporary antisemitism compiled for the German Bundestag, 40 percent of Germans agree to the statement: "Given how Israel treats the Palestinians, I can easily understand that one is against the Jews."

The problem is not in the first place that journalists themselves were antisemites–although some of them certainly are. The main problem is rather that journalists in their coverage of Israel more often than not do not adhere to basic journalistic standards: They often draw a picture of Israel that is based on imbalanced and misleading reporting; the selective omission of facts (such as anti-Israeli incitement, violence and acts of terror); the application of double standards when judging Israeli behavior compared to that of other countries confronted with similar circumstances; and the presentation of their own biased attitudes as if they were plain facts.

At some times the reporting itself crosses the line and has to be regarded as promoting an anti-Israeli version of antisemitism – for instance when Israel is equated with Nazis. More often however, the reporting contributes to a wide-spread, one-sided and de-realized picture of Israel, in which the Jewish State is presented almost exclusively as the aggressor, whereas the Palestinian side of the conflict is barely ever mentioned – unless it can be portrayed as the victim of Israeli oppression. This de-realizing coverage of Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict forms the foundation on which the demonization of Israel; her de-legitimization; and the already mentioned application of double standards can flourish.

These mechanisms will be analyzed focusing on the German speaking media coverage of the Gaza war in 2014 and some more recent examples.