The Return of Anti-Semitism? Waves of Societalization and What Conditions Them

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Paper prepared for:

Antisemitism as Cultural Processes: Cultural Sociological Framings of the Rise in Antisemitism

53rd Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies

Chicago, IL | December 21, 2021

In this programmatic essay, we provide a new framework for understanding, and explaining, the recent renewal of anti-Semitism in Western societies today. The explosion of anti-racist movements like BLM and anti-sexist movements like #MeToo have dominated public attention space – along with the dangerously anti-democratic populist backlash movements against them, to which the jet fuel of anti-immigration has been added. Hidden in plain sight amidst these hugely combustible confrontations, however, has been the revival of publicly anti-Semitic words and deeds.

In Hungary, the right-wing government led by Viktor Orbán, although outwardly pro-Israel and bearing a façade of being Jew-friendly, is notable for flirting publicly with anti-Semitism, e.g., using anti-Semitic stereotypes in its ongoing campaign against George Soros. In Poland, anti-Semitism is state-*sanctioned*. The government and public discourse openly promote antisemitic discourse, mostly in the form of Judeo-Communist stereotypes. Poland's right-wing discourse equates anti-Semitism with "anti-Polonism" (Polonophobia/anti-Polish sentiment), attributed to both Jews from Israel and the US. The rise of the far right in Germany, particularly the AfD, has been accompanied by frequent public demonstrations of anti-Semitism; and, despite its relative regional and electoral isolation – less radically right leaders have left the party—the AfD is about to receive millions of Euros from the Federal government. Fifty years ago, in the south of France, Jean-Marie Le Pen started the National Front, whose ideology was as much anti-Semitic and Holocaust-denying as anti-immigrant and anti-EU; the party gained 10-15% of the national vote in the late 1980s and 90s, and in 2002 actually defeated Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in the first round of presidential elections. In the UK, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial is also on the rise. On the left of the Labour Party, there has been a decades-long, highly public identification with the "liberation struggle" of the Palestinians. Whether such

support is anti-Jewish is a matter of intense debate, but what is not disputed is that Jeremy Corbyn's leadership between 2015 and 2020 triggered such widespread allegations of anti-Semitism that key Labour leaders resigned in protest. Beyond leftist identification with anti-Zionism, moreover, there has been a shift in British collective consciousness; disparaging remarks about Jews, and actions against them, have reemerged in the British public sphere, supported by what Gidley characterizes as "a deep reservoir of stereotypes and narratives, one which is replenished over time and from which [British] people can draw with ease" (Gidley et al 2020: 416). In the U.S., anti-Semitism has also publicly re-emerged. Amidst shocking, if episodic episodes of anti-Jewish violence, far right demonstrations against racial minorities have begun to feature anti-Semitic slogans, as when, in Charlottesville, Virginia, *Unite the Rig*ht marchers chanted, "Jews will not replace us."

Democratically-minded social observers in the centers of Western societies, critical social theorists, and Jewish spokespersons of every political persuasion have framed these events as indicating the "revival of anti-Semitism" *tout court*. This widespread alarm is morally refreshing and sociologically significant, triggering the societalization of rising anti-Semitism in the name of an open, religiously pluralistic civil sphere.[1] We believe, however, that the sweeping statement "anti-Semitism is on the rise in Western society" is misleading, for it fails to reflect national variations in the renewal of anti-Semitism and all-important variations in the societalizing reactions against it.

Contemporary research on the revival of anti-Semitism is certainly abundant. There are arguments about how it should be precisely defined, investigations of country-specific dynamics

[1] A social strain becomes societalized when social problems that have previously created only episodic indignation are constructed as explosive crises endangering the moral self-regard of society as such. Instead of being traumatic for particular victims, they become traumas for all "humankind." See Alexander 2018a, 2019.

and histories (Kushner 2017; Silverstein 2008; Wieviorka 2007); studies that map its geographical extent (Feldman 2018; Jikely 2015a); efforts to link the revival to specific ideological contexts, whether to the left (Staetsky 2017; Rich 2018), the right (Weisman 2018; Wodak 2015), or to religious affiliation (e.g., Meer 2013; Renton and Gidley 2017; Wistrich 2010) and studies. Volker (1978) has shown how anti-Semitism functions as a marker of identity. Other explanations focus on the decline of Holocaust memory (Jikeli 2020; Wetzel 2013), the crisis of capitalism (e.g., Becker et al., 2011; Stoegner 2011), or the influx of immigrants from Muslim countries (e.g., Bunzl 2005; Jikeli 2015b).

Our aim is not to challenge these explanatory efforts but, rather, to provide a broader historical, comparative, and theoretical framework within which they might be better understood. What is needed, we argue, is an approach that goes beyond a specific country or a particular religious or ideological context.

Before presenting our new model, we wish to acknowledge the obdurate power of anti-Semitism in Western history and the relatively recent but highly significant struggles against it, struggles whose success has depended on the emergence of a civil sphere. These considerations will lead us to consider the extraordinary variation in how anti-Semitism has been societalized, in the post-war period and more recently. It is in the model of comparative societalization that our principal explanatory contribution consists.

Anti-Semitism as a culture structure

Anti-Semitism is a culture structure that has exercised an extraordinarily polluting power over the entire course of Western history. Attaching the meta-signifier sacred/profane to the signified of Jewishness, Jews became a profaned symbol, a living embodiment of moral and

emotional disgust that had to be extruded for collectivities to feel physically safe, morally pure, and aesthetically beautiful or sublime.

As a polluted sign, anti-Semitism took on different social forms, from interactional micro-aggressions to institutional discrimination, legal exclusion, ghettoization, sporadic violence, and mass murder. The contents of the polluted sign – what anti-Semitism actually meant in a particular context – varied with the nature of the sacred side of the binary to which it was tied. If the sacred was Christianity or Islam as religion, then the polluted other was the Jewish religion. If the sacred was Christianity or Islam as a way of life, then what was profaned were Jewish everyday practices. If the sacred was the master Aryan race, then Jews were polluted as a dark and dirty subject people. If the sacred was Western, Judaism became polluted as oriental. If nationalist, Jews were symbolized as cosmopolitan. If socialism or communism was sacralized, Jewishness was polluted as moneyed and capitalist. If conservative capitalism was symbolized as pure, then Jewishness was polluted as liberal, socialist, or communist. If anti-imperialism was the sacred, Jews were identified as colonialists. If Islamic Palestine was sacred, then Jews became the defiled competitor, polluted as occupiers.

What each of these extraordinarily diverse and often contradictory designations have in common is the role they have played as polluted ciphers of Jewishness, no matter how the particular content of that protean sign has been defined.[2]

Anti-Semitism is the most obdurate of the polluted culture structures that have marked, and shamed, Western history. Its long-lastingness derives from its location inside the heart of Christianity, whose origin myth recounted the Jewish effort to kill its new God and whose early

[2] They have also shared in the same process of materialization, for the pollution of Jewishness is iconic as well as discursive. The culture structure of anti-Semitism expresses itself aesthetically. Jews give off a repulsive odor; they have ugly physiognomies, such as small eyes, long noses, an overabundance of body hair.

decades of historical advancement depended on polluting and replacing the Jewish faith. The historical "Christian-ness" of anti-Semitism ensured that it would become an intrinsic feature of the collective identities of Western nations, which identified not only as political but as religious entities, not only for many centuries past but, in still significant ways, right up until today.

Emergence of a Civil Sphere

The struggle against anti-Semitism, the effort to cleanse Jewishness of its polluted associations, was for millennia principally a Jewish fight. Gradually, however, there emerged a sphere of society that promoted "civil" rather than "primordial" solidarity. Certainly, there were themes in Christianity that promoted more universalistic social ties; just as important, however, were more secular republican and liberal ideologies, the first born in Greece and Rome, the second emerging in early modern times. These efforts to create a "civil sphere" (Alexander 2006) – discursive, institutional, interactional – opened up pathways for non-Jewish people, whether secular or religious, to join the struggle against Jewish pollution.

Throughout the centuries of this conjoined struggle, the relatively autonomous, highly idealized "discourse of civil society" has been critically deployed, challenging the pollution of Jews as an irrational, unfair, sometimes violent, and always anti-humanistic form of particularizing "discrimination." This ideological critique of anti-Semitism intensified as a broad and diffuse "Enlightenment" spread across Western societies in the 18th and 19th centuries, deepening the commitment to a civil form of solidarity and triggering world-historical movements of democratization, if only rarely functional political democracies. Throughout Europe, Jews – newly defined as rights-bearing citizens – were allowed to leave places of confinement and become incorporated into national societies. On the condition that they shed their still polluted Jewish *qualities*, or practice them only in the invisible world of private life,

Jewish *persons* were allowed to imbibe, and perform, the public culture of civil modernity. This was the bargain of assimilation, which soon proved to be a hard bargain indeed (Alexander 2006: Part IV).

Backlash against Civil Incorporation

For as Jewish persons took advantage of opportunities for assimilative incorporation, anti-civil backlash movements emerged that actually intensified the pollution of Jewish qualities, fighting to dis-incorporate Jews and, more broadly, to re-primordialize the solidarities that defined national societies: Pogroms in Russia, the Dreyfus affair in France, *volk* movements in Germany, antisemitic and anti-immigration organizations and laws in Britain, anti-Jewish quotas and barriers in public and private associations throughout much of the United States. Everywhere, the newly expanded civil spheres of Western societies became compromised, not only by the intense renewal of anti-Semitism among key segments of the population, but by the waves of White racial animosity that accompanied imperialism and anti-immigrant discourses about ethnic succession. Among these sordid challenges to Western civil spheres, however, the backlash against Jewish incorporation was perhaps most persistent and prominent.

The "Jewish question" preoccupied leading thinkers from the early 19th to the mid-20th century, and answering it provided a litmus test that distinguished progressive and democratic from right-wing, authoritarian theories and movements. It was the anti-Semitic answer to the Jewish question that triggered Nazism, which spread like wildfire across Europe in the years after World War I. Arguing that primordial should replace civil solidarity as the basis for national identity, during the interwar period Nazism won more often than it lost. In the wake of the Nazis' political victory in Germany and their military triumph throughout the continent, European civil spheres were pulverized. In the folkish party-state, violence and hierarchy defined

the communicative and regulative institutions of social life, and the critical leverage of public opinion was destroyed. Anti-Semitism now became hegemonic, and other racist and primordial ideas given free reign. Six million Jewish people were murdered, along with a million other despised minorities. The Holocaust marked a cathartic moment for the anti-Semitic narrative that, for millennia, had defined Jews as the principal barrier to a moral social life.

Restoration of the Civil Sphere and Postwar Anti-Anti-Semitism

When the Axis powers were defeated by Allied forces, this primordial and anti-democratic narrative suffered what seemed a mortal blow. Since Nazism was defined by its primordial and anti-civil character, the defeat of this enemy triggered widespread efforts to construct healthier civil spheres throughout the Western world. With the shocking discovery that the Nazis had carried out civilian mass murder on a hitherto unimaginable scale, anti-Semitism became an enemy that leading powers in the newly reconstructed post-war world were determined to destroy. For the first time in Western history, broad numbers of Christian people identified with the suffering of Jews. As the "trauma drama of the Holocaust" gathered performative power (Alexander 2004), and citizens in Western democracies began to perceive Jewish people as fully human beings, anti-Semitism became societalized (Alexander 2018a) as a corrosively anti-civil sentiment. With anti-Semitism established as a crime, French Jews "were allowed to become more visible" (Wieviorka 2018: 43), enjoying protection and a new status as respected citizens. In the UK, racial hatred of Jews became unacceptable, and, in the decades after WWII, anti-Semitism became publicly almost nonexistent, what remained going underground (Beckman 2013; Sonabend 2019). In America between 1945 and 1950, to evoke the title of Leonard Dinnerstein's (1981) famous essay, anti-Semitism became "exposed and attacked"; in the decades following, not only Jewish persons but eventually even Jewish qualities

became identified – among broad swaths of the citizenry of Western nations – with the sacred side of the civil.

This broad-brush picture of sweeping, *Weltgeschichte* change is compelling, but it does not do justice to the variation that actually existed on the ground. In Europe, the societalization of anti-Semitism was more halting than in the United States. In the Western, non-communist region, it took more time, sometimes even decades, for members of national civil spheres to make the suffering of Jewish victims their own, and such civil identification was typically less thorough going. Because in European nations non-Jewish persons had also suffered grievously during the war years, they were less likely to identify with the distinctive suffering of the Jewish people.

In the UK, whose citizens experienced years of the Nazi's brutal air war, societalization of anti-Semitism did not happen immediately after the war, and even then, only partially. In the aftermath of the war fascist groups such as Jeffrey Hamm's British League of Ex-Servicemen and, later, Oswald Mosley's Union Movement publicly engaged in anti-Semitic activity. Around 1947, anti-Jewish sentiments became even more widespread in response to the conflict in Palestine between British Mandate forces and Zionist groups. The "43" group, led by British Jewish ex-servicemen, waged physical battle against the far right until 1950, when the immediate threat to British Jews had dissipated. It was widely believed that anti-Semitic attitudes also existed in the Attlee government (Wistrich 2011) and within the British intellectual sphere (cf., Eban and Adrian 2006). Indeed, according to Kushner (1989; cf., Schaffer 2014) anti-Semitism was formally rejected by the UK government only with the 1965 Race Relations Act,[3]

[3] By the time the Bill was debated in Parliament, fighting against the discrimination of Britain's black communities occupied the attention of a majority of politicians. However, the legislation was also shaped by the need to protect the Jewish community from fascism, its success relying on the lobbying efforts of British Jewish communities (Schaffer 2014).

which was expanded by the 1968 Race Relations Act banning "racial discrimination in public places" and "made the promotion of hatred on the grounds of 'colour, race, or ethnic or national origins' an offence."[4]

Much of France was directly occupied by Hitler's soldiers, and the pervasive postwar resistance myth, which portrayed every French person as victim, delayed until the 1990s official French acknowledgement of the distinctive suffering of French Jews and the national collaboration that had facilitated it (Rousso 1991). In 2014, citing laïcité – the republican proscription against public religiosity – the French Jewish organization SPCJ described anti-Semitism as "a structural problem that has not been fought as such and has not been halted yet."[5] In Germany, for decades after the war, most citizens denied prior knowledge of the Holocaust, much less their active or passive participation in effecting it. Only with the performative power of the '60s generation did Germans begin to experience the "perpetrator trauma" that societalized anti-Semitism and gave to Jews, retrospectively and in contemporary time, an honored position of respect in the newly democratic German civil sphere (Giesen 2004; Heins and Langenohl 2011; Heins and Unrau 2019).

Among the nations of Eastern Europe, the societalization of anti-Semitism was blocked altogether during the Soviet occupation. According to state-Communist ideology, it was classes and nations, not primordial religions or races, that Nazis targeted. In this way, the massive suffering of Jewish people in Eastern Europe, and within the Soviet Union itself, failed to elicit widespread guilt and sympathy, and Jewish people did not become objects of civil identification. For example, in Poland, a nation riven by anti-Semitism before, during, and immediately after

[4] https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/collections1/race-relations-act-1965/race-relations-act-1965/

[5] SPCJ Report on Antisemitism in France in 2013, p. 8.

the war, the anti-Slavic, anti-Polish sentiments of Nazism were emphasized, and the fate that millions of Polish Jews suffered was for many decades ignored (Gross 2001, 2007; Bilewicz and Krzeminski 2010). In Hungary, under the newly established Communist regime, any attempt to acknowledge Jewish suffering and/or Hungarian responsibility for it was suppressed, tabooed from public discourse (Braham 2017). Mátyás Rákosi's regime created a paradoxical situation for the Jewish community: Hungarian Jews looked for support and defense from the very party that had vilified Zionism and stirred anti-Semitism (Gantner 2013; Kenez 2001). After the 1956 uprising, and during the National Communist era that followed, a form of "personal anti-Semitism" within the party, coupled and intensified by ideological anti-Zionism, was intensified by the increasing geopolitical tensions in the Middle-East.

With these historical and comparative variations in mind, we introduce our explanatory model.

Anti-Semitism Returns: Towards an Explanatory Model

Proposition 1: Incomplete societalization

To the degree that a national community failed to societalize Jewish hatred in the post-war period, to that degree anti-Semitism has publicly reemerged and thrived. This is the core proposition of our explanatory model.

In Hungary and Poland, anti-Semitism has publicly advanced, with civil protest against it confined to increasingly powerless opposition. In Germany, it has been primarily in the eastern, post-Soviet *Lander* that anti-Semitic far right political parties and social movements have thrived. In the western regions of Germany, by contrast, anti-Semitic incidents triggered massive protest marches and rallies, and they have proved far less hospital to the AfD and other far right, anti-Jewish parties. In France, the Holocaust-denying, anti-Semitic themes of Jean-Marie Le Pen

eventually faced harsh criticism not only from the left but from conservative political parties; in response to such mainstream pushback, Marine Le Pen expelled her father from the movement, declared herself anti-anti-Semitic, publicly supported Israel, and narrowed her party's hate-filled rhetoric to focus on anti-immigrant, anti-Arab, and other traditionally "national" themes[6]. In the UK, an outspoken Holocaust-denier, David Irving, was imprisoned after his conviction in a widely publicized trial.

In the propositions that follow, we contextualize this argument about incomplete societalization.

Proposition 2: The secular decline of Holocaust memory.

In East European countries, which had neither "remembered" nor societalized the Holocaust during the post-war years, attempts to construct Holocaust memory after the collapse of communism were often strained and artificial, gestures frequently made merely in response to international pressure. In Hungary, after 1989, as part of the attempt to be accepted in international circles, victims of the Holocaust received physical and discursive recognition and remembrance was institutionalized (Kovács 2016). At the same time, a form of local remembrance emerged, minimizing the responsibility of the Hungarian nation and portraying the nation as itself a victim of Nazi Germany (Baer and Sznaider 2015; Karakaya and Baer 2019). In Poland, 1989 unlocked the previously silenced public discourse about witnessing and indifference, and even direct complicity (Forecki 2013). This triggered backlash, defensive

[6] French historian Jacques Julliard has gone so far as to say: "The new anti-Semitism in France today is a Muslim anti-Semitism. But it is not being said, because people are afraid of stigmatizing Muslims or setting off a wave of Islamophobia." https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/05/03/599515300/alarm-grows-in-france-over-anti-semitic-violence. We do not agree with this self-serving characterization; we present it, rather, as an indication of the anti-anti-semitism of the non-Islamic core of the French civil sphere.

confrontations against Holocaust memory that created a right-wing "politics of history" (Hackmann 2018), a movement that strongly intensified after 2005 when the Law and Justice governments came to power (Cadier and Szulecki 2020).

Memory and memorialization have also declined among national societies that *had* remembered the Holocaust and *did* societalize anti-Jewish hatred. In these nations, the citizens who, despite societalization, had continued to privately harbor anti-Semitic feelings – not an insignificant minority – no longer were shamed into silence. In the UK, despite its relatively early and still powerful Holocaust consciousness, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are on the rise. For decades, leftist Labourites have identified with the "liberation struggle" of the Palestinians (see below), a tendency first brought to wide public attention with Jeremy Corbyn's rise to party leadership. Far from being merely an institutional problem, a more broadly shared collective consciousness is also involved. As British thinking about the past has become increasingly untethered from Holocaust memory, the long-standing Western binary that pollutes Jewishness has reemerged in public attention space. Anti-Semitism is "a reservoir: a deep reservoir of stereotypes and narratives, one which is replenished over time and from which people can draw with ease" (Gidley et al 2020: 416). This is also true in the United States. Despite how broadly and deeply Holocaust memory is imbedded in postwar American cultural history, the polluting anti-Jewish cultural structure has also publicly re-emerged. Amidst shocking episodes of anti-Semitic violent attacks, far right demonstrations against racial justice have begun to feature anti-Semitic slogans from the pre-war era (Lipstadt 2019). In a recent edited volume on contemporary anti-Semitism in the US,[7] Beirich (2021) demonstrates how contemporary anti-Semites have merely updated a long-standing American legacy of

[7] https://www.inss.org.il/publication/contemporary-antisemitism-collection-of-articles/

conspiracies and bigoted tropes (Ward 2017). Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan A. Greenblatt may be thus right to contend that the recent uptick in anti-Semitic violence "is being caused not by a change in attitudes among most Americans," but rather [by] more of the millions of Americans holding anti-Semitic views … feeling emboldened to act on their hate[8]."

Proposition 3: The tarnishing of Israel as a civil symbol.

In the decades after WWII, admiration for Israeli's democratic socialism helped inspire a more civil and less primordial representation of Jewishness. In recent decades, this civilizing process has been reversed, and Israel has come to be viewed – by influential members of Western cosmopolitan societies – as primordial and anti-civil.

As a nation constructed at least partly in response to the Holocaust, the Israeli public and its political elite have persistently utilized Holocaust memory to further their national ambitions, interpreting the Holocaust as being specifically about Jewish fate rather than universal norms (Alexander and Dromi 2011). The Holocaust has been used to justify an Israeli moral claim to victimization (Adams 2020). In the aftermath of the '67 war, more than 250,000 people fled to the eastern bank of the Jordan River; Israel's military occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; massive Israeli settlements were established; and aggressive military efforts to counter rising Arab-Palestinian nationalism were engaged. All these drew intense and increasingly critical international attention. Israel has been widely – though far from universally – condemned as an Apartheid state, and a global sanctions movement (BDS) has emerged. Under the umbrella of "New anti-Semitism," the debate centers on the notion that the source of contemporary hostility to Jews has shifted, that it now rests more on the Arab-Israeli conflict than on the primordial opposition to Jews-as-Jews, i.e., Bernard Lewis' (2006) argument about the third, or

[8] https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/anti-semitic-stereotypes-persist-in-america-survey-shows.

ideological, wave of anti-Semitism. On the flip side, the conflation of anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism is seen by pro-Palestinians as a deliberate attempt to intimidate and silence the movement for Palestinian rights, i.e., the so-called weaponization of anti-Semitism and Holocaust memory.

Proposition 4: The increasing centrality of the Palestinians struggle in progressive ideology.

In the wake of the six-day war, Israel's military superiority and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza triggered horrendous, widely-publicized acts of PLO terrorism, which received ideological support and funding from Arab states and state-communist countries in Eastern European. After decades of continuing Israeli settlement in Palestinian territories made the Occupation seem more colonial than strategic, and as Israeli military power grew exponentially, Palestinian protests began to include mass mobilization and guerilla tactics – Palestinian stone-throwing during the first Intifada, suicide bombings and attacks on civilians in the 2000s, and the firing of rockets, mortars and missiles into southern Israel in the years after that. Despite the violence of such actions, the framing of Israeli as anti-civil perpetrator and Palestinians as innocent victims steadily gained traction, triggering international aid to Palestinians from a wide range of foreign governments and international non-governmental organizations and significant sympathy for anti-Israeli demonstrations and the sanctions movement. Throughout this period, but quickening during the 2010s, military conflicts in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and terrorist insurgencies in Nigeria and Pakistan brought waves of Arab, mostly Islamic refugees to Europe and Northern America. The anti-Israeli activism of the Palestinian diaspora exercised increasing performative power, supported by high-profile mainstream figures in entertainment and sports, academia and business, its messages effectively projected via social media. Identification with the Palestinian cause is now extending deep into

the Jewish diaspora itself, with younger Jewish Americans much less supportive of Israel and organizations like J-Street gaining mainstream political support.

While skepticism, and even downright antagonism, to Israeli policy vis-à-vis Palestinians has not led to anti-Jewish public expression among America's liberal elites, the same cannot be said in the UK, where anti-Semitic prejudice had long been entrenched as a feature of the old aristocracy and the reactionary right. In recent decades, as we have noted, this underlayer of anti-Semitism has found its way into the other side of the political spectrum: "Sympathy for the Palestinians and opposition to Israel has become the default position for many on the left: a defining marker of what it means to be progressive" (Rich 2018: 9). Whether such a transformation of feeling – the British left, as the American, had early embraced Israeli as a progressive paradigm – can be described as anti-Semitic is, of course, a matter of intensive and often vituperative debate. What cannot be contested, however, is that significant segments of the British citizenry believe it to be. If much of the British left now pollutes the world's only Jewish state as ferociously anti-civil, it is likely that such profaning sentiments will extend, to one degree or another, to Jewishness itself. Anti-Semitism on the left thus "emerges out of the ostensibly democratic discourse of criticism of Israel" (Hirsch 2018:2).

Proposition 5: Shifts in Left ideology toward Race, Gender, and Post-Coloniality.

In the decades after the uneven societalization of anti-Semitism, the focus of progressive ideology has shifted away from what might be called "the lessons of anti-Nazism." In response to the sentiments that have been generated by cresting global social movements, new critical theories have been building coloniality, gender, and race (Bell 1995; Risman 2004). Within the terms of each of these new intellectual-cum-moral movements, Jewish centrality and the dangers of anti-Semitism have been displaced. If Jews are coded as Western, white, male, and privileged,

the idea of Jews as a vulnerable social group disappears, and anti-Jewishness may be seen less as vicious prejudice than as anti-elitist common sense (Goldstein 2006). The question, then, is not what is anti-Semitism or why does it continue to exist, but rather, why do 'good,' normative, progressive people fail to care about its persistence. Baddiel's (2021) *Jews Don't Count* links the broadly assumed privileged status of Jews – "although marginal," he writes, Jews "are not thought of as *marginalized"* (p. 28)– to the blinkers that facilitate left wing anti-Semitism.

Theorizing waves of societalization

Until now, the restriction of societalization vis-à-vis anti-civil social strains has been theorized in terms of polarization and marginalization (Alexander 2018: 1067-1069). Our findings in this paper, however, demonstrate that, alongside these structural considerations, a temporal dimension must be added. There are "waves of societalization," the first wave setting a cultural and institutional framework – of path dependency – for societalizing reactions that may emerge in response to later events. In Germany, France, the UK, and the US, anti-Semitism was societalized, if variably and incompletely, in the postwar era. The existence of such reconstructed background representations, and the institution they helped create, set the stage for a second wave of societalizing outrage and social mobilization in response to the anti-Semitism that has recently publicly re-emerged. Just as the first wave of societalization was variable, so is the second: The incompleteness of the second wave is proportionate to the varying incorporation of Jewish people, and their qualities, into the civil spheres of national societies. However, the inability to achieve thoroughgoing societalization in the first wave is not the only factor that has affected responses to rising anti-Semitism. The decline of Holocaust memory has decreased the performative power of societalizing protest, as has the tarnishing of Israel as a culturally

powerful democratic symbol. The transformation in the moral sentiments and objects of political identification among progressive ideological groupings has also played a significant role.

Conclusion

Because anti-Semitism is such an obdurate culture structure of hate, it seems unlikely that it can ever be entirely eliminated from Western societies – even if it has been thoroughly societalized. As a long-standing culture structure of scapegoating otherness, anti-Semitism is always available as a narrative that backlash groups can employ to "explain" injuries to their emotions, identities, and material fates.

In response to the frontlash of progressive social change (Alexander 2018b) – such as the incorporation of Jewish persons and their qualities – masses of modern citizens continually suffer from feelings of displacement. Responsive to cultural and social backlash movements, they avail themselves of authoritarian solutions, anti-Semitism conspicuously among them. Aggrieved minorities may not feel entitled to publicize their scapegoating, much less to mobilize reactionary social movements inside such reactionary frames. Inhibited by old memories and newly civil norms, they may feel compelled to confine their reactive and polluting feelings to private life. In this brief essay, we have presented a new model for explaining why inhibitions against public expression of anti-Semitism have been weakening. At the same time, we have stressed that this resurgence of anti-Jewish hatred is triggering a second wave of societalization, one which must be understood in a comparative way. There is no assurance that Western civil spheres will be able to sustain anti-anti-Semitism, much less a positive recognition of Jewish qualities. Whether Western societies can sustain the civil repairs they initiated in the wake of the Holocaust will affect, not only the fate of the Jews, but the vitality of the civil sphere in Western democratic life.

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