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#### **RESUMEN / ABSTRACT:**

Este trabajo analiza las interacciones entre recurrencia histórica y cambio de las expresiones del antisemitismo y su relación con los diversos referentes de pertenencia colectiva- cultura, etnicidad, lengua, religión e historia. Así, el antisemitismo es anterior al racismo, toda vez que la expresión de este último estuvo precedida e interactuó con modalidades eminentemente culturales y religiosas. A su vez, factores religiosos, raciales y culturales han coexistido con motivaciones sociales, económicas y políticas. En el trabajo se sostiene que el análisis del antisemitismo debe dar cuenta de las múltiples conexiones entre actores particulares, ideas/ideologías y símbolos a nivel nacional, regional y global. Una perspectiva multidimensional contribuye a explicaciones integrales de su carácter estructural así como de sus manifestaciones y modos de expresión, de sus legados culturales y de su dimensión de subjetividad. Para tal fin, se abordan diferentes momentos y coyunturas históricas y se analizan las complejas relaciones entre antisemitismo, anti-sionismo y anti-israelismo, así como los reenvíos de significados contemporáneos entre estas diversas expresiones.

This article analyzes the interactions between historical recurrence and change in the expressions of anti-Semitism as it is related with various referents of collective belonging- culture, ethnicity, language, religion, and history. Thus, anti-Semitism precedes racism, as it interacted with eminently cultural and religious modalities. On its side, religious, racial and cultural factors have coexisted with social, economic and political motivations. The article argues that the analysis of anti-Semitism must account for the multiple connections between particular actors, ideas / ideologies and symbols at the national, regional and global levels. A multidimensional perspective contributes to comprehensive explanations of its structural character as well as its manifestations and modes of expression, its cultural legacies and its dimension of subjectivity. Therefore, it analyzed with different historical moments and situations, and analyzes the complex relationships between anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism at the meaning making level and in their practical expressions.

# Antisemitism in North America

*New World, Old Hate*

*Edited by*

Steven K. Baum, Neil J. Kressel, Florette Cohen-Abady  
and Steven Leonard Jacobs



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## Antisemitism in Mexico and Latin America: Recurrences and Changes

*Judit Bokser Liwerant and Yael Siman*

Latin America's recent resurgence of antisemitism stems from a complex combination of geopolitical shifts and trends. An examination of such changing patterns reveals several of the less obvious social and political forces, and permits enhanced conceptualization of Mexico and Latin American antisemitism—its development, transmission and staying power. It is the intention of the authors to provide such analysis.<sup>1</sup>

Serious concern is often voiced about the strong emphasis given to antisemitism as a permanent characteristic of Latin America. While the focus on antisemitism in Latin America may not be surprising given its historical legacy and foundational experience e.g., Inquisition; the conquest/nationalism binomial, this chapter shows that simplistic and reductionist approaches to the region should be avoided, and instead replaced by more nuanced interpretations showcasing differences in time, place and forms of expression. An understanding of the different conditions that favor antisemitism as well as its manifestations emerges as a *sine qua non* when accounting for its extent—potential or actual. Particular attention is placed on its historical socio-political expressions and on its symbolic representations—in the conventional media and, more recently, in the social networks—and the ways it is produced and reproduced discursively.<sup>2</sup>

While we witness a greater conceptual awareness of the complexity of antisemitism, we still need more clarity when analyzing related contemporary expressions of prejudice, exclusion and, specifically, anti-Zionism (in its heterogeneous composition); critiques of Israel; and even anti-Israelism. Antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism are singular yet overlapping phenomena at the meaning-making level. Criticism of Israel, for example, is

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1 For an earlier version of this chapter, see Judit Bokser Liwerant, "Approaching Recurrences and Changes of Anti-Semitism in Latin America: the Case of Mexico," <http://juditbokserliwerant-unam.mx/capli/cap33.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2015).

2 Martin Reissigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

not necessarily antisemitic in essence or motivation. However, both overlap if prejudiced rhetoric or images borrowed from old myths and old/new stereotypes, such as the blood libel or conspiracy theories are used.<sup>3</sup>

A discursive tool may be the use of double standards when making judgments regarding Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. Tools may also include the representation of Israel's policies as evil, racist or genocidal. Such approaches lead to the demonization and delegitimation of Israel with significant, even dangerous, implications.

Antisemitism, historically, has been nourished by religious beliefs, myths, socio-economic motives, xenophobic sentiments and certainly racism. In our time, racism is not exclusively associated with so-called biological inferiority; veiled attitudes culturally channel attacks against national, ethnic and religious groups, preferably minorities, thereby isolating, excluding and segregating them. Such attitudes allegedly support cultural difference. However, their underlying assumptions point to fixed and naturalized traits that are largely attributed to social groups and confined to a pseudo-psychological culturalism.

Interactions between historically recurrent and emerging new forms of antisemitism find expression in complex conceptual elaborations. Thus, it has been argued that a "new antisemitism" stems from the Left, the Right, and radical Islam and tends as a rule to converge on its opposition to the existence of Israel as a Jewish State.<sup>4</sup> This new expression is nourished by convergent interests of otherwise opposed political actors that run from the Left i.e., strong adherents to the Palestinian cause, to the Right i.e., nationalists who view the Jew as the eternal foreigner, and Islamic religious fundamentalists i.e., Muslims who immigrated to Europe carrying their hatred of Israel and of the Jews.<sup>5</sup> The new antisemitism of the Left presents a number of parallel tracks that symbolically converge to include both Jews and Israel and therefore, the terms Jew, Zionist and Israel are increasingly interchangeable in contemporary discourse at the global level.<sup>6</sup>

3 Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

4 Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (New York: Norton, 1986); Pierre-André Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008).

5 Jack R. Fischel, "What's New About the New Anti-Semitism?" *Virginia Quarterly Review* 81, (2005): 225.

6 Ben Cohen, "The Persistence of Anti-Semitism on the British Left," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16 (Fall 2004): 3; Samuel Edelman, "Antisemitism and the New/Old Left" in *Not Your Father's Antisemitism*, ed. Michael Berenbaum (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2008); Daniel J. Goldhagen, *The Devil That Never Dies* (New York: Little, Brown, 2013); Alvin Rosenfeld, *Resurgent Anti-Semitism: Global Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

While classical antisemitism involved discrimination against the personhood of Jews, the new antisemitism involves discrimination against the statehood of Jews. Both assault the core of Jewish self-definition. This line of thought underscores antisemitism's uniqueness in that classical antisemitism denies Jews the right to live as equals in society and the new antisemitism denies Jews the right to live as equals in the family of nations. Some proponents of the concept of new antisemitism argue that criticism of Israel and Zionism is most often disproportionate in degree and unique in kind when compared to attitudes toward other foci of conflict worldwide.<sup>7</sup>

In the current debate, some observers downplay the significance of the new antisemitism, or, for that matter, antisemitism altogether. They posit that: 1) those people of goodwill who support the Palestinians resent being wrongly accused of antisemitism; 2) supporters of the Jewish state exploit the stigma of antisemitism to silence legitimate criticism of Israel's policy; 3) accusations of antisemitism based on anti-Israel opinions lack credibility; and 4) a "reasonably informed" person thinks that Israel shares the largest part of responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Other perspectives point to new sources of antisemitism. Pierre André Taguieff contends that antisemitism is no longer based on racism and nationalism but, paradoxically, on anti-racism and anti-nationalism. It equals Zionism and racism; resorts to Holocaust denial; borrows a Third-World discourse, and the slogans of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-Americanism, and anti-globalization; and disseminates the myth of the intrinsically "good Palestinian"—today's innocent victim *par excellence*. Thus, while Jews may not suffer discrimination, they are often victims of stigma, threats, physical

7 Irwin Cotler, *New Anti-Jewishness: Sounding the Alarm* (Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, 2002); Lawrence N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

8 Brian Klug, Robert S. Wistrich, "Correspondence between Prof. Robert Wistrich and Brian Klug: When is Opposition to Israel and Its Policies Anti-Semitic?" (Jerusalem: SICSA—Hebrew University, 2006), <http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/klug.html> (accessed 1 June 2015); Earl Raab "Antisemitism, Anti-Israelism, Anti-Americanism" *Judaism*, 51 (2002): 387; Steven Zipperstein, "Historical Reflections of Contemporary Antisemitism" in *Contemporary Antisemitism: Canada and the World*, eds Derek J. Penslar et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005). For an extended review of the diverse approaches to anti-Semitism and its expressions cfr. Eliezer Ben Rafael, *Confronting Allosemitism in Europe. The Case of Belgium Jews* (forthcoming); for comparative and global analyses ingrained in new anti-Semitism approach, Alvin Rosenfeld (ed), *Resurgent Antisemitism: Global Perspectives*, 2013; on past and current expressions, Michael Berenbaum, *Not Your Father's Antisemitism. Hatred of the Jews in the 21st Century*, 2008.



violence and even the media, which endorses radical anti-Zionism. On its part, judeophobia or neo-judeophobia results in anti-Jewish violence incited by radical Islamists. It becomes a cultural given on a public scene mechanically and unanimously supportive of the Palestinian cause, and transcends the boundaries between Left and extreme Left. Its anti-Israelism, coupled with anti-Americanism, permeates all parts of Right-wing opinion. Judeophobia accuses the Jews of being “too community,” too religious, and nationalist, as well as too cosmopolitan. The defense of Palestinians as victims of Zionism is the ideological core mode of legitimation for contemporary anti-Jewish violence. This awakens old accusations of “ritual murder,” aka the blood libel.<sup>9</sup>

For his part French sociologist Michel Wieviorka emphasizes the multiple sources of antisemitism: far-right and far-left circles, given milieus in the Muslim population, youngsters of disadvantaged educational contexts or the spin-offs of the Middle-East conflict, and the sympathy awakened by the Palestinian cause among educated strata. Nevertheless, Wieviorka views in antisemitism only one aspect of many others of a general societal malaise, and not a major crisis in its own right.<sup>10</sup>

In a new era that poses unprecedented challenges—both conceptual and policy oriented—scholars such as University of London sociologist David Hirsh take a different stance by asking if criticism of Israel is necessarily anti-semitic. In his view, the difficult argument for some “critics of Israel” to deal with is that criticism of Israel is often expressed by using rhetoric or images that resonate as antisemitism: holding Israel to higher standards than other states, and for no good reason; articulating conspiracy theories; using demonizing analogies; casting Jews in the role of oppressors; formulating criticism in such a way as to pick a fight with the vast majority of Jews; using the word criticism but meaning discriminatory practices against Israelis or against Jews.

Hirsh adds that the recurrence of antisemitism does not mean witnessing the same phenomenon, but one that may bring old elements while acquiring new expressions, responding to different logics and framed by distinct individuals and groups. In this sense, one problem with the “Hydra” explanation<sup>11</sup> is

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9 Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck*.

10 Michel Wieviorka, *The Lure of Anti-Semitism* (Boston: Brill, 2007).

11 Hirsh refers to the view of antisemitism as a many-headed “hydra” or sea monster, always lurking under the surface of the water while putting up different heads in different places and times. That is, this ahistorical model conceives different expressions of antisemitism as an ever present underlying phenomenon, an ever-present fact of human history. Thus, the difference between a time or a place where it is visible and one where it is not is purely contingent. David Hirsh, *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism. Cosmopolitan Reflections*,

that while each form of anti-Judaism draws on and replicates older forms, “they are also hugely different phenomena. They arise and they become widespread in radically different times and places. They have different manifestations, are employed by different social forces, they make use of different narratives.” Such differences are as striking as the commonalities, among the Spanish Inquisition, Christian antisemitism in nineteenth century Poland, the socialist one in Germany at the time of August Bebel, Right wing anti-Bolshevism, Nazi racist genocidal antisemitism, understated and gentlemanly English exclusion, contemporary anti-imperialist anti-Zionism and Jihadi antisemitism. Anti-Zionism is indeed defined as a form of antisemitism because it denies the right of Jewish self-determination while defending self-determination for all other nations.<sup>12</sup>

In this sense, an academic boycott of Israel is antisemitic because it aims to punish Israeli academics by applying standards that are different from those applied to academics elsewhere. Even if antisemitism does not motivate that boycott, it is nevertheless antisemitic in effect. Some circles, which consider themselves as Left, act upon their belief that Israel is a unique evil. As a result of their activism, these ideas permeate the mainstream discourse and are no longer marginalized. The ideological novelty is that hatred of Jews is now expressed in the language of the “fight against racism” or “human rights.” Racism also takes a new form as anti-Islamophobia.

Jews have always been a target of special attention and feelings, in so many different circumstances. Addressing this issue, Zygmunt Bauman incorporates the notion of *allosemitism*, which implies the notion that Jews’ plights in society are radically different from any other social entity and require special concepts to be described and analyzed.<sup>13</sup> Jewishness may attract hate or love, but always feelings that are extreme and intense. The object indicated by *allosemitism* is “unfamiliar” or “strange” in its essence: it does not comply with the general order of things, nor does it fit into any other category or phenomena. Furthermore, the attitude toward its object is extra-temporal and extra-spatial: it consists of a permanent interrogation resulting, each time, from the

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Working Paper. Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (New York: ISGAP, 2007).

12 David Matas, *Aftershock* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2005).

13 Zygmunt Bauman, “Allosemitism: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern,” in *Modernity, Culture and ‘the Jew’*, eds. Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 143; Leonardo Senkman “Anti-Zionist Discourse of the Left in Latin America: An Assessment,” in eds. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Judit Bokser Liwerant, and Yosef Gorny, *Reconsidering Israel—Diaspora Relations* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 22.

interplay of continuous historical developments and actual circumstances. In Bauman's view, modern antisemitism or hate of Jews targets "Jewishness" rather than Judaism. For the antisemite, whatever they do, Jews possess their own inimitable *Volkseigentümlichkeit* a.k.a. people peculiarities. It is in this sense that one may effectively speak of Jews as a "special species."

The permanent foreignness of the Other—the Jew as the historical Other—converts it into a threat to the identity and integrity of the majority society. Facing social, political and cultural transformations that recover old patterns of rejection while expressing new forms, exclusion is based on diversity, and not necessarily on race. In the introduction to the anthology *Theories of Race and Racism*, editors Les Back and John Solomos remind us that a highly reliable prediction of the 20th century, albeit dramatic, was formulated by the civil rights activist and NAACP co-founder W.E.B. Du Bois in 1903, when he characterized the problem of the 20th century as the line of color that would run across race relations worldwide. Perhaps with that in mind, Stuart Hall would claim almost a century later that the "capacity to live with difference is the main challenge of the 21st century" insofar as contemporary societies experience the increasing diversity of subjects, social experiences and cultural identities in a continuous process of change.<sup>14</sup> Contrasting both characterizations reveals the changing meanings given to the concept of race *vis-à-vis* the concepts of ethnicity and culture, as well as the historical transformations of reality: while for Du Bois the line of color was part of his quotidian environment, based on institutional patterns of racial domination, in our time, racism takes new dimensions, as well as a different content and meaning.<sup>15</sup>

The complex interaction between historic recurrences and changes, as well as between different referents of collective belonging—culture, ethnicity, language, religion, and history—are expressed in antisemitism in singular modes. Antisemitism precedes and surpasses racism. Its racial formulations were preceded by cultural and religious modalities. Additionally, religious, racial and cultural factors frequently have coexisted with social, economic and political motivations.

Today's Latin American antisemitism is marked by diverse sources and strands. Mutually reinforcing antisemitic (and later anti-colonial and anti-imperialist) meanings get transferred, and reinforce each other through a historical and now trans-regional and trans-national cultural/ideological code

14 Les Back and John Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009).

15 Stuart Hall, *Race, the Floating Signifier*, Media Education Foundation, 1997, [https://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/407/transcript\\_407.pdf](https://www.mediaed.org/assets/products/407/transcript_407.pdf) (accessed 5 June 2015).

that characterizes wide sectors of intellectuals, public figures and the media.<sup>16</sup> Thus, antisemitism has become a transnational phenomenon that in some instances gets expressed through criticism of Israel as the embodiment of collective Jewry. Anti-Zionism connects people across countries, regions and continents, operating through the political agenda of social movements at the local, regional and global levels.

Already in the 1960s and 1970s, anti-Zionist discourse served in the United States and Western Europe as a cultural code among the “New Left” that suggested belonging to the camp of anti-imperialism, anticolonialism and a new sort of anticapitalism. In North and South America, anti-Zionist charges—with their frequent anti-Jewish twists—initially were not an independent issue among the prevalent political and social views of the Left, but instead a code for more important matters other than the Israel-Palestine conflict. The cultural contours of this code displayed its struggle against the overall set of values and norms typical of the imperialist West, such as authoritarianism, paternalism, machismo (male pride) and the legacy of colonialist conceit *vis-à-vis* the Third World.

Nevertheless, as Shulamit Volkov points out, following many years of an unsettled Israel-Palestine conflict, today’s opposition to Israel can hardly be regarded only as a code for some other evil. Together with a more open antisemitism by right-wing xenophobic groups, but not only by them, the subculture of the Left, even of the center-Left, cannot be seen in its position towards Israel as a side-issue, ripe to serve as a cultural code.<sup>17</sup> Increased hostility towards Israel is globally coordinated, transcending the national boundaries of countries and standing at the center of the New Left’s anti-imperialist and anti-globalization discourse. It is a “transnational ideological package” that symbolizes the struggle against globalization and US hegemony.<sup>18</sup>

Given the historic pattern of recurrence and change, the non-linearity of the interactions and mutual influences between antisemitism and anti-Zionism add complexity to it. In this sense, even radical voices point to the danger that anti-Zionism—which does not necessarily begin as antisemitism but emanates from criticism of human rights abuses by the State of Israel—may “normalize”

16 Judit Bokser Liwerant, *El Movimiento Nacional Judío. El Sionismo en México 1922–1947* (México City: UNAM, 1991).

17 Shulamit Volkov, “Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism,” in *Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective—Convergence and Differences*, ed. Jeffrey Herf (New York: Routledge, 2007), 39.

18 Leonardo Senkman, “Anti-Zionist Discourse.”

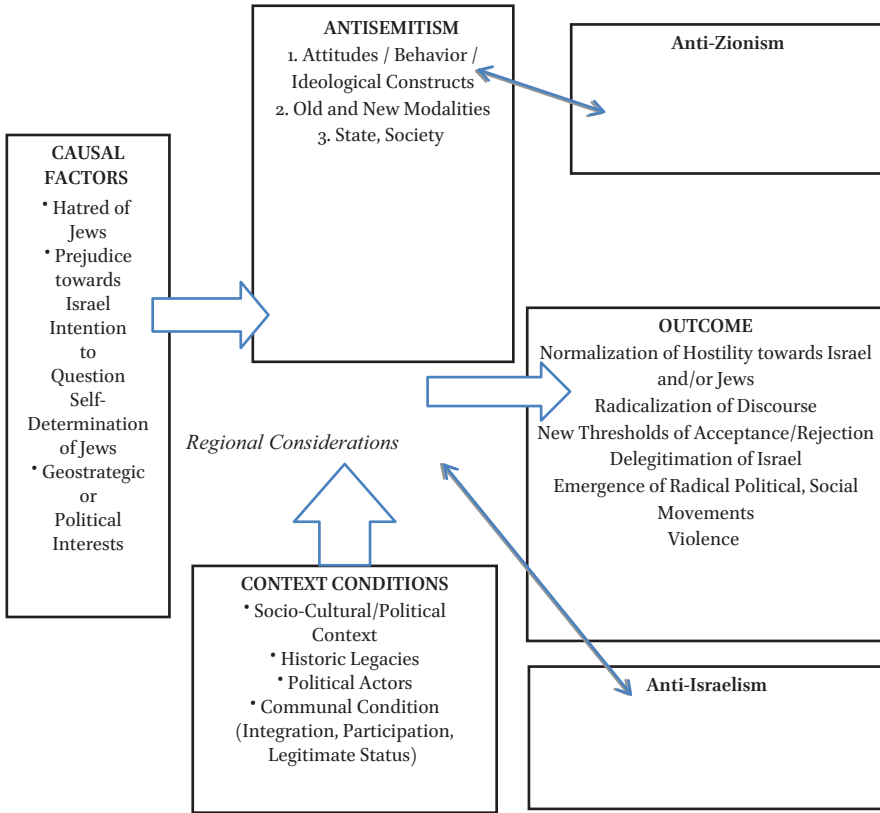
hostility towards Israel and the Jews, thereby setting new thresholds of what becomes understandable, acceptable and even legitimate.

The impact of new technologies which allow for the instantaneous, massive and largely anonymous circulation of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel arguments transcending national borders challenge local particularities. As will be analyzed, similar to other regions, in Latin America, antisemitism, anti-Zionism, critiques of Israel and anti-Israelism are singular phenomena that have historically overlapped. This can be seen in the political discourse that has accompanied particular local or international governmental positions, in the press and the social networks. Anti-Zionism and antisemitism are global phenomena, and yet anchored in diverse local realities. We are thus compelled to avoid abstract universalisms that could dilute the specificity of space, actors and societies. Within Latin America, Mexico stands out with its singularity but not in isolation from other countries in the region or the rest of the world.

It is our contention that analyses of contemporary antisemitism need to account for multiple connections between particular actors, ideas and symbols through national, regional and global circuits and levels. A multi-dimensional perspective, which does not view the borders of the Nation-State or even the region as the only referents, contributes to robust explanations of its structural manifestations and modes of expression, historical and cultural legacies, and subjectivity.

The chart below shows that antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism are particular, but overlapping phenomena; they also reinforce each other. Among the causal factors that may drive their overlapping are hatred of Jews, prejudice towards Israel, the rejection of the self-determination of Jews, as well as geostrategic or political interests. Possible outcomes include normalization of hostility towards Israel and/or Jews, radicalization of discourse, new thresholds of acceptance/rejection, delegitimation of Israel, the emergence of radical political and social movements viz., including transnational ones, and violence both symbolic and physical. These outcomes become particularly acute in our times given the transnationalization of prejudice a.k.a. de-territorialization, the globalization of hatred, the prevalence of new technologies, and the reconfiguration of social arrangements leading to new convergences between seemingly different and even opposing actors. Legitimate criticism of Israel is largely based on human rights violations and different from the former in both its causality of origin—ethical, universal, cosmopolitan—and outcome—public pressure, international accountability.

This chapter analyzes the manifestations of antisemitism in Mexico throughout the 20th Century and the first decade of the 21st Century. It focuses on three historic moments:



1) the 1920s–1940s, with the arrival of Jewish immigration, when Otherness was socially represented as foreignness amid an immigration debate that resulted in restrictive policies towards Jewish immigration and Jewish refugees; 2) the 1970s–1990s, when antisemitism changed in response to developments in the Third World block and the internationalization of the Middle East conflict, and 3) the beginning of the 21st century, characterized by democratization, pluralism, the widening of the public sphere, the transition from the printed press to the Internet-social networks, and the resulting radicalization of discursive antisemitism.

By examining the different historic moments we trace the local roots and routes of antisemitism within a wide spectrum of interconnected processes— at the local, regional and global levels. The in-depth analysis of Mexico as our case study also shows that complex phenomena need to be situated in the particular socio-cultural and political context in which they develop (nationally, regionally and globally), and approached through multi-causal explanations.

## Regional Considerations

Antisemitism's impact on the social representation of the Other is both subjective (stereotypes, myths, attitudes, among others) and behavioral (actions, practices, institutional arrangements). These two interacting but also autonomous levels are particularly relevant in countries that had difficulty dealing with their inner cultural diversity but recently underwent profound transformations resulting in the legitimate expression of difference in the public sphere.

If we trace back anti-Jewish prejudice in Latin America, we find that it has historically been veiled and structural, diffuse and latent. Contemporary processes of social and political change such as democratization in multicultural settings still exhibit contradictory dynamics. Therefore, the particular history and evolution of prejudice need to be contextualized largely in light of the regional and the national political culture.

Latin America has historically been one idea and a region with different realities. When the renowned French historian Fernand Braudel was asked to dedicate an issue of his review *Les Annales* to Latin America, he titled it “*A travers les Ameriques Latines*,” in the plural, emphasizing the diverse nature of its countries and cultures. The region's economic and political diversity, with deep historic roots, may be best understood today in terms of the ethno-cultural make-up of its populations. In Euro-America (with countries such as Argentina or Uruguay), where mass immigration changed the socio-ethnic profile of the population, multi-ethnic societies were built with a *de facto* tolerance towards minorities, counterbalancing the primordial, territorial, and religiously homogeneous profile that the State aspired to achieve. In Indo-America—i.e., Mexico, Peru or Ecuador—the original ethnic composition of the population enhanced the unified and homogeneous national profile.<sup>19</sup> Countries such as Mexico rooted their conception of national identity on an ethnic-religious cultural model—*mestizaje*—based on fusion, assimilation and the merging of Spanish-Catholic and indigenous populations. As a resource for identity-building and national integration, this model became a central criterion for evaluating the full incorporation of minorities.

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19 Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “The Construction of Collective Identities in Latin America Beyond the European Nation State Model,” in *Constructing Collective Identities and Shaping Public Spheres*, eds. Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1988), 245; Haim Avni, “Presentación de las Comunidades Judías de América Latina” in *Encuentro y alteridad: vida y cultura judía en América Latina*, eds. Judit Bokser Liwerant and Alicia Gojman de Backal (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), 15.

Cultural specificity influenced the various ways in which Modernity developed. However, modern institutions were also central in granting citizenship, pluralism and democracy. Insofar as the public sphere and civil society became constitutive pillars of modern forms of collective life, and Modernity's legacy was seen as a world of values and institutions that generated the capacity of social criticism and democratic integration, the region had to cope with incomplete achievements and enormous challenge.<sup>20</sup> In the modern West, Latin Americans were the first group of citizens to fail at reconciling social equality with cultural differences, thereby resulting in a public life that is socio-ethnically fissured.<sup>21</sup> In turn, many values and institutional arrangements were cultural hybrids. Thus, while religion was structurally embedded in social life, the internalization of Catholicism also implied its conversion into a civic culture. Civic Catholicism opened the possibility of creating new meanings and codes thus advancing secularization in the public sphere. However, it simultaneously set its own limits. Together with the central place of the Catholic Church, European corporate traditions led to difficulties when dealing with religious and ethnical diversity, thereby projecting encounters with Otherness as contradicting realities of social diversity and homogeneous narratives.<sup>22</sup>

A *de facto* collective coexistence allowed the development of Jewish life, including the definition of its communal contours and borders in light of complex dynamics between social integration and group autonomy. In the region, Jews were often seen as unwanted others, as a source of risk to national identity. However, they never had to fight for Emancipation.<sup>23</sup> The struggle for religious tolerance was also conceived and presented as necessary in order to attract European immigration waves. Strengthening society as a means to achieve national development, progress and modernization required capital, abilities, and talent that were sought among European populations. Immigrants were therefore seen as necessary, both in their human and material capacities.

Nevertheless, the prevailing ideal image of national society led to the definition of selective immigration policies towards different groups. In light of such immigration policies and laws, the Jews were assigned an identity *vis-à-vis* the national population, thereby reflecting the ideal conception of national societies, its pragmatic requirements, and the changing correlation

20 Jeffrey Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

21 Carlos A. Forment, *Democracy in Latin America: 1760–1900, 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

22 Judit Bokser Liwerant, ed., *Identities in an Era of Globalization and Multiculturalism: Latin America in the Jewish World* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

23 Haim Avni, "Presentación," 15.



of political forces. While freedom and equality were granted, restrictions to immigration fostered ambivalences towards this minority. This has certainly been so in countries with limited immigration or restricted migration policies.

### Otherness and Immigration: Between Acceptance and Rejection

In Mexico, national thought defined the collective self-image and the conceptual margins of the Other. In the interplay between identity and Otherness, the externally assigned image, the social representation, and the identity ascription of the Jew *vis-à-vis* the national community has not been one-dimensional. Like all imagined communities, a nation is not merely an extended web of relationships between people; it also involves criteria of belonging including ethnicity. Historically there have been sequential attempts to define the public sphere based on a national/ethnic identity, which expresses the permanence of national narrative shaping social representations and imaginaries.

The real and symbolic meaning of the founding project of *mestizaje* expressed the nation's ethnic and political dimensions. While it called for an ethnic-socio-cultural encounter between the indigenous and the Hispanic-Christian components, its primordial features had limiting effects on the social construction of diversity. Thus, not every group and culture was a foundational layer of the nation, or perceived as such, while, at the same time, the Jewish collective sought integration into the nation without ethnic assimilation.

The construction of the Other/Foreign accompanied the intellectual *Criollo* who, on the one hand, in his quest for autonomy from Spain identified with the indigenous population, but on the other hand, remained reluctant to lose his ancestors' privileges.<sup>24</sup> The *Criollo* faced this dilemma through the successive reformulations of the national project until the Revolution. *Indigenismo* was articulated as a native claim and, thus, benefited from the new socio-ethnic category: the *mestizo*. At the same time, the latter became the rising political actor in the national scene. Paradoxically, its producer, the *Criollo*, was disqualified as a foreigner.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the complex relationship between liberalism and the political national project resulted from their divergent

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24 Francisco Bulnes, "La Personificación del Criollo," *Nexos*, September 2002, <http://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=10571> (accessed 1 June 2015); David Brading, *Mito y Profecía en la Historia de México* (Mexico City, Vuelta, 1988); Luis Villoro, *El Proceso Ideológico de la Revolución de Independencia* (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Colección: Cien de México, 1986).

ideological and political premises. Liberalism sought to found the nation based on a rupture with its colonial and indigenous past and, therefore, the conceived “Other” acquired a new meaning. Yet, for reasons external to the domestic philosophical debates, Mexico did not become a country of immigration. Its structural social and economic profile could not compete with other immigrants’ destinations, both in the North of the continent and in the Southern Cone. Although Liberalism denounced fanaticism and the sequel of religious intolerance as a legacy of the Inquisition, the encouraged one to immigrate to Mexico was the Protestant European, not the Jew.<sup>25</sup>

Positivism subsequently enhanced existing difficulties to relate to the “Other.” The unfulfilled efforts of Porfirio Díaz’s regime to attract European immigration to Mexico reinforced socio-ethnic splits in the public sphere. The foreigner, however, continued to operate as a permanent referent in ambiguous ways. The criteria for being national remained selective, and the construction of a transnational identity was not yet seriously considered. For the intellectual elite, the *Científicos*, the perception of the Jew was highly problematic; the European debate surrounding the Dreyfus Affair was transplanted and reframed in a prejudiced way.<sup>26</sup>

The Mexican Revolution was preceded by the search for the Mexican collective identity as a requisite to build a new political and social order. From Justo Sierra to Molina Enríquez, from Antonio Caso to José Vasconcelos, the “We” was configured in terms of ethnicity and race. The *mestizo* became the emblematic protagonist of the national endeavor.

As national identity and culture were historically regarded as the main bases for unity, Jews—like other minorities in Mexico—developed their communal life without a corresponding visibility in the public sphere; thus they lack recognition as a legitimate collective component of the national chorus. Limited integration, together with autonomy to preserve cultural, religious and social particularities, further reflected and reinforced the Jewish community’s boundaries and its social differentiation from the majority society.

The events of the 1930s and processes developed during that decade had important consequences for the encounter between Mexico and the Jews. Revolutionary regimes consolidated in light of a complex dynamic of both

25 Judit Bokser Liwerant, *El Movimiento Nacional Judío. El Sionismo en México*; Judit Bokser Liwerant, *El México de los años Treinta: Cardenismo, Inmigración Judía y Antisemitismo*, in *Xenofobias y Xenofilia en la Historia de México Siglos 18 y 19* ed Delia Salazar (Mexico: Dirección de Estudios Históricos, 2006), 379.

26 Claudio Lomnitz, *El Antisemitismo y la Ideología de la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010).

continuity and rupture. Identity building involved the national integration of diverse elements. If the Mexican revolution did not have a defined program or a unified ideology, the nationalism of the 1930s came to occupy a central role in discovering and creating an “authentic Mexican.” Nationalist programs engaged all aspects of life and thereby created a certain “mysticism” that enhanced Mexican nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

The focus on national identity among post-revolutionary Mexican regimes enhanced the importance of the ethnic dimension and had severe repercussions for the problematic binomial “national-foreign.” The concept of miscegenation/*mestizaje* set the parameters for national inclusion.

Mexico’s antisemitism at this time, especially that surrounding immigration policies, started during the previous decade and was not the sole possession of any particular political party or movement. The 1929 world crisis reinforced the importance of economic considerations in defining immigration policies. Protective policies of national workers were formulated and a related temporary prohibition imposed on the influx of foreign workers, a stance that became absolute after the Second National Migration Convention in 1931. The 1930 Law of Immigration aimed to regulate the selection of immigrants according to their possibilities of assimilation into the national population. Specifically, article 60 of such law stipulated:

The individual or collective immigration of healthy foreigners capacitated for work, who exhibit good behavior and pertain to races that are easily assimilated in our context, is considered to be of public benefit for both the species and the economic conditions of the country. The Ministry of Interior is hereby empowered to place this law into effect by whatever means he deems convenient, and also to remove those requirements of the Law when the Secretary considers certain immigrants to be both beneficial and of intention of permanent settling in the country.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding who was a suitable immigrant candidate, the Law of Immigration (June 1932), along with subsequent proposals, regulations and legislations reflected an ongoing search for the means to achieve homogeneous national integration. This search turned progressively problematic. During the

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<sup>27</sup> David A. Brading, *Mito y Profecía en la Historia de México*.

<sup>28</sup> Even if this law maintains a tendency to consider collective immigration necessary, it conferred on the Ministry of Interior (according to article 64) the right to restrict or select immigration according to its discretion. Law of Immigration, August 30, 1930, Official Diary of the Federation, Vol. LXI.

government of President Lázaro Cardenas, national and international political developments created additional problems. Prejudice was widely shared by different social sectors and antisemitic associations that aimed to curb Jewish immigration for economic, ethnic and social reasons. It was expressed in attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices, and projected into norms and practices with a strong impact on the immigration policies and the immigrant population residing in the country.<sup>29</sup>

A reactionary nationalism gained power in Mexico. Partly, this stemmed from national political developments, post-revolutionary nationalism, and a reaction to a progressive and popular *Cardenismo*. Through its various organizations and affiliations, the nationalist movement led to the consolidation of rightist sectors. Economic and racial motives were intertwined and gradually, the racial theme became dominant, especially amidst Right-wing groups. The Anti-Chinese and the Anti-Jewish National League, founded in 1930, and the Honorable Traders, Industrialists and Professionals lobbied the government to restrict the immigration of Jews.<sup>30</sup>

The League expressed the view that:

With the goal of definitively minimizing the cruel and damaging effects that foreign elements have imposed on the country, especially those regarding Jews and Asians: the first by destroying our commerce and almost all of our economic activities; the latter by destroying our race, our commerce, and our homes.<sup>31</sup>

For its part, the anti-Jewish League engaged in a “patriotic duty” to “support the imminent nationalist labor” that president Ortíz Rubio (1930–1932) set in motion.<sup>32</sup> This argument was then incorporated into the National Campaign

29 Judit Bokser Liwerant, “Cárdenas y los Judíos. Entre el Exilio y la Inmigración,” in *Entre la Aceptación y el Rechazo, América Latina y los Refugiados Judíos del Nazismo*, ed. Abraham Milgram (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), 248.

30 Judit Bokser Liwerant, “El México de los años Treinta: Cardenismo, Inmigración Judía y Antisemitismo,” in *Xenofobias y Xenofilia en la Historia de México Siglos 18 y 19*, ed. Delia Salazar (Mexico: Dirección de Estudios Históricos, 2006), 379; Alicia Gojman de Backal, *Camisas, Escudos y Desfiles Militares: los Dorados y el Antisemitismo en México, 1934–1940* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000).

31 Letters from the National Anti-Chinese and Anti-Jewish League to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Interior, and the Minister of Industry and Commerce, October 23, 1930, *A. G. N. Gob.*, 2–360 (29), 8105.

32 *Memorandum* of the Anti-Chinese and Anti-Jewish League to the President of the Republic, December 9, 1930, *A. G. N. Gob.*, 2–360 (29)-51.

of 1931. Therein, the consumption of national products and the displacement of Chinese and Jewish immigrants from the realm of commerce were presented as key to combating unemployment and overcoming the devastation of the economic crisis. Rafael Melgar, the president of the Revolutionary Block of the Deputy Council, presented the project of the Campaign, which was approved in mid-1931, and united the defense of the national economy with xenophobic and antisemitic measures. The latter manifested from the onset as an essentialist disqualification of the “pernicious, agitating, and subversive” character inherent to the foreigners.<sup>33</sup>

Other organizations that united businesspeople from different states within Mexico heralded nationalist objectives and mottos to rectify what was considered disloyal competition and the displacement of nationals. The press became an additional and complementary platform from which the Jewish presence in Mexico was de-legitimized.<sup>34</sup> Anti-Jewish attacks were largely justified on economic grounds. The expulsion of 250 Jewish merchants from the Lagunilla market in May of 1931 had a similar impact. The proclamation of the National Day of Commerce on June 1 of that same year, likewise a strike against foreign commerce, elevated the expressions to a particularly critical point. At this time, different commercial and industrial groups were also magnifying the Jewish national presence, calling it an invasion and countering it on the grounds of being ruinous for national economic development.<sup>35</sup>

While the expulsion of the Jewish merchants from the Lagunilla market encouraged the continuing activity and pressure exerted by the League, the greatest agitation emerged from specifically commercial and industrial organizations that based their arguments on the defense of the alleged national economic interest. The Nationalist Campaign and the subsequent mobilization of popular sentiment in defense of the nation accompanied the Federal Labor

33 Letter by storekeepers of the state of Sinaloa to the Governor, June 30, 1931, *A.G.N. Dept. of Labor*, 2–360 (21)2; Letter by the Industrial Union of Workers of Durango to the Secretary of Governance, August 9, 1932, *A.G.N.* 2–360 (7)-8034. Vid. José Manuel López Victoria, *The National Campaign*, Mexico, Ed. Botas, 1965.

34 *Vid. A.G.N.*, 2–360(1)1. “No más Judíos Inmigrantes,” *El Nacional Revolucionario*, México, March 2, 1931; “El Mago de los Sueños Negros,” *ibid.*, May 8, 1931.

35 The president of the Federation of Small Business and Industrialists of the Republic disqualified the Jewish residents of Mexico for constituting a mafia that operated based on violence [toward] and bribery [of] the economy’s nationals, “La Ruinosa Invasión de Israelitas,” *El Nacional*, México, April 20, 1932; *Vid.* “El Peligro Israelita,” *Gráfico*, México, Nov. 9, 1932; “Campaña Antisemítica en Nuestro País,” *Excelsior*, México, Mayo 28, 1933; “Pídese la Expulsión de Todos los Judíos que no son Labriegos,” *La Prensa*, México, Nov. 21, 1933.

Law (August 1931) and precipitated antisemitic attitudes and practices in the country, ranging from spreading stereotypes to instigating acts of aggression.<sup>36</sup> These incidents took place across the country; their proclaimed defense of the national economy diluted or confused the general public opinion and the views of the Jewish community in the country.

Other Right and Left wing organizations spread. The Mexican Revolutionary Action, founded in 1934, operated through its paramilitary units, the Golden Shirts. The antisemitic Pro-Race Committee and the Middle Class Confederation exerted pressure on the government and waged antisemitic campaigns that reached their peak in 1938–9. Rightist sectors gained support from the nationalist-populist sectors in the country, which they in turn also reinforced. Given the anti-Jewish tenor in the country, it is worth noting that none of the speeches given by the Golden Shirts ended without first condemning “international Judaism,” and demanding the restriction to Jewish immigration, the removal of Mexican citizenship from Jews, the prohibition of Jewish participation in national politics, and the call for expropriation of Jewish properties. Likewise, the Pro-Race Committee contacted the authorities on various occasions, requesting legislation that would provide a “frank and dependable protection to Mexican commerce, industry, and capital.”<sup>37</sup> Branches of these organizations extended their activity throughout the entire country.<sup>38</sup> Alongside concurrent antisemitic and xenophobic arguments, they used anti-communism to call for disqualifying Jews from comprising the national fabric.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, possibilities were reduced for Jews to avoid immigration restriction based on professional considerations—“regardless of the nationality to which [the Jew] pertained.”<sup>40</sup> Trade unions and Left-wing labor organizations also became a platform for antisemite expressions, related mainly to

36 Vid. Rosenberg, Moisés, “Los judíos de Tacubaya sufrieron un susto,” *Der Weg (The way)*, México, Oct. 28, 1931.

37 Letter from the Pro-Race Central Committee to the Secretary of Governance, August 4, 1936, *ibid.*, 2.360 (29)/8103.

38 “Nuestras Calamidades: el Judaísmo en México,” *La Prensa*, June 2, 1936; “Los Tentáculos del Judaísmo Envuelven a las Actividades Económicas de Nuestro País,” *Ibid.*, June 4, 1936.

39 “Los Judíos son Propagadores Comunistas,” *Ibid.*, June 11, 1936.

40 *Ibid.* The restrictions were sent confidentially to the Mexican consulates overseas. The extreme tenor of the restrictions directed at the Jews caused the Mexican Ambassador to the United States, Francisco Castillo Nájera, to express his concern regarding a potential conflict that could arise should the American government learn of these measures. Confidential Letter by Ambassador Castillo Nájera to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, July 25, 1935, AREM.

immigration and exile policies.<sup>41</sup> Throughout this period, discussions regarding national immigration policies emphasized whether the incoming group could be assimilated, as well as whether it will compete economically.<sup>42</sup>

Pressures on the government to restrict immigration systematically increased. A wide spectrum of sub-groups from the Right found certain cohesion within the *Confederación Patronal de la República Mexicana*. With the support of German Nazis, this Confederation became the principal financing source for the rightist secular radical sectors.<sup>43</sup> The presence of German Nazi elements, rooted in the country's Embassy (including, for example, the Community of the German People in Mexico) largely supported the activities of the rightist radical sectors as extensions of spy webs, conferring on them great influence.<sup>44</sup> In 1937, the anti-Jewish lobby voiced its fear that Mexico would provide a haven for the Jews, renewing pressure on the government to prohibit Jewish immigration.<sup>45</sup>

Antisemitism reached the forefront of public discourse and nourished policy decisions after 1938, due to the complex interaction between Otherness and prejudice regarding the refugee issue, migration and exile. Thus, while it was stipulated that the policy of the Ministry of Interior was to stimulate the immigration of all foreigners considered beneficial to the country, it vigilantly guarded against "that immigration that not only did not produce the awaited benefits, but that would induce situations of unbalance, be it due to inherent qualities of the presuming immigrants or due to the specific circumstances of the country."<sup>46</sup> Complex national and regional factors played a key role in defining restrictive immigration policies, and antisemitic stereotypes reinforced them. Antisemitism and Nazism were fostered in international fora where the question of Jewish refugees was discussed and became transmission channels of prejudice.

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41 *Ibid.*

42 Gilberto Loyo, *La Política Demográfica de México* (Mexico: Institute of Social, Political and Economic Studies of the National Revolutionary Party—PNR, 1935).

43 Hugh Campbell, *La Derecha Radical en México 1929–1949* (Mexico: Sep-Setentas, 1976).

44 Brigida Von Mentz, Verena Radkau, Daniela Spenser and Ricardo Perez Montfort, *Los empresarios alemanes, el Tercer Reich y la Oposición de Derecha a Cárdenas I* (Mexico: CIESAS, 1998).

45 *Excelsior*, México, December 13, 1937; "Grave Amenaza Contra México: Viene con Destino a Veracruz un Barco Francés Cargado con Judíos," *Ibid.*, December 23, 1937.

46 Communication concerning the criteria that ought to regulate immigration, sent from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, México, March 23, 1939, *AREM*, Refugee Branch III-1246-9-1.

Social representations of Jews as outsiders invoked images of permanent foreignness, Jews were seen as immigrants devoid of virtue. This becomes clear when we consider the following arguments:

By placing aside the humanitarian and generous sentiments that propelled our country to offer asylum to those persecuted by totalitarian regimes, we must remain vigilant of the national interest. It is well-known that the elements that seek refuge involve groups that cannot be assimilated, and that the experience of other countries has demonstrated that in the long run, when the number of Jews reaches substantial numbers, they form exclusive castes, [which then become] dominant and powerful, without developing any ties to the country in which they established themselves. They then frequently become the cause of national problems. If we must admit them, may it be in the smallest number possible, selecting them with the utmost care, and only then if they would not constitute an economic or ethnic problem for the country.<sup>47</sup>

Alongside the preeminent role that national interests took over humanitarian considerations, the definition of the strictly economic and occupational conditions that applied to those seeking asylum does not appear to carry a discriminatory condition; however, when we consider the growing imperative of refuge for Jews at this time, their possibility of immigration to Mexico was indeed restricted.<sup>48</sup>

Given the immediate need of Jewish immigration, claims such as the “lack of discrimination” took on a new meaning. Moreover, if we consider the international system during the Cardenista period, as well as the extensive influence of the Mexican regime on immigration policies and national attitudes toward the Jewish refugees, the convergence between national and foreign policies becomes visible. President Cárdenas determined foreign policy while the Ministry of Interior defined immigration policy. In the midst of the regime’s

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47 Communication regarding the Intergovernmental Committee, sent from G. Luders de Negri to the Secretary of Foreign Relations, London, August 31, 1938, *AREM*, Refugee Branch III-1246-9-1 (342.1(44)/10974).

48 Liwerant, “Cárdenas y los judíos,” 248; Judit Bokser Liwerant, “El México de los Años Treinta;” Daniela Gleizer, *El Exilio Incómodo. México y los Refugiados Judíos, 1933–1945* (México: El Colegio de México—Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Cuajimalpa, 2011); Felipe Pozo Bloch, “México en Evian: Propuestas Teóricas, Realizaciones Prácticas” (Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1984).



political crisis, President Cárdenas allowed the question of Jewish immigration to be limited to the realm internal immigration policy.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the ambivalences that emerged at the Evian Conference, the governmental disposition to an eventual opening of the nation's doors intensified an avalanche of anti-Jewish protests, openly expressed by the Mexican public and the national press. As Luis González has previously indicated, these protests did not emanate only from the Right; antisemitism also included centrist and leftist sectors.<sup>50</sup> One example of the widespread nature of anti-Jewish sentiment is the March 1937 National Confederation, the Left's initiative presented to the President regarding the declaration of a "Jewish quarter," referring to an area in the center of Mexico City, and justified on the grounds of economic competition as well as "patriotic considerations."<sup>51</sup> In 1938, the same group expressed its concern regarding Jewish asylum and its effect on the interests of Mexican working classes.<sup>52</sup>

For German and Austrian Jewish refugees, the context was complicated. The complexity can be attributed to fascist antisemitic demonstrations, nationalism and restricted immigration policy. This complexity was further enhanced by Cárdenas's recovery of *mestizaje* as a fundamental ethnic-political national category that collectively affected the Jews as a group that could not be assimilated. This conception may explain the Cardenista welcoming policy towards the Spanish exile, thereby opening the country's immigration doors to members of the International Brigade and a large number of Spanish Republican refugees, in spite of the opposition of some nationalist groups and the radical religious Right.<sup>53</sup> In fact, the Mexican reception of a massive Spanish exile remains one of the stellar moments of the Cardenista regime.<sup>54</sup>

Antisemitism and Nazi influence certainly reached various sectors of society. While hard-core elements remained within the Right, as historian Luis

49 The immigration quotas that started in 1938 progressively increased; for the year 1939 they were even more extreme. While the immigration of all Latin Americans remained unrestricted, that of immigrants originating in Germany, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Holland, England, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland was reduced from 5000 to 1000, and to 100 those of the remaining countries. Those "without a country and those who had lost their citizenship" would only be admitted according to explicit consent granted directly by the Minister of Interior.

50 Luis González *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana 1934–1940, Los Artífices del Cardenismo* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1981).

51 "Un 'Ghetto' en esta Capital," *Excélsior*, México, March 29, 1937.

52 *Vid., A.G.N., Serie Lázaro Cárdenas (s.l.c.)*, 546.6/16.

53 Letter of the National League to the President, December 20, 1938, *A.G.N., s.l.c.* 546.4/48.

54 Luis González, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana*.

González affirms, the impact of these phenomena was felt across the ideological spectrum. Indeed, the pro-Nazi attitude of many Mexicans, which differed from a pro-Allie position by the majority of the nation's leaders, "admits a multitude of explanations: the previous fascist propaganda . . . the petroleum issue, the anti-Yankee and anti-British phobia, popular sadism, the desire to annoy national leaders and everyone they wished."<sup>55</sup> Following her analysis of the actions of fascist and Nazi groups in Mexico, journalist Betty Kirk called the period that spans December 1938 to December 1940 "the second revolution."<sup>56</sup>

Several national figures and groups that had Nazi and Falangist support shaped the contour of cultural legitimacy of antisemitism. One of these was undoubtedly the journal *Hispanidad*, which sought to define Hispanic identity according to the union of race, culture, language and religion, and which contributed to the ongoing victimization of Jews, rendering them the object of permanent aggression. The journal *Timón*, which was directed by the renowned intellectual José Vasconcelos, disseminated pro-Nazi, anti-liberal and antisemitic editorials, essays and articles. Its virulent racist content was directed against Mexico's Jews who were stigmatized. It circulated weekly from March to July of 1940 until it was officially banned. Given Vasconcelos's centrality to the post-revolutionary cultural and political landscape, his pro-Nazi thought has been largely downplayed, being attributed to political disenchantments and temporal factors. However, this aspect of his political thought combined a romantic tradition with his intention to consolidate Mexico's national identity, thereby "reaping the national harvest" of philosophical idealism.<sup>57</sup>

Afterwards, anti-Jewish demonstrations were exacerbated by the presidential succession in which Right-wing groups made efforts to organize themselves in the electoral realm. General Juan Andrew Almazán united the various rightist sectors, even though his political support was not restricted to them. The electoral race instigated the intensification of anti-Jewish propaganda and gave way to disturbances and attacks.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, the National Union of Veterans of the Revolution, the Nationalist Vanguard and the National Party

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55 *Ibid.*

56 Betty Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front. The Battle of Europe Versus America* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), 233.

57 David Brading, *Mito y Profecía en la Historia de México*; Enrique Krauze, *Caudillos culturales de la Revolución Mexicana* (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1976).

58 Confidential Notice A-3, about the German Activities in Mexico, sent by the Under-Secretary of State to President Cárdenas, A.G.N., S.L.C., 704.1/124.1.

of Public Salvation incorporated explicitly antisemitic views into their activities and programs.<sup>59</sup>

The latter comprised former revolutionaries with aspirations to eliminate communists from official posts and expel Jews from the country. In a fundraising event for Presidential candidate Manuel Ávila Camacho (February 1939), militants such as colonel Adolfo León Ossorio, Bernardo Mena Brito, and Luis del Toro committed themselves to the expulsion of Jews from the country.<sup>60</sup>

The new regime headed by General Ávila Camacho and the constitution of a government of national unity departed from the socialist character of Cárdenas' regime and minimized antisemitic actions and reactions. It also sought to ally with the belligerent democracies and distance itself from the initial ties with the Axis that had been strategically pursued by the Cardenista regime.

Responding to the sinking of the Mexican ships *Potrereros del Llano* and *Faja de Oro*, Mexico declared war on the Axis powers in May of 1942. This decision reduced the pro-fascist and pro-Nazi protests in the country, and likewise reinforced the anti-fascist elements from the Left, which had maintained a disconcerting silence throughout the period involving the German-Soviet pact. Even though the immigration policy did not substantially change during the subsequent time period, Mexico's entry to the war signaled to the country's Jewish community the beginning of a new era, which led Jews to create bridges with anti-fascist sectors of society, which in turn provided a platform to develop new ties with society.

### Critical Juncture: Zionism, Racism, Regionalization

During the 1970s, the national, regional and global scenarios were reconfigured and antisemitic expressions gradually catalyzed through new political codes that brought together Israel and Zionism. This process reached its climax with *UN's Resolution 3379* that equated Zionism with Racism, a resolution that Mexico supported—thereby entering the international dynamics of attack on Zionism and Israel while projecting entrenched stereotypes to the Jewish community.<sup>61</sup>

59 Hugh Campbell, *La Derecha Radical*.

60 Kirk, *Covering the Mexican Front*.

61 Judit, Bokser Liwerant, "Fuentes de Legitimación de la Presencia Judía en México: El Voto Positivo de México a la Ecuación Sionismo=Racismo y su Impacto Sobre la Comunidad Judía," *Judaica Latinoamericana* 3 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 319–350.

Delegitimation of Zionism implies the elaboration of ideological and symbolic referents questioning Zionism's foundations and aims as incompatible with the international community's beliefs and values system. A severe criticism of the State of Israel as a political entity was also voiced. Both formulations shared antisemitic elements, thereby projecting themselves on the life of Jewish communities in Latin America and elsewhere in the diaspora.

Through radical elaborations, anti-Zionism was formulated in new terms that recovered old antisemitic referents, thus combining the hard nucleus of prejudice with changing motivations and functions. Symbolic violence—which calls for hatred and enables discrimination—became intertwined with referents of ascription such as the national, the foreigner and the Other. Accusations of double loyalty were heard frequently.

Mexico's vote was related to the radical positions and alleged progressive stance of the government, whose domestic policies aimed to incorporate dissent and opposition, mainly of intellectual sectors.

Relations with the United States were relevant. The bilateral economic relation with the US, and the worsening economic conditions of Mexico motivated, since 1971, a change in the prevailing patterns in the economic and international arenas and the reformulation of world alliances. The most significant change in Mexico's foreign policy may be seen in light of the growing tension that developed with the United States, which initially resulted from US domestic economic measures.<sup>62</sup>

The difficulty of maintaining a "special relationship" with the United States led Mexico to search for compensatory markets for the global exchange of technology and investments. Simultaneously, the basic assumption and expectation were that the organizations regulating international relations could be the forum that would promote the redefinition of the relations between domestic markets and the United States. In the international context of the mid-1970s, such beliefs nourished an ideology and a discourse that brought to the forefront the Third World as actor. The drafting of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and the establishment of an Economic System for the Third World, the proposals to reorganize participation in international

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62 The economic crisis that the United States experienced at the beginning of the 1970s was expressed in protectionist policies that affected bilateral trade with Mexico. Nixon's decision in August 1971 to add a 10% tax to regulated imported goods had a direct impact on the "special relation" and "preferential treatment" that the economic dependency model reinforced. This measure, together with the reduction in the national economic growth and the significant increase of the deficit of the current account, led to new paths in foreign policy.

organizations, i.e., Organization of American States and the United Nations Security Council, constitute some of the emblematic moments of the new political-ideological foreign policy. In effect, an economic project for the Third World would encompass a collective bargaining power and the examination of specific programs of economic, financial, industrial and technological cooperation.<sup>63</sup> It also highlights an interest to strengthen the United Nations, which for some implied taking a proactive stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel's expulsion from the UN would have led to the weakening of this international organization and increased tensions with the United States. Thus, the goal of assuming a mediating function through several actions: the implementation of international resolutions, the evacuation of Israeli troops, the guarantee of integrity and sovereignty for all states, and the adoption of adequate measures to grant freedom to the Palestinian people.<sup>64</sup>

Consequently, the political priority became the elimination of "economic colonialism"; the enhanced role of Latin America in the Third World; the strengthening of the Third World's solidarity and the coordination of shared actions. Paralleling these changes, the condemnation of any form of discrimination and racism and the need to intensify the fight against all forms of imperialism, racism and colonialism took shape.

Together with the economic and political goals, the personal political praxis has to be considered: the Third World leadership role that President Echeverría sought to achieve by becoming General Secretary of the UN. While visiting Egypt, President Echeverría met Yasser Arafat on August 5, 1975, and immediately afterwards announced his intention to officially recognize the PLO.<sup>65</sup> One month later, a PLO delegation led by Faruk Kaddumi, head of the organization's political division, visited Mexico and was welcomed by Echeverría, a step that formalized the opening of the PLO's local office.<sup>66</sup>

One needs to analytically account for another dimension—the meaning that Mexico's vote acquired in the domestic realm: the same regime that condemned Zionism was the promoter of an incipient project of democratization.

63 Declarations of President Echeverría in *Gira de trabajo del Presidente Luis Echeverría Álvarez México*, S.R.E., 1975, and the Presidential Report, September 1, 1976.

64 Judit Bokser Liwerant, "Fuentes de Legitimación de la Presencia Judía en México."

65 In contrast to the prevailing interpretation of the encounter as a spontaneous and non-reflexive act, typical of his personal governing style, there is the testimony that in Guyana, at the beginning of his trip, when talking of a new organization that would emerge from OAS (Organization of American States), the President signaled his intention to have an interview with Arafat. See Gutiérrez Esparsa, Luis. "Echeverría: un viaje memorable," *Hoy*, August 30, 1975.

66 "Representantes palestinos con el primer mandatario," *El Nacional*, September 6, 1975.

Aiming to incorporate Left-wing academics and intellectuals and, more generally, progressive sectors that had distanced themselves from the government in the aftermath of the 1968 repression of the student movement, President Echeverría implemented international “audacious stands.”<sup>67</sup> This was clearly exemplified by the integration of figures like Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz in Mexico’s diplomacy.

Actions taken regarding the regime of Allende in Chile and the break-up of relations with Spain were also partly for domestic consumption. The first one was related to an episode of domestic repression and the second one to the closure of the independent newspaper *Excélsior* in 1975. These two cases were gradually interpreted as progressive and democratizing actions; many in the public viewed the vote against Zionism as an equally progressive measure. Mexico was the setting of the World Conference for the International Woman’s Year, a significant precedent of resolution 3379. It incorporated a condemnation of Zionism together into the fight against colonialism, thus equating Zionism with Apartheid and other forms of racial discrimination.<sup>68</sup>

To this condemnation, one can add Resolution 77-XII adopted by heads of State and Government of the Organization for African Unity also in 1975 and the Declaration of Politics and Strategy to Strengthen Solidarity and Mutual Aid between Non-Aligned Countries in Lima promulgated in the same month. These were important precursors of the United Nations equation of Zionism with Racism.

Following Mexico’s vote against Zionism, the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger declared that his government would retaliate against those countries that voted in favor of the resolution, even before it would take any action against the UN. In this context, the Jewish community in the US announced its decision to cancel any touristic trips to Mexico. Its justification was that “Americans make more business and touristic trips to Mexico than to any of the other 71 nations that voted against Zionism.”<sup>69</sup>

67 Olga Pellicer de Brody, “Cambios Recientes en la Política Exterior Mexicana,” *Foro Internacional* 13, (1972): 139; Soledad Loaeza, “La Política del Rumor: México, Noviembre-Diciembre, 1976” in *El Colegio de Mexico Centro de Estudios Internnacionales. Las Crisis en el Sistema Político Mexicano, 1928–197* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1978), 121.

68 In its paragraphs 24 and 26, the Declaration conceived the condemnation and the elimination of such ideologies and regimes as principles that regulated international behavior, to achieve equality, development and peace.

69 Declaration by David Weinberger in a letter sent to Ambassador José Joaquín de Olloqui, according to declarations of the consultant to Mexico’s embassy in Washington. Enrique Buj Flores, *Excélsior*, November 25, 1975.

The interplay between discourse and practice developed in complex ways given that the Mexican regime attempted to “rectify the vote” through arguments intersecting different moments: the vote against Zionism, the tourism boycott and the attempt to amend Mexico’s position at the UN. In this way, critiques of any one dimension did not prevent critiques of the other issues; on the contrary, they further interactively nourished them. The boycott functioned as a pressure mechanism. “Rectifying measures” that aimed to clarify the “misunderstandings” associated with the vote included the visits of high-level politicians to Chicago, Los Angeles and New York where meetings with Jewish leaders were held, as well as the Foreign Minister’s trip to Israel.<sup>70</sup> Foreign Minister Rabasa asserted on several occasions that Zionism was not Racism, that there was no discrimination in Israel—exemplified by a floral offering at Herzl’s grave—and that given the clarifications of the matter, the “misunderstanding was forgiven and forgotten.”<sup>71</sup>

In the reception offered to the delegation of Jewish leaders from the US and Canada that traveled to Mexico (December 12), President Echeverría asserted that he did not at all identify Zionism with Racism, and that his government’s vote at the UN did not seek to convey such message. The president added that Mexico’s vote aimed at creating a dialogue between the people of the Middle East, even if it had not been achieved.<sup>72</sup>

However, Mexico’s initial position at the UN and its later amendments led to a severe criticism of the regime’s inconsistent policy;<sup>73</sup> this criticism continued through the argument of Mexico’s distancing from its traditional international trajectory.<sup>74</sup> The alleged loss of autonomy in regards to Mexico’s sovereign

70 “Los malos entendidos,” *El Universal*, México, December 6; “Comunicado emitido al término de la visita del Canciller Emilio Rabasa,” *El Nacional*, México, December 11; *Excélsior*, México, December 11.

71 “Llegó Rabasa a Tel Aviv,” *Excélsior*, December 5; “Ofrenda de Rabasa,” *El Nacional*, December 6; “Completa tolerancia religiosa,” *El Nacional*, December 8.

72 “Confianza judía de que se encuentre una solución al voto de México,” *El Nacional*, December 13.

73 Manuel Moreno Sánchez, “Nuestro voto sobre el sionismo,” *El Universal*, November 17; Jorge Aymani, “EL sionismo, Washington y la diplomacia mexicana,” *El Día*, December 16; Hernando Pacheco, “Israel y el Tercer Mundo: sionismo y racismo,” *Ibid.*, December 8; Gustavo Ortiz Hernán, “EL sionismo no es racista,” *Siempre*, December 20.

74 Gastón García Cantú, “Un México antisemita, jamás,” *Excélsior*, November 21; Abrahám López Lara, “Sionismo racista. Voto de México,” *Excélsior*, November 3; Pedro Gringoire, “Pulso de los tiempos: Sionismo no es racismo,” *Ibid.*, November 4; Manuel Moreno Sánchez, “ONU y sus compromisos,” *El Universal*, November 17; José Luis Mejías, “Relaciones Exteriores,” *El Universal*, November 28; Abelardo Villegas, “¿México antijudío?”

exercise of power and its giving way to external pressures, were underscored.<sup>75</sup> In other words, the clarification and “apology” by Foreign Minister Rabasa was seen as a response to external pressure and the loss of an independent political stand.

In light of an official discourse that sought to differentiate between the condemnation of Zionism and antisemitism,<sup>76</sup> critiques of Zionism also included anti-Jewish prejudice in particularly acute ways. Thus, Zionism was seen not only as expansionist and colonialist,<sup>77</sup> but also as a “doctrine based on ethnic motivations, relentless, messianic, discriminatory and even brutal,”<sup>78</sup> or as the “combination of a religious fanaticism and an exclusionary nationalism, both equally racist.” It was further defined as an ideology that reflected the belief of God’s chosen people; as if Jews segregate, have pride and believe to be superior to other races.<sup>79</sup>

The resignation by Minister of Foreign Affairs Rabasa, on December 29, detonated by his declarations of an alleged forgiveness and forgetting by the Israeli government and followed by the president’s assertion: “I prefer to die before asking another country for its forgiveness,”<sup>80</sup> reinforced the symbolic connection between Jewish pressure, aka Jewish lobby, and loss of autonomy. Thus, the Jewish community of Mexico was questioned in regards to the boycott’s unjust nature given that the country had offered asylum to persecuted Jews and where the Jewish community had developed in conditions of freedom

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Una diplomacia errática” *Excelsior*, December 8; Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa, “Cinco hipótesis. Diplomacia sin rumbo,” *Ibid.*, December 9; Guillermo Martínez Domínguez, “Nuestro pueblo nada tiene que ver,” *Siempre*, December 17.

75 Guillermo Villegas, “‘El malentendido’ mexicano-israelí,” *Excelsior*, December 15; Samuel I. Del Villar, “Acto sin paralelo. La política exterior pide perdón,” *Op. Cit.*, December 16.

76 José Luis Huerta Cruz, “Antisionismo no es antisemitismo,” *El Universal*, November 29; Op-ed, *Ibid.*, December 13.

77 Genaro María González, “Falta de bases históricas y legales,” *Excelsior*, November 17; Antonio Lara Barragán, “El judaísmo internacional,” *El Universal*, December 16; Genaro María González, “Diplomacia caprichosa ¿hay algo que perdonar?,” *Excelsior*, December 15.

78 José María Tellez Girón, “Judaísmo, sí; sionismo, no,” *El Día*; Tomás Gerardo Allaz, “Estatuto de animales para los no judíos” e “Israel, víctima de sí mismo,” *Excelsior*.

79 Vicente Sánchez Gavito, “No sólo discriminación semántica del racismo,” *Excelsior*, December 29; Antonio Lara Barragán, “El judaísmo internacional,” *El Universal*, December 6; Esteban Ilanes, “Elitismo pero no racismo,” *Novedades*, November 22; Salvador Chávez Hayhoe, “Sionismo y racismo,” *El Universal*, November 27; Antonio Armendáriz, “¿Semitismo o sionismo?,” *Novedades*, December 1.

80 *El Heraldo*, December 31.



and “prosperity.”<sup>81</sup> This argument was advanced by intellectuals and academics who viewed the boycott as a lack of understanding and loyalty by Jews towards Mexico, thus leading to the twofold questioning of the Jewish collectivity in Mexico and Zionism. They stated that such measures would “tomorrow lead the Mexican Jewish community to face its government under the banner and for the defense of Zionism.” The radicalized prejudice emerged: that the boycott confirmed its racist and imperialist attitude.<sup>82</sup> The argument that Jews were a powerful and alien group—an argument that gave birth to Modern anti-semitism—reappeared in the Mexican context.

In 1975 the UN resolution 3379 also received the supportive vote of Brazil.<sup>83</sup> Because of the increasing pro Palestine stance among Latin American countries, Chile and Brazil included, both under military anti-Communist dictatorships, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) gained considerable political and diplomatic clout via the introduction of liaison and information offices in Brazil and Mexico City (1976), Lima (1979), Managua (1980), La Paz (1982), and Buenos Aires (1985). Following the PLO proclamation for Palestinian statehood, in December of 1988, the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 43/177, viz. Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, though at that time, only Nicaragua and Cuba formally recognized a Palestine State.<sup>84</sup>

The impact of the equation of Zionism with Racism transcended the specific national, regional and international political scenarios and correlation of forces. The radical questioning of the whole paradigm can be read in terms

81 Antonio Armendáriz, *Op. Cit.*; Abelardo Villegas, “¿México antijudío? Una diplomacia errática” *Excésior*, December 8; Beatriz Eugenia De la Lama, “Desproporcionado ataque contra México por parte de los judíos norteamericanos,” *Revista de la Secretaría del Trabajo*, December 9.

82 Leopoldo Zea, “¿Qué es por fin el sionismo?,” *Novedades*, December 16, and “El sionismo y las trampas del pacifismo,” December 23; Abelardo Villegas, *Op. Cit.* and “Balance político de 1975. Candidato, grupos de presión, Israel,” *Excésior*, December 22.

83 See Santana Carlos Ribeiro, 2006. “O aprofundamento das relacoes do Brasil com os paises do Oriente Medio durante o dois choques do petroleo da década de 1970: un exemplo de acao pragmática,” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, vol. 49(2), 2006, 157–77; Seme Taleb Fares, 2007. “O pragmatismo do petroleo, as relacoes entre Brasil e Iraque,” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 50 (2); Jerry Davila and Jeffrey Lesser, “Brasil, Israel y el Voto ‘Sionismo= Racismo’ en las Naciones Unidas (1975),” in Raanan Rein, María José Cano Pérez, Beatriz Molina Rueda, eds, 2012. *Más allá del Medio Oriente. Las diásporas judía y árabe en América Latina*, Granada, Eirena, 227–242; Bokser Liwerant, “Fuentes de legitimación de la presencia judía en México,” *Op. Cit.*

84 Senkman, “Anti-Zionist Discourse,” 22.

of complex interactions between an ideological discourse, social representations and political conflicts. Symbolic violence surpassed the precise context even when its root and causes got transformed. This is precisely what could be seen in Mexico during the Gulf War. Fed by fifteen years of an international effort and mediated by the invasion of Lebanon—as well as the events of Sabra and Shatila—the initial anti-Zionist discourse was projected as a delegitimation of the Zionist paradigm.

The 1991 Gulf War also illustrates the consolidation of an intellectual atmosphere that censored Israel as an instigator of the war and a spearhead of Western imperialism. Moreover, argumentative inversions of victimizer-victim, which were widespread in the seventies were further reinforced.<sup>85</sup> It is important to acknowledge that while some previous processes got a new spin or turn, in the early 1990s, the national scenario was radically different from the mid-1970s. The government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) implemented a neo-liberal economic project of privatization and reduction of the State, while committing to modernization and an increasing identification with a First World economic model of development and industrialization. This would completely distance it from the Third World discourse and strategy followed by Echeverría. In terms of its international insertion, *salinismo* self-ascribed to North America, which required redefining bilateral relations with the United States, both in conceptual and practical terms. Notwithstanding, it was impossible to prevent a discourse that recovered the vision of Zionism as Racism. The Gulf War found its alleged ultimate cause in the State of Israel and Zionism; they were the essential factors that provoked events in the region. Following different models of historical and temporal de-contextualization of the conflict, a vicious argumentation led to prejudiced analyses. In effect, this conflict posed a series of analytical challenges because it incorporated, among other things, issues such as the participation by the great powers, the strategic importance of the region, and the role of its natural resources in the definition of its global socio-political significance. Similarly, the questioning of the limits of international organizations and renewed uncertainty regarding the impact of religion on national and international politics appeared as key spheres for comprehension of the conflict. Instead, however, biased reductionism prevailed.

A paradigmatic example is the recurrent argument that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict stood at the center of the critical situation that led to the Gulf War. This thesis originated in an attempt to equate Iraq's invasion of Kuwait

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85 Luis Roniger, "Latin American Jews and Processes of Transnational Legitimization and De-Legitimization," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 9 (2010): 185.

and Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. While it initially seemed a didactic resource based on similarities—and which was first used on August 12, 1990, ten days following the Iraqi invasion—it gradually led to the dilution of one *problematique* by underscoring the other. This explains why when Saddam Hussein's regime declared at the United Nations—in early December—that the Palestinian question was key to solving the Persian Gulf conflict, the Mexican national press was already a fertile soil for such biased reading.

Insofar as the Palestinian-Israeli question became the ultimate cause, the complexity of the situation in the Persian Gulf, the convergence of different regional conflicts and the participation of multiple actors were all neglected. Israel was continuously seen as the most aggressive country that systematically “violated” the UN's accords, that maintained its presence in the Palestinian territories where it committed daily assassinations,<sup>86</sup> and which provoked violence in the region.<sup>87</sup> Gradually, Israel was further conceived as a military power, invader and oppressor, with a war prone and expansionist spirit.<sup>88</sup> “Intransigent” and “aggressive” were thoroughly and unilaterally applied to Israel throughout the different stages of the conflict. In this way, with the outbreak of the war, the Palestinian question remained a substratum that was intertwined with new formulations. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was used to highlight the alleged double standards of the UN and the US towards Israel and the Arab countries; specifically, Iraq.<sup>89</sup>

Given that Israel was seen as a military power that was “paranoid by nature and which set as its main objective the displacement, and even . . . the destruction of . . . the Arab race,” it was asserted, “dispossession was followed by expansionism and genocide.”<sup>90</sup> The dialectic victim-perpetrator was inverted, thus projecting the Nazi Holocaust into relations with the Palestinians, arguing that the Jewish people “[have] always raised the suffering of the diaspora and

86 Juan Ambou, “No al uso de la fuerza en el Golfo,” *El Día*, September 6, 1990.

87 Editorial, *El Universal*, October 10, 1990; Aurelio Támez García, “Los excesos de Israel,” *El Economista*, October 10, 1990; Pedro Miguel, “Dos genocidios y la ONU,” *La Jornada*, October 23, 1990; José Enrique González Ruiz, “Kuwait y Palestina: dos raseros de la ONU,” *El Día*, September 24, 1990; Newspaper Op-ed, “Israel: reiterada intransigencia,” *El Nacional*, November 5, 1990.

88 Aurelio Támez García, “Reflexiones sobre la guerra,” *El Economista*, January 23, 1991.

89 Verónica A. García and Hugo Gámez, “El sionismo causa de la división en el Medio Oriente,” *El Universal*, January 23, 1991; “Israel, la guerra y los palestinos,” Op-Ed, *La Jornada*, February 4, 1991; Manuel Luis Méndez, “La eterna tragedia palestina,” *Uno más Uno*, February 6, 1991.

90 Hermann Bellinghausen, “¿Razas arrasadas?,” *La Jornada*, January 24; Op-Ed, *La Jornada*, January 16, 1991.

the Holocaust around the world." Israel, however, was the perpetrator of a new Holocaust as they (Jews, Israelis) had "learned from their own Nazi killers, the use of violence to impose their own interests."<sup>91</sup> This evil inversion was also expressed in the questioning of Israel as an entity that was "doing to the Palestinians what Hitler did to the Jews,"<sup>92</sup> "playing the eternal role of attacked victim given that it has benefited from it over time,"<sup>93</sup> and succeeding given their economic power in turning the Holocaust "into the massive crime more widely publicized in the history of humanity" in contrast to the Palestinians who lack the means to broadcast their own genocide.<sup>94</sup>

Anti-Zionism was further expressed in a global questioning of the State of Israel and its ideological paradigm, surpassing criticism of a particular government, the army's actions, or the political platform of a ruling coalition. Israel was recursively seen as a "racist country that operated outside any legal framework" and as the soil for "the movement of international gangsters."<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, discourse tried to differentiate between Zionism and progressive Judaism, while arguments referred to the permanent foreignness of Jews and the lack of loyalty to the country.<sup>96</sup> Respected intellectuals, whose position before 1975 had been favorable towards Israel and the Jews, modified their attitude expressing anti-Zionism fifteen years later. Their position was further reinforced by hard-core anti-Jewish prejudice and was expressed in 1991 through arguments such as the "historical intransigence of the Jewish people" that resulted from its self-perception as chosen by God.<sup>97</sup>

The Left played an important role in anti-Zionism. Ideologically influenced by the political conditions of a bipolar world, and trying to recover the redemptive and revolutionary vision of the past, such position was expressed as a radical opposition to the Gulf War and a complaint regarding imperialist interests in the region, where Israel seemed the main spearhead. Certainly, the

91 Op-Ed., *La Jornada*, January 16, 1991; Leopoldo Zea, "Israel en el conflicto del Pérsico," *Novedades*, November 6, 1990; Op-Ed., *El Día*, December 12, 1990; Eduardo Segovia, "Palabras de México en la filosofía y en la ONU," *El Día*, February 27, 1991.

92 Eduardo Galeano, "Preguntitas," *La Jornada*, January 15, 1991.

93 Gonzalo Martre, "La tormenta debe seguir," *El Universal*, January 22, 1991.

94 Halive Hernández Ascencia, "Scuds: los que van a morir te saludan," *El Sol del Mediodía*, February 1, 1991.

95 Ugo Pippitone, "El Golfo," *La Jornada*, January 24, 1991.

96 Mauricio González de la Garza, "Y los palestinos," *El Sol de México*, January 21, 1991, and "Carta a Saddam Hussein," *Siempre*, March 13, 1991.

97 A paradigmatic figure of this change is Leopoldo Zea, *Vid.* "Israel en el Conflicto del Pérsico," *Novedades*, November 6, 1990, and "Urgente reunión de la Asamblea General," *Ibid.*, February 12, 1991.

Left's loss of important spaces in the national arena explains the functionality of its anti-Zionist discourse. The Gulf War was a resource to broaden and displace the object of critique, simultaneously addressed towards Zionism, Israel and the United States' foreign policy. Nevertheless, on this occasion, the political Left did not exclusively endorse an anti-Zionist discourse; more primitive antisemitic stereotypes appeared as well. Thus, the Jew was portrayed as arrogant, exclusionary, of questionable morality and a money lover.<sup>98</sup> The Jew was also seen as someone who lacks the possibility to exercise a "non-prejudiced and autonomous thought. . . ."<sup>99</sup>

This chapter in Mexico's history shows how delegitimation of Zionism, whether as a motivation or an outcome, created a situation where anti-Zionism and antisemitism were mutually reinforced, thereby inferring a permanent and complex relation among ideas, discourses and social conflicts. Moreover, expressed as symbolic violence, they temporarily surpassed the initial conditions that originated them, thereby acquiring great autonomy and efficacy.

Anti-Zionist expressions have historically fluctuated with the development of events in the Middle East: Six Day War (1967), Yom Kippur War (1973), Lebanon War (1982), First Intifada (1987–1993), Gulf War (1991), Second Intifada (2000–2005), Cast Lead (2008–2009), Flotilla Incident (2010), cross-border attacks by Egyptian and Palestinian militants (2011), Pillar of Defense (2012) and Protective Edge (2014).

Following polarization towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict during the 1970s–1980s, the end of the Cold War led to normalization of relations with both the Palestinians and the Zionist state, although founded on an equidistance basis. Motivated by the signing of the peace Oslo accords (1993), formal diplomatic missions of the new Palestine Authority opened in Chile (1992), Brazil (1993), Mexico (1995), Argentina and Colombia (1996), and Peru (1998).

A few years after the signing of the Chilean-Palestine Memorandum for Scientific Technical, Cultural and Educative Cooperation (June 1995), Chile opened in Ramallah the first diplomatic Latin American representation (April 1998). But we should recall that simultaneously anti-Zionism, as an ideological stance among the diplomacy of Latin American countries, lost its virulence as a resource to rhetorically attack Israel and was replaced instead by pragmatic considerations in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Nicaragua. With the exception of Cuba, all Latin American countries voted in favor of

98 Roberto García Jaime, "El judío," *Uno Más Uno*, February 4, 1991.

99 *Ibid.*

UN resolution 46/86 on December 16, 1991 reversing the infamous Zionism is Racism declaration.<sup>100</sup>

Not surprisingly, years later, the main ALBA countries, i.e., Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Cuba, cut diplomatic relations with Israel. They were first led by Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales in January 2009 to protest over the military offensive in Gaza. In June 2010 Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega followed suit, voicing a harsh opposition of Israel Zionism. Unlike other ALBA members, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa did not break diplomatic ties with Israel, although Iranian economic and political relations strengthened.

In a reconfigured world system, the Venezuela regime under Hugo Chávez (1998–2013) became a Latin American proxy of the Iranian State and its hatred of Jews. It is plausible that beyond the strong antisemitic motivations of close advisers to Chávez, viz. Argentine nationalist intellectual Norberto Ceresole played an important part in making both Zionism and Israel Venezuela's enemies. Chavismo has since aligned with Iran to battle US imperialism. In this way, Chávez positioned himself on the world stage as opposing American foreign policy, and thus Israel, its military partner. The regime has tried to establish itself as a global player and a regional leader in a multi-polar international system. As part of this strategy, he developed regional oil initiatives such as Petrocaribe and Petrosur geared towards providing oil through "soft" financing and bankrolling. While Chávez's government has declared his unwillingness to foster xenophobic hatred, its political dynamic and its polarizing rhetoric coupled with a strategic alignment against the United States reinforced chauvinistic attitudes identifying Jews as allies of the "anti-people" and of enemy countries.

Parallel discursive processes and practices defaming the State of Israel gave way to antisemitic acts, e.g., Caracas Tiferet Israel Sephardic synagogue vandalized on January 31, 2009. In part, Chávez's animosity towards Jews might have responded to his aim to win favor from Teheran.<sup>101</sup> This explanation also seems

100 See Cecilia Baeza, 2012. "América Latina y la cuestión palestina (1947–2012)," *Araucaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política y Humanidades*, Año 14, No 28, 111–131; Barrata, Robert Thomas, 1989. "The PLO in Latin America," in August R. Norton and Martin Greenberg (org.) *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale/Edwardsville, 166–195; Cecilia Baeza and Elodie Brun, "La diplomacia chilena hacia los países árabes: entre posicionamiento estratégico y oportunismo comercial," *Estudios Internacionales*, No 171, enero–abril 2012, 61–86.

101 Luis Roniger, "Anti-Semitism, Real or Imagined? Chávez Iran, Israel, and the Jews," *ACTA 30*, (Jerusalem: SICSA–Hebrew University, 2010). Relations between Venezuela and Israel acquired a low point in 2006, via President Hugo Chávez's convictions regarding the Israel-Lebanon conflict, and pro-Iranian ties. In the wake of the next Israel–Gaza conflict

to hold when analyzing the anti-Zionist position of the ALBA countries, the anti-US bloc led by Chavismo.<sup>102</sup> The process involving the problematic social representation of Israel has become a new shared pattern in Latin America, although with regional variations.<sup>103</sup>

### Discursive Antisemitism Changes: From the Printed Press to the Social Networks

Recurrences, changes and ruptures need to be seen from a perspective that traces the past while focusing on the present, even more so given that antisemitism does not occur in a vacuum. Social and political life cannot develop without recognition and rationalization, without having its objectives commented upon and justified, without facing groups and institutions, just like political power, as the object of a discourse of legitimation and delegitimation. Thus, we can affirm that collective life permanently evolves in two levels: the symbolic, and the practical. While antisemitism has been discursively conveyed through the media mostly in the printed press, following a global trend it has also moved to the local Internet-based social networks. Both expressions can be explored in the new century.

The Mexican press has been highly sensitive to the ebbs and flows of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as seen by the substantial increment of articles and editorials published when the conflict erupts. We find that preceding the Flotilla Affair of May 31, 2010 or Operation Cast Lead of December 2009-January 2010, there were a few mainstream news items or editorials regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

However, the number of articles, editorials, photographs and cartoons published significantly increased when war broke out. In fact, negative mentions

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(2008), Venezuela broke all diplomatic ties with Israel and formalized relations with the Palestinian Authority on April 27, 2009. Post Chávez Nicolas Maduro administration has kept the same anti-Israeli stance.

102 Luis Roniger, "Latin American Jews and Processes of Transnational Legitimization and De-Legitimization," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 9 (2010): 185.

103 Yael Siman and Manuel Férrez, "La Construcción de Realidades de Conflicto: La Cobertura de la Prensa Nacional Mexicana Sobre el Conflicto entre el Movimiento Islamista HAMAS y el Estado de Israel. Una Visión desde América Latina," in *El Conflicto en Gaza e Israel, 2008–2009*, ed. M. Férrez (Mexico: Senado de la República, 2009); Judit Bokser Liwerant and Yael Siman, "El Medio Oriente Hoy. Nuevas Tendencias e Interrogantes" in *Medio Oriente y Norte África ¿Reforma, Revolución o Continuidad?*, ed. M. Férrez and E. Ballesté (Mexico: Senado de la República, 2011).

in the Mexican press in 2011–2012 were closely connected to events in the Middle East, signaling what may be a consistent pattern. A large number of Op-Eds questioned the long-term and entrenched Israeli policy of occupation, and immorality towards the Palestinians, i.e., Alejandro Saldívar's editorials blaming the conflict on Israelis and their war-prone attitude and military apparatus.<sup>104</sup>

When Operation “Defense Pilar” occurred in November 2012, 105 negative articles (based on *Tribuna Israelita*'s categorization) were published mainly in Leftist newspapers *La Jornada* and *Unomásuno*. In light of critical events in Palestine/Israel, the debate broadened and included more mainstream newspapers and voices.

Discursive expressions, be they antisemitic, anti-Zionist or anti-Israel, have significant and concrete implications on the process of delegitimation specifically when we observe the recovering of old arguments, prejudices and negative images. Some of them are reformulated following new logics while others maintain the old ones.

A look at 2010–2011 data, viz. *Tribuna Israelita*,<sup>105</sup> finds an overall reduction in the number of published notes related to Jewish issues and Israel (–38.21% from 2009 to 2010, –8.33% from 2010 to 2011). This is also the case for news reports, editorials, cartoons, reviews, reproductions, photographs, interviews, and classified letters (–41.74% from 2009 to 2010, –5.16% from 2010 to 2011).<sup>106</sup> This seems to be related to the lower impact on Mexican public opinion that events in the region e.g., the “Flotilla Affair,” had in comparison to the impact of “Operation Cast Lead,” a finding consistent with the 2010 World Report by the Stephen Roth Center at Tel Aviv University. Using the same data for the same period, “negative” articles and editorials far outnumbered “positive” ones.

But it is also observed that the number of negative news reports—31 in 2010 and 27 in 2011—was significantly smaller than the number of Op-Eds—313 and 277—respectively. That is, negative news regarding Jews and/or Israel had a

104 Alejandro Saldívar, “Siembra de judíos” in *Proceso*. 03/01/2011.

105 There is no comparable data in the 2012 report.

106 *Tribuna Israelita* Annual Reports. The number of annual incidents remained below 100 (67 in 2010, 88 in 2011, 65 in 2012), mostly harassment actions: verbal aggressions, painted signs and propaganda (demonstrations, conferences, distribution of books, flyers and objects). A limited number of actions included electronic messages, physical aggression (generally with low levels of violence), threats, and a few incidents in the media (other than newspapers).



significant and disproportional impact on Mexican public opinion. Those classified as “neutral” represented the largest number.<sup>107</sup>

TABLE 7.1

|          | 2010 | 2011 |
|----------|------|------|
| Positive | 48   | 32   |
| Negative | 442  | 407  |
| Neutral  | 3408 | 3248 |

Thus, for the period analyzed, the printed press in Mexico shows a spectrum of qualitatively differentiated arguments. Negative arguments include overt antisemitic positions. When looking at these arguments closely, one also finds anti-Zionist arguments underlined by a questioning of Israel's existence, e.g., claims that equate Israel with racism or Nazism, or Holocaust inversion, as well as claims that imply a more covert prejudiced position towards Jews. Anti-Zionist positions generally omit historical contextualization, present simplistic or binary representations of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and are generally one-sided. In the last decades the overlapping antisemitic, anti-Zionist and anti-Israel arguments have gained appeal.

It has to be stressed that *Tribuna Israelita* also codes as “negative” arguments that are highly critical of Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. Some of them overlap with anti-Israel positions.<sup>108</sup> “Positive” arguments include the questioning of anti-Jewish prejudice and/or simplistic generalizations regarding Israel-Palestinian dynamics, Jews or both. “Neutral” arguments are generally descriptive rather than value-laden—although in some instances they may be underlined by more subtle prejudiced assumptions.

107 These include Op-Eds, news reports, newspaper editorials, cartoons, reviews, reproductions, photographs, interviews and classified letters. Each category separately shows only few exceptions.

108 Luis Bassets begins with a critical argument regarding Netanyahu's policy towards the democratic transition in Egypt, which he argues would make it more difficult for Netanyahu to advance his strategic vision of a continuous expansionist State. Luis Bassets, “Al fin despierta Israel” (Finally Israel wakes up) in *El País*. 03/02/2011.

The gamut of arguments that appeared in the printed press in 2010 epitomizes what we have been stating. Among the most common positions we observe Israel's conducting "war crimes" in Lebanon and Gaza; Israel's "terrorist" traits and its implementation of "massacre," "genocide" and "collective punishment" in Gaza to a million and a half Palestinians; the building of a Wall in the West Bank that seeks to "exterminate" 4.5 million Palestinians; Israel's "violation" of international law in the occupied territories and worldwide; the Zionist Jewish State as a racist one on nationality and citizenship issues; and Israel as an "apartheid" State.<sup>109</sup> But covert prejudice towards Israel may also be revealed by omission of relevant information or the use of double standards. While it differs from explicit prejudice, it also has a meaningful impact.

Further overlapping at the meaning making level between anti-Israelism and anti-Zionism can be observed through analogies, parallels and metaphors that point to Holocaust inversion: the West Bank Wall was conceived out of a great strategic plan, the slow and sustained "extermination"; "This time, without gas chambers".<sup>110</sup> The *naqba* as Israel's "expulsion" of 700,000 Palestinians—which was preceded by "ethnic cleansing"—has a straightforward parallel with the Holocaust: the word *naqba* denotes the "oldest and most prolonged Holocaust" in contemporary History as a result of the creation of an "illegal Zionist State."<sup>111</sup> Nazi-fascist wall locked up Palestinians alive in "ghettos" (The author uses the term within quotation marks). As part of the anti-American and anti-Imperialist discourse that emphasizes the alliance between the US and Israel, the walls at the West Bank and at the USA-Mexico border were compared, though only the former was seen as a "genocide wall."<sup>112</sup> This requires analytical differentiation between anti-globalization and anti-Zionism; it also questions the political discourse of both international civil society organizations and partisan anti-global movements.<sup>113</sup>

109 Andrés Pascoe Pierce, "La década del Terror" in *Crónica*. January 2, 2010; Xavier Caño Tamayo, "Sobre una bomba de violaciones de derechos humanos" in *Rumbo de México*. January 4; José Steinsleger, "¿Cuándo caerá el muro?" in *La Jornada*. January 6, 2010; Héctor Delgado, "ONU monosabía, ignora la autodeterminación" in *Uno más uno*. February 11, 2010; Manu Dorberier, "El que se somete a la infamia, se convierte en infame" in *El Sol de México*. February 20, 2010; Newspaper Editorial. "Lula en Israel" in *La Jornada*. March, 2010; José Steinsleger, "¿Israelíes o judíos?" in *La Jornada*. April 21, 2010; Juan Gelman, "Prohibido y ya" in *Milenio Diario*. May 29, 2010.

110 José Steinsleger, "¿Cuándo caerá el muro?" in *La Jornada*. January 6, 2010.

111 José Steinsleger, "Palestina: orígenes de la nakba" in *La Jornada*. May 5, 2010.

112 Héctor Delgado, "¡Bienvenida Señora Michelle Obamain *Uno más uno*". April 15, 2010.

113 See the two articles discussing the Israel/Palestine conflict and the charge of antisemitism, Brian Klug, "A Plea for Distinctions: Disentangling anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism

Similar to the period that followed Operation Cast Lead, the Flotilla Affair increased anti-Zionist expressions.<sup>114</sup> Israel's negative image reached an apex in this episode, conveying its "genocidal" and illegitimate code of action.<sup>115</sup> However, this episode reflects the diversity of arguments: critiques of Israel's policy, positions that deligitimate Zionism and Israel, and more objective representations of the conflict. Writing in *Proceso*, the academic Olga Pellicer wrote a critical piece on Israel's attack of the humanitarian flotilla, which in her view showed the aggressiveness of the Israeli military forces and the intolerable situation created by the Israeli blockade.<sup>116</sup> In a more radical tone on the same incident, Luis Gutiérrez Esparsa called for the condemnation of the assault by Israel of the Flotilla of Freedom, in which 750 unarmed civilians traveled, because it constitutes "one more brutal" act by Israel, an "arrogant," "expansionist" power that resorts to "impunity" and that makes "ethnic cleansing" one of its priorities and "persecutes implacably" the Palestinian people for more than sixty years.<sup>117</sup> Thus, Israel was equated to paradigmatic evil, expansionist and racist; a state that commits genocidal policies and ethnic cleansing. For his part, Rubén Cortés presents a very different interpretation of the Flotilla Affair, questioning the view that the six ships that were "intercepted" by Israel were "pacifists" or looked for freedom. Instead, they supported only one of the parties involved in this war, that is, "terrorist" Hamas, an organization that controls Gaza with an "iron fist."<sup>118</sup>

In contrast to the two episodes analyzed above, a smaller number of editorials in 2011 and 2012 explicitly referred to Jewish issues and so anti-Jewish prejudices were limited.<sup>119</sup> This may be seen as consistent with the fact that the links of the Jewish community with Israel and other Jewish centers have gained legitimacy in the public—sphere—reinforced by the visible recognition of the existence of a Mexican Diaspora—and have, thus, diminished the questioning of the transnational character of Jewish life. In contrast to the past, arguments critical of the nexus between the Jewish community and Israel or

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today," and the response of Tamar Meisels, "Is It Good For the Jews? A Response to Brian Klug's 'A Plea for Distinctions: Disentangling Anti-Americanism From Anti-Semitism,'" *Tink* 20, Vol. 7, The Royal Institute of Philosophy, Winter 2008, pp. 69–90.

114 Esteban Beltrán, "El asfixiante bloqueo de Gaza" in *El País*. June 1, 2010.

115 Héctor Delgado, "Israel asesina marinos civiles en Gaza" in *Uno más uno*. June 1, 2010.

116 Olga Pellicer, "Las tareas de Sísifo" in *Proceso*. June 7, 2010.

117 Luis Gutiérrez Esparsa, "Gaza y la Flotilla de la Libertad" in *Excélsior*. June 2, 2010.

118 Rubén Cortés, "Exceso israelí vs. pacifismo terrorista" in *La Razón*. June 2, 2010.

119 See Jesús Michel Narváez. "¡Claro que duele!" in *El Sol de México*. 15/02/2011, Ángel Guerra Cabrera. "Egipto ayer y hoy" in *La Jornada*. 07/02/2011, and Matías Pascal. "Un Subsecretario de SHyCP Socio de Banca Patito Mifel" in *UnomásUno*. 21/07/2011.

the North American Jewish community have been largely absent in the public discourse. Furthermore, traditional stereotypes such as the control of the national or international financial system or the self-segregated group *tropos* have been minimal, though some political episodes awakened the argument of the particular interest over the national well-being.<sup>120</sup>

Thus, the media discourse shows continued patterns and changing trends. In recent years, we observe transnational circuits through which particular meanings get transferred. One must assess the impact on the national media of the transnational dynamics and sources that feed information. Specifically, *La Jornada* and *UnomásUno* systematically reproduced editorial articles of *The Guardian* and *Independent* and their own editorial articles reinforced this stand. Articles by authors such as Ilan Pappé, Noam Chomsky and Robert Frisk are periodically reprinted in newspapers with important circulation in Mexico such as *El País* and *La Jornada*.

The mainstream news media, e.g., *Milenio*, *El Financiero* and *Excélsior*, has an increased number of articles critical of Israel's settlement policy.<sup>121</sup> We may also point to the building of the transnational cultural code we analyzed. Zionism, identified with Racism, Colonialism and Imperialism, became an implicit argument of the major focus, namely, that the State of Israel is belligerent and war-prone, oppressive and expansionist.<sup>122</sup> In this sense, Naief Yehya establishes a parallel (of immorality) between the American and Israeli military, both imperialists that in old or new forms destroy or displace entire peoples.<sup>123</sup> Human rights violations gained an increased presence among the critical arguments. The Arab-Israeli conflict continued to be portrayed as part of the clash between the imperialist West and the Arab and Muslim Third World.

As with previous periods of escalation of violence, the Mexican press widely pits the Israeli Defense Forces against Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. Singular but overlapping arguments can also be found between reporting practices.

120 Bokser Liwerant, "Being National, Being Transnational: Snapshots of Belonging and Citizenship," in *Shifting Frontiers of Citizenship: the Latin America Experience*, eds. M. Snzajder, L. Roniger and C. Forment (Leiden and London: Brill, 2013), 343–365.

121 Emilio Menéndez del Valle, "Imponer la paz en Palestina," *El País*, April 9, 2010.

122 See Alfredo Jalife Rahme. "Israel y Estados Unidos provocan disturbios religiosos en Egipto" in *La Jornada*. 03/07/2011. In this article the writer argues that Israel and the US seek to control the region. In an article by Enrique Dussel, he calls Israeli and US policies fundamentalist, violent and militarist. See "¿Estado de rebelión egipcia?" in *La Jornada*. 03/02/2011.

123 Naief Yehya, "Destruir una casa para salvar a un pueblo: vieja-nueva filosofía imperialista" in *La Jornada*. 30/01/2011.

According to *Tribuna Israelita*, there were 105 published negative notes. Anti-Zionist positions develop from initial criticism of Netanyahu's policy to destroy the military and political infrastructure of both Islamic movements.<sup>124</sup>

Holocaust inversion was used to question not only Netanyahu's decision, but also Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land. Similar to previous episodes, one editorial also equated Israel's policy to both Nazism and Fascism: "The most recent killing against Palestinian Arabs in Gaza committed by the Nazi fascist Israeli militarism is a provocation against the peoples of the world."<sup>125</sup> In an even more radical tone, another Op-Ed noted:

While the behavior of the Tel Aviv government towards the Palestinians has increasingly become similar to that of the Nazi perpetrators towards their ancestors in Europe . . . it is more adequate to characterize it as an extermination camp, to which the Hebrew State only allows to enter water and food that are scientifically calculated as necessary for the survival of the (Palestinian) inhabitants.<sup>126</sup>

The metaphor of the ghetto was also used in this case perhaps to mobilize moral outrage for the "imprisonment" of the Palestinians.<sup>127</sup> In "negative" Op-Eds, historical context when provided is generally one-sided with respect to Israel's "colonization" of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, "violation" of international law and "destruction" of Palestinian daily life.<sup>128</sup> Some stressed the disproportionate force used by the perpetrators (Israelis) against the victims (Palestinians).<sup>129</sup>

Positive editorials are also identified for the 2010–2012 period: they questioned Hamas's strategy to eliminate Israel and also Iran's support of the Islamist regime, they pointed to Israel's economic and technological achievements, they distinguished between Israel as a Zionist entity and its particular governments, and they advanced a principled rejection of Hamas' and

124 See Editorials by Héctor Delgado (Unomásuno), Ángel Guerra Cabrera (*La Jornada*), Fran Ruiz (*Crónica*) and Gabriel Moyssen (*El Financiero*).

125 Héctor Delgado, "Israel: Nazifascism and genocidal apartheid". Unomásuno, 19/11.

126 Ángel Guerra Cabrera, "Gaza, Prison no, extermination camp". *La Jornada*, 22/11.

127 Héctor Delgado, "¡Todos somos Gaza!". Unomásuno, 21/11. A parallel between Gaza and the ghetto is found in Fran Ruiz, "The most stupid war of the world". *Crónica*, 23/11.

128 De la Fuente Editorial. "Gaza: Assymetric Violence. *La Jornada*, 16/11.

129 De la Fuente Editorial. "Gaza: Assymetric Violence". *La Jornada*, 16/11. See also Nizar Dana, "Gaza under fire," *La Razón*, 23/11; Fran Ruiz, "The most stupid war in the world." *Crónica*, 23/11; De la Fuente Editorial. "Stop to the killing of children and women in the Gaza Strip. Unomásuno, 21/11.

Hezbollah's refusal to accept Israel as a legitimate state. Some Op-Eds also questioned dominant prejudices in Mexico towards Jews and Israel.<sup>130</sup>

Paralleling these trends, a pattern of radicalization in the social networks developed. It included prejudices previously used though increasingly aggressive, as evidenced by the presence of Holocaust denial arguments and hate speech towards Jews. This phenomenon may signal new dynamics via "interactive social web" (Web 2.0).<sup>131</sup>

Users as opposed to publishers are able to create content, share it and react to it beyond national boundaries legitimizing multiple narratives or rendering credibility to relativism.<sup>132</sup> The shift in sources—from accountable to largely anonymous ones—are key to understanding the impact of non-institutionalized social character minimizing public resistance—what David Hirsch calls "unmediated opinions." A potential implication is the widespread acceptability of the new modalities of prejudice and exclusion (including antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism) in the web, particularly among the young, ending in a blurring of boundaries of public discourse.

Social networks vary in their impact. According to the global traffic monitoring group Alexa, Facebook remains the most popular social media, with monthly visits nearing a billion; the users are younger and are part of a computer cohort; other social forums continue to outpace each other, e.g., Twitter, by which millions tweet daily traveling into other linked Internet platforms, such as YouTube or Facebook.<sup>133</sup>

130 Miguel Alemán V, "Yitzak Rabin" *El Universal*. February 24, 2010; José Penhos, "Hombre clave de Hamas." *Siempre!* March 8, 2010; Javier Santiso, "Israel: ejemplo de innovación económica." *El Universal*. May 16, 2010; Bernard Henri Levy, "Porqué firmé la 'llamada a la razón.'" *El Sol de México*. May 24, 2010; David Harris, "¿1947 o 1967?" *El País*. June 15, 2010; José Antonio Aguilar Rivera, "Democratismo y Fanatismo." *El Universal*. July 10, 2010.

131 According to a survey conducted by Mitofsky in December 2011, Twitter is largely used by the young, educated people and those of higher socio-economic class. The Twitter user's profile: 60% are between 18 and 30 years old, and 95% live in urban areas.

132 Andre Oboler, April 1, 2008, "Online Anti-Semitism 2.0. 'Social Anti-Semitism' on the 'Social Web.' Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. <http://jcpa.org/article/online-anti-Semitism-2-0-social-anti-Semitism-on-the-social-web/> (Accessed on January 7, 2014).

133 While the fastest-growing age group for Facebook is the 25+ group, an August 2006 study showed that 33.5% of Facebook users were in the 35–54 age range; only 34% were aged 18–24 Facebook's original target audience. One example is the group proclaiming "Israel' is not a country!... delist it from Facebook as a country!" It has 32,596 members. If one of its members has an average of 150–200 friends, this group could be advertised to about 4.9 million people. <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts> (accessed June 1, 2015). In addition to these forms of interactive web, Web 2.0 includes sites such as Google Earth, Flickr, Digg, Del.icio.us, Blogger, Reddit, Beebo, Wikipedia, Myspace, and some would include

In Mexico, antisemitism in the social networks reached a high point in 2012. Tweets and electronic messages appear to mirror each other in terms of radical content and language, in contrast to the printed press published notes and editorials. This seems related to different accountability mechanisms available in each case. The number of electronic messages is generally small but their tone is more violent and extreme. It includes antisemitic representations of Jews as foreigners, Christ killers or exploiters of the local labor force delivered via institutional emails or Jewish websites.

For example, the electronic Jewish newspaper *Enlace Judío* received emails questioning the contributions, assimilation status and loyalty of Mexicans since they are “taking over key positions in the government to create their own government within the Mexican State.”<sup>134</sup> Some electronic messages sent to *Tribuna Israelita* endorsed Hitler and Nazism. The central agency of the Jewish community also received an email that expressed an anti-Israel position. While few, there were some antisemitic emails sent directly to Mexican personalities of Jewish origin or anonymous hate emails that circulated among the Mexican public.

Emails sent to Jewish institutions in Mexico have also been channels to express negative positions towards Jews-Israel through symbolic representations of Israel as a terrorist state and a Jewish-Israel axis of immoral collaboration.<sup>135</sup> For instance, on February 23, 2011 *Tribuna Israelita* received an email by Peace In the World. Originating in Canada, the page advocated

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Ebay and Amazon. Many online newspapers that allow comments where antisemitism is tolerated, e.g., The Guardian’s “Comment Is Free.” *Huntington Post*, eMarketer (accessed 1 January 2014). See “Twitter Company Statistics.” <http://www.statisticbrain.com/twitter-statistics/> (accessed 1 June 2015).

134 September 19, 2012, [hombrelibre1963@gmail.com](mailto:hombrelibre1963@gmail.com). Some emails incorporated the phrase Heil Hitler and repeatedly called for Jewish genocide. On August 21, 2010, the well-known historian Jean Meyer received an email from Fernando Espinoza de los Monteros ([fems51@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:fems51@yahoo.com.mx)). Titled as “Those who Work for Israel in our Nation,” this message used forged *Protocols of the Elders of Sion*. In August, 2010 an anonymous email circulated widely. It was entitled: “The Jewish Problem in Mexico” (Signed: Cuernavaca, February 2010).

135 Two emails sent in May and June, 2010 to *Tribuna Israelita* used the slogan Heil Hitler and called for the destruction of Jews. The first one was signed by Josue “N” ([rk@hotmail.com](mailto:rk@hotmail.com)) followed by Lebanese Husein ([libanes\\_mex@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:libanes_mex@yahoo.com.mx)). Two years later, another email sent to *Tribuna Israelita* underscored the idea of righteousness by the Nazis against the Jews. Source: email sent by “Indio mexicano” ([huelofeo@yahoo.com](mailto:huelofeo@yahoo.com)) in 2012. On June 1, 2010, *Tribuna Israelita* received another email from Fran Ruiz ([fran@cronica.com.mx](mailto:fran@cronica.com.mx)) that stated that Israel, like Iran, Birmania, Cuba, North Korea, and Sudan was a terrorist state.

the liberation of Palestine and accused Israel of routinely violating international laws, committing war crimes and killing Palestinians. Immediately following its criticism of Israeli policies—without presenting any historical contextualization—the email criticized the “support of illegal Israeli occupation” by the “Jewish people in Mexico.” Extreme statements on the “purity of the Jewish race” and Holocaust denial also found expression in electronic messages.<sup>136</sup> Additionally, a few incidents were documented in blogs and Twitter.<sup>137</sup> In Uruguay and Argentina, political hostility towards us “economic imperialism,” combined with an increasing ideological hostility at neo-liberal globalization, yielded an anti-Zionist discourse among some leftist social networks.

To fully appreciate the nature and scope of antisemitism/anti-Zionism in the social networks, our analysis will focus on three paradigmatic episodes:

a) First, the chain of prejudices derived from the verbal and physical attack of a valet parking employee by a business man of Jewish origin, Miguel Moisés Sacal Smeke (January 2012). In this case, the indexing of antisemitic attacks under the hashtag<sup>138</sup> #GentlemandelasLomas (upscale Mexico City neighborhood) obtained the status of Trending Topic on January 10, reaching more than 10,000 references. Examining the number of tweets (95 tweets registered between January 10 and 11, 2012) referring to this lamentable though individual case, one finds that “negative” tweets outnumbered the “neutral” ones (48 vs. 25), while “positive” tweets had the lowest number (22) (although it was similar to those classified as neutral). This contrasts with the general trend found in the printed press, as previously shown. But those tweets marked as favorite show a slightly different situation: the majority were negative (94) followed by positive (78) and then by neutral (58). Tweets posted in two days show large numbers (52) underscore Miguel Sacal’s Jewishness. E.g., references to Sacal as a Jewish businessman or Miguel Sacal, the Jew. A smaller number (8) establish a connection between his aggressive actions and his Jewish origin while a few others (6) posit that stating his Jewish origin does not equal

136 In one of the emails the Holocaust was called “Holocuento” (Holostory). See “Libre” (hombrelibre1963@gmail.com) in Tribuna Israelita’s 2010 report.

137 On July 8, 2010, for instance, several messages in Twitter blamed the Mexican Jews for the creation of buildings, commercial centers, study houses and allegedly a clothing store, thus impacting the neighborhood’s use of land in one of Mexico city’s neighborhoods where Jews live. “@vecinodeteca, @diantp seguro la fabrica es de uno de esos judíos que invadieron teca primero centros comerciales ahora fabricas?? @Vecinodeteca @Alexferca @alfredodelmazo @jupeatzh #Huixquilucan ha de ser algún miembro de la comunidad, ya ves que se vuelven intocable\$\$\$.”

138 On social media such as Twitter, it is a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign used to identify messages on a specific topic.



antisemitism. However, a number of tweets (17) used coarse and virulent anti-Jewish language when referring to Sacal. Among the “positive” (18) tweets one finds arguments that put into question anti-Jewish prejudice and the advanced simplistic generalizations. At the same time, some addressed reveal historically rooted stereotypes of Jews (e.g., Jewish = money/success).

b) A second chain of prejudiced comments was detonated by Dr. Alfredo Jalife Rahme, a journalist, analyst, academic of the National Autonomous University (UNAM), Mexico, and head of the Center for Geostrategic Studies at UAM, Xochimilco. Paradoxically, as a result of a sustained request to limit his anti-Zionist/antisemitic outbursts in the press, Jalife has acquired a strong presence in social networks such as Facebook and Twitter (mainly since May 2012), particularly writing on political national and international topics. In contrast to the previous case, Jalife put anti-Zionism at the center of his discourse.

Jalife’s statements on the powerful Zionist-US axis, the financial Zionist power (conspiracy of the Zionist-Anglo-Saxon banking system) or the massive colonization of Palestine by (foreign-Soviet) Zionists, have been replicated from Jalife’s articles in Left-wing newspapers into his tweets, although with more openly radicalized positions and offensive language. Many of his assertions emphasize the Jewish origin of prominent individuals and their favorable position regarding Israel. Zionists are portrayed as “messianic,” business figures and companies are represented as “Zionist bankers” or “Mossad shooters.” Similar to the previous case, Jalife also frequently uses the sign \$ (“ashkeNa\$is,” “zoo\$ioni\$tas”). Jalife’s Twitter account, which reached 21,000 followers, mobilized public opinion, facilitated the circulation of prejudice, and escalated Israel’s symbolic delegitimization. Jalife’s antisemitic comments and the controversy that followed in the press also revealed existing tensions between Mexico’s legislation against discrimination and the right for speech freedom, highly valued in any democracy. Our reference to this particular instance underscores the interaction between the printed press and the social networks, as well as the fact that the extremism, antisemitism and anti-Zionism of this public figure have found space among the Leftist sectors and in *La Jornada*.

c) Another incident concerns the intervention in January 2013 of a university professor, Raquel Rodríguez, at an academic forum of solidarity with Palestine that was co-organized by the Graduate Program in Human Rights (University of Mexico City, UACM), the pro-Palestine organization “Palestina ya,” and the government of Mexico City. Rodríguez explicitly denied the Holocaust, saying it was a “great lie,” and drew upon other old antisemitic notions. In this case, however, local Jewish journalists (*Enlace Judío*) published a report and filed a complaint to the Council Against Discrimination in Mexico City (COPRED).

The Council investigated the episode and reached the conclusion that it was an expression of antisemitism against the Jewish community in Mexico; this led to demanding a public acknowledgement by the individual and institutions concerned, and the organization of an open forum to discuss the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.<sup>139</sup>

All in all, current expressions of anti-Zionism are much more than an ideational-cultural struggle for equality and human rights. In contrast to the past, social and political actors with anti-Zionist stands are not confined solely to political parties and organizations of the Left. A large array of local social movements, NGOs, international organizations and a heterogeneous groups formed by institutions of the transnational civil society, are making use of anti-Zionist discourse on a global scale; this suggests the formation of new coalitions, which some scholars refer to as a key trait of the “new” antisemitism.

In Latin America today, a joint anti-Zionist and anti-Israel discourse of social movements does not play merely a cultural role as an ideological code to indicate belonging to the camp of anti-imperialism as part of the national politics of each country. In contrast to the 1960s, in the new millennium, anti-Zionism has become a mobilization call for anti-globalization action in both local and transnational public spheres. Additionally, transnational social networks emerging from civil society advocate legitimacy of the Palestinian state while instilling through their discourse and attempting to delegitimize Israel. Opposition by the Latin American Left to Israel’s policies towards the

139 On social media such as Twitter, Jew is a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign to identify messages on a specific topic. Some examples: “Miguel Sacal! One more Jew who in a piece of soap would produce less damage and more benefit,” “When Hitler comes to life again we need to invite him to Mexico to cook in his ovens every other bastard Jews such as Miguel Sacal Smeke,” “The Jewish businessman Miguel Moisés Sacal makes offensive statements. Has he forgotten Nazi racist antisemitism and the Holocaust?”. See “¿Seré “antisemita” de verdad?,” *La Jornada*, December 28, 2008; “El lavado de dinero del canciller israelí Avigdor Lieberman,” *La Jornada*, April 20, 2011; “La opinión pública de los países árabes detesta a EU, según encuesta estadounidense,” *La Jornada*, July 20, 2011. In his Tweets, Jalife sent antisemitic libels about “financial and speculative Jewish power” or the “powerful financial corridor” that runs from Wall Street and Chabad to Mexico (June 1st, 2nd and 6th, @AlfredoJalife). Jalife also refers to Israel as “racist and genocidal” (June 5th). In his tweets, Jalife equates Zionism with Nazism (June 1st). He self-defines himself as follows: “I am not antisemite. I am a—semite—referring to his Lebanese ethnicity. I am not Jew hater (judeófofo). I am anti-Zionist for the same reasons that I am anti-Nazi” (June 7th). All Jalife’s tweets were monitored by Tribuna Israelita. Local political figures called “Zionist sympathizers” include Claudia Sheinbaum—from the Leftist party PRD. A series of businessmen and Jewish prominent personalities were also attacked by Jalife—documented by Tribuna Israelita.

Palestinians, even among center-Left and liberal organizations in the region, can hardly be regarded as a side issue. This has become a major and persistent concern for Latin American policy makers.

The globalization of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will likely continue if certain conditions are present, such as the continued stagnation of the peace process, the eruption of new cycles of violence in the Middle East, the strengthening of Islamic radical groups in countries that now experience political turmoil, the presence of neo-populist governments in the region, and the particular interaction between strategic decisions of international, regional, and national and local activists.

### Going Global: New Circuits, Channels and Routes of Antisemitism

In a globalized world of instantaneous transmissions, prejudice acquires borderless fluidity. At the same time, it is grounded and expressed locally, in the terms of different sub-cultures, and among diverse groups in particular countries. Local, national, regional and global logics interact in complex ways while the porosity of national borders leads to the deterritorialization of interrelations and social arrangements.

Adding to the national and regional current processes of change, democratization plays a key role. New institutional channels have opened to civic participation. This points to new thresholds of acceptance-rejection. The recognition of difference, the politics of identity and the emphasis on heterogeneity have increasingly widened the public sphere's scope. Socio-cultural-political parameters and limits to diversity are subject to transformations.

Recognition of difference, a new identity politics and the emphasis on heterogeneity, act as a substratum that enhances and reinforces pluralism. "Struggles for recognition" and "identity/difference movements" propel cultural identity issues to the forefront of the public political discourse. In light of the general processes, Jews, as other minorities, find new paths of recognition and collective expression in the public sphere and its wider scope.<sup>140</sup>

An increasingly expansive force of democracy has also emerged between global cycles of economic crises and social conflicts. The region's changing reality reflects the expansive force of democracy as well as its recessions, regressions, and reconfigurations. Latin America has incorporated global cycles of political opportunities and social conflicts in contradictory ways, as evident in democratization and de-democratization; centralization; civic citizenship

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140 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

and ethnic allegiances; collective affirmation and individualization of rights. Multiculturalism and new claims for recognition of primordial identities seek inclusion based on essentialism, even though they reinforce exclusion on ethnic grounds. While the scope for diversity broadens, Latin American societies also face serious risks of fragmentation and even de-structuring processes.<sup>141</sup>

Neo-liberal and growingly institutionalized citizenship regimes coexist with corporatist and populist political forms, social mobilization and plebiscitary democracy. Thus, the region experiences contradictory trends: an increasing civic participation of social and political actors is threatened by exclusionary initiatives. The prevalence of historically complex relations with the United States and widespread dissatisfaction with the effects of globalization opened new opportunities for radical movements in the region. In this context of non-linear trends, antisemitism acquires new modalities of expression.

Mexico's consolidation of democracy is still an ongoing process. Essential vectors such as rule of law, transparency, and accountability need to be fully established. In the realm of human rights, the country experienced both significant progress and setbacks. National and State Commissions of Human Rights have gained progressive presence. In April 2010, the Mexican Senate unanimously approved reforms that give human rights a constitutional status, widen their recognition and protection, and give the National Commission on Human Rights faculties to investigate grave violations to individual rights. However, according to this agency a high percentage of its recommendations were not implemented within the deadlines specified and/or were not accepted by public officials because of weaknesses that characterize the judicial system. The World Economic Forum (2012) warned that the cost of corruption in Mexico equals 9% of the national gross domestic product (a.k.a. PIB), while businesses need to spend 10% of their income on bribes.<sup>142</sup> Transparency International annual's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI, 2011) also shows that despite government attempts to tackle corruption, Mexico still obtained a low score of 3.0 (close to Brazil's score of 3.8).<sup>143</sup> The so-called war against drugs and organized

141 Judit Bokser Liwerant, "Los judíos de América Latina: los signos de las tendencias. Juegos y contrajuegos," in *Pertenencia y alteridad. Judíos en/de América Latina: Cuarenta años de cambios*, eds. H. Avni, J. Bokser, S. DellaPergola et al., (Berlin and Madrid: Editorial Iberoamericana, 2011), 115–164.

142 Source: *World Economic Forum on Latin America. Regional Transformation in a New Global Context*, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, April 2012. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/LA12/WEF\\_LA12\\_Report.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/LA12/WEF_LA12_Report.pdf) (Accessed: April 17, 2014).

143 Source: "The cost of corruption to Latin America's competitiveness." *Americas Market Intelligence*. [http://americasmi.com/en\\_US/expertise/articles-trends/page/the-cost-of-corruption-to-latin-americas-competitiveness](http://americasmi.com/en_US/expertise/articles-trends/page/the-cost-of-corruption-to-latin-americas-competitiveness) (Accessed: April 17, 2014).

crime has resulted in a spiral of violence that has not been directly connected to ethnic or religious motives.

In pluralistic Latin American societies, a widened public sphere and a stronger civil society facilitate the emergence of new actors. Different social movements attract vast middle-class sectors, including Jews and the Jewish community, as civic participants of the national arena. This has been further enhanced by liberal democratic policies. Indeed, Jewish individuals have increasingly entered the political sphere and assumed high rank public roles. Resulting from increased top-to-bottom citizenship participation, organized Jewish communities have reached prominent roles. Thus, the twofold complex process of erosion of a national ethnic narrative and the increased recognition of minorities based on religious and ethnic grounds render increasing visibility and legitimacy to communities.<sup>144</sup>

Paralleling these developments we should look at the fragmented integration of Latin America into the international economic system. In light of growing inequalities, inclusive political entities coexist with exclusionary trends that hinder democracy. Economic crises have also impacted Jewish communities, although in differentiated ways. As Mexico was not hit as harshly as the Southern Cone, e.g., Argentina, its economic conditions led to radical changes in the organized Jewish life. Globalization processes, for instance, deteriorated the economic standing of some while boosting higher and middle classes into advantageous positions in international commerce, high technology, services, the sciences, academia and its institutions, and the financial sectors. This resulted in a wider interaction between the Jewish community and diverse sectors of Mexican society.

In the case of Argentina, the recovery of democracy granted Jews the possibility of becoming active citizens in the public sphere without being exposed to ethnic or religious discrimination. At the same time, a solid civil society took shape. The infrastructure for community and grassroots activism also widened and was further strengthened by the work of international NGOs that focus on rights, identity, education and civic responsibility. The more pluralistic and democratic Argentina's civil society has become, the greater its rejection of antisemitism, although it will hardly disappear any time soon. Additionally, as more Jewish institutions participate in the public sphere demanding justice, e.g., the terrorist attacks of the Israeli embassy (1992) and AMIA/Jewish Community Center (1994), the greater the appreciation towards Jews as

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144 Judit Bokser Liwerant, "Los Judíos de América Latina: Los Signos de las Tendencias Juegos y Contrafuegos," in *Pertenencia y Alteridad. Judíos en de América Latina: Cuarenta Años de Cambios* (Madrid: Editorial Iberoamérica, 2011), 115.

citizens committed to democracy. Nevertheless, Argentina faces major challenges such as its own vulnerability and lack of security. Furthermore, despite this new spirit of inclusiveness and re-democratization, social exclusion still exists. Indeed, during the political re-democratization process most citizens were increasingly losing trust in liberal institutions and especially the judicial system. This loss of popular confidence coincided with a sharp increase in crime and violence during the 1990s in Argentina's large cities. The lack of a clear process of investigation of the antisemitic attacks has enhanced the deficit in trust.

Venezuela is a contrasting case. As previously stated, shifting political forces and changing relations between the Venezuelan state and international actors has made the Jewish community subject of great constraints. However, the influence of Chavismo in spreading anti-Zionism in Latin America has been less dangerous than the increasing impact of international social movements and transnational networks fighting against imperialism, neo-liberalism and racial discrimination including also Zionism and Israel. While Chavez's regime might have not intended to promote a systematic atmosphere of hostility towards Jews, its radical and polarizing rhetoric, coalitional dynamics and strategic international positioning have narrowed the legitimate public space of the Jewish collective.

This has certainly impacted the massive emigration by Venezuelan Jews mainly to Southern Florida. According to estimates, by the 1990s the number of Venezuelan Jews reached 35,000, but today they number about 9,500 in a national total population of 29,300,000. The above contrasts with the more stable Jewish community of Mexico which numbers 39,200 and national total of 114,800,000. Argentina has the largest Jewish population: 181,800 in a national total of 40,500,000.<sup>145</sup>

In Mexico, different extreme Right organizations have diminished their public visibility and the intensity of their activities. Organizations such as *LaRouche* inspired Mexican Labor Party (*Partido Laboral Mexicano*), Anti-Communist Federation (*Federación Mexicana Anticomunista*) and *Los Tecos*, have assumed a latent existence, the exception being the Peoples Council of Mexican Eagles (*Partido de las Águilas Mexicanas*).<sup>146</sup>

With an ideology dubbed as "neo-Mexicanism," an idealized image of Mexico's Indian past scorns Europe's role in forging the national identity. Its

145 Sergio DellaPergola, *World Jewish Population*, Berman Institute, #7, 2012, <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/details.cfm?StudyID=632> (accessed 5 June 2015).

146 Stephen Roth Institute, *Antisemitism Worldwide*, <http://humanities.tau.ac.il/roth/2012-09-10-07-07-36/antisemitism> (accessed 1 June 2015).

open activity has declined and the Tribunal Federal Electoral (*Tribunal Federal Electoral*) denied its petition to be registered. The Federal Electoral Institute (*Instituto Federal Electoral*) issued an open letter condemning the group's anti-semitic, racist and intolerant views.

In other parts of the region, Latin American Jews have been exposed to grassroots antisemitic attitudes promoted by small nationalistic groups, and not sanctioned by the authorities. Such attitudes were of particular concern to Jews in times of social and political unrest, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, when forces of both the right and left alleged that Jews' loyalty to their countries of residence was compromised by an attachment to Israel. In some instances, this was politically exploited, either by fringe elements or during the escalation of repression, as happened in Argentina under military rule between 1976 and 1983, when antisemitic violence was unleashed. But popular antisemitism led by Right-wing associations—as in Argentina—seems to be unique to this country. In Venezuela, these trends were less visible until the end of the 1990s when, as stated, the country experienced important transformations.

In some instances, this was politically exploited, either by fringe elements or during the escalation of repression, as in Argentina's military rule (1976–1983), when antisemitic violence took place. But popular antisemitism led by Right-wing associations seems to be unique to this country. In Venezuela, these trends were less visible until the end of the 1990s when, as stated, the country experienced important transformations. However, even in Venezuela, assimilation of Jews was expected, and social suspicion existed along with the ability to freely organize communal institutions.<sup>147</sup>

At the same time, it is important to mention that the transition towards multicultural and pluralistic definitions of citizenship in the region have paved the way for a series of constitutional reforms and laws that penalize discrimination. Examples include laws enacted in Brazil and Mexico—where antisemitism has been defined as a crime with mandatory sentencing. In Mexico, legal changes included an intense debate that culminated in the decision to maintain the explicit mention of antisemitism as a form of discrimination.

When incorporating a comparative perspective, it is noteworthy that Europe has seen the reemergence of different antisemitic movements and parties. A Muslim radical youth is mobilized by extremist rhetoric that locates the Middle East conflict in a continent with renewed interests in the Arab world. Of particular importance is the role of the extreme Right, profoundly antisemitic and also anti-Muslim. But antisemitism has also been associated with Left-wing

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147 Luis Roniger, "Latin American Jews and Processes of Transnational Legitimization and De-Legitimization."

sectors, among which anti-American positions are intertwined with attitudes against globalization.<sup>148</sup> In places where prejudice and political violence have acquired a central place, antisemitism has become the *lingua franca*—explicit or latent—of exclusive political sectors and platforms.

Globalization processes have generated new collective identities and have given new relevance to ethnic identities in the territorial and geopolitical reordering. Primordial identities strengthen in a context of global virtual spaces where identities get separated from territorial or geographical spaces, and built by intense networks of supra-national social interactions. The loss of the State's monopoly in different realms and the erosion of its influence in building political imaginaries, the crisis of capitalism and its impact on economic and social spheres, the uncertainty generated by rapid and intense global fluxes have all turned ethnic identities into a resource to confront insecurity and instability in uncertain scenarios.<sup>149</sup>

Expressions of antisemitism linked to Israel are on the increase in different regions. Anti-Zionist antisemitism found fertile soil. Certain positions magnify the political and economic power of the Jews, or stress the ethnic or religious dimension of the actors involved in the Middle East conflict. These orientations minimize the political dimension of peaceful negotiation that may generate nuanced outcomes with no absolute winners or losers. Other positions do not question the objectives to destroy the Jewish State.

Arguments have multiplied: Israel is a source of disorder for the neighboring countries; the cause of the dictatorships in the Middle East; the greatest threat to world peace; the Nazis of our time; it inspired the war against Iraq; it controls U.S. policy; it foments hatred toward the Americans and the West; it perpetrates genocide against the Palestinians; it murders Palestinian children. Israel's policy of sexual non-discrimination was called "pink-washing," on the grounds that the attitude of respect toward gays, as opposed to the persecution of them in Muslim countries, is purely used for propaganda purposes.<sup>150</sup>

In contrast to Europe, extremist political parties have not become an integral part of national politics in Latin America. But even if we observe the presence of radical Right-wing parties are currently marginal, they should not be neglected in their risk and impact. Indeed, cell organizations have found fertile soil in some countries in the region. Any links between neo-Nazism and fundamentalist Islamic (transnational) groups if they exist, are still unknown.

148 See Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin, *The New Antisemitism* (London: Profile, 2003).

149 Judit Bokser Liwerant-Salas Porras, "Globalización, identidades colectivas y ciudadanía", *Política y Cultura*, 12 (Winter 1999): 25–52.

150 Daniel Goldhagen, *The Devil That Never Dies*.



Finally, while the overall trend toward increased presence of Jewish life in Mexican and Latin American societies is gaining momentum and it has acquired growing levels of legitimacy, thus weakening the risk of antisemitic outburst, new challenges arise from several fronts derived from the new articulation between the local and the global. On the one hand, a strong and autonomous civil society has developed, thus widening potential allies in the fight against antisemitism. However, the transnational mobilization against globalization of certain international civil society organizations increases the significance of anti-Zionism as a political strategy and a standardized ideological code in multiple contexts.

We not only see the transmigration of old myths into new social realities but the transnational mobilization against globalization of certain international civil society organizations that explore the usage of anti-Zionism as a political strategy and a standardized ideological code in multiple contexts. These social movements have influenced effectively on the political elites in the Latin American states to promote the recognition of the Palestinian state at the UN, as happened with the political initiative of Lula in December 2012. This move was not anti-Zionism, but an integral part of the international struggle to develop political, social and economic alternatives that enhance justice, equality and sovereignty of the peoples.

At governmental level, one has to point to the fact that Iran is involved in an active quest for allies in the region in order to countervail the international community's pressure against its development of nuclear capabilities. In the last years, given the elections of new leaders in the region, Iran advanced in its efforts to find sympathetic governments to its cause. Benefiting from the anti-American climate and discourse as well as from the recurrent search of a realignment in the region, Iran has extended its trade and energy ventures to create increasingly strategic relations with Latin American governments.<sup>151</sup>

The analysis of the Mexican case reveals singular and common traits of a global antisemitism in the 21st century. It also sheds light on historical recurrences and changes; past and present expressions and modalities; ways in which old elements are reformulate with new meanings, responding to different logics, contexts and social, political and cultural circumstances. The relations between historic permanence and transformation, as well as between different referents of collective belonging—culture, ethnicity, language, religion, and history—are expressed as antisemitism in singular and diverse modes.

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151 Venezuela represents the extreme and evident case where convergences in bolstering oil prices by controlling production volumes has projected itself into the political arena.

This case shows the complexity embedded in antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism as interacting and overlapping social realities and categories for analysis in a globalized and transnational world. In Latin America today, mutually reinforcing antisemitic, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist meanings get transferred, and reinforce each other, through a historical—and now trans-regional and trans-national—cultural substratum. Thus, in a wider spectrum, antisemitism has become a transnational phenomenon of global concern that in some instances gets expressed through criticism of Israel as the embodiment of collective Jewry. Thus, anti-Zionism connects people across countries, regions and continents, operating through the political agenda of social movements performing at the local, regional and global levels.

The in-depth analysis of three moments in contemporary Mexico has underscored how prejudices and policies, perceptions and behaviors were differentially displayed so that complex phenomena need to be contextualized (nationally, regionally and globally) and approached through multi-causal explanations. Thus, prejudices and geopolitics, national settings and regional changing logics, social structures and agency, widen the frameworks to explain how historical experiences and symbolic narratives create and recreate meanings.

Therefore, it becomes particularly important to point to new conceptual and methodological tools that need to be developed to help clarify and distinguish—as well as connect—among discourses, motivations and outcomes. Even with respect to antisemitism, claims may differ qualitatively in their argumentative structure and underlying assumptions. In this regard, it becomes key to focus on the interaction between quantitative indicators and qualitative traits. Thus, the challenge we still face is to elaborate robust measurement criteria, as well as precise indicators and categories that are not mutually exclusive while equally relevant for analyses of text and context, of potential or actual political and ideological undercurrents.