

CHINESE ANTISEMITISM

2021 - 2025

ORIGINS AND PURPOSES



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THE JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY INSTITUTE

CHINESE ANTISEMITISM

2021-2025

ORIGINS AND PURPOSE

Dr. Shalom Salomon Wald

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Foreword

This JPPI study by Dr. Shalom Salomon Wald arrives at a moment when clarity is rare and essential. Over the past several years – punctuated by the Gaza wars of 2021 and 2023-25 – antisemitic narratives in China have intensified across state-aligned press outlets, social media platforms, and parts of academia. This is not a parochial development. When the world’s second-most populous nation and a leading architect of the information environment authorizes, amplifies, or tolerates such ideas, the effects reverberate well beyond its borders. Dr. Wald’s contribution is to bring scope, structure, and sobriety to a topic that is too often discussed in fragments.

This report advances three framing insights. First, much of what we are witnessing is not “homegrown” prejudice but the convergence of external drivers – geopolitical rivalry with the United States, alignment with Arab and Muslim partners (including Iran), and the contagious globalization of antisemitic memes – onto China’s media and university ecosystems. Second, the habitual conflation of Israel, Jews, and Judaism has become a key accelerant: critiques of Israeli policy are routinely translated into indictments of Jews as a collective, echoing patterns now familiar in the West but articulated through China’s particular ideological lexicon. Third, universities – training grounds for the next generation of decision-makers – have emerged as influential incubators, where anti-Zionist dogma and open hostility too easily pass as critical scholarship.

Dr. Wald is careful to distinguish critique from bigotry. He accepts that sharp criticism of Israeli policy is not antisemitism. But he shows, with disquieting evidence, how double standards, Nazi analogies, and claims of Jewish conspiratorial power have migrated from fringe tropes into normalized discourse. He places these trends within a longer arc of Sino-Judaic encounters – from Sun Yat-sen’s sympathy with Zionism to recent gestures in Beijing that praised the Talmud – underscoring the tragic reversal from an era in which China could proudly claim a civilization largely unmarked by antisemitism.

The policy implications are practical and immediate. Israel must continue to

manage its indispensable relationship with the United States even as it protects space for constructive ties with China. It should enlist Jewish communities globally, and partner governments – especially in Europe – to call out antisemitic rhetoric and actions with consistency and consequence. Equally crucial is sustained monitoring: rigorous, language-competent tracking of state media, social feeds, and academic publishing to move beyond anecdotes to patterns. Finally, cultural and scholarly engagement – precisely the kinds of exchanges now being chilled – remain among the most effective long-term correctives to ignorance and caricature.

This is not a counsel of despair. The same report that documents deterioration also notes glimmers of diplomatic recalibration and pockets of intellectual curiosity among Chinese students. The choice facing leaders in Beijing, Jerusalem, and across the Jewish world is whether to let a meme metastasize – or to confront it with facts, principled diplomacy, and patient cultural work. Readers will find in these pages both a warning and a map. For policymakers, scholars, and communal leaders, Dr. Wald’s analysis is not merely timely; it is necessary reading for anyone committed to ensuring that the world’s oldest hatred does not become a new normal in one of the world’s oldest civilizations.

On a personal note, I am deeply grateful to Dr. Wald for his contributions and commitment to both this critical field of inquiry and to JPPI, where he has been a Senior Fellow for more than two decades.

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Prof. Yedidia Stern, President

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SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS

1. Antisemitic waves washed over China's social and official media following the Gaza conflicts of 2021 and 2023-25. They were authorized, if not initiated, by the Chinese government in pursuit of China's political goals (see Key Drivers) and based on anti-Jewish tropes.
2. Antisemitic propaganda spread, driven by the Chinese media's anti-Israeli presentation of the Israel-Hamas war and the Chinese tendency to conflate Israel, Jews, and Judaism.
3. Universities are leading incubators of antisemitism, as in the West, and so are the social media platforms used by Marxist and nationalist pundits and influencers.
4. China could emerge as an additional driver of antisemitism in the "Global South" and even the West. It could prejudice the minds of students, China's future leaders, and extinguish the interest in Jews and Israel that once existed among parts of China's reading public.
5. In 2025, China's ambassador to Israel called for friendlier bilateral relations, which was not reported in China. Israel must preserve all possible links with China but cannot accept China's denial of media and university antisemitism. Jews across the world must be engaged. Israel should maintain its "One China Policy," while strengthening non-political links with Taiwan and increasing research on the long history of Sino-Judaic relations.

KEY DRIVERS OF CHINESE ANTISEMITISM

1. China's tension with America, where it perceives Jews as playing a leading role.
2. China's quest for antisemitic friends and allies: Arabs, Muslims, Iran, Russia.
3. Scapegoat-seeking for China's domestic problems.
4. Overthrowing the Western global order.
5. Anti-and philosemitism: Two sides of the same coin.
6. Antisemitism as a meme in a global cultural pandemic. China joins a global movement.

The three predominant drivers are the tension with America, the Arab/Muslim alliance, and the pull of global antisemitism.

Why Is Chinese Antisemitism Important?

The appearance of antisemitism, “the world’s oldest hate,” in a country that claims to be history’s oldest civilization is thought-provoking. Until modern times, China’s traditional core values have not been influenced by Christianity, Islam, or the Western Enlightenment, which are all inextricably linked with the rise, survival or decline of antisemitism. Analyzing Chinese antisemitism can shed some light on recent Chinese history and current Chinese policies in several areas – foreign and domestic affairs, economics, and culture. Chinese antisemitism is not homegrown. Like elsewhere, it is entangled with other issues.

In recent years, the number of publications and articles on China has risen exponentially. Much global interest focuses on China’s impact on the rest of the world, including the Muslim Middle East. Few works address China-Israel relations, and the number of Chinese-speaking experts on antisemitism in China can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

There are various definitions of antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) has proposed a comprehensive definition that is widely used. This paper uses four criteria. The first three appear, formulated differently, in the IHRA text; the fourth, psychological projection, is new. Antisemitism is antagonism to Jews or Israel based on double standards – standards not applied to others. Criticism of Israeli government policies is not antisemitic. But anti-Zionism is antisemitic when it denies the right of the Jews to their own state in their ancient homeland. It is also antisemitic to claim that Jews or Israel wield excessive influence to advance nefarious interests. Finally, comparing Israel to Nazi Germany or projecting onto Jews and Israel the misdeeds the accusers themselves commit are also expressions of antisemitism. All these forms of antisemitism have appeared in China.

Chinese antisemitism, if permanent, is likely to have several potentially harmful domestic and foreign consequences. Universities are among the most influential promoters of Chinese antisemitism. As they train China's next generation, they risk transmitting current prejudices to some of China's future leaders. Today, almost all Chinese government leaders and most Communist Party high officials are university graduates, often holding engineering degrees. Antisemitism has begun to erode the unbiased interest in the Jewish people or Israel that existed before in some of China's reading public, in several universities and in government circles. Bias distorts analytical skills, affects China's understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and explains why China's diplomacy in the Middle East has had little effect. In other words, antisemitism is indirectly also China's loss – it can no longer claim to be the largest or oldest civilization without antisemitism. This was a point of pride for some Chinese, including high officials. Losing this distinction is not irrelevant at a time when China seeks to enhance its “soft power” in the West. On the Israeli side, a decrease of interest in China and the Chinese language has been reported in academia, including greater reluctance to cooperate with Chinese institutions, particularly since October 7, 2023.¹

The dialogue between Chinese and Jewish intellectuals exploring commonalities in their historical experience, culture, and belief systems risks coming to an end. Prof. Ping Zhang of Tel Aviv University mourned: “The foundation of the good relationship built between the two sides over the past three decades has been shattered.”² This outcome was not anticipated when China's top leaders called for a “dialogue of civilizations.”

Conflating Israel, Jews, and Judaism

An observer of Chinese views will notice a widespread tendency to conflate Israel, Jews, and Judaism. In popular discourse, Israel and Jews are more or less synonymous. This is not much different from the West, where the anti-Israeli presentation of the Gaza war by official and social media is regularly causing verbal and physical violence against local Jews. Chinese officials, intellectuals, and news providers are generally aware of the difference between Israel and World Jewry. Officials acknowledge the distinction when it suits them, for example, when they insist that their criticism of Israel has no antisemitic connotation. They often fail to draw the distinction when it does not suit them, for instance, when expecting Israel's gratitude for Shanghai's providing a haven for Jewish refugees in 1940-45, before Israel even existed.

A genuine Chinese understanding of Jewish history developed in the early 20th century. Sun Yat-sen, the first provisional president of the Republic of China, later called the "father of modern China," compared the tragic fate of the Jews to that of the Chinese. In 1920, he wrote to N.E.B. Ezra, head of the Shanghai Zionist Association, that he supported Zionism, the "movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation which has contributed so much to the civilization of the world."³ The original views of China's Communists were not very different. A couple of weeks after Israel's declaration of independence (May 14, 1948), while the Chinese Civil War was still raging, the Communist Party's *People's Daily* welcomed Israel's establishment with an empathy not always found in the West: "The wandering life of the Jews for two millennia was ended. The State of Israel was established in the Middle East."⁴ These Chinese perspectives viewed Jewish history as continuous and regarded Israel as the logical extension of a longstanding narrative. The perceived unity of Jews and Israel was in line with many Jewish and all Zionist views, but it was also inspired by how the Chinese saw their own several thousand-year-old history. Even in 2008,

Henan University historian Prof. Zhang Qianhong published a *History of Israel*, which begins with the tale of Abraham, the biblical ancestor migrating from Mesopotamia to Canaan, later Israel. Her book ends with the Middle Eastern peace negotiations of the early 21st century.

China's tensions with the West, to which Israel belongs, have upended this positive perspective on the continuity between Jewish history and the State of Israel. The link between the two still exists, but it is now often seen in a negative light – and its explanation is antisemitic. With the creation of Israel, “the Western powers literally stabbed a dagger in the heart of the Arab world,”⁵ a typical, quasi-official but false historical statement. It ignores that in 1948, it was the Soviet bloc that provided decisive military and political support for Israel, not the West, apart from American President Truman's quick and critical recognition of the new state. Hence, if Israel is presented as a colonialist white settler outpost, as can be found in China today, the Jewish people writ large can be incriminated for Israel's actions. The original source of linking the two negatively was Soviet, especially Stalinist antisemitism disguised as anti-Zionism. Soviet hostility was directed at Israel, the United States, its allies, and the large Jewish community in the USSR suspected of supporting Israel. The new Chinese version also targets Israel and the United States but lacks a local Jewish minority as a focus. Instead, it targets American Jewry and aligns with the antisemitism and anti-Americanism of the Muslim world. So much for the changing historical background of the popular conflation of Israel, Jews and Judaism.⁶ This conflation often means that positive or negative relations with Israel translate into positive or negative relations with the Jews – not the few in China today, but the entirety of world Jewry.

Antisemitism without Jews or Deep Roots

China's old history does not know Jews and has no cultural, religious, or political memory of a Jewish influence comparable to the West. Two cities are often remembered for a local Jewish presence. A small Jewish community flourished in Kaifeng (once the capital of the Song Dynasty) from the 12th to the 19th century and never faced discrimination. Until the late 19th century Kaifeng's Jews were not regarded as a remote branch of a several thousand-year-old people spread across the globe, but as one of China's many small foreign sects that followed their own special customs but respected China's Imperial rule and culture. And in the 20th century, the city of Shanghai gave precious refuge to more than 20,000 Jews fleeing Nazi persecution who would not have survived the Holocaust in Europe. There were also small Jewish communities in Harbin and Tianjin, which dissolved in the 20th century by emigration.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, political reformers who visited the West discovered that Chinese and Jews in the West had something in common: they were both oppressed. One of these reformers was Sun Yat-sen. At the same time and during most of the Republican period (1911-1949) some antisemitic stereotypes also arrived from the West and casually entered Chinese newspapers and intellectual discourse.⁷ "Stingy" or "greedy" were colloquial antisemitic stereotypes for Jews. Such stereotypes did not target real Jews in or outside of China, except for rare comments about unwelcome refugees or rich Sephardi Jews in Shanghai. Also, some Chinese nationalists opposed colonialism which included in their eyes, Zionism. No important political or cultural movement in China absorbed and amplified antisemitic stereotypes. This was a critical difference with the West and Russia. The Jew was not an enemy, Japan was. From early on, the main foreign transmitters of antisemitism were Christian missionaries, some of whom warned of Jews as enablers of Communism, or as plotters who wanted to rule the world. Other transmitters were Chinese students returning from abroad, including France

and Nazi Germany. The example of China's most famous 20th century writer, Lu Xun shows that the Western definition of antisemitism is not always transferable to China. Lu's stories occasionally portray Jews as "greedy" or "calculating."⁸ Was he antisemitic? In 1933, as soon as Hitler came to power, Lu Xun went with a group of Chinese writers and politicians to the German consulate in Shanghai to protest the onset of antisemitic persecution in Nazi Germany. Lu Xun's party had themselves photographed in front the closed doors the Germans had refused to open.

During the Republican and even more recent periods, Chinese references to Jews often showed a wish to know more about them. This included interest in the resonance of Jewish writings in China, from the Hebrew Bible to the Yiddish and Israeli literature of the 20th century. In the early 21st century, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) nominated the Israeli novelist Amos Oz year after year, but in vain for the Nobel Prize for Literature. His books, all featuring Israel, were popular in China. It is also noteworthy that none of China's top Communist leaders, from the early 1920s until recently, were known to be personally or ideologically antisemitic – in significant contrast to many Soviet and other East European Communist leaders. President Xi Jinping's few statements about Jews and Judaism indicate that at least until a few years ago he opposed antisemitism. On May 15, 2019, Xi Jinping opened a "Dialogue of Asian Civilizations" in Beijing. He called the Talmud, the source of Jewish law, one of the greatest Asian contributions to the civilizations of the world.⁹ The Chinese, but no known Jewish or Israeli media reported his praise of the Talmud. On September 14, 2020, Xi clashed publicly with Germany's Angela Merkel and the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen who had criticized Chinese treatment of the Uyghurs. Xi hit back by attacking the rise of antisemitism in Europe.¹⁰ Until 2019/20, China had stood apart (together with India) as a civilization with no major old or current history of indigenous antisemitism.

Behind the Rise of Antisemitism in China: A Convergence of Events

Around 2021, the Chinese government chose to harden its attitude towards Israel and its Jewish supporters. Chinese contacts informed some Israeli experts of this policy change. Whether Xi Jinping himself made the relevant decisions is not known. No single reason, but a convergence of events caused this change. In May 2020, then-U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Israel to argue against China's critical infrastructure investments, particularly in a major desalination project. The Chinese resented this, as well as additional interventions that followed.¹¹ Already in 2019 Israel had to set up an *Advisory Committee to Assess the National Security Implications of Foreign Investments*, which began operating in 2020. China was not mentioned but everybody knew that it was the main target.¹² These warnings compelled Israel to restrict its economic relations with China. Then, Israel's eleven-day conflict with Gaza in May 2021 became an opportunity for China to assault America, Israel's only effective diplomatic defender, by hitting out at its Israeli ally. Hence, China attacked Israel at the United Nations for alleged war crimes, which led Israel in June 2021 to pay the Chinese back by supporting for the first time a Western resolution condemning China's Uyghur policy. The Chinese were upset at Israel's vote. This was a prelude to China's accelerated support for the Arab side, starting with the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023. In China, the attack triggered a strident anti-Israeli and antisemitic media wave.

During the same years but hidden from the public noise at the United Nations, Beijing was preparing a major geopolitical initiative, its grand entry into the Arab Middle East to challenge the United States. On January 14, 2022, the Communist Party's *Global Times*, a propaganda tool to convey China's views to the wider world announced that a "generous" China would enter this region to replace a "selfish" America. At about the same time China announced officially its New Security Architecture for the Middle East.¹³ This document made clear that China's interest in the Middle East went far beyond energy security and

economic links. It revealed a comprehensive strategy of heavily investing in local infrastructure and future technologies to coordinate the development of Middle Eastern nations with China's own. For China, distancing itself further from Israel was an inexpensive way of boosting its friendship with the Arab world. Finally, in December 2022, President Xi Jinping arrived in Saudi Arabia to meet 21 leaders of the Arab world, carrying in his briefcase dozens of agreements ready for discussion and signature. The official pretext for his visit was to attend the first Head of State Summit of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF).

In the background of these well-known public events, Chinese decision-makers were discreetly re-assessing Israel's power and influence. During a couple of decades until about 2020, many Chinese regarded Israel as a solid, strong, unified country, well positioned to resist its noisy, ill-prepared enemies. But Israel's judicial reform crisis, its unending mass demonstrations against the government and its five elections in four years, ruined Israel's "strongman" image. Israeli government sources denied that the crisis was damaging the country's international standing. But the Chinese media's extensive reporting of the crisis said something else. Chinese journalists writing from Israel described the country's deep political and social polarization,¹⁴ asked why Israel's reform efforts were always getting "more chaotic"¹⁵ and quoted President Herzog's warning that the nation was on the "brink of constitutional and societal collapse."¹⁶ In China, the publication of such reports often indicates what the leaders are thinking. The October 7 military failure finally confirmed to the Chinese that Israel was no longer what they once thought it was. Israel's domestic and defense crises do not explain China's embrace of the Arab Middle East but did likely sharpen Chinese criticism of Israel. Israel's military successes since those difficult days and America's ongoing support have certainly told China that Israel's strength was rising again, but China's fundamental positions have not greatly changed.

China's message to the Arabs is that it would always stand resolutely with them, as it had in the past. It was clear to both the Chinese and the Arabs that Israel and the Jews were firmly in the Western camp. What is not clear is why China's

permanent and well-known political support for Arab interests was allowed, if not encouraged to degenerate into a media and university campaign of vile Jew-hatred (details below). This was not necessary. How would parroting the anti-Jewish abuse widespread in the Arab world enhance China's national interest in the world, or turn the antisemites of the world into useful political supporters of China?

The following pages will provide details and elucidate more specific motives for China's social and public media antisemitism. Future historians might find other, deeper answers in political, societal, and intellectual changes currently underway in China, rather than the wish to participate in the turmoil of the Middle East or in a reaction to perceived American antagonism.

Salient Cases of Antisemitism in China

Antisemitic ideas were occasionally expressed in the People's Republic of China even in the years before the current antisemitic wave. Song Hongbing, in his 2017 book *Currency Wars*, asserted that Jews controlled global finance. The book became a best seller, perhaps because many Chinese hoped to learn how to get rich quickly rather than out of any preoccupation with the Jewish question. Yet there were also signs that the public atmosphere in regard to Israel and Jews was beginning to deteriorate. On August 19, 2020, the *Jerusalem Post* published an unfriendly editorial: "China has proven to be a bad actor – we owe them nothing."¹⁷ By then the Chinese should have become used to unfriendly headlines in Western newspapers, but this one, translated into Chinese, triggered a flood of unexpected antisemitic attacks by Chinese netizens that discomfited scholars of Judaism in China.

An unprecedented antisemitic media wave started with the Gaza war in 2021. It was reinforced since the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023.¹⁸ Chinese media began spreading antisemitic tropes under the cover of criticism of Israel's military actions. While similar denunciations conflating Israel, Zionists, and Jews occurred in other countries too, in China all political speech is tightly monitored and censored if it is not in line with official positions. If antisemitism was spreading on China's media, it meant that it was officially sanctioned. It appeared in government sources and public media, in social media, and in universities.

Government Sources And Public Media: Since October 7, 2023, antisemitism has surged on media platforms controlled by the Chinese government. The Vice President of China's Foreign Ministry think tank, China Institute for International Studies (CIIS) alleged that "the foundation for political survival in the U.S. is parasitically attached to Israel's powerful Jewish forces."¹⁹ On October 10, when Israel had barely regained control over its territory after the Hamas onslaught, the governmental China Internet

Information Center (CIIC) alleged that Israel had used white phosphorus bombs. This was a lie that prompted Chinese netizens to compare Israel to the Nazis.²⁰ Chinese officials decided to eradicate some memories of Jewish history and culture in China. In 2024, Beijing canceled a non-political musical about the Jewish refugees in Shanghai, a prohibition which contradicted the regular official celebrations of Shanghai's offering refuge to fleeing Jews. Already earlier, the city of Harbin removed the memorial tags affixed to buildings once belonging to a Jewish community, such as the former synagogue, and the city's small Jewish museum was shuttered.²¹ Inevitably, the Nazi practice of eliminating all traces of Jewish contributions to Germany comes to mind. Also, state publishers canceled the publication of several books on Jewish history.

Social Media: The Chinese internet is the chief conveyor of antisemitic and anti-Israeli opinions. This had already started before 2021. Hostile bloggers argued with internet users who defended Israel. What had been a trickle before 2021 became a flood after. But even during Israel's war with Iran in 2025, some bloggers applauded Iran's defeat, whether because they loathed Iran or liked Israel is not known.²² After 2021 and again following 2023, cyber nationalists and Marxists, internet pundits, and "influencers" were free to defame Israel and the Jews because the internet antisemites were protected by official approval. The news excoriating Israel and Jews on social media are often translations of foreign, mainly English-language sources. It is not known who provides and pays for the translations. It would be no surprise if Israel's wealthiest enemies help fund such activities. The best known among them is involved quite openly. The only foreign news provider operating from inside China is Qatar. Its Al Jazeera was allowed to open a news channel in 2002, but this is now blocked. Instead, Al Jazeera launched in 2018 a Mandarin-language news website, the first website from the Middle East addressing the Chinese audience directly. Needless to say, the Chinese version of the news is as hostile to Israel as the Arab and English versions. Al Jazeera is widely followed in China. Chinese students who have to write papers on the Middle East have quoted Al Jazeera as a serious professional source.²³ There are also domestic Muslim news sources in China. Already decades ago, Muslim websites blamed the Jews for Britain's Opium Wars against 19th-century China, imitating antisemitic slanders in the West that are blaming the Jews for all wars.²⁴ Inside China, Israel cannot defend itself against hostile Arab and domestic Muslim propaganda.

Repeated hostile depictions of the United States and Israel as “brothers” are conjuring up the vision of a post-Western global governance, with the United States isolated as a puppet of Israel and world Jewry. One of the more important bloggers is Lu Kewen, a former worker who claims to have 15 million followers. He defames the Jews with quotes from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, pre-dating Israel by a century or more. Lu Kewen published photos of a foreign women to enable his Chinese readers to identify any Jew by their long noses (considered ugly in popular Chinese tradition).²⁵ Similar racist pictures could be found in Nazi publications more than eighty years earlier. Another media influencer, Su Lin expressed his murderous hostility openly. After the October 7 attack, he stated that “ Hamas went too soft on Israel.”²⁶ A preferred target of China’s internet warriors is “the Jew George Soros.” Although Soros has no public Jewish connections and is funding organizations critical of Israel, his characteristics fulfill the criteria most relevant for Chinese polemicists: he is a Jew, very rich, American, politically influential, and an enemy of China. Hence, China’s internet antisemites accuse him of representing the Jews’ alleged international financial power and of conspiring to control the world for Jewish benefit. “The Jew” Soros had once criticized President Xi Jinping, which made it mandatory to lash out at him.²⁷

Universities: Official animosity to Israel and its Jewish supporters encouraged an atmosphere of hostility that is said to have existed in some Chinese universities before 2023. As all universities are government-financed, their policies follow government directions. Visitors and colleagues report that some teaching staff and students are openly expressing antisemitic, including pro-Nazi, and anti-Israeli views. This is how prestigious universities became critical nodes for the spread of antisemitism.

Objective research and unbiased publications on Israel, Zionism or Judaism have become difficult, unpopular and in some cases impossible. Fewer academics teach and do research on Jewish culture and history than in the past. Similar trends have been reported from Western countries as well. But in contrast to the West, where publicly defending Jews and Israel, fighting antisemitism and objective scholarly research is possible, it is not in China, or only at great risk to the defenders. In 2024, China closed down the first Chinese university in Israel, a branch of Beijing’s University of International Business

and Economics (UIBE) after three years of operation. The Chinese professors and students returned home. The reasons were said to be practical and not antisemitic or anti-Israeli, but the closure still sent a message.

There are also professors who have become not conveyors, but targets and victims of antisemitism and anti-Zionism. Germany, after 1933 when the Nazis came to power, had already demonstrated the lead role of universities in spreading antisemitism and excluding Jews. In fact, it was a double role: many in academia were persecutors and some were persecuted.²⁸ In some universities and institutes the atmosphere has turned ugly. When late Prof. Yin Gang, a nonconformist scholar criticized Hamas' violence, he was called a "Judeo-Nazi." Though many respected him for his vast knowledge of the Middle East, he faced a flood of internet insults.²⁹ Other professors report getting written death threats from students who blame them for not condemning Israel. Suddenly, shadows from China's dark past are re-emerging: during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), students who became Red Guards mistreated teachers whom they accused of "counterrevolutionary" thoughts.

There are a few positive signs as well, but they do not weigh heavily. Some students do not trust the one-sided official presentation of the war between Israel and Hamas and want to know how it really started. Occasional public university lectures on Jewish issues are attended by large numbers of students, and in 2025 Chinese Ph.D. theses on Jewish history and culture could still be written. But Judaic researchers are pessimistic about the long-term future of their research in China. One of them predicted that in 20 years, teaching and research on Judaism will have disappeared from Chinese universities, not only due to hostility, but because Israel and Jews would be regarded as increasingly irrelevant in a world where the Global South, guided by China, is expected to be dominant. The slow death of teaching and research on Jews and Israel could be a long-term consequence of the current antisemitic wave.

Prof. Yin Zhiguang: Yin is a young professor of international relations at the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai. His views are examined here because he is a well-known academic antisemite. His Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and Maoist appeal to the Global South align closely with President Xi Jinping's political and ideological agenda.³⁰ Yin advocates global "cultural decolonization" and strengthening the China-led Global South. While he consistently denounces

the United States, the only other nation facing his permanent wrath is Israel. The Gaza wars of 2021 and 2023-25 offered him many occasions to lash out at Israel. His reaction to Israel's September 2024 pager attack against Hezbollah terrorists was an eye-opener. "How dare the West speak of civilization? Israel's atrocities reveal that Western civilization has never had a moral bottom line." This statement reflects a broader conflation in the Chinese imagination between the West and the Jews. Two decades ago, young Chinese generally admired Western, and particularly American, civilization, and often associated it with Jewish achievements. However, the "Trade War" starting in 2018 and the subsequent, growing tensions between China and the United States eroded the latter's image in China and by extension, that of the Jews as well. Yin describes the Israelis as "armed guards of Gaza's open-air concentration camp."³¹ He almost certainly was never in Gaza and wrote this before Israel occupied most of the Gaza Strip. Did his comment emerge from long-suppressed collective memories of China's own "open-air concentration camps," a taboo issue, where millions suffered during Mao's Cultural Revolution?³² Or is this a reaction to the American and Western charge that China keeps Uyghurs in concentration camps, a charge that China resents and rejects?

Yin's accusations are at times exaggerated and unsubstantiated, such as asserting that "Israel has deliberately assassinated countless Palestinian poets." He investigates the roots of the current violence: "Israel's colonial rule over Palestine has lasted 77 years." This means that Israel's creation in 1948 was inherently illegitimate, and logically it should still be illegitimate. Yin explains further that "Israel's regime is both an outpost of a contemporary capitalist global empire and a time-capsule of the 19th-century capitalist colonial empires." These accusations are identical to those of the West's radical leftists. Yin's most surreal claim is that the West cannot even speak about Israel's alleged crimes because all public voices "are strictly controlled by financial capitalists... a shadow empire that controls media, politics, finance" – obviously the Jews.³³ A secret conspiracy of Jewish capitalists controlling the world is one of the oldest antisemitic canards. Yin now also blames this invented Jewish conspiracy for the imaginary prohibition of free speech in the West. This is quite ironic as he identifies with the policies of the People's Republic of China, which has never allowed free speech. Yin conveniently ignored the fact that Israel is under continuous attack by Western media and popular demonstrations.

It is unclear whether Yin influenced Chinese government positions or the antisemitism in China's social media. He does not disclose how he discovered the assumed wrongdoings of the Jews. He refers neither to a Chinese tradition nor to old Soviet antisemitism. Yin obtained his Ph.D. in 2011 from the University of Cambridge where a few years later, students demonstrated for Hamas, called for "intifada until victory" and threatened their Jewish classmates. Probably this was the link. Antisemitism has become a bond uniting students and professors at many universities across national borders.

Censorship: China's censorship is involved in the antisemitism question, both in social media and in academia. Chinese experts argue that their country's ubiquitous media censorship ignores antisemitism on social media because it triggers no domestic social tensions. There are very few Jews in China. By contrast, there are many Chinese Muslims. This is said to be the reason why media censorship is suppressing anti-Islamic but not anti-Jewish sentiment. It is a true, but only partial explanation. It ignores the official permission, if not encouragement of media antisemitism.

Censorship is obvious at the higher education level. The authorities warned professors to keep away from "political" issues. The safest way for a professor to follow this advice is to limit his field to ancient Bible studies, which at least one is doing. Some academics were forbidden to visit Israel, and others had their Weibo and WeChat accounts suspended as punishment for voicing support for Israel. Some professors avoid communicating in writing with Jewish or Israeli colleagues. They maintain contact through personal visitors. An annual conference of Judaic studies in China had to be postponed. Publishing peer-reviewed articles in key journals has become difficult when the author portrays Jews or Israel in a positive light. A publication stop can jeopardize an author's academic career. A special case are foreign professors invited to give a lecture in China. The Chinese edition of the books of the Hebrew University professor Yuval Noah Harari, such as *Sapiens*, remain best sellers, but when Harari was invited to give a lecture at the University of Peking about a philosophical issue, not the Middle East (July 10, 2025), he was introduced to the audience as a professor from Cambridge. When he spoke about his younger years as a schoolboy in "the country," he never mentioned which country.³⁴ "Israel" and "Jerusalem" are apparently forbidden words. These can be signs of a

disorganized censorship bureaucracy, or of a political decision to wipe out any neutral public mention of Jews, Judaism, and Israel, a symptom of incipient Orwellian totalitarianism.

Censorship decisions on books about Jewish themes are unpredictable. Some books are allowed, but others are forbidden, which can look absurd to outsiders. For example, prohibiting the Chinese edition of a biography of an early 18th-century founder of a Jewish sect in Eastern Europe does not seem to make sense. Did the censors fear a resurgence of religious sects in China itself, like those that created so much havoc in the past?

Scope and Impact of Antisemitism: No Complete Picture

Apart from case studies and the anecdotal evidence so far presented, a reliable, comprehensive assessment of the scope of antisemitism among China's more than 1.4 billion citizens, across 23 provinces and 5 autonomous regions, is currently not possible. Comparing the scope and domestic impact of Chinese to Western or Muslim antisemitism is hazardous. Some Chinese observers assert that Israeli and Jewish issues are barely ever touched in family and social gatherings. When they are mentioned, old stereotypes about Jews being rich, intelligent and successful are allegedly still alive, in spite of the Gaza war. It is sure that China's Muslim minorities, probably less than 5% of the total population, have no real political or intellectual influence on China's Han majority, in contrast to the situation in the West. It is equally credible that the Chinese generally exert no pressure on their government to act in one way or another towards Jews or Israel, whatever sentiments they may express on Middle East issues. Gaza is too remote from their true daily preoccupations. This is a big difference from the West, where public opinion is driving governments to turn against Israel. China's antisemitism cannot be compared to that of the two main Jew-hating powers of the recent past, Germany under the Nazis and the USSR under Stalin. But China could move in that direction if current trends are allowed to continue and intensify.

Various metrics could be employed to assess antisemitism in China.

National Opinion Polls: In 2024, the *Anti-Defamation League (ADL)* carried out nationwide opinion polls in many countries, including China, and published a Global antisemitism index. The current (2024) ADL website reports that 660.5 million Chinese people “harbor elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes,” which is 47% of China's population, or three times more than the number of Chinese antisemites identified in another 2014 study (200 million).³⁵ The ADL also calculated that 46% of adults worldwide “have significant antisemitic beliefs,” or twice as many as in 2014. This suggests that antisemitism was rising

faster in China than in the rest of the world. The definitions, measurements and comparisons for China need critical review, with which the ADL is said to have agreed. Critics argued that the survey lacks cross-cultural validity. For example, a third of Chinese respondents replied that “Jews have too much power in the business world,” but mentions of business power are often viewed positively and not negatively in China and East Asia.³⁶ Jews and Israelis visiting or living in China do not notice that almost every second Chinese person shows “elevated levels” of antisemitism. By contrast, those visiting or living in Western countries do notice the rise of antisemitism. The ADL statistics suggest at least that China’s media wave against Jews and Israel did influence popular opinion.

Large-Scale Public Events: In the West and the Muslim world, massive public demonstrations against Israel and “Zionists,” meaning Jews are an easily visible and measurable expression of antisemitism. As China does not allow independent public demonstrations, this measure is not applicable. Another visible public demonstration of Jew-hatred is the frequent vandalism of public synagogues, memorials, cemeteries and other Jewish places in most countries where there are Jews. In China, there are no visible still-functioning public synagogues as in the West, but there are Jewish museums, cemeteries, Chabad houses and the buildings of Israel’s diplomatic missions. No act of vandalism has been reported against any of them so far (Summer 2025).

Social Media: It was said that China’s social media through the internet are the most efficient “producers” and conveyors of antisemitism, as in other countries. These media can also be regarded as “consumers” or reflections of ambient antisemitism. 1.11 billion Chinese individuals used the internet at the start of 2025, or 78% of a total population of ca. 1.42 billion, which means most if not nearly all Chinese adults.³⁷ Assessing whether and how these 1.11 billion people are using words like Jew, Judaism, Israel, Zionism, antisemitism would yield better insights into the Chinese public’s views than any other method, except for improved opinion polls. Accessing Chinese websites from outside of China for evaluation purposes is difficult and identifying content related to Jews from billions of entries would be possible but expensive. This has not been done so far.

Foreign Impacts: Little assessed are the foreign impacts of Chinese antisemitism. The Israeli expert Tuvia Gering notes: “When a state

representing one-fifth of humanity, armed with the world's most sophisticated propaganda machine, vilifies Jews, it jeopardizes the very lives of Jewish people everywhere.”³⁸ Does China's voice now add to the antisemitism rampant in the “Global South,” particularly in numerous Muslim countries? China's growing global role means that its attitude to Jews and Israel will likely have a wider impact on important parts of the world than say, the current antisemitism in any European country. Even clearer is the impact in the United States, Israel's main, indispensable ally. There, 170 million, mostly young people, are regular *TikTok* followers. According to Israeli warnings, TikTok's leadership often pursued policies hostile to Israel and Jews.³⁹ This is credited with playing a significant role in influencing young Americans against Israel and Jews. In addition, China-linked networks are funding anti-Israeli protest groups in the United States⁴⁰. The Chinese Communist Party is interfacing with pro-Palestinian activism in the United States to promote China as a universal “defender of justice,” in contrast to America.⁴¹ Japan is another country where a Chinese source, an officially accredited diplomat to the country, encouraged antisemitism. In June 2025, China's Consul General in Osaka, Japan, published a graph on X comparing Israel to Nazi Germany. Earlier, he had compared Jews to the war criminals of Japan's imperial army.⁴² Following Israel's protest, the graph was deleted. Jew-hatred is normalizing internationally, in this specific case with China's help, and including in countries which had until recently no interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Last but not least, the large Chinese diaspora, both in the West and Asia, is aware not only of China's influential hostility to Israel but also of Western solidarity with the Palestinians, which some diaspora Chinese share.⁴³

A Typology: Drivers of Antisemitism in China

This chapter counts twelve specific, separate “drivers” – that is sources or causes – of China’s current antisemitism. Many of them are connected or operate together, even if they are separate. Their number and variety are large, arguably larger than they would be for countries with a long history of indigenous antisemitism.

China’s Confrontation with the United States

1. **An Interplay of Three Factors Related to the United States:** Three factors connected to America are fueling antisemitism in China. First, America’s political and economic confrontation with China, second China’s economic difficulties, and third the conviction that American Jews (2% of the population) control the country’s wealth, media, and politics. The presumed control of the world’s largest economy by a minuscule minority, the Jews, is seen as a demonstration of the inequity of capitalism. This control is said to be visible in the legendary personal riches of Jews and their support for Israeli interests. That the support of Israel is often the outcome of a complex game of domestic and foreign policy considerations, is generally not understood.

Human rights arguments increase the tensions between China and America, supported by the West. This has repercussions for Israel. The United States continues condemning China’s treatment of its Uyghurs, calling it in 2024 officially as “genocide and crimes against humanity against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs,”⁴⁴ and China retorts in anger, vilifying America as “an accomplice to the genocide in Gaza.”⁴⁵ The repeated public mentions of “genocide” by both powers helps legitimize the term’s use as a slur against Israel. The United States sees Chinese antisemitism and the attacks against Israel primarily as an anti-American propaganda tool. Professor Deborah Lipstadt, the United States Special Antisemitism Envoy (until 2024) made

this point and called Chinese antisemitism “a cause for alarm.” Chinese officials underlined the propaganda value of the antisemitism quarrel when they declared: “We use the Jews as a stick to beat the Americans.” In other words, antisemitism has become part of the wider big power confrontation.

Hostility to America, Israel, and Jews combine in many countries. Everybody is aware of the strong links between the United States and Israel.

China’s Search for Friends and Allies

2. **Arabs and Muslims:** Chinese media antisemitism became more discernible around 2021, just as the country’s Middle East policy became more actively pro-Arab and anti-Israeli, particularly at the United Nations. This is no coincidence. Once China became convinced of the reported solidarity of all Jews, not least by Israel’s and the Jews’ own telling, it was not irrational to add antisemitism to its anti-Israeli tool kit. In the West, the wish to improve relations with the Muslim world often leads to policies inimical to Israel, but not always to Jews. It is Muslim minorities in the West and their local supporters that add anti-Jewish hostility at home to governmental anti-Israeli policies abroad.

Not only China, but most countries, Western and Non-Western, fear Islamic violence and want good relations with the Muslim world and local Muslims.

3. **The China-Russia-Iran “Axis”:** China has formed strong links, even a quasi-alliance with Russia and Iran (maybe to be followed by North Korea)⁴⁶. The purpose is to strengthen political, military, economic and technological cooperation. Such links often enlarge cooperation to culture, tourism etc. to increase mutual “bonding.” There is a historical precedent for antisemitism as a method of bonding between countries in strategic quasi-alliances. It was the “Axis” – the first political use of the term – uniting Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan before World War II. Fascist Italy had almost no popular antisemitism and no legal discrimination against Italian Jews until 1938. Then Hitler made a state visit to Rome to mobilize Italy’s support, and its leader, Mussolini, issued his anti-Jewish laws not long after. Today, Iran incites China against Israel. On February 14, 2023, China’s and Iran’s president, the latter on visit to Beijing signed a joint declaration, amongst others criticizing Israel and demanding that it submits its nuclear

installation to UN control. No other great power leader has ever signed a similar public demand of Israel, certainly not jointly with Iran. Whether Iran also fueled China's media antisemitism and whether Russia too played a role is not clear.

The triangular quasi-Axis allying China, Russia and Iran is a unique configuration in today's geopolitical landscape.

Looking for Scapegoats

- 4. Projecting One's Own Offenses onto the Jews:** The Soviet Jewish writer Vassily Grossman discusses antisemitism in his autobiographic novel *Life and Fate* (1959): "Tell me what you accuse Jews of – I'll tell you what you are guilty of."⁴⁷ Grossman's observation, gained during the Second World War in his native Soviet homeland, is a convincing explanation of antisemitism. Projecting one's own culpability into others is a well-documented psychological defense mechanism. Blaming Israelis and their "Zionist," that is, Jewish, supporters for crimes against humanity and genocide, and calling them Nazis can be found in many, including European, countries. Many of these countries have carried out wide-spread cruelties and wars of annihilation during their past colonial conflicts or have persecuted their own Jews or other minorities in the more remote past or have collaborated with Nazi Germany in the murder of their Jews in the recent past. Sticking the Nazi label on Israel allows them to project their own, conscious or subconscious memories onto the victims – memories that remain a source of qualms and irritation. But the Nazis were not in China, and China did not persecute Jews, yet China's anti-Israeli polemics are using the Nazi metaphor surprisingly and too often. When Professor Yin Zhiguang calls Gaza an Israeli "open-air concentration camp," one could ask whether he had subconscious memories of camps in China.
- 5. Canary in the Coal Mine:** According to an old European saying, "The Jews are the canary in the coal mine." The leading French historian Fernand Braudel has suggested a link between growing Jew-hatred and economic crises in European history.⁴⁸ Rising antisemitism announces the approach of economic hardship and social tensions. Is China now replicating this experience, not against local Jews because there are almost none, but

Judaism more broadly and the Jewish state? China's economic growth has slowed, according to foreign reports, and youth unemployment is high. Perhaps the canary analogy remains valid.

6. **Xenophobia:** Hostility to foreigners seems to rise in China, occasionally encouraged by official sources as “patriotic.” Other manifestations of Chinese xenophobia are much worse than antisemitism, for example, a widespread public hostility against African students. In 2023/24, there were several unprovoked, violent street attacks against foreigners. In the past, xenophobic violence in China occurred during periods of social and political tension, such as during the “Boxer Rebellion” in 1900. In many countries, people who dislike foreigners tend to dislike Jews too.
7. **The Jews are Themselves to Blame:** Blaming the Jews for their own misfortunes and for the hostility they encounter was originally a mission of the Biblical prophets but has since become an antisemitic trope extended also to Israel. The Gaza war has become the most potent contributor to this thought, but the tendency existed long before. A small group of leftist Israeli and Jewish writers play a major role in this self-blame game. Shlomo Sand's *The Invention of the Jewish People*, published in 2009, says it all in the title of his book, and Ilan Pappé's “revisionist” 2006 book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* and his other, similar books justify the Palestinian rejection of the creation and continuing existence of Israel.⁴⁹ Both authors are well known to Chinese academic researchers of the Middle East and have influenced Chinese views. A completely different issue is the reported negative Chinese reactions to some Israeli propaganda, which was considered exaggerated.
8. **The Jews seek Global Power:** According to all too familiar tropes, the Jews want to dominate the world – if they don't dominate it already. This is the theme of the notorious 19th century antisemitic pamphlet, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which is cited by Lu Kewen and other Chinese internet antisemites. They project onto the Jews what they may wish for their own country, or what they know China too is accused of by the West: seeking world domination. This would be a classic case of projecting China's own supposed sins onto the Jews and Judaism, as described in driver No. 4.

Blaming Jews for internal or external problems is one of the oldest and most frequent antisemitic reactions.

Overthrowing the West's Global Order

9. **A Project to Overthrow the West's Global Order:** Kevin Rudd's (former Australian prime minister) 2024 book, *On Xi Jinping*, concludes from Xi's own statements and policies that his true long-term aim is to overthrow the established global order and replace it with a new China-centered system supported by the "Global South." If this is so, Muslim countries would form the largest single bloc in this new, imaginary order. As the Jewish people and Israel are an integral part of the West, their place in the "new" world order would be greatly reduced. In China's "Global South" fantasies, the Jew/Israeli could become a fading symbol of the old, moribund order. If Rudd is right, maybe Chinese antisemitism aims at anticipating or even promoting this outcome. Today, China is the only credible initiator of an overthrow of the global order. The only other candidate, though not yet a credible one is radical Islam. The United States, the status-quo superpower, is sending mixed messages.

China is the only country with a credible plan for a radical change of the global order.

Philo- and Antisemitism, Two Sides of the same Coin⁵⁰

10. **Philosemitism Reverting to Antisemitism:** Antisemitism is a reversal of the earlier philosemitism of some Chinese readers and intellectuals. According to Dr. Mary Ainslie of the University of Nottingham, these are two sides of the same coin.⁵¹ They are not as contradictory as they would be in the West. The classical Chinese stereotypes of the Jews emphasized traditional Western values and achievements, which many Chinese admired. When China's views of the West deteriorated and Israel was increasingly seen as a mere annex of the United States, philosemitism flipped into antisemitism. Some say it was a mistake to promote an excessively positive image of the Jews in China. The "two sides of the same coin" paradigm is very Chinese and has no contemporary parallels in the West (but it likely does have parallels in Japan and South Korea).

11. **Antisemitism Reverting to Philosemitism:** In the West, some portrayals of Jews are negative but can take a positive cast in China. The claim that Jews control all the banks was, in some cases, a popular compliment in China: “We envy you, please tell us how you did it.” In the 1920s, Shakespeare’s Shylock, the literary embodiment of an evil Jew, was translated and commended by Chinese nationalists who read *The Merchant of Venice* as praise for a proud Jew who took revenge for the violence Christians were inflicting on his people. It was a model the Chinese were invited to follow.⁵²

The “Two-Sides-of-the-same-Coin” paradigm is currently unique to China (and probably East Asia)

Antisemitism is a Meme,⁵³ a Culturally Transmitted Pandemic.⁵⁴ China joins a Global Movement.

12. **Antisemitism, a meme or cultural pandemic, spreads like a viral pandemic:** The term “meme” was coined by the geneticist Prof. Richard Dawkins. It is analogous to “gene”⁵⁵: “Cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission,” and also viral transmission. Antisemitism can be studied as a meme. What makes it comparable to a microbiological (bacterial or viral) pandemic infection is that in its acute form it appears unexpectedly, is transmittable and fast spreading. It returns again and again over centuries and across nations and cultures. It shows identical or similar external symptoms, and sometimes new ones appear and can be lethal. The current antisemitism meme seems universal and so far, irradicable. It was brought to the surface to reach its present strength by Israel’s wars, but its infectious agents existed before, some hidden and others openly visible. Memes are called “viral” because they are activated and spread like a virus, much faster than a gene, much more widely, and over longer periods. Memes replicate themselves by imitation, “leaping from brain to brain.” Memes are easily shareable and spread online (therefore sometimes called “internet memes”) mainly through social media platforms but also through public media. Before the modern information revolution, memes such as antisemitism spread more slowly, through written texts, official decrees, sermons, folk tales, rumors and hearsay, but could also spread very widely and last as long as they do today.

Google defines meme as “an idea, behavior, or style that spreads by means of imitation from person to person within a culture, and it often carries symbolic meaning.” This is how antisemitism can be described except that its spread is not limited to one culture but crosses through many – it is global. Among others, memes may take the form of ideas, jokes, images, videos, melodies.

Contemporary memes often start with a “meme generator,” that is, a free online “image maker” which permits anyone to add their own text or image. A catch phrase or unusual term can be a meme generator. Has the term “genocide,” as leveled against Israel, turned into a meme generator? Both the United States and China officially incriminate each other (and Israel in China’s counterattack) by using this term.

“Memes allow people to participate in cultural experience,” according to another definition found on the internet. Antisemitism is certainly a “cultural experience,” for the victims no less than the actors, and China participates in it together with the West and of course, the Muslim world. The rise of antisemitism developed in parallel in China and the West after the October 7 massacre, but in China it started more quickly and strongly than in the West. By now the West has pulled even, and the Muslim world was antisemitic long before.

Can the spreading of a meme be dissuaded, limited, delayed or stopped? The question is important with respect to antisemitism. Spreading is accelerated by individuals who act as points of connection or “nodes.” If such individuals can be identified and stopped, a meme can sometimes be reduced or extinguished. The policy implications of calling antisemitism a meme need to be further discussed. Giving it a label that recalls an infectious illness could be helpful. An end to the current Gaza war would certainly weaken and slow down the spread of this meme but will not stop it in the short term or make it disappear. Its roots are too deep, and it has spread too widely.

By becoming antisemitic, the Chinese joined the wider world, the South and the North.

The Drivers: Shared with Others or Unique to China?

Most of the specific, identified explanations for Chinese antisemitism, eight out of twelve, would be valid for other countries as well. Only four are unique to China. In other words, if Western human rights laws and the defense of the established global order have not linked China to the West, antisemitism finally has.

Antagonism to the United States enmeshed with hostility to Israel and the Jews can be found in many countries (1), and the same is true for many countries' policies to have good relations with the Muslim world, if necessary, at Israel's expense (2). Choosing the Jews as scapegoats for internal and external problems (4, 5, 6, 7) and accusing them of controlling the world (8) are the most classical motives of global antisemitism. And calling antisemitism a meme, a spreading cultural pandemic, means that the Chinese version of anti-Jewish hostility is part of a vast universal movement (12). It is more comfortable to swim with, rather than against a global stream.

There are fewer, namely four possible explanations for antisemitism that are typical for China only. Bonding with Russia and Iran to form a unique triple quasi-axis could persuade China to assimilate to its allies' traditional antisemitism (3). In China, philosemitism can turn into antisemitism (10) and antisemitism into the opposite (11) because neither antisemitism nor philosemitism have a deep historic basis there. This facilitates a reversal of both trends. And last but not least, only China could realistically try to achieve an overthrow of the Western global order (9). This would dramatically reduce Israel's and the Jewish people's international position.

As said, a lot of China's antisemitism and hostility to Israel is imported from abroad, turned into a weapon for the power struggle with the West and exported back. Israel's long wars in the Middle East encouraged China's search for transnational solidarity against the West⁵⁶. As the West is becoming themselves more hostile to Israel and Jews, there is currently (2025) no great

difference between Western – American, European, Australian – and Chinese antisemitism. The real, critical difference is that Western governments recognize antisemitism as a serious problem which they promise to fight. This is not the case in China which denies that it exists at all and ignores that the borderline between hostility to Israel and hostility to Jews is increasingly blurred.

Is Change in the Air?

The 77-year-old relationship between Israel, created in 1948, and the People's Republic of China, created in 1949, can be seen as a series of continuous “ups and downs.” A period of improved relations is generally followed by years of deterioration, often triggered by external factors, which are again followed by years of improvement, and so on. The years following 2019/20 were a period of severe deterioration. Is this period coming to an end? Is change in the air?

Since late 2024, China has taken small diplomatic steps to improve its shattered relations with Israel. There were hints in Chinese media that this was China's intention. On November 29, 2024, China's ambassador to Israel used the country's most widely read newspaper to argue for “taking a long view...for a new chapter.”⁵⁷ Prof. Yitzhak Shichor, drawing on his long experience of China-Israel relations, commented positively.⁵⁸ On May 10, 2025, the Ambassador continued his charm offensive to the Israeli public with a TV interview and later on with additional public appearances. Surprisingly, he condemned the Hamas “atrocities” of October 7 as “inhuman” and “outrageous.” This was a first for a Chinese official, but in Beijing no media reported his words. The ambassador also said that Iran's possibly building a nuclear weapon would be unacceptable to China, yet four days later (May 14, 2025), the *China Daily* officially welcomed the “already demonstrated peaceful nature” of Iran's nuclear program and attacked America's “illegal unilateral sanctions on Iran.” A fundamental gap separates China's official discourse on the Middle East conflict addressed to a global audience and completely aligned with Israel's enemies, and China's appeasing words just for Israel. Beijing's obfuscations are meant to allow China to pursue contradictory goals, by balancing between opponents and asserting to have only friends and no enemies. But balancing will not suffice to cope with the Middle East's hard realities and will not turn China into a credible peace maker. It has not reversed China's recent antisemitic trends.

Parallel to China's media, some of Israel's media too are publishing articles hoping for greater Chinese interest in Israel. “China's Israel pivot,” promises

one, and asks “is China waking up to Israel’s strategic importance?”⁵⁹ China’s overriding strategic priority linked to the Middle East are approximately 50 Muslim majority states which are part of the 125 Global South countries that China wants to lead. As long as Israel is stuck in its internal and external crises, China will likely wait and avoid being seen “waking up” to Israel’s importance.

Policy Considerations⁶⁰

Israel's China policy is set by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet when they have time for it, which is currently rare. Israel has apparently no coherent long-term China strategy. SIGNAL Group's Carice Witte regards this as an Israeli handicap in working with a country that bases its policies on long-term perspectives. The mandate conferred to Israeli officials is to avoid alienating China and focus on strengthening economic engagement. Chinese businessmen are said to be well-disposed to Israel, which is an added advantage of economic links.

Of course, Israel's freedom of action vis-à-vis China is constrained by Israel's close alliance with the United States and the tensions between the two superpowers. United States concerns have always accompanied the Sino-Israeli relationship. It follows that Israel's China policy must have an American sub-chapter, which is the need to seek American understanding that uncontroversial economic, cultural, and academic links with China might improve Israel's acceptance also by the Global South. This would be in America's interest too.

Israel must take a long-term view like David Ben-Gurion did in the 1950s and early 1960s. He exhorted Israel and the Jewish people to seek contact with China and India, the great powers of the future as he believed, although both were then still hostile to Israel. At this moment, in autumn 2025, Israel's international relations are under great strain. This is not the best time for new policy initiatives towards China. When the situation improves, Israel should consider a number of policies regarding antisemitism in China, which could have broader effects as well:

- 1. Engage the Jewish People around the World** in confronting antisemitism in China, particularly in the media and the university system. China's prominent global role, and the fact that China is not at war with Israel or the Jews gives this issue a greater global resonance than, say antisemitism in a smaller foreign country. Jews all over the world are worried by the global rise of antisemitism but are generally not aware of China's role. Israel should make them aware. There are Jewish communities in many countries in addition to the United States that are important to China, such

as the BRICS founding members Brazil and South Africa, or the European countries. Jewish communities in all these countries could make their voice heard through China's embassies. Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism should play a lead role, in cooperation with the appropriate world and national Jewish organizations, particularly the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Jewish Committee (ACJ) and others. In Israel, *Yad Vashem* could be involved as well.

- 2. Engage other, mainly Western countries to join Israel** in denouncing antisemitism in China. The United States is already doing it. As this is part of the larger confrontation between the two super-powers, the contribution of other, particularly European, countries could have more effect in China. France, Germany, the United Kingdom and others declare defeating antisemitism as a national priority. When a Chinese blogger quoted Hitler on his website to defame the Jews, he should have triggered a strong diplomatic protestation from the Federal Republic of Germany (apparently, there was one, but no public trace could be found). In Germany, publicly quoting Hitler against the Jews is a crime with serious legal consequences. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with Jewish community organizations in the concerned countries, should play the main role.
- 3. Monitor and record expressions of Chinese antisemitism**, particularly in public and social media and in universities. Much of what is known of Chinese antisemitism is anecdotal, not comprehensive and not statistically weighted. Anti-Defamation League (ADL) statistics and data collection processes require revision and improvement. The assiduous research by Chinese-speaking scholars on this subject has been indispensable so far and must continue. Reviewing antisemitism among China's 1.11 billion internet users is technically possible but expensive and difficult from outside China. If the ADL or Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism cannot take this on, perhaps civil society bodies, if funding is available, or private companies can.
- 4. Explore which sectors of China's state bureaucracy are responsible** for authorizing, directing or preventing antisemitism. China's state bureaucracy is huge and not well coordinated. For example, China's ambassador to Israel argued recently for closer links between the two countries and would

certainly include university links, but it is the Ministry of Education that is responsible for higher education policy, and this ministry does not take advice from diplomats or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Knowing exactly where to intervene in a bureaucracy can confer a decisive advantage. Israel's embassy in Beijing, its consulate in Shanghai, and Israel's China experts can be helpful.

- 5. Make Israel's concern about public hostility to Jews and Israel part of the country's diplomatic mandate** and discuss it with the Chinese authorities, including China's ambassador in Israel, as an unwanted obstacle to improved relations. China needs to understand that the issue is serious. If the next Chinese generation grows up with only hostile views of Jews and Israel, building a lasting relationship in the future will be difficult. Raising this concern is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Israeli ambassador in Beijing, and the Chinese ambassador in Israel.
- 6. Propose a renewal of cultural Relations.** China's ambassador in Israel referred in his articles and speeches to the more than thousand years of friendship between Chinese and Jews. Israel should take his diplomatic flourish up and suggest building more academic and other relations in the fields of historiography, archeology, literature, arts, and music. Presenting the long history of the Jewish people and the creativity of Israel are more convincing countermeasures against antisemitism than polemics.⁶¹ A great variety of organizations, including museums, could be involved depending on the subject chosen and the budget available.
- 7. Maybe the time has come for Israel to speak a clearer language** to the Chinese.⁶² So far, Israel's reaction to China's one-sided support for its adversaries, and to the continuation of the antisemitic trends in China, has been restrained. Maybe this should change even if Israel still has a weak hand: If China cannot balance its position more equitably and recognize that Israel is facing severe intractable threats, it will play no role in finding solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs cannot decide alone to change Israel's language. This would require a prime ministerial decision and a cabinet vote.

- 8. Israel's "One China Policy" should not change.** Israel adopted a "One China Policy" in 1950 when it recognized the People's Republic of China and never changed this policy. Recently, a proposal was informally voiced by non-governmental sources that Israel should support some political gains for Taiwan to demonstrate displeasure with China's backing for Israel's enemies. Israel should ignore such proposals. Drawing it into one of the world's most dangerous tensions, as if the Middle East conflict were not enough, would be reckless. So far, Taiwan has not been infected with the People's Republic of China's antisemitic wave, and it should be thanked for this. Israel should strengthen its cultural and academic relations with Taiwan. It should support scholarly Taiwanese research on the long history of relations between China and the Jewish people, particularly also how and why antisemitism emerged on the Chinese mainland. Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei (ISECO) should follow this issue, if necessary, the prime minister and the cabinet must also intervene.
- 9. Influencing China's views of Israel's resilience and power.** China keeps assessing Israel's domestic resilience, its military strength and its strategic position in the Middle East and beyond. As said, Israel's long-lasting domestic crises and the October 7 catastrophe have greatly damaged Israel's image in Chinese eyes, while the following military and intelligence successes have restored part, although not all of this image. Some, certainly in the Chinese military, are again impressed by Israel's performance. Others, likely continue to regard Israel and the Jews as geopolitical lightweights provisionally maintained by the United States, compared to the enormous size and importance of the Muslim countries and an increasingly hostile wider world. In the absence of a comprehensive peace, can Israel's image in Chinese eyes be influenced? Can Israel make itself strategically more attractive to China? An Ad-Hoc Working Group of experts from various Ministries (Defense, Strategic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Diaspora Affairs, Science and Technology) together with China experts, should reflect in this question.

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Endnotes

- 1 Some of the decreasing interest in China studies could reflect a general decline of interest in the humanities in Israeli universities. In mid-2025 the interest in China as a major actor in global geopolitics appeared to increase again.
- 2 Jordyn Haime, "Antisemitism in China After 7 October,," *Points East*, Vol.39 No.1, March 2024, 4.
- 3 Zack Rothbart, "Lost Letter on Zionism from 'Father of the Chinese Nation' Surfaces," *blog.nli.org.il/en/sun-yat-sen*, 10.2.2021. The existence and the text of his letter by Sun Yat-sen were always known, what was "lost" was the knowledge that the original is kept in Israel's National Library (nli).
- 4 She Gangzheng, "The Changing Image of the State of Israel in the *People's Daily* during the Cold War,," *The Image of Jews in Contemporary China*, ed. James Ross and Lihong Song, Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2016, 129.
- 5 Xin Qi, Xin Gefei, *A Brief History of Human Culture in the 20th Century*, 2010.
- 6 An example of Israel taking responsibility for the world's Jews happened in 2008 when it sent President Shimon Peres to attend the opening of the Beijing Olympics in order to appease the Chinese. China was outraged after one hundred American rabbis publicly appealed to the Jewish people to boycott China's Olympics. They thoughtlessly compared these Olympics to those of Berlin inaugurated by Hitler in 1936.
- 7 Yuang Marcus Liu, Qing Xiao, "Republican-Era Chinese Antisemitism and its Remembrance among Jewish Refugees,," *Jahrbuch fuer Antisemitismusforschung* 33, ed. Stefanie Schueler, Technische Universitaet Berlin, Jan. 2024, 54-83. See also Zhou Xun, *Chinese Perceptions of the Jews' and Judaism – A History of the Youtai*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001. Also Dan Ben-Canaan, *Perceptions of the Jewish People*, Lecture, Harbin, PRC, pdf. See <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/Chinese-Perception-of-Jewish-People.pdf>. More recently Dr. Yang Meng, University of Peking mentioned other cases (not yet published in mid-2025).
- 8 Yuang, "Republican Era..." op cit, 54.
- 9 The author attended the conference as an Israeli delegate and heard President Xi making this statement before 2000 Asian delegates.
- 10 <https://www.israeltoday.co.il/read/chinese-president-raises-issue-of-anti-semitism/>. "Chinese President Xi Jinping stunned European leaders when he raised the issue of anti-Semitism in Europe," by Yossi Aloni, 21.10.2020.
- 11 Wang Yu, "Chinese Investment in Israel under the Shadow of the United States: A Precarious Success?," *Israel-Asia Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Ed. Yoram Evron and Rotem Kovner, Routledge: London and New York, 2023, 59.
- 12 <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/activity-advisory-committee-2022>
- 13 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/full-throttle-in-neutral-chinas-new-security-architecture-for-the-middle-east>
- 14 http://www.xinhuanet.com/globe/2023-09/19/c_1310741880.htm
- 15 https://www.sohu.com/a/666455593_516458
- 16 <https://news.cctv.com/2023/02/13/AR-TIzMsIXHvBbYFgtA9enyxX230213.shtml>
- 17 Jpost.com/opinion/china-has-proven-to-be-a-bad-actor-we-owe-them-nothing-639116#google-vig
- 18 If not specified otherwise, the examples in this paper are from the following papers of Israel's expert Tuvia Gering: "Antisemitism with Chinese Characteristics," *Tablet*, Feb. 16, 2022. "China's Turn Towards Antisemitism," *The Jerusalem Strategic Tribune*, INSS, org.il, Nov. 2023. "In the Wake of the War in Israel, Antisemitism in China Reaches New Heights," *INSS*, , org.il-Posts, 16 Nov.2023. Other examples and conclusions are from the following papers:

Jordyn Haime and Tuvia Gering, "Jewish Conspiracy Theories in China,," *Points*

- East*, Vol.38 No.3, Nov. 2023. Jordyn Haime, "Since Oct.7, Antisemitism has Exploded Online in China,," *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 12, 2023. Jordyn Haime, "Antisemitism in China after 7 October," *Points East*, Vol.39, No 1, March 2024. Mary Jane Ainslie, "Antisemitism in China Explained," *Points East*, Vol. 39 No 1, March 2024.
- Josh Rogin, "An American Perspective on Chinese Online Antisemitism," *Points East*, Vol.39 No 1, March 2024. Arthur Kaufman, "Chinese Voices Seek Transnational Solidarity in Israel-Hamas War," *chinadigitaltimes.net*, Nov. 2, 2023.
- 19 <https://history.ifeng.com/c/80yhgcRC12G>
 - 20 <https://x.com/GeringTuvia/status/1711752842719981968>
 - 21 Information provided by Dr. Dan Ben-Canaan who lived in Harbin for many years.
 - 22 A third possible explanation is that the Chinese government wants to test popular opinion trends by placing invented, dissonant blogs under false names on the internet. Other countries have been known to do the same.
 - 23 The author predicted in a 2004 JPPI publication that Al Jazeera would increase the impact of Middle Eastern events on Chinese Muslims and promote radicalization. Chinese censorship eliminated this warning in the Chinese edition of this publication. See Shalom Salomon Wald, *China and the Jewish People – Old Civilizations in a New Era*, Jerusalem-New York: Gefen, 2004, 41. The Jewish People Policy Institute.
 - 24 Source: Prof. Ping Zhang. Tel-Aviv.
 - 25 Gering, "Antisemitism with Chinese Characteristics," *op.cit.*
 - 26 Tuvia Gering, "With China's Help, Antisemitism of the World Unite," *Discourse Power*, Nov. 14, 2023, p.10.
 - 27 <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/china-says-soros-criticism-of-xi-is-meaningless-idUSKCN1PjOZK/>
 - 28 The French philosopher Julien Benda analyzed some of the older and deeper roots in his book *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (1927). He explained that in the 20th century European intellectuals abandoned the defense of universal values such as truth, reason, and justice in favor of partisan, political causes. Was Benda right for China too?
 - 29 Tuvia Gering, "The Mission of the Historian," *Discourse Power*, Sept 17, 2024.
 - 30 The translations and references are from Tuvia Gering, *Discourse Power*, June 26, 2025, "Liberation is an inevitability of life, from Palestine to Beijing, and onward to the whole world," and some of the text is from the introductory analysis by Dr. Shalom S. Wald "A Note on Yin Zhiguang's 'Liberating the Mind'."
 - 31 Gering, "With China's Help...", *op.cit.* 11.
 - 32 The Communist Party of China has since condemned the Cultural Revolution that threw China back by a decade, and it also admitted Mao's responsibility for it, but an open public discussion of this period is still difficult in China.
 - 33 <https://thechinaacademy.org/after-pager-attack-how-dare-the-west-speak-of-civilization/>
 - 34 The author listened to the entire speech on the internet.
 - 35 <https://www.adl.org/adl-global-100-index-antisemitism>
 - 36 Rotem Kowner, Mary J, Ainslie, and Guy Podoler, *op.cit.* "When antisemitism and philosemitism go hand in hand: attitudes to Jews in contemporary East Asia," *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol, 57, 2023. Issue 3.
 - 37 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-china>
 - 38 Tuvia Gering and Ofir Dayan, "Can China's new ambassador to Israel reset the strained relationship?," *Atlantic Council, New Atlanticist*, Dec. 12, 2024.
 - 39 https://www.gov.il/en/pages/committee_discussion_tic_toc.
https://www.org.il/strategic_assessment_tiktok.
<https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/A-Tik-Tok-ing=Timebomb12.21.23.pdf>.
 - 40 Michael Starr, "NRCI: China-linked network funds key anti-Israel protest groups in US," *Jerusalem Post*, May 15, 2024.

- 41 Jennifer Baker, "The George Washington University, Program on Extremism, 2025.
- 42 Tuvia Gering, "Liberation is an inevitability of life, from Palestine to Beijing, and onward to the whole world," *Discourse Power*, 1-3, June 26, 2025.
- 43 Dr. Meng Yang (Beijing) after reading the New York Chinese newspapers, and Arthur Kaufman, "Chinese Voices Seek Transnational Solidarity in Israel-Hamas War," *chinadigitaltimes*.2023/11/net/chinese-voices-seek-transnational-solidarity-in-israel-hamas-war. Nov. 2, 2023.
- 44 U.S. Department of State, *China 2024 Human Rights Record*, <https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>
- 45 The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, August 2025, *The Report on Human Rights Violations in the United States in 2024*, 20.
- 46 The terms "alliance" and "axis" ("quasi-axis" in this paper) have been criticized as too strong for this form of political cooperation, but exactly the same could have been said about the original "Axis" between Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan; The three never trusted each other completely and often pursued independent policies. See <https://belfer-center.org/publication/illusory-entente-myth-russia-china-iran-axis>.
- 47 Grossman's phrase has often been quoted. See Murray Citron, "Book Review: Grossman biography is also a narrative on Soviet history," *Ottawa Jewish E-Bulletin*, Feb. 24, 2020.
- 48 Erner Guillaume, « La faute à la conjoncture : Braudel et l'antisémitisme », *Quadermi*, no.52, Automne 2003.
- 49 It is no coincidence that these books appeared shortly after the end of the Second Intifada (2000-2005) during which more than a thousand Israeli civilians were killed by Palestinian suicide bombers. The Second Intifada destroyed Israel's "Peace Camp.." "Revisionist" books sought to explain, if not justify, Palestinian rejectionism.
- 50 Rotem Kowner, Mary J, Ainslie and Guy Podoler, "When antisemitism ..." op.cit.
- 51 Ainslie, "Antisemiism in China explained," *op. cit.*
- 52 See Zhou Xun, *op. cit.* pp. 53f.
- 53 The term "Meme" was invented by Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 30th anniversary edition 2006, pp. 189-201. See also "Meme" in *Wikipedia and other internet sources*.
- 54 The Meme sub-chapter has been reviewed by Prof. (ret.) Ronald Atlas, University of Louisville, Kentucky, fm. President of the American Society of Microbiology.
- 55 Dawkins, *op. cit.* 189.
- 56 Arthur Kaufman, *Chinese Voices*, *op.cit.* 2-6
- 57 Xian Junzheng, "Taking a Long View and Working in Joint Hands for a New Chapter," *Israel Hayom*, Nov. 29, 2024. <https://www.israelhayom.com/2024/11/29/taking-a-long-view-and-working-in-joint-hands-for-a-new-chapter>.
- 58 Shichor S, "Out of Proportion: Israel's Paradox in China's *Middle East Policy*," *Middle East Policy*, 2025;32:54-73.
- 59 Anat Hochberg-Marom, "China's Israel pivot: Beijing rethinks Middle East strategy – but is China waking up to Israel's strategic importance?" *Jerusalem Post*, August 8, 2025.
- 60 The Recommendations have been discussed with Dr. Gedaliah Afterman, Head of the Asia Policy Program, Abba Eban Institute for Diplomacy, Reichman University.
- 61 According to Chinese sources, Sino-Israeli cultural relations would unnerve Israel's foreign enemies more than economic and other material relations. Culture creates affinities and helps supporting long-term links.
- 62 Roy Ben Tzur, "Biased Neutrality: China's Rhetoric Amid Escalating Tensions in the Middle East," *INSS Insight* No. 2024, August 14, 2025. Ben Tzur defends this view.

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