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Title: “**Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Europe: Insights from Social Psychology**”

Panel: Psychology

There has been some empirical research into antisemitism and anti-Zionism among Muslim minority groups in Europe, which focuses upon a diverse range of ethnic groups in distinct national contexts. Moreover, in this work there is generally a focus primarily on Holocaust denial, rather than general perceptions of Jews and the Jewish State. Much important quantitative research has been conducted in social psychology which sheds light on the correlates and predictors of antisemitism and anti-Zionism. However, there has been less qualitative research from a social psychological perspective which can provide insight into the nature and dynamics of social representations of Jews and Israel, as well as the more discursive and rhetorical aspects of these representations. To address this lacuna in the social psychology of antisemitism, this paper presents data from a qualitative interview study with a group of British Pakistani Muslims concerning their perceptions of Jews and Israel. Thirty-six British Pakistani Muslim individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 participated in an in-depth interview study that set out to explore their perceptions. The interview data were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, and the analysis was informed by tenets of Social Representations Theory and Identity Process Theory from social psychology. The following themes are outlined and discussed: (i) Construal of Zionism as a threat to self and ingroup; (ii) Threatened self-efficacy and outgroup deflection; (iii) “Us versus Them”: establishing a sense of belonging; and (iv) Blurring the boundaries of Judaism and Zionism. There was a strong perception among interviewees that it was necessary to manifest suspicion of Jews and Israel in order to protect Muslim identity, which was, conversely, perceived as threatened by these outgroups. A key recommendation is that Muslim identity be decoupled from anti-Zionism and antisemitism so that British Pakistani Muslims feel able to reach their own conclusions about Israel’s legitimacy– without the anti-Zionist and antisemitic social representational pressures emanating from their valued Muslim group membership. It is argued that there is much heuristic value in applying tenets of Social Representations Theory and Identity Process Theory, which collectively provide a socio-psychological model of identity threat and action, to the field of antisemitism and anti-Zionism. It is argued that this integrative model can shed light on the potential social

psychological motivations of prejudice, including antisemitism and anti-Zionism. More broadly, this paper highlights the potential contribution of qualitative social psychology to existing work on antisemitism and anti-Zionism in political science and the humanities.