

Analytical paper on debunking myths of online antisemitism

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About the project

Analysis of hate data collected by members of the International Network Against Cyber Hate, INACH, in Europe has shown that there are strong and documented links between current online hate phenomena and hate-slurs, prejudices and practices that have been propagated in the Third Reich.

To transform these worrisome findings into effective warnings, especially since remembrance and knowledge on the Holocaust and its horrors are fading, the project Remember and ACT! (Re-ACT) is putting a special focus on researching how “old” concepts of antisemitism and antigypsyism are being re-enacted by concerted hate campaigns and where they originated from. Starting from there, Re-ACT will develop, collect, and provide educational materials and tools for the prevention of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of intolerance.

These self-generated sets of information plus a curated collection of high-quality educational materials will build the foundation for the establishment of an online prevention-hub at INACH.

Introduction

Incubation period, infection, spreading and then overall generalisation: this is the way a virus spread. Yet, this is also the way hateful conspiracy theories percolate.

In the context of the 2020 Covid_19-pandemic, many conspiracy theories spread via social media became very popular by presenting Jews as “responsible” for the coronavirus¹. This was in echo with the “traditional” hateful theory of a global Jewish conspiracy for power and domination (e.g. “the New World Order”) as well as with “traditional” Middle-Ages antisemitic stereotypes such as well-poisoning and blood libel. Stereotypes, conspiracy theories and hateful myths about and against Jews are considered as one of the oldest manifestations of hatred. Antisemitic theories – how irrational and “old” they are – continue to be widely spread nowadays and even have gained a “second youth” by the global development of the internet including social media and online communication applications.

Throughout the centuries, the figure of the ‘stranger’ who became the one of the ‘interior enemy’ is projected on Jewish people. Jewish people have unintentionally been assigned the role of the “perfect scapegoat” responsible for “why things [in a very general sense] go wrong”. By now, almost every societal event and crisis may cause the rise of conspiracy theories including hateful beliefs. Many conspiracy theories throughout the centuries have included the Jewish people as responsible for crises, tragedies, and disasters.

In European countries, one of the most common antisemitic trends charges that Jewish people conspires to weaken Humanity in their attempts to dominate it. Antisemitism can take different forms – online and offline - referring to sinister stereotypes and derogatory character traits. On one hand, Jews are perceived as duplicitous, miser, profiteers, and unreliable. On the other hand, they are

¹ sCAN project, Hate speech trends during the Covid-19 pandemic in a digital and globalised age, April 2020. Available at: <http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/sCAN-Analytical-Paper-Hate-speech-trends-during-the-Covid-19-pandemic-in-a-digital-and-globalised-age.pdf> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

presented as weasel, shrewd, powerful and above all, influential. According to the work of the former European Union Monitoring Centre (EUMC) and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) the working definition adopted by the European Parliament on 1 June 2017, antisemitism is *"a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."* It is also *"Manifestations [which] might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic."*

Antisemitic conspiracy theories originated from different perpetrator groups, ranging from the Neo-Nazi and far-rights extremists to the Jihadists and the extremist left-wing rhetoric, and others. They seem to have now amassed in non-traditional places, like popular websites and mainstream social media, in this way rapidly becoming 'normalised'. Furthermore, these "modern" conspiracy theories seem to grind their roots in traditional and old antisemitic myths. Since human history has proved how words and speech can lead to the most horrific of acts, it is essential to analyse and understand how "traditional" antisemitic theories still influence new trends of online antisemitism. These new fads include but are not limited to images and caricatures, rhetoric and keywords, rumours, and ideology.

Throughout this analytical report, we would like to present the main recurring online antisemitic conspiracy theories while seeking to understand what their "roots" are to provide elements for debunking them. This report includes case studies from several European countries that illustrate and underline the impact of transnational trends on the phenomena of online antisemitism.

Myths die hard: from the Middle Ages to 2020

Many antisemitic myths were developed and spread during the Middle Ages: Jews were perceived as “enemies” of Christianity and presented as “responsible” for the murder of Jesus. Several conspiracy theories based on sinister and irrational stereotypes became popular especially in the context of societal and health crises. These theories - regardless of how irrational they are - re-appear on a frequent basis and are still transmitted online through traditional conspiracies and rumour mechanisms.

The European bubonic plague during the Middle-Ages produced one of the key-antisemitic myths - still prevalent nowadays. The interrelationship between the rise of antisemitism and the Black death in Europe is a clear example of the terrible impact of the scapegoat mechanism and the dissemination of rumours. At this point in time, Jews were accused of well-poisoning. Many believed the epidemic was a forthright punishment of God for their sins. The Christian majority was already familiar with anti-Jewish rhetoric disseminated mainly through priests.

Jewish populations were accused of ritual murders and of host desecration against Christians. Hatred was dispersed in both the private sphere and in religious educational or celebrational gatherings. Stereotypes were also developed as an invisible but real border between the Jewish and Christian communities in the Middle Ages. Because their religions have different ways of considering money Jews and Christians have a long history of disputes on this topic. *“Christian law considered usury a sin, but Jews were forbidden*



Illustration of an alleged “blood libel” in 1475
(Public domain)

to own land or to work in the craft sector by discriminatory laws”². Therefore, the Jews have been targeted as a greedy people. Their ban from several sectors of activity has been forgotten or hidden to emphasize the myth of their supposed “appetite for wealth”.

Jews were also portrayed with horns and tails-characteristics: the children of Satan. This demonisation and allusion to the Devil, set the groundwork for theories such as, for instance, linking them to bloodthirst. The Jewish people were accused of the “blood libel”, the presumed sacrifice of Christian children at Passover to obtain blood for matzos, the traditional unleavened bread. These antisemitic myths do not disappear³. They have been remodelled for a modern-day audience using the same rhetoric, images, and ideas⁴.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, many antisemitic publications directly

refer to these older stereotypes. Some well-known antisemitic websites published several articles using the same rhetoric and mechanisms than the aforementioned traditional medieval anti-Jewish Black Death clichés. Here are the titles of these articles: “Poisoning: the Jewish hyena Buzin [the name of ex-French Minister of Health] with her declaration that we “can’t close our borders” for stopping the coronavirus business”; or “Crash oil, stock



² Trollbusters, Monthly Roundup, Get the trolls out project, October 2015. Available at: <https://getthetrollsout.org/trollbusters/october2015> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

³ Passover commemorates the exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. During this Jewish holiday it is forbidden to eat leavened food. The reason for this is that Jewish tradition states that in their haste to escape from Egypt the Jews did not have enough time to wait for bread to rise. Instead, they ate matzos, unleavened bread.

⁴ “The Medieval Holocaust: The Approach of the Plague and the Destruction of Jews in Germany, 1348-1349”, Brigham Young University -Albert Winkler, 2005. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2841&context=facpub> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

exchange in free fall, mass-quarantine: the divine punishment against the Jewish Occident is occurring; and "The Hebrew Great Debate: the yid B. with her hooked nose red-coloured by Christian babies blood forbids French people to talk about what they want". In the United Kingdom, CST (Community Security Trust) reports that publications were sharing the idea of a "Jew Flu" implying that Jews are closely associated with the spread of the virus *"either deliberately – to try to kill white people – or inadvertently"*⁵.

The blood libel is also part of new antisemitic trends where Israeli people (e.g. soldiers, politicians, etc.) are presented as vampires eating Palestinian children and stealing their organs. In Algeria, the newspaper "Algérie Patriotique" published an article in 2018 entitled 'Vampires do not feed on their own blood'. The vampire in the article refers to Bernard-Henry Lévy, Jewish French intellectual, media personality, and author - exacerbating old-fashioned antisemitic stereotypes.

The same phenomenon appears regarding the theory of Jews as the killers of Jesus. The crucifixion by Jews was a popular theme in images and headlines, enhancing the accusation that Jews, instead of the Romans, were responsible for the murder of Jesus. Jesus Christ's murder by the Jews was taught traditionally for many centuries. The theory of "deicidal people" quite popular during the Middle Ages is still used as a common ground by some antisemitic groups as for example when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In that modern-day context, the Jews are still perceived as the "Antichrist allies"⁶.



**A modern-day
illustration of the blood
libel connected to the
"vampire" antisemitic**

⁵ "Coronavirus and the plague of antisemitism", Community Security Trust, 2020. Available at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

⁶ « Qu'est-ce qu'une caricature antisémite ? Essai d'explication historique et politique », ISGAP, Joël Kotep, Sept. 2016. Available at: <https://isgap.org/flashpoint/quest-ce-quune-caricature-antisemite-essai-dexplication-historique-et-politique/> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

Global domination, secret plan and “New world order”

The most popular conspiracy theory about Jews gained traction once again during the Middle Ages and highlighted “unadulterated Jewish greed”. This myth - appearing under new forms - is still quite prevalent nowadays especially in the online sphere. “Originally”, the theory was that a council of Rabbis from Spain met secretly every year regarding which place should supply the Christian victim for the presumed annual sacrifice required by Judaism. Over time, the goal was changed from a Christian sacrifice to world domination. The accusations inflated further still. Jews “trying to control the world thanks to their Jewish lobbies which pull the strings of politics, economy and so on”, is a conspiracy theory quite prevalent today.

One of the most devastating conspiracy theories can be found in the well-known fake publication ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’: the 19-century presumed report claimed to prove that there was a secret pact of Jewish leaders to rule the world. The ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ is the most famous and widely antisemitic publication of modern times. Its lies about Jews continue to circulate today, especially on the Internet. These Protocols claim to document a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world, whereas the conspiracy and the “Elders of Zion” never existed. The version of the Protocols that has been translated into dozens of languages was first published in Russia in 1905. The exact origin of the Protocols is unknown, but its goal was to portray Jews as conspirators against the state they live in. The Protocols played an important role in Nazi propaganda and remain the most influential antisemitic text of the past one hundred years. Until today the Protocols continue to be widely shared online bolstering many antisemitic conspiracy theories.

This very conspiracy theory was also spread by involving well-known Jewish families or persons in developing presumed plans for a global domination. This theory implies the antisemitic concept of “Jewishication”: Jews are perceived as overrepresented in “strategical” fields, including the media, financial markets, and politics. The Rothschilds, a Jewish banking family, have been at the centre of conspiracy theories since the 19th century claiming that “they try to control the

entire world's money whilst dictating world politics and conflicts". These antisemitic accusations against the Jewish "financial elite" family, are still widely spread today. They are fully part of the American-based QAnon conspiracy theory⁷. According to this theory, 'Q', a presumed anonymous individual shared top security information and knows "the truth about a secret struggle for power" in the attempts to destroy the "deep state". Within this theory, expanding readily in European countries, the Rothschilds are perceived as deeply involved in the "evil project of billionaires" financially exploiting the Covid-19 pandemic.

Another name is becoming a reference for the antisemitic conspiracy theories: George Soros, a wealthy investment banker and philanthrope, depicted by anti-Semites as a "wealthy Jew seeking world domination"⁸. Soros embodies the rich and influential "cosmopolitan" man presented as an "enemy of the people" according to the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. The violent anti-Soros campaigns in Hungary were based on global conspiracy theories; Soros was accused of intentionally destabilising the country by means of his financial support for civil society organisations. In this wake, the "puppeteer" stereotype was reactivated as people were led to believe that it was Soros secretly pulling the strings. Nonetheless, this anti-Soros hatred has extended far beyond the Hungarian borders and even far from the Balkans. Soros is now perceived by nationalists and extremists as the head of a Jewish



**Georges Soros represented as
an octopus controlling the
world**

(screenshot 16/07/2020)

⁷ "QANON and the growing conspiracy theory trend on social media", Media Diversity Institute, June 2020. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee500d316a2470c370596d3/t/5f1813b4c9031f13d52ad25f/1595413465022/QAnon+Report.pdf> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

⁸ "Rising conspiracy theory claims George Soros behind US unrest, ADL say", The Times of Israel, Eric Cortellessa, 2 June 2020. Available at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rising-conspiracy-theory-claims-george-soros-behind-us-unrest-adl-says/> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

world-wide conspiracy for the oppression of the West by means of a presumed “great replacement” of local populations by Muslims migrants⁹. Entirely unknown a few years ago, he was depicted as a conspirator and was on the front pages of a popular far-right French magazine in 2018.

Jews are accused to be “everywhere” not only in sectors of influence: banks, the political scene, finances, media, or in the film industry. They are also accused of being the perpetrators behind world conspiracies drawing out the antisemitic stereotype of influential and powerful Jews “manipulating” politicians. An example of these stereotypes was a repugnant carnival which took place in the city of Aalst in Belgium¹⁰. That highlighted how deep these old clichés’ roots were.

Shockingly enough, humour was

weaponized in this event. The original purpose of the carnival was to make people laugh about various disguises on display. However, the antisemitic undertones were impossible to ignore. Its organisers defended their carnival by arguing that freedom of speech would be at stake should this kind of event be prohibited. According to them, they were making “fun stereotypes” not of Jews.



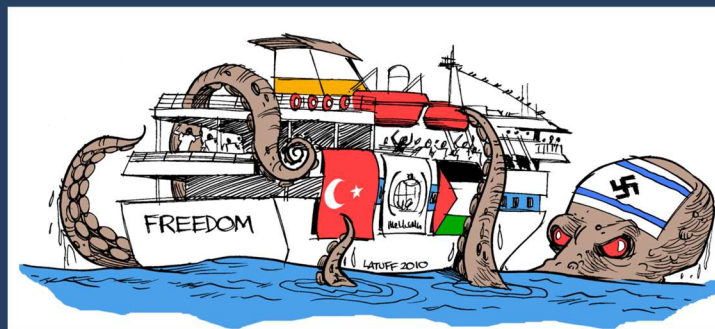
Winston Churchill represented as an octopus controlling the world under the “Jewish power” (1938 – Josef Plant)

⁹ “Antisemitic hate against Soros as a common denominator of the international right”, Bell Tower, Kyra Ayyadi, Dec. 2018. Available at: <https://getthetrollsout.org/articles/antisemitic-hate-against-soros-as-a-common-denominator-of-the-international-right> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

¹⁰ “Joint Complaint to the City of Aalst over Antisemitic and Racist Carnival”, Get the Trolls Out Project, March 2020. Available at: <https://getthetrollsout.org/complaints/joint-complaint-to-the-city-of-aalst-over-antisemitic-and-racist-carnival?rq=antisemitism> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

In echo with these stereotypes, this right-wing conspiracy theory of the “New World Order” (NOW) is part of this rhetoric. The NOW theory explains that “a tyrannical, socialist “one-world” conspiracy has already taken over most of the planet and schemes to eliminate the last bastion of freedom with the help of collaborators within the government”. “Through repressive measures, as well as manufactured crises such as terrorist attacks and pandemics, the globalist conspirators seek to eliminate dissent [citizens] so that the “New World Order” can move in and enslave them”¹¹. The final goal would be ensuring an authoritarian regime by implementing repressive measures. The ‘NOW’ is the evil master plan that underlies all conspiracy narratives.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the concept of a “plot behind it all” was shared by extremists. The underlying idea is that the government and elites, mostly manipulated by Jewish organisations are using the pandemic to “reformat the world”. In Germany, it was claimed that “secret elites” are using the virus to establish a “New World Order”. This trend is also targeting the politicians and elites accused of manipulating their population for establishing



The boat “freedom” is attacked by a giant octopus marked with Israeli flag (with a swastika) – 2010 Carlos Latuff

dictatorship. The same trends can be observed in Slovenia where it is propagated that there is no virus, but instead politicians are taking advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to implement a dictatorship¹². A well-known metaphor, used to portray

¹¹ “New World Order”, Anti-Defamation League. Available at:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/new-world-order> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

¹² “Hate speech trends during the Covid-19 pandemic in a digital and globalised age”, sCAN Project, April 2020. Available at: <http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/sCAN-Analytical-Paper-Hate-speech-trends-during-the-Covid-19-pandemic-in-a-digital-and-globalised-age.pdf> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

the undercover Jewish power, is an octopus with its tentacles grabbing and controlling worldwide finance and, by and large, all segments of society. Similar graphic images were published in European newspapers in the 1930s and frequently used by the Nazis, such as images depicting a large octopus' head marked with the Star of David holding the earth within its tentacles¹³. These representations, often associated with Soros nowadays or with the Israeli state, are not new. A famous cartoon shared online shows a boat named "Freedom" attacked by a giant octopus marked with the Israeli flag where the Star of David has been replaced with a swastika.

¹³ "Magazine depicts Soros as a conspirator against France", Get the trolls out project, Licra, Sami Lagati, May 2018. Available at: <https://getthetrollout.org/articles/magazine-depicts-george-soros-as-a-conspirator-against-france> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

The resurgence of Nazi theories and the White supremacism

More than seventy years after the Holocaust, Nazi theories does not have disappeared at all. In fact, such theories seem to be more popular and, above all, easily accessible to a large audience because of the internet. "Mein Kampf" is downloadable in two clicks and has become an online best-seller¹⁴. In reference to online presence, far right Neo-Nazi speech has found a "second birth" with the popularity and expansion of the "White supremacist" movement. Social media have enabled such voices to be more organised and present than ever, composed of historical-revisionist and denialist theories, of Neo-Nazi ideology.

In Nazi ideology, Adolf Hitler blamed the Jews for everything wrong with the world and especially for the weakness of Germany after the WWI and its decline due to "Jewish influence". He has also included the conspiracy of Jewish world domination in a capitalism dependent economy. Further still, he elaborated upon Jewish red danger because of communism thanks to the European popular myth of the "Judeo-Bolshevik". According to the Nazis, mankind was divided into high and low races: the Jews were part of the low ones. For ensuring a "strong" German people, it has to be "pure". This "purification" was implemented by a programmed genocide: nearly six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust¹⁵.

¹⁴ Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf (My Struggle) is "part autobiography and part political treatise promoted the key components of Nazism". United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopaedia. Available at: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/mein-kampf> (last accessed 23.09.2020)

"Mein Kampf, le livre d'Hitler bat des records sur le Net", Le Figaro, Bertrand Guyard, 10 January 2014. Available at : <https://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2014/01/10/03005-20140110ARTFIG00449--mein-kampf-le-livre-d-hitler-bat-des-records-sur-le-net.php> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

¹⁵ "Hitler's antisemitism. Why did he hates the Jews?", Anne Frank House: <https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/go-in-depth/why-did-hitler-hate-jews/> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

Soon after the Holocaust, antisemitic theories continued to be spread by making apology of the Nazi's Crimes against Humanity; or by denying the historical facts of the genocide through the promotion of antisemitic conspiracies; or by promoting a new genocide. The revisionist/denialist movement is structured around several types of figures: the presumed Historians, scientists and specialists, the comedians and familiar personalities, the politicians and the activists. One of the main conspiracy "successes" of this movement is the promotion of the concept of "Holo-Hoax", where the Holocaust is presented as an event which did not happen. The theory behind this is, that "the Holocaust was invented for antisemitic purposes: making money, thanks to the "Holocaust Industry", extracting reparations from the Germans as well as justifying the establishment of Israel as an official State thanks to the "Jewish-Zionist power"". The movements behind the theory also seeks to rehabilitate and promote the Nazi regime and its ideology. The "Holo-Hoax" and the denialist conspiracy theories mainly include in their rhetoric the "Jewish global domination" of governments, finances, and media. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, based in the US, it appears that "despite many influential Holocaust deniers aging out of relevance, the tenets of denial have become embedded in other segments of the movement" including within the White nationalism (e.g. in the US, the Ku Klux Klan).



**Antisemitic denialist cartoon
of the "Holocaust Industry"
(2016)**

Screenshot 20/07/2020

Neo-Nazi advancements have also been embedded in new far-right movements: skinheads, White supremacist embodiment, the Alt right and the identitarian movements. All these violent and extremist groups use codes, symbols and theories originating from the ideology of the national socialism. Many of them have integrated antisemitic components of the Nazi propaganda which branded Jews as

a biological threat, "parasitic", "Jewish virus", "harmful bacillus" and responsible of the "degeneration" of society. The association between Jews and disease as well as with disease-bearing creatures (e.g. rats) is a key-element of antisemitic speech. They also use codes, terms and symbols originating from or a part of Nazi ideology. The colours (black, white, red) and the swastika are sometimes used without any change and sometimes transformed to become more "mainstreamed" and "normalised".

Other codes and symbols are quite prevalent online. For example, references to the "Heil" with use of the numbers "88" (the eight letter of the alphabet is "H" and it is direct reference to "Heil Hitler"). The same can be said for the code 14 notoriously used by extreme rights-wingers for the "Fourteen Words" coined by the US-American neo-Nazi David Lane: "We must secure the existence of our

people and a future for white children".

The Nazi gesture has also been readapted by some antisemitic personalities as for example with the "quenelle" (an inverted Nazi gesture). Many extremist far-right political parties, such as the French "National Front" or the Greek "Golden Dawn", have re-used torches and fire symbols: Nazi key-elements of the Third-Reich propaganda.

More than codes and symbols, these movements also promoted concepts

based on the racist Nazi ideology. The conspiracy theory of "White genocide" was spread by white supremacists' groups in the US to European countries. This propaganda term echoing the French concept of the "Great replacement" states that the presumed white (Christian) race, culture and roots are "dying" due to the growing of non-White (Christian) populations. Until just recently, both terms "have



Pepe the frog, the Internet meme symbol appropriated by the US Alt right and European far-right wing
(screenshot 15/07/2020)

frequently been conflated, especially in online alt-right and white supremacist circles” and “have been propagated by white supremacists of all nationalities”¹⁶. The Great replacement theory includes antisemitic components as well as anti-Muslim and Afrophobic ones. This approach also refers to the French colonialism citing “reverse” colonisation and the necessary “remigration” of migrant populations. White people will have to “assimilate” if nothing is done. All this presumed “replacement” is organised and controlled by Jews to destroy the white race¹⁷. It is important to note that in some far-right circles, Jews are not directly named. Nonetheless, terms used for the responsible of the great replacement and the “White genocide” are part of the antisemitic rhetoric: “globalists”, “cultural Marxists”, etc¹⁸. Both concepts are also part of the European Identitarian movement as for example Generation identity, very active in Austria, France, and Germany¹⁹. If this movement pretends to not be antisemitic, many components are directly referring to Nazi ideology. The manifesto of the Christchurch terrorist underlines the parallel and strong connections between all these different extremist far-rights movements.

¹⁶ “[Factsheet: White genocide conspiracy theory](https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-white-genocide-conspiracy-theory/)”, Bridge Initiative Team, 3 February 2020. Available at: <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-white-genocide-conspiracy-theory/> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

¹⁷ “Defining Extremism: A Glossary of White Supremacist Terms, Movements and Philosophies”, ADL. Available at: <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/defining-extremism-white-supremacy> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

¹⁸ “Right wing terror in New-Zealand: 50 people killed in two mosques”, Get the trolls out project, Belltower news, Stefan Lauer, 15 March 2019. Available at: <https://getthetrollsout.org/articles/right-wing-terror-in-new-zealand-50-people-killed-in-two-mosques?rq=white%20genocide> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

¹⁹ “Who are Europe’s far right identitarians?” Politico, Julia Ebner, 4 May 2019. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/who-are-europe-far-right-identitarians-austria-generation-identity-martin-sellner/> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

“New” antisemitic trends?

“New” antisemitic trends seem to have appeared on the online sphere recently. In the last centuries antisemitism was mainly a far-right monopoly. These “new” trends are in part connected to the expansion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as the consequences of the spread of Jihadist theories. Nonetheless, this “new antisemitism” is also grounding some of its roots in very “traditional” and old conspiracy theories and concepts. These “new” antisemitic trends have also reached different type of social categories including some left-wring partisans. Nonetheless, it is crucial to understand how far-right parties are playing on antisemitism engendered by radical Islam to highlight a supposed hatred between the Muslims and the Jews. This is the way these parties divide and rule.

The border between antisemitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Israel remains unclear. Anti-Zionism cannot be entirely associated to antisemitism. Nonetheless, some anti-Zionist trends are composed of antisemitic rhetoric and conspiracy theories. Moreover, anti-Zionism may be also used as a “politically correct” form of antisemitism, based on the freedom of speech. The European Monitoring Centre (EUMC) developed in its working definition several examples on how the anti-Israel rhetoric can lead to the demonisation of the Israeli State, the promotion of analogies between Israel and the Nazi regime. In addition, Jews are frequently targeted because they are conflated with Israel. The term “Zionist” can be used with abusive connotations, therein reflecting a rising tide of bigotry and racism directed at Jews.

The comparison between Nazism and Israel is widely prevalent on social media. The correlation both trivialises the tragedy of the Holocaust and promotes sinister antisemitic stereotypes. It is a way to “charge that is purposefully directed at Jews in an effort to associate the victims of Nazi crimes with the Nazi perpetrators and serves to diminish the significance and uniqueness of the Holocaust. To make such a comparison constitutes blatant hostility toward Jews, Jewish history and the legitimacy of the Jewish State of Israel”²⁰.

Also, other conspiracy theories are part of this new hidden antisemitism; Israel is used as a hidden way to present “Jews” as responsible for what is going wrong, from terrorist attacks to the covid-19 pandemic. As for example, some antisemitic publications claim that Zionists, or the State of Israel itself, have created the pandemic with the



Antisemitic and anti-masonic caricature using the myth of the “puppeteer”: here Stalin and Churchill manipulated (1941, Serbia)
Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of the Katz Family)



Israeli Prime Minister, B. Netanyahu, presented as a puppeteer (with the Rothschild) responsible of the 2015 terrorist attacks and the Syrian war.
(screenshot 15/07/2020)

²⁰ “Response to common inaccuracy Israel acts like Nazis”, ADL. Available at: <https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/response-to-common-inaccuracy-israel-acts-like-nazis> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

(perverse) purpose of then being able to profit from developing an antidote²¹. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has also indirect consequences on European Jewish populations for it is said to be “imported”. Some experts note an impact of events in the Middle East and the resurgence of antisemitism.

This “not so new” antisemitism is also present in European countries including in some (far)-left political parties. For instance, the UK Labour Party was criticised during the Corbyn period for not reacting against anti-Zionist - antisemitic affairs²². Jeremy Corbyn’s publications about an antisemitic mural removal was widely talked about and denounced in the media. In fact, the mural displayed a depiction of “greedy Jews” by using the same characteristics as used in Nazi propaganda. The scandal has tarnished the Labour Party²³. According to the UK based sociologist David Hirsh, this kind of antisemitism is tolerated: *“Hostility to Zionism has become a language in which opposition to imperialism, to neo-liberalism and to global capitalism is articulated and so it sets up a toxic way of imagining most Jews”*²⁴.

Another “new” form of antisemitism promoted by Jihadists has violently erupted in European countries. They exploit the conflict in the Middle East and hold the Jews, the Zionists, or Israeli people as “responsible”. Jihadists additionally use conspiracy theories involving the Jews or the Israelis (the “infanticide nation”) perceived as responsible of the devilish slaughters of innocent Palestinian children. Jews are also being depicted as “inhuman” and connected to the Devil.

Regarding the Jihadist rhetoric, possible targets are numerous: almost all individuals and symbols which are not linked to this ideology should, according to their calls, be destroyed. Nonetheless, Jihadists would consider Jews as a “main

²¹ “Global trends in conspiracy theories linking Jews with Coronavirus”, AJC, Alyssa Weiner, 1 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.ajc.org/news/global-trends-in-conspiracy-theories-linking-jews-with-coronavirus> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

²² “What is the difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism”, BBC News, 29 April 2016. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36160928> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

²³ “A media storm antisemitism in the Labour party, Get the trolls out project”, Eline Jeanne, 3 April 2019. Available at: <https://getthetrollsout.org/articles/a-media-storm-antisemitism-in-the-labour-party> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

²⁴ Jewish news, Blogs, David Hirsh. Available at: <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/author/david-hirsh/> (last accessed 31.08.2020)

target” (should they be hit by their attacks). They are interpreting numerous facts as symbols of a Jewish supremacy. For that reason, conspiracy theories are easily developed in this environment²⁵. Several platforms said to be “religious networks” share threatening ideas. For instance, religious laws such as fatwas are explained by the leaders online who, instead of enlightening their audience, are contributing to the rise of a new kind of violent antisemitism by revealing a divine commandment to “kill them all”. Jews are considered as a “sneaky elite whose appetite for money” bolsters every scheming act. Thus, according to them, “Muslim values” would be at stake. Atrocious terrorist attacks were perpetrated against Jewish communities in France: synagogues, Jewish schools and kosher supermarkets were targeted. The 2015 terrorist attack against a kosher grocery store left deep wounds in France.

²⁵ “Islamism on Internet, propaganda, infringements and counter-strategies », jugendschutz.net, 2015. Available at:
https://www.hass-im-netz.info/fileadmin/public/main_domain/Dokumente/Islamismus/Islambroschuere_onlineversion_english.pdf (last accessed 31.08.2020)

Conclusion

Antisemitic conspiracy theories and myths prove persistent in today's society. Moreover, it appears that "new" forms of antisemitic conspiracy theories - diffused through social media platforms or other modern-day resources - are based on "old" myths and stereotypes that have plagued the world for generations.

Many antisemitic myths were developed during the Middle Ages. These theories re-appear nowadays on a frequent basis and are still transmitted online through traditional conspiracies and rumour mechanisms.

Conspiracy theories such as the "New world order", global domination and secret plan are still highly devastating. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, a rising underlying conspiracy trend is that the government and elites manipulated by Jewish organisations are using the pandemic to "reformat the world".

In addition, social media and Internet have enabled far right Neo-Nazi speech to find a "second birth" in particular with the popularity and expansion of the "White supremacist" movement.

Finally, "new" online antisemitic trends seem to have appeared in part connected to the expansion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as the consequences of the spread of Jihadist theories. Nonetheless, this phenomenon is also grounding some of its roots in very old conspiracy theories and concepts.

Each time one myth is debunked, the same issue appears: some people become convinced by the theory – regardless of how irrational it is – and choose to believe that the counteraction developed is part of an overarching plot. In doing this, a cycle of manipulation is created in which truths and myths become intertwined and underlined by deep mistrust.

For these reasons, understanding the structure, the rhetoric, and the elements of antisemitic myths proves particularly urgent. Continued education and knowledge play a key-role in combating such distortions of the truth. Certainly, reading on the dreary past is compulsory, but one must also keep a mind's eye on the imperative future.

Resources

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