

Antisemitism in Italy

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This paper focuses on the background and characteristics of antisemitic expressions and perceptions in Italy – not the largest but one of the oldest Jewish communities in Europe. We provide a profile of the main characteristics of Italy's Jewish population and review the main themes and prejudices that have long permeated Italian society and public opinion regarding Jews in the country. Through a variety of recent sources we document the extant public knowledge and attitudes about Jews, attitudes about Israel, and perceptions of the diffusion of antisemitism among the general public. Perceptions of antisemitism among Italian Jews have been documented separately as part of the FRA study. Our purpose here is to contribute to a better assessment of the antisemitic syndrome, its sociological and political components, through the prism of the Italian case. In particular we demonstrate the extent of the phenomenon in a country where antisemitism, while not rated among the highest in Europe, is nevertheless a matter of concern. We also compare the actual socio-demographic profile of the Jewish population with the distorted perceptions of its rivals and detractors.

Keywords: Italy, Jews, Antisemitism, Racism, Prejudice

Concern is rising across European countries following the renewed spread of terrorist violence against Jewish individuals and sites. Murderous attacks occurred in March 2012 in Toulouse, in May 2014 in Brussels, in January 2015 in Paris, and in February 2015 in Copenhagen, and profanation of Jewish cemeteries and other targets is again on the rise. While part of a broader conflict featuring Islamic extremist groups against freedom of opinion and the constituted order in Western societies, these anti-Jewish episodes are intertwined with broader discourse about the status of Jewish communities in Europe. The fact is that European Jewish individuals and institutions increasingly become the target of acts of aggression mostly conceived and generated in a Middle East that has become the major basin of violence worldwide. For many European Jews, the state of Israel is a country where several of their relatives reside, and more broadly a pole of reference in the multifaceted complex of their cultural identity. But in turn, Israel being the paradigmatic enemy of extremist Islamists, anti-Israeli furor increasingly is transferred against the presence of Jewish communities in Europe.

The anti-Israeli component of anti-Jewishness so extremely demonstrated in the recent murderous acts is actually embedded in a much wider and more complex set of attitudes and

behaviors involving the relationship between European societies and the Jews. A dialectic and much ambivalent relationship existed since antiquity, featuring dramatic ups and downs, culminating with the build-up of modern antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries and the annihilation of two thirds of European Jewry during World War II by Nazi Germany and its collaborators (Wistrich 2010). The reconstitution of European Jewry after the Shoah, while overall peaceful and successful, nonetheless has faced periodical surges of antisemitism. These trends were unequally spread across Europe and in different ways and intensities involved the whole gamut of European ideologies – Christian, nationalist, fascist, socialist, and liberal. A study of the perceptions of antisemitism among Jews in nine European Union countries undertaken at the initiative of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency was completed in 2013 (FRA 2014) and pointed to a sharp increase in the perceptions of antisemitism along with racism, xenophobia, and religious intolerance.

This paper focuses on the background and characteristics of antisemitic expressions and perceptions in Italy – not the largest but one of the oldest Jewish communities in Europe. We provide a profile of the main characteristics of Italy's Jewish population and review the main themes and prejudices that have long permeated Italian society and public opinion regarding Jews in the country. Through a variety of recent sources we document the extant public knowledge and attitudes about Jews, attitudes about Israel, and perceptions of the diffusion of antisemitism among the general public. Perceptions of antisemitism among Italian Jews have been documented separately as part of the FRA study (DellaPergola 2015). Our purpose here is to contribute to a better assessment of the antisemitic syndrome, its sociological and political components, through the prism of the Italian case. In particular we demonstrate the extent of the phenomenon in a country where antisemitism, while not rated among the highest in Europe (ADL 2014), is nevertheless a matter of concern. We also compare the actual socio-demographic profile of the Jewish population with the distorted perceptions of its rivals and detractors.

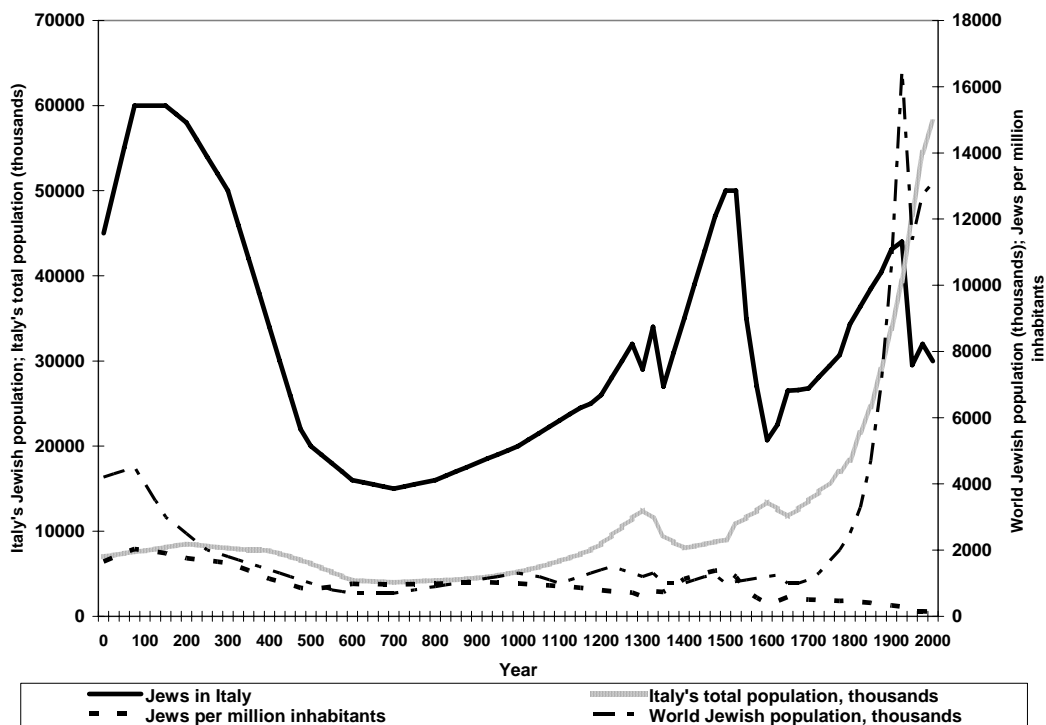
1. Jews in Italy: historical and demographic background

In 2011 Italy celebrated the 150th anniversary of its united statehood, but the concept of a cultural and later political entity spanning over the whole peninsula and its major islands from the Alps to the heart of the Mediterranean is much more ancient. Italy is unique in that it has had a Jewish population permanently resident over the last 2200 years. Jews lived in Rome well before the establishment of the Roman Empire and the inception of Christianity. During the following centuries, Italy absorbed Jews from various areas in the Mediterranean basin and from continental Europe. These newcomers eventually became deeply ingrained within Italy's culture, language and customs, while at the same time keeping a vivid sense of their own Jewish religious and community traditions. The long-term demographic history of Jews in Italy is documented in Figure 1.

The left axis and scale documents the evolution of Jewish population size in Italy and

Italy's total population in thousands since antiquity. The right axis and scale allows to assess world Jewish population in thousands and the number of Jews per million of total population in Italy. As shown in the figure, the demographic history of Italian Jewry consists of three major waves: the first during the ancient Roman period, in the Middle Age; the second culminating with the age of *Renaissance*; and the third in the modern period along with emancipation and the national *Risorgimento*. Each stage of Jewish population growth was followed by a period of major population decline. The first accompanied the establishment of Christianity as the official faith of the Roman Empire, and the Empire's demise; the second reflected Counter-Reformation and the expulsion of Jews from many towns and regions, including Italy's whole south and Islands, and the closure of most remaining Jews in urban ghettos; and the third was the consequence of fascism's rise to power, the 1938 racial laws, and the Shoah.

Figure 1. Jewish Population Size in Italy Compared with Italy's Total Population and World Jewish Population – From Antiquity to the Year 2000



Source: DellaPergola (2010).

Such a long-term view of the Jewish presence in Italy is highly relevant to our study in two ways. On the one hand, it conveys a sense of quite exceptional historical continuity and the direct exposure of Italian Jews to the sources of Greco-Roman and Christian culture that constituted the mainframe of reference for Italian culture and identity in past and modern times alike – including majority perceptions of Jews. Conversely, the deep rootedness of Jews in the local cultural context was to play a crucial role in determining Jewish identity in Italy and the

local Jews' peculiar perceptions of friendly and unfriendly forces in surrounding society. More than most other countries in the world, Italian Jewry was deeply integrated in and imbued with the local culture, spoke the local language – Italian, and could not or cannot be easily distinguished from its non-Jewish surrounding.

In 1938, when the fascist racial laws were promulgated, there lived in Italy about 46,000 Jews. In 1945, after 7,500 perished in the Shoah, 6,000 converted to Catholicism, and 6,500 were lost through a negative migration balance emigration, the numbers were reduced to 26,000 – not including as many DPs temporarily hosted in transition camps in Italy. A national Jewish population survey in 1965 uncovered about 32,000 Jews, mostly reflecting immigration from Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, some other immigration from European countries, and returnees from previous displacement. The number officially recorded in 2011 through membership in local Jewish communities was less than 25,000, despite continuing immigration, reflecting the continuously negative balance of Jewish births and deaths, remigration, losses due to assimilation, and also some withdrawals from community membership (see below). Factoring for non-members of Jewish communities, the current estimate can be raised to 29,000 – or less than one half of one per thousand of the total Italian population.

2. Regional distribution and community organization

Before the expulsion from Spain in 1492, which somewhat later also involved Italy's Spanish-ruled southern and insular regions as well as some northern provinces, a majority of the Jews lived in the south – half of them in Sicily. Following that major expulsion, during the last 500 years most Jews have lived in the northern and central regions. Throughout modernization and emancipation, Jews gradually moved from many smaller provincial towns to the larger regional centers. Eventually, most Jewish communities declined with the exception of Rome and Milan, and finally Rome remained the only slightly growing or stable community. Today Rome hosts over one half of Italy's total Jewish population; Milan is distant second, with about one quarter; and another quarter are spread across 19 officially constituted Jewish communities in other major cities in the North and Center of Italy, plus some in the reconstituted community of Naples and a sporadic few more southward. The contemporary Jewish presence reflects – with different emphases – the degree of socioeconomic and administrative development of the underlying society, namely investment in higher education and hi-tech, employment opportunities in the tertiary sector and in the professions. Table 1 reports the changing regional distribution since World War 2, showing the strengthening position of Rome vis-à-vis other communities.

Table 1. Residential Distribution of Jews in Italy, 1948-2010

Region (Main city)	1948 ^a	1965 ^b	2010 ^a
Italy total	27,861	32,000	24,460
Northwest	9,018	12,170	7,477
Piemonte-Val d'Aosta (Torino)	3,227	2,134	967
Liguria (Genova)	1,108	1,036	347
Lombardia (Milano)	4,683	9,000	6,163
Northeast	3,997	3,104	1,658
Veneto (Venezia)	1,438	1,233	715
Trentino-Alto Adige (Trento)	64	39	44
Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Trieste)	1,634	1,118	545
Emilia-Romagna (Bologna)	861	714	354
Center	14,312	16,239	15,135
Toscana (Florence)	2,912	2,663	1,604
Marche (Ancona)	400	316	148
Lazio e Umbria (Rome)	11,000	13,260	13,383
South and Islands (Naples)	534	487	190

a Community membership.

b National sample survey plus estimate of non-members.

Source: DellaPergola (2010).

An outline of the current location of officially constituted Jewish communities in Italy appears in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Officially Constituted Jewish Communities in Italy, 2012



Source: DellaPergola (2010).

Jewish communities in Italy have been operating under a peculiar legal arrangement which holds special significance for the present review. In 1929 the Italian state, then under the fascist regime, decided to put an end to its long controversy with the Catholic Church by reaching an agreement on state-church relationship. This led to the Lateran Treaty. Immediately after, the regime strived to regulate its relations with religious minorities, then a very tiny segment of Italy's population. In 1930-1931, a state law was passed regulating Jewish Communities and their roof body, the *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane (UCII)*. In spite of its authoritarian context, the law – drafted by Jewish jurists – had several advantages: it subdivided the Italian territory in several Jewish community circumscriptions, establishing in each area compulsory membership for all Jews interested at receiving Jewish community services, with compulsory membership fees (taxation) proportional to income. It allowed free elections of Jewish Community Boards, and of the national board of UCII – a quite unusual democratic procedure under the fascist regime – and it gave each community the authority to elect the respective Chief Rabbi with lifetime tenure. For over 50 years this community structure allowed and in fact supported the regular functioning of Italian Jewry.

In 1984, the law was challenged in court by a Jew unwilling to pay his community taxes. The law was declared unconstitutional because it infringed freedom of religious association. A new arrangement had to be created. In 1987, a new bi-lateral agreement (the *Intese*) was signed between the President of the Union Italian Jewish Communities (*UCEI*) and Italy's prime Minister. Interestingly, the word *Ebraiche* = Jewish was introduced instead of the previous term *Israelitiche* = Israelite. The former in the past carried rather derogatory connotation but nowadays conveys a prouder and more assertive notion of Jewish community, while the latter suggests a more elusive and subdued identity. Existing Jewish communities kept much of the same structure and prerogatives, but membership had now become voluntary. Communities launched a membership campaign, at the end of which more than 80% of extant members had freely re-associated. Italian Jewry, hence, continues to hold a very high membership share – quite unusual worldwide.

This peculiar community structure allowed the successful execution of a first national socio-demographic survey, completed in 1965 (under the previous legal arrangement of compulsory membership). A systematic random sample of about 3,000 households was drawn from the community registers kept in each community. Supported by a high response rate, the survey was able to ascertain the demographic, socioeconomic and Jewish identity characteristics of Italian Jewry (DellaPergola and Sabatello, 1975; Della Pergola, 1976). The same community structure allows today easy and systematic access for vital statistics assessing and survey sampling among the affiliated that, as noted, constitute the vast majority of the Jewish population.

One additional significant piece of information is that for the past several years Italy has had a fiscal system by which 8 per 1000 of the amount due from income tax can be allocated by tax-payers to their preferred charity, including religious denominations. While Italy has fewer than 30,000 known Jews, at least twice as many tax-payers annually devote their 8 per 1000 to UCEI, thus providing a significant source of income for community goals. Who are the non-

Jewish taxpayers who offer their money to the Jewish community can only be inferred. Some probably are descendants of Jewish converts from the time of Inquisition, especially in Italy's southern regions. Others probably include anticlerical Italians who prefer an alternative to giving to the Catholic Church to which many, at least nominally, belong.

3. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Jewish population

The demographic trends and composition of Italian Jewry have been long characterized by low fertility, ageing, and quite high rates of intermarriage – though with great variation across local communities. UCEI data from 2010 show that there were more Jews aged 66 and over than below 19, and more aged 51-65 than 19-35 (UCEI 2010). With such an age composition, the death rate is sure to surpass the Jewish birth rate of less than 10 per 1000 population during the last 20 years, hence causing population decline.

Table 2. Age Composition of Jews in Italy, 2010

Age	Percent
Total	100.0
0-18	18.7
19-35	18.3
36-50	21.5
51-65	19.7
66+	21.4

Source: UCEI (2010).

Since World War II, immigration has usually compensated for these negative trends, by bringing to Italy a significant share of Jews from Mediterranean countries, primarily Egypt and Libya, but also Turkey and Lebanon. Many of these held Italian citizenship abroad. More recently a significant wave from Iran arrived. However, the impact of these arrivals has been attenuated by significant remigration – namely to Israel (see below), to North America, to Latin America, to other European countries, and even to Australia.

As a reflection of the variable incidence of past immigration, the cultural fabric of Jewish communities is quite different. Rome has a majority of veteran local born with a minority of Libyans. Milano has a larger share of Jews born in different Mediterranean countries and a minority of Ashkenazim of Central-Eastern European origin, as well as a share of veteran Italians from earlier internal migrations to Northern Italy's major economic center where the Jewish community was reconstituted only in the 19th century. The smaller Jewish communities across Italy have a higher share of local born veterans. There has been a persisting cultural cleavage and socioeconomic gap between Jews from Rome and from other Italian communities which has translated sometimes into different patterns of choice on the occasion of national

political elections as well as Jewish leadership preferences.

In terms of social status, today's Italian Jewish community belongs largely to the better educated and middle class or higher status of society. While greatly outdated, the following distributions illustrate the case as of 1965 (see Table 3). These striking structural differences reflect the quite different educational exposures and achievements of Jews and non-Jews in Italy. Since then, the proportion of the total population in agriculture clearly diminished, and so did the share of urban workers, leading to higher shares in professional, managerial, clerical and personal service employment. Among Jews, significant increases in the same employment categories came from a significant diminution in trade and commerce, which however remains much higher than among the total population.

Table 3. Occupational Distribution of Jews and Total Population in Italy, 1965-1971

Occupation	Jews, 1965	Total, 1971	Percent Ratio J/T
Agriculture	0	17	0
Not in agriculture	100	100	100
Professional	19	6	317
Managerial	5	2	250
Clerical	14	17	82
Commerce	54	14	386
Personal services	3	13	23
Workers	5	48	10

Source: DellaPergola (1976).

A new survey in 2012 still indicated a high percentage of self-employment among Italian Jews (41%), typical of persons in the free professions and commerce, versus 53% employees, and 6% unemployed (DellaPergola 2015).

Jewish neighborhoods are still an important trait of Jews in Italian cities, as in most other cities worldwide. The concentration in certain peculiar residential areas makes the Jewish presence more visible than their actual numbers would suggest and also provides an element of cohesiveness which strengthens internal social interaction to some extent.

4. Religiosity, identity patterns, affiliation

The 1965 national survey, which we have already defined as very outdated, nonetheless provided a detailed picture of Jewish identification in Italy whose general outline is still relevant. The survey showed that the majority of Italian Jewry did keep some attachment to tradition, a minority consistently observed and practiced, and a further minority stood at the very margins of Jewish identity (see Table 4).

In the course of the more recent decades, on the one hand assimilation has continued its

erosive course with growing rates of intermarriage, and probably even more inter-cohabitation – i.e. permanently living together without being formally married. It is likely that many inter-religious couples nowadays postpone marriage until the birth of a child, whereas in the past intermarriage would have taken place. As a consequence, the actual marriage rate has diminished dramatically, but the rate of actual intermarriage may have diminished too.

On the other hand, two main forces have strengthened Jewish identity in Italy. One is greater access to better Jewish educational facilities, scholarly and popular publications, the press, and other sources of knowledge, also thanks to the new virtual tools. It can be fairly stated that today the general level of acquaintance with Jewish culture is higher than it was in the past, among Jews and among non-Jews alike. The other major process at work has been the rise of Israel as a major component of Jewish identification, which has prompted or even compelled virtually every Jew to take position on a daily basis facing the stimuli or even the explosion of news and comments from the outside environment, namely the media. For a Jew, nowadays it is nearly impossible to be indifferent to his/her identity, whether directly or indirectly experienced. This applies in particular to the younger generation which is the most exposed to the new media environment.

Table 4. Selected Jewish Identification Indicators in Italy, by Selected Characteristics of the Jewish Population, 1965, Percentages

Characteristics	Synagogue		Eats Pesach Matza	Chanukah lights	Bless Shabbat Kiddush	Eats Kosher Meat	Went to Jewish school	Knows some Hebrew	Member Jewish organiz.	Member non-J. organiz.
	Every week	Any time								
Total	12	89	88	41	35	31	51	29	37	13
Gender										
Male	13	89					54	33	38	17
Female	12	88					48	25	36	10
Age										
15-34	15	93	93	39	30	29	67	36	36	12
35-54	13	87	91	49	36	31	48	27	37	15
55-74	18	83	88	37	35	32	36	21	38	15
75+	12	76	80	34	34	31	36	26	37	8
Birthplace										
Rome	13	95	95	34	36	27	49	18	25	6
Other Italy	13	86	82	38	29	29	53	32	45	21
Europe-America	10	83	88	55	42	36	46	48	75	19
Asia-Africa	15	89	95	62	49	49	54	44	32	7

Source: DellaPergola and Sabatello (1975); Della Pergola (1976).

Table 4 presents a selection of major Jewish identification indicators in Italy, by selected characteristics of the Jewish population, as of 1965. Synagogue was attended weekly by no more than 12%, but only 11% did never attend during a year. Great variation characterized the following of Jewish rituals, with 88% consuming *matzah* (unleavened bread) during Pesach, while 41% lightened *Chanukah* lights (in remembrance of the re-inauguration of the Temple in Jerusalem after profanation by the Hellenists), 35% blessed *Kiddush* (wine sanctification) on Shabbat, and 31% ever consumed *kosher* meat (purchased in specialized butcheries). Just over half attended at least one year of Jewish day schooling, but most did for very short periods of time. Some Hebrew knowledge reached 29% of the Jewish population. Membership in Jewish organizations, besides the compulsory community membership, covered 37% of Italian Jews, as against 13% membership in non-Jewish organizations.

Variation across major socio-demographic categories was quite substantial for some of these Jewish indicators. Males generally had higher averages than females probably reflecting inequality of gender status still prevailing at the time. There were signs of Jewish identity recovery among the youngest adults, such as in synagogue attendance, Pesach observance, Jewish schooling, and knowledge of Hebrew. In several respects Jews born in Rome had the lowest indices of Jewishness, but this was due in part to the lower socioeconomic status of that community, that has since improved quite significantly. In several respects, Jews born out of Italy displayed higher Jewish identification indices than Italian Jews – those from Asia and African countries in terms of religiosity, and those from Europe and America in terms of knowledge and participation.

A new survey in 2012 unveiled that by their self-definition, 30% of Jews in Italy were quite or very religious, 31% moderately traditional, and 39% not observant (DellaPergola 2015). Changes versus the older data were not dramatic.

5. Antisemitism and perception of antisemitism

Knowledge about Jews

A first glimpse at the perceptions of Jews by Italians comes from a multiple answers question on the nature of the Jewish group. Data collected in 1990 in a major national survey on anti-Semitism at the initiative of the Jewish community show that a plurality of about one third of all Italians perceived the Jews as members of a *religion*, but just fewer saw them as a *race*. The concept of race resounds embarrassingly cognate to the fascist concept of racial discrimination implemented with the infamous 1938 laws. In spite of its scientific and moral disqualification, the concept is still diffused among the people. Another quarter describe the Jews through the category of *people*, and slightly less indicated Italian Jews as *residents of the state of Israel* – an indication of perceived foreignness. The persisting confusion between *Israeliano* (Israeli) and *Israelita* (Jew) re-emerged in 2011 in a widely publicized speech by then Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi – who came to the podium with friendly intentions but failed the semantic test.

Table 5. Perceptions of Italian of the Nature of Jews, Percentages, Multiple Answers Allowed, 1990

Category	Percent
A religion	32
A race	29
A people	25
Residents of the state of Israel	23
A tradition	14
Other	1
Don't know	10

Source: Goldstaub and Manheimer (1990).

A typical indicator of hostility or at least estrangement versus the "other" often emerges through the tendency to overestimate its population size. Table 6 demonstrates such a tendency versus Jews in Italy with 1990 data. Whereas the actual Jewish population was comprised in the 20-50,000 range, 32% of Italians overestimated the numbers up to figures above 2 million, whereas another 10% underestimated them at less than 20,000. A majority of 52% could not figure out a number. In other words only 6% were on target, testifying of the scarce amount of real contact between the small and geographically clustered Jewish population and the majority of Italian society.

Table 6. Perceptions of Italians of the Number of Jews in Italy, Percentages, 1990

Perceived number	Percent
< 20,000	10
50,000-20	6
50-100,000	5
300,000-100	5
500,000-300	4
1,000,000-500	7
2,000,000-1	6
> 2,000,000	5
Don't know	52

Source: Goldstaub and Manheimer (1990).

Attitudes about Jews

The same 1990 survey compared the opinions of Italians about Jews and about other groups of what can be defined as "others", namely not part of the societal mainstream (see Table 7). Jews occupied an intermediate position, with higher social stigma in comparison to foreigners, Blacks, and the mentally ill, but a better position in comparison to Arabs, atheists, Gypsies, Drug addicts, and homosexuals. It can be inferred that over the last 20 years, some of these perceptions have moved to higher or lower levels of prejudice, namely a worsening of the position of Arabs and Blacks reflecting the intensive immigration of the last years, and possibly a reduction in the prejudice against homosexuals.

Table 7. Opinions of Italians about Selected Groups of "Others", 1990

Group	Sympathy(S)	Indifference	Antipathy(A)	Difference S – A
Foreigners	40	56	4	+36
Black	33	55	12	+22
Mentally ill	18	73	9	+9
Jews	18	71	11	+7
Arabs	18	66	16	+2
Atheists	9	73	18	-9
Gypsies	7	52	41	-34
Drug addicts	4	53	43	-39
Homosexuals	4	50	46	-42

Source: Goldstaub and Manheimer (1990).

More detailed data on images of Jews among Italians in 1990 are displayed in Table 8. Focusing on the percentages who *much agree* with the various propositions, four levels of agreement can be detected.

Above 40% much agree that Jews "suffered much" and "very traditional" – apparently not negative features. Between 20% and 40% indicate again apparently positive features like "strong believers in God", "strong family bonds", "help each other", and "very intelligent", along with negative traits like "more Israelis than Italians" and "rich", and ambivalent like "good at business". Between 10% and 20% much agree with apparently positive traits like "innovators", along with negative traits like "enough with persecution claim", "greedy", "seek too much power", and "feel superior". Finally, less than 10% much agree with definitely negative features like "physically distinctive", "from victims to perpetrators", "they discriminate", "they disrupt society", "they should all go to Israel".

Table 8. Images of Jews Among Italians, 1990

Proposition	% Agree	Thereof: % Much agree
Suffered much	87	55
Very traditional	84	47
Strong believers in God	72	39
Help each other	71	34
Strong family bonds	62	26
More Israelis than Italians	60	29
Rich	59	28
Good at business	57	38
Very intelligent	57	22
Enough with persecution claim	44	13
Greedy	41	18
Seek too much power	37	13
Innovators	37	11
Feel superior	34	12
Physically distinctive	25	7
From victims to perpetrators	23	6
They discriminate	20	6
They disrupt society	19	5
They should all go to Israel	19	7

Source: Goldstaub and Manheimer (1990).

Repeated in 2008, a similar survey replicated many of the same findings. The mode of questioning was somewhat different and emphasized in the first place the large proportions of Italians who are indifferent or ignorant about the questions at stake. Questions in Table 9 are ranked by decreasing degree of hostility regarding the negative stereotypes, and by increasing degree of empathy regarding the positive stereotypes. Three crucial themes emerge: one is the disproportionate power of Jews especially in the financial realm as exemplified by the proposition: "Jews maneuver world finance to their advantage"; the second theme is the substitution of Jews from victims of nazi persecutions to perpetrators versus the Palestinians as in the following example: "Jews speak too much of their tragedies and too little of those of others"; and the third is the persisting perception of Jews as non-Italians as shown in the statement: "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their country". In each of these three exemplary instances the percentage of Italians who agree is higher than that of those who disagree. Interestingly, three statements with very similar and quite parallel contents but sharper formulations elicit more disagreement than support: "all in all Jews always lived exploiting

others", "Jews profit of Nazi extermination to justify Israel's politics", and "Jews are not really Italians".

On the other hand, there also exist positive stereotypes which relate fundamentally to the same or similar areas of contents, like: "In spite of the conflict, Jews are sensitive to the sufferance of Palestinians", "Jews gave a great contribution to different sectors of Italian society".

Table 9. Attitudes of Italians toward Jews, 2008 – Percentages

Proposition	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Diff. A-D
Negative stereotypes, prevailing agreement				
Jews maneuver world finance to their advantage	32	50	18	+14
Jews speak too much of their tragedies and too little of those of others	30	50	20	+10
Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their country	26	57	17	+9
Jews always get disproportionate political power	27	53	20	+7
Jews control the media in many countries in the world	25	56	19	+6
Jews have transformed from a people of victims to a people of aggressors	26	52	22	+4
In the end, money is always in the hands of Jews	27	49	24	+3
Negative stereotypes, prevailing disagreement				
Jews profit of Nazi extermination to justify Israel's politics	24	51	25	-1
Jews do to the Palestinians what Nazis did to the Jews	22	49	29	-7
Jews are not really Italians	23	44	33	-10
You never can trust Jews completely	19	48	33	-14
All in all Jews always lived exploiting others	15	52	33	-18
Positive stereotypes, prevailing agreement				
In spite of the conflict, Jews are sensitive to the sufferance of Palestinians	23	56	21	+2
Western culture owns many fundamental ideas to Jewish culture	23	61	17	+6
Modern science would not be what it is without the contribution of Jewish scientists	27	57	16	+11
Jews gave a great contribution to different sectors of Italian society	27	59	14	+13

Source: ISPO (2008).

A further survey of young Italians aged 18-34 confirms that overall the antisemites (in this case, those who feel antipathy toward Jews) represent about one fifth of the total population (see Table 10). It is essential to signal, first of all, that the vast majority of young Italians (71%) never had a relationship with a Jew. Therefore their attitudes are largely based on pre-concepts unrelated to empirical validation. The survey explored the extent of anti-Jewish attitudes

regarding personal relations, and found the hard-core representing 10-20% of the population (16% expressing antipathy and 6% extreme antipathy).

Table 10. Attitudes of Young Italians Toward Jews, 2010

Proposition	Total	Extreme sympathy	Moderate sympathy	Moderate antipathy	Extreme antipath
Attitude to Jews	100	47	31	16	6
Percent with negative attitude toward proximity to Jews:					
Refuses a daughter dating a Jew	21			43	71
Refuses a son dating a Jewess	19			40	65
Refuses Jewish neighbors	11			24	60
Refuses having dinner with a Jew	10			20	58
Refuses having a Jewish colleague	9			21	49
Percent who had any relations with Jews	29			24	25
Of those who had relations with Jews:					
Percent whose relation was negative	10			30	59
Of those who never had relations with Jews:					
Percent who consciously refused to do so	5			14	19

Source: IARD (2011).

About the same 10-20% express negative attitudes toward possible situations of proximity to Jews, like a son or daughter dating a Jewish partner, or having Jewish neighbors or colleagues. The proportions refusing such contacts and proximities are expectedly much higher among those who a priory express antipathy toward Jews. The same negative pre-conception toward Jews is also related to negatively judging a relationship with Jews, in case one ever occurred.

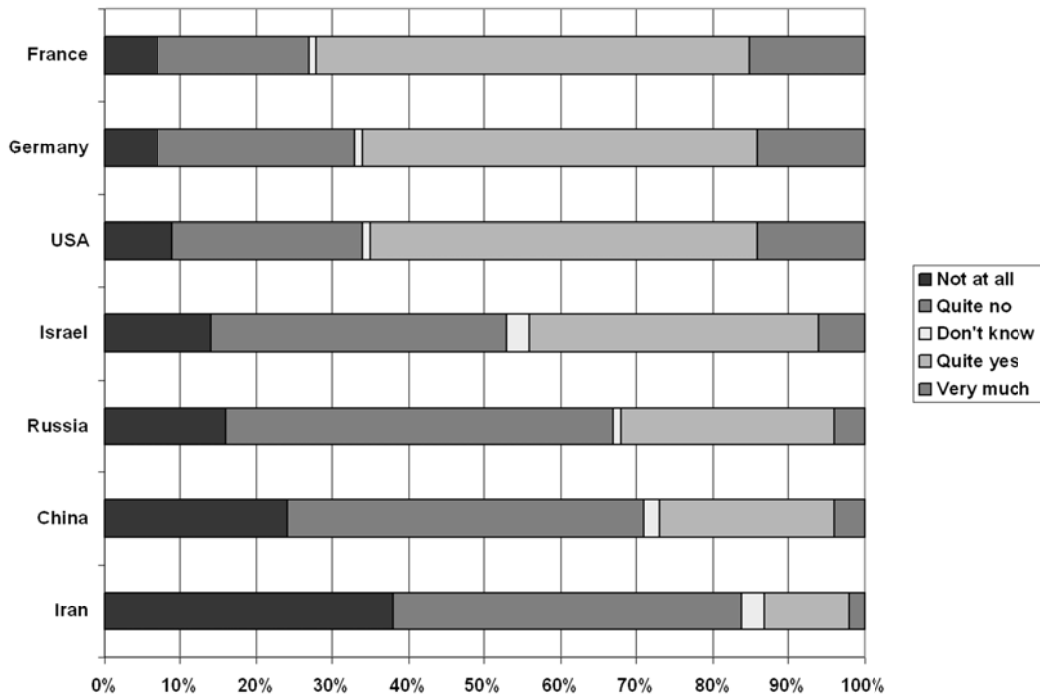
Attitudes about Israel

As noted above, one crucial theme of public discourse and component of the public attitude to Jews is the reference to the state of Israel and its policies (see Figure 3).

That Israel, especially since the 1967 Six Day War, is strictly intertwined in attitudes about Jews has been already documented above. Many Italians do not perceive correctly the subtle distinction that exists between being a Jew in Italy and being a citizen or even a supporter of the state of Israel. The vicissitudes of the Middle Eastern conflict have caused serious erosion of Israel's image in the media and public opinion. Occasionally, as for example on the occasion of the 1982-83 Lebanon war, during certain stages of the first or second Intifada during the late 1980s and early 2000s, and also during the more recent war episodes in Lebanon and in Gaza, the media were often quite unbalanced against on Israel and sometimes seriously impinging on the legitimacy of the Jewish state. This had very problematic implications for the Jewish

community in Italy. However, a survey in 2008 indicated that the image of Israel had not yet been dramatically and irreversibly damaged. Israel as a country was less liked than France, Germany or the United States, but more than Russia, China or Iran. It emerged, nevertheless, that more people disliked than liked contemporary Israel.

Figure 3. Percent Liking Israel and Other Countries in Italy, 2008



Source: ISPO (2008).

Perceptions of diffusion of antisemitism

In 2008, a clear majority of two thirds of Italians believed that anti-Semitism is still a dangerous phenomenon, while only 22% felt it is now irrelevant (Table 11).

Table 11. Perceptions of Diffusion of Antisemitism in Italy, 2008

Perception	Percent
It still is an existing and dangerous phenomenon	67
Does not know	11
It is now irrelevant or nearly so	22

Source: ISPO (2008).

In view of the above, it is not surprising to find that the share of Italians who believed antisemitism has increased (40%) exceeded the share of those believing it has diminished (15%). About one half believed there had been no change or did not know (Table 12).

In 2008-2009 there was an increase in racist internet sites, from 836 in 2008 to 1,172 in 2009.

Table 12. Perceptions of Current versus Past Diffusion of Antisemitism in Italy, 2008

Perception	Percent
Much increased	8
Somewhat increased	32
Subtotal	40
More or less the same	34
Does not know	11
Subtotal	45
Somewhat diminished	11
Much diminished	4
Subtotal	15

Source: ISPO (2008).

6. Lessons from the past and more recent developments

Main perceptual patterns

From the ISPO survey on Anti-Jewish prejudice, it can be argued that 44% of the Italian population display some prejudice or hostile attitude toward Jews. These can be subdivided into four sub-groups. The first (10%) shares the *classic* anti-Jewish prejudice: "they are not Italians", "they have always lived exploiting others", but refuse the *contingent* stereotypes about the Shoah and Israel. A second group (11%) shares the *modern* stereotypes, such as "Jews are rich and powerful", "control politics and finance", "are more loyal to Israel than to their country". A third group (12%) share *contingent* anti-Israeli beliefs, such as "they exploit the Shoah to justify Israeli policies", "behave as Nazis with the Palestinians", but do not accept the *classic* prejudices. Finally a fourth group (12% of Italians) includes the *pure antisemites* who share all the different types of prejudice: the *classic*, the *modern*, and the *contingent*. These are the conclusions presented in a comprehensive Report at the Italian Parliament in 2011 (Camera dei Deputati, 2011), which testifies of the preoccupation in the public sphere facing the mounting manifestations of antisemitism in Italy.

The size of this last hard-core group does not seem to have changed much over the last decades. Importantly, no big changes appear when comparing the most recent data with an earlier study of anti-Semitism in Italy (Campelli and Cipollini, 1984). The main directives

remain than the vast majority of the Italian population never had actual personal contact with Jews, and therefore expresses pure prejudice without any empirical validation. There is a stable hard core of 10-15% of visceral antisemites surrounded by much larger concentric circles of people with visible but declining intensities of anti-Jewish prejudice – eventually reaching into that roughly 40% of society which is immune of it. Anti-Semitism cuts across the whole range and gamut of political ideologies and parties – with different intensities according to the specific idiosyncrasies of each.

The more recent FRA survey (FRA 2014, DellaPergola 2015) complements these findings by looking into the perceptions of antisemitism among the Jewish public in nine European Union countries. According to this survey, 68% of Jews in Italy (likewise in Germany and the UK, but 89% in France and Belgium) reported an increase in the levels of anti-Semitism in the previous five years, together with a rise in racism in their respective countries. Almost 30% of Italian Jews said they had suffered antisemitic harassment in the past 12 months, similar to the levels reported among Jews in France and Belgium. About 20% in Italy reported the impression they had been discriminated against because of their religious affiliation, 4% had suffered acts of vandalism, 2% physical aggression. If the latter figure may seem quite low or "insufficient" for concern, it is actually important because it means one person in 50. In France and Belgium, the level of aggression was four times higher, and in 2014-2015 it was tangibly confirmed by actual murder. Antisemitism primarily infests virtual networks where 61% of Italian Jews assess the problem as very serious; for 24% the problem is very serious in the media and press, and it is serious for another 36%. The perception is of an increase of antisemitism throughout all available media and communication channels.

Finally, the soft boundary between anti-Zionism and antisemitism should be explored again. The FRA survey shows that 67% of Jews in Italy have relatives in Israel, while 56% believe strong support for Israel is essential part of their Jewish identity. This evidently points to a significant emotional involvement in what happens in and around Israel. The Italian Jewish public demonstrates its ability to clearly distinguish between routine and legitimate critique of the actions undertaken by Israel's government and its leaders, versus plain de-legitimation of the Jewish state. Only 9% believe it is definitely antisemitic to criticize Israel, and another 28% believe it is probably antisemitic; whereas 62% believe it is definitely antisemitic to affirm that "Israelis behave like Nazis" towards the Palestinians, and another 26% believe it is probably antisemitic (DellaPergola 2015). Moreover, the blaming of local Jews for what Israel may do – a transfer that is construed as antisemitic – is perceived as originating in the first place from the Left of the Italian political spectrum, followed at short distance by the Right, and at greater distance by Islamic activists and by Christian extremists. In other Western European countries, the Islamic ideological matrix is perceived as predominant, followed by the political Left; in Hungary, it is the political Right, followed by Christian extremists.

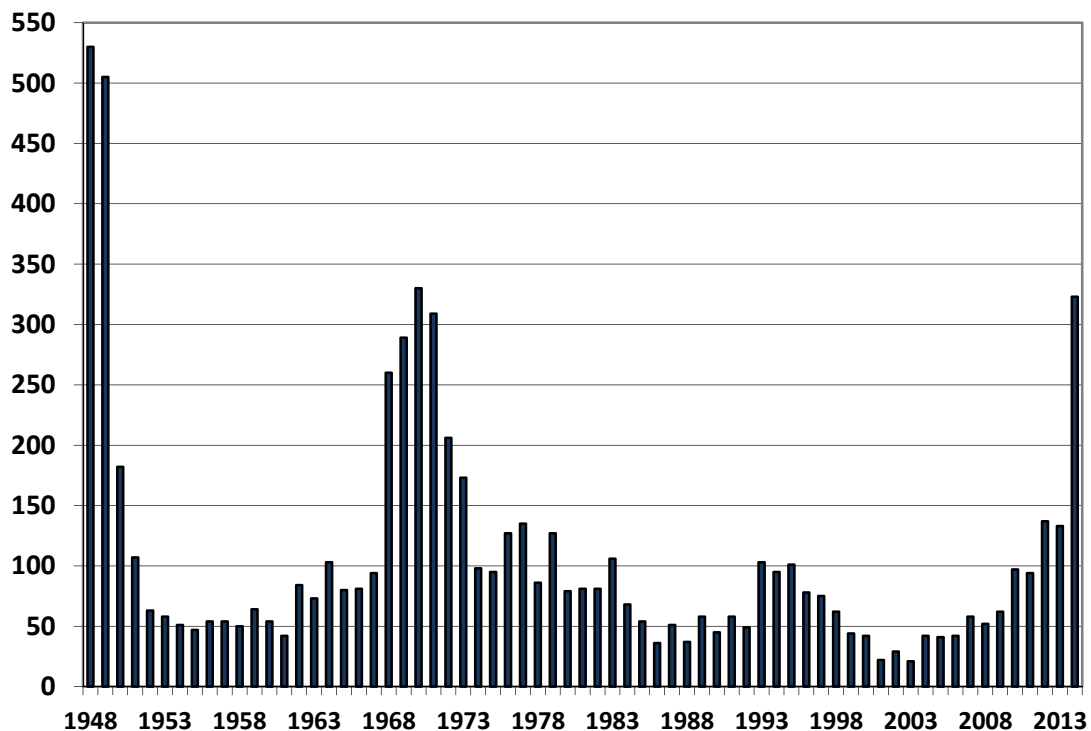
Migration responses

One of the possible reactions among the Jewish community in response to the growing sense of malaise related to perceived antisemitism may be to choose leaving their current countries of

residence. According to the FRA survey in 2012, 22% of Jews in Italy were considering the possibility of emigrating. In France and Belgium the percentages were much higher, 52% and 41% respectively (FRA 2014). Following the murders in January and February 2015, these attitudes became plausibly more frequent.

The actual extent and timing of Jewish emigration, including to Israel, historically tended primarily to follow economic rationales, and only secondarily ideological motivations. The latter mainly determined the choice of destination country – Israel or an alternative place. A portrayal of the patterns of emigration from Italy to Israel between 1948 and 2014 indeed usefully outlines the changing scope of the broader phenomenon (Figure 4). Israel received larger numbers of Italian Jewish migrants after World War II – who actually still pertained to the pre-war movement of reaction to and escaping from the anti-Jewish racial Laws. The true change of pace occurred after the 1967 Six Day War and following years, reflecting the variable economic and political circumstances and push drivers of the 1970s, of the 1980s, of the 1990s, and of the latest decade. The more recent increase in migration is not trivial and points to a diffused malaise, in part stemming from the negative circumstances of European and Italian economy, but also reflecting the already noted perception of growing anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli feelings among Italy's public opinion and media. Since 2004 migration has constantly increased, reaching in 2014 a peak of 323, second highest result since 1950 after the record of 330 in 1970 following the 1967 Six Day War. While the increase has been constant over eleven years, at its peak it only represents just above 1% of Italy's the total Jewish population.

Figure 4. Migration from Italy to Israel, 1948-2014



Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (annual).

The increase in Italian Jewish emigration is part of a more general rise of *aliyah* (figuratively: ascent = migration to Israel). In 2014, more than 6,500 emigrated from France, an all-time record for this country; and 224 from Belgium, the highest since 1972.

7. Concluding remarks

After the murders in Paris and Copenhagen, much attention was devoted to Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu's speech inviting the Jews of Europe to immigrate to Israel. While very few will probably be motivated in their decisions by Israel's Prime Minister's words, Jewish emigration has actually been on the increase for the past several years. Such increase seems to reflect, among other reasons, the diffused malaise among many Jews in Europe facing a perception of antisemitism that has built-up for years and is constantly sharpening.

The case of Jews Italy, which we have reviewed in this paper, confirms the existence of a combination of persistent economic problems with a perception of growing antisemitism and racism in society. The consequent feeling of fear and insecurity outlined by recent survey data is enhanced by the diffused persistence in society of negative stereotypes about Jews that have been present in Italian society in variable amounts throughout history. The light motifs tend to be repetitive, for good or for worse: the Jews are self-concerned, the Jews are exploitative, the Jews are foreigners. These perceptions contrast, sometimes sharply, with the actual data on Jewish population size and social structural composition. In no way a group so small and so much concentrated in the middle class, with a significant minority in the lower-middle class, like the Jews in Italy are, can exert the penetrating influence on general society so often attributed to them.

If the emerging sense of fear and insecurity among Italian Jews is to be overcome, one aspect to be carefully considered concerns the general orientation of public discourse. Besides the extreme negative manifestations that demonstrably plague the media and the web, those better intentioned are often unable or unwilling to affirm their unequivocal condemnation of the extreme ideologies that produce anti-Jewish thoughts or action. Whether stronger sanction, legal or other, against such forms of intolerance can be effective and desirable is a theme for further discussion in the framework of the fight against antisemitism in Italy and in other European countries.

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