Jews Are Not A Prop

POLITICIANS ARE USING ANTISEMITISM AS A TOOL TO MOBILIZE EXTREMISM FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL POWER

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This report is part of an American Jewish Congress initiative to combat domestic terrorism, including white supremacy and antisemitic extremism.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JEWS ARE NOT A PROP

Politicians are using antisemitism as a tool to mobilize extremism and their own political power.

That is the core conclusion of our fifth report on domestic terrorism, which focuses on white supremacy and antisemitic extremism. In this report, we at the American Jewish Congress identify, explain, and provide recommendations on how to defeat the pernicious dangers posed to both the United States and American Jews that result from the use of antisemitism in our nation’s politics.

For American Jews, being targeted for political purposes may feel new, but it is far from a unique phenomenon in the history of the Jewish people. The Jews have often served as a useful scapegoat for despots, tyrants and agitators in political battles that had nothing to do with the Jewish community. In the 14th century Jews were a politically convenient target to blame for the Black Death. In the 19th century the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were created in Tzarist Russia to blame the Jews for a series of ills in society, the Nazis did the same thing to mobilize German society to fascism. The scapegoating of the Jewish community for political purposes is a serious threat. It has led to massacres, pogroms, and the Holocaust.

This is why we have written this report: because American Jews are in a period where some of our nation’s politicians and their supports are deliberately using antisemitism to grow their personal political power.

America’s alarm bells should be going off!

It has been said that antisemitism is the world’s oldest hatred. It can also be said that antisemitism is the world’s loudest alarm bell – an alarm bell that all of society should pay attention to. For when Jews are being targeted politically, it is a sign that the politics of the nation in which they reside are ill and entering a dangerous page.

In this report, we explain this moment in our nation’s politics by describing:

1) The politicians targeting American Jews, including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) and Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA);
2) The toxic drivers of antisemitic hate, including the role of Neo-Nazism, White Supremacy, the Christian Identity Movement, QAnon, and the January 6th Insurrection and Stolen Election Claims; and
3) The mobilization of the mob, focusing on how American extremism is organized through social media.

We then provide recommendations on how to stop political antisemitism by:

A) Limiting the normalization of antisemitism;
B) Improving financial transparency;
C) Investigating antisemitism in alternative social media spaces; and
D) Penalizing the facilitation of extremism.

We hope that you, the reader, will find this report useful as you explore the momentous challenge our public life is facing right now. We are in this dangerous phase – where political antisemitism is being used to both whip up hate and ultimately violence – because politicians appear to have neither limits to nor standards for their ambitions. We know that the use of hate for political power is corrosive, and that political antisemitism, which has a horrific history, presents a clear and present danger to American democracy. Jews have seen this movie before, where we have been used as a prop for the ambitions of despots and tyrants. The movie never ends well – either for Jews or for the society in which we live.
Extremist groups and those supporting dangerous ideologies are organizing. Some seek to take control of America through the ballot box, others reject the democratic process entirely and advocate direct and violent action. They have created an alternative social media universe where these ideologies of hate come into their digital artifacts are remixed, and their conspiracy fueled hate, particularly of American Jews, is allowed to virally spread. The engagement of politicians in this space amplifies, emboldens, and normalizes antisemitism online and in society.

Politicians like Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) are building a political base on the alternative social media platforms, such as Gab, used by antisemitic extremists. Greene joined Gab in January 2021, seven months later her Gab following has reached over 314,600 people. Our research shows that 57% of them are also sharing content promoting one or more antisemitic conspiracy ideologies such as white supremacy and QAnon.

Greene caused a public outcry when she compared COVID-19 safety measures to the Nazi’s racist laws that targeted the Jews of Europe for annihilation in the Holocaust. She used Jewish symbols, such as the Star of David, as a prop in her campaign. Her base loved it, and it wasn’t due to the faulty symbolism.

Greene’s base loved her comparison of mask laws to the Holocaust precisely because they saw it as a high-profile attack that would cause hurt in the Jewish community, particularly to Holocaust survivors.

After three weeks of refusing to withdraw the offensive statements, Greene “apologized” in a staged press conference while refusing to withdraw statements comparing her political opponents to Nazis. She made a point of having just visited the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, turning that too into a prop. Greene visited the Auschwitz concentration camp when she was 19, so should have known better without a visit to the DC museum. Her apology was not shared with her base on social media. It was purely for the cameras. We reject it.

Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) linked to our statement rejecting Greene’s apology tweeting that Greene should learn “never apologize to the left” adding, “There is nothing an America First fighter can say or do to appease a mob acting in bad faith.” His statement shows support for Greene’s original antisemitic remarks. His reference to “America First”, a movement started in the 1940s to oppose American action against Nazism was concerning even before he organized a fundraiser with prominent white nationalist and Holocaust denier Nick Fuentes who is now advocating under the America First banner.

Joining the Nazi analogies is Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA) who compared members of the Democratic party to members of the Nazi party, then compared opposing efforts to restrict voting rights to fascism, just like Nazis. Perry has previously promoted white supremacist conspiracies around population replacement, the same conspiracy promoted in the Christchurch terrorist attack manifesto in 2019. The antisemitic conspiracy is usually presented as a Jewish plot to replace white people in society through mass immigration of non-white people.

3 https://twitter.com/DrPaulGosar/status/1405300496169066500
(2) THE TOXIC DRIVERS OF ANTISEMITIC HATE

**ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL MEDIA CONSOLIDATES THE MOB**

Alternative social media spaces are forming a new online superhighway to radicalization, violent extremism, and domestic terrorism. A community that accepts and thrives on hate is growing in these online spaces, creating new opportunities for those who wish to embed antisemitism and racism into American society. The online platform *Gab* is committed to supporting these ideologies. Antisemitism is used as a prop to create group cohesion.

Many Gab users, influenced by one or more antisemitic conspiracy ideologies, have learn of other antisemitic ideologies on Gab. Messages of hate from these ideologies become blended. Gab’s antisemitic ideologies include:

**a) Neo-Nazism**

Neo-Nazis glorify Hitler and the Nazis. They often engage in Holocaust denial and distortion, while at the same time claiming that “Hitler did nothing wrong.” On Gab some actively promote insurrection in the United States. Neo-Nazi groups that are proscribed as terrorist groups in some countries, such as Atomwaffen Division, have a history of being promoted on Gab.

![Figure 1: a Nazi group on Gab with over 4,100 members](image)

**b) White Supremacy**

With a basis in pseudoscience, and a range of discredited theories, white supremacy is an ideology that promotes the belief that people can be categorized into “races” based on their physical characteristics, that these “races” affect personal characteristics such as intelligence, and that there is a hierarchy of races with white people being at the top. The ideology is summed up in the white supremacy slogan called *the 14 words*: "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." White supremacy is inherently antisemitic and was a key part of Nazi ideology. On Gab groups like the “White Protection League,” with over 5,900 members, promote this ideology with regular insertions of neo-Nazi content. Stephan Balliet, convicted of the terrorist attack in Halle (Germany), is a white supremacist radicalized in the /pol/ community on 8chan. That community is now on Gab with over 57,200 followers.
(c) **Christian Identity Movement**

The Christian Identity Movement is a religious ideology popular among the extreme right. It is inherently antisemitic, based on white supremacy and provides a theological rationalization for racist and antisemitic violence. The Christian Identity group on Gab posts content with Christian identity ideology, but also neo-Nazism and white supremacy. Robert Bowers, who is accused of killing 11 Jews in the attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, was a regular Gab user who shared Christian Identity content in his posts.

While the group called “Christian Identity” is relatively small, aspects of the ideology are very visible on Gab with many users, including Gab’s founder Andrew Torba, actively promoting both white identity and Christian Identity Movement ideology and viewing the two as fundamentally linked.

(d) **QAnon**

The QAnon movement is based on a mishmash of conspiracy theories, many based on traditional antisemitic conspiracy theories such as the blood libels and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The QAnon conspiracy is centered around a belief in a “deep state” run by elite Satan-worshipping pedophiles that is controlling America. The largest QAnon group on Gab has over 170,300 members. The groups largely contain QAnon content, but with white supremacy and antisemitic content also mixed in. QAnon supporters, many organized on Gab, were largely behind the violent January 6th storming of the Capitol.

(e) **January 6th Insurrection and Stolen Election Claims**

Across the groups we found multiple posts with conspiracy theories about the January 6th insurrection being the work of government agents, a media conspiracy, and claims those arrested for involvement in January 6th are being tortured. We also found a range of posts calling, in general terms, for people to rise up against the United States Government. Claims that Trump won the 2020 election and that it was stolen by Biden also permeated the posts. Gab was also being used to coordinate protests. The same mechanism could be used to coordinate other actions, as it was on January 6th.
(3) THE MOBILIZATION OF THE MOB

AMERICAN EXTREMISM IS ORGANIZED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The ideologies discussed above are cross promoted through Gab. The result is a larger and diverse mob united by antisemitism ready to: (1) engage in extremist action and (2) serve as a political base for far-right politicians.

The same users were seen in multiple Gab groups, and in some cases the same content was shared by different users in groups with different ideologies. Once someone is on Gab they have increased exposure to new antisemitic and extremist ideologies. Far-right views are the norm on Gab and opposition to these views is almost completely absent. Gab’s founder, Andrew Torba, prefers it this way.

**Gab is increasing the risk of individual radicalization & mob mobilization – for political or violent action.**

![Figure 4 Andrew Torba discussing those with left wing views.](image)

Gab permits and enables far-right extremists to organize. It has provided them with a megaphone that is not only uncensored, but which sees their views promoted by the platform founder himself. Gab is not a content neutral platform advocating free speech, it is a far-right platform seeking to displace other channels of information and influence in order to better organize its audience.

**Cults and extremist groups push supporters to sever external connections, increasing reliance on the group.**

![Figure 5 Andrew Torba advocates for supporters to withdraw from mainstream society.](image)

As seen above, Gab is doing the same. Extracting people from such situations is a key to deradicalization.
(4) RECOMMENDATIONS

HOW TO STOP POLITICAL ANTISEMITISM

Politicians and political actors are engaging in antisemitism to build their own personal political power. To protect our democracy, this is how we can stop it.

A. Limit The Normalization Of Antisemitism
Members of Congress, their staff and other employees of the United States Government should be prohibited from using official resources to engage with social media platforms that lack reasonable efforts to prevent the spread of antisemitism. Reasonable efforts include having a policy to prohibit antisemitism, or hate speech more broadly, and reasonable efforts to enforce that policy.

B. Improve Financial Transparency
Transparency on solicitation of political donations is needed to ensure those who use antisemitism platforms as a political fundraising base can be held accountable at the ballot box. The public should be able to understand the total funds raised and total number of donors that have originated from each social media platform, website, or media source. The origination point should be the source of the message that contained a call to donate, and not simply the website that processes the transactions.

C. Investigate Antisemitism In Alternative Social Media Spaces
The State Department has played a leading role in tracking global antisemitism since 2006. Much of this antisemitism is now moving into alternative social media. A new effort is needed to report on global antisemitism in these alternative technology spaces, as well as cross referencing this with the work of agencies tasked with tackling domestic terrorism.

D. Penalize The Facilitation Of Extremism
American based platforms and those who own and operate them should face penalties if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent radicalization and that radicalization leads to acts of foreign or domestic terrorism.

Turning a blind eye to antisemitic extremism, responding only once it crosses the line into incitement of imminent and likely violence, is unacceptable. Left unchecked on alternative social media platforms with a susceptible audience, such extremism inevitably builds and intensifies until it leads to violence.

Failing to prevent the antisemitism that mobilizes extremist violence should come with liability for the platform. Choosing to provide a platform to dangerous organizations and those with extremist ideologies must lead to liability for the reasonably conceivable result that may follow.
2021 SPECIAL REPORTS

The American Jewish Congress’ initiative to combat domestic terrorism, including white supremacy and antisemitic extremism, has produced the following reports:

Report 1

Capitol Storming:
Neo-Nazi, QAnon & Antisemitic Online Chatter

Report 2

Radicalization’s Exodus:
White Supremacists Use Holocaust Denial to Radicalize QAnon and MAGA

Report 3

The New White Supremacist Politics:
How Marjorie Taylor Greene Uses Gab’s Online Antisemitic Extremism to Fuel Her Political Power

Report 4

90 Days of White Supremacist Radicalization:
Extremism’s Evolution in a Post-January 6th America

Report 5

Jews Are Not A Prop:
Politicians Are Using Antisemitism as a Tool to Mobilize Extremism for Their Own Political Power
The American Jewish Congress was founded in 1918 by leaders like Justice Louis Brandeis, Albert Einstein, Golda Meir, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise.

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