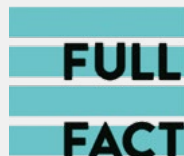


ANTISEMITISM POLICY TRUST



Global Network
on Extremism & Technology



Institute
for Strategic
Dialogue



TellMAMA
Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks

ARIEH KOVLER



**CONSPIRACY THEORIES:
A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF
PARLIAMENT AND CANDIDATES**

This guide was produced by the Antisemitism Policy Trust together with:
Community Security Trust (CST) | Full Fact | Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET)
Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) | Tell MAMA | Arie Kovler

Special thanks to Dr Matthew Sweet for advising on this guide

Executive Summary

Conspiracy theories are as old as time. However, in recent years, with the rise of social media and global events including the Covid-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories are posing distinct challenges to democracies and democratic elections. This risk is not only of conspiracy theories targeting governments and populations but also the active support and proliferation of conspiracy theories by government or other public officials. This guide has been produced to inform Members of Parliament and parliamentary candidates in the UK about the risks of conspiracy theories, and to try and draw out some key themes in order that you can be prepared to quickly assess and understand new conspiracy theories as they emerge. In this guide, we outline what conspiracy theories are, their appeal, and an overview of eight prominent conspiracies in the United Kingdom.

Conspiracy theories do not exist in isolation but share and borrow core components. Numerous conspiracy theories are rooted in anti-Jewish racism. The common notion shared by many conspiracy theories, of a secret cabal that seeks world domination by controlling world

events, promoting conflicts and financial instability, can find its roots in age-old antisemitism. Commonly-used phrases in conspiracy theories, for example, 'Global Elite,' have historically acted as code words for Jews, although these days may be used to refer to any group of people.

Conspiracy theories question official explanations of events. They all share this same basis: the existence of a covert and a powerful person or group of people or organisation with evil intent that seeks to harm or change an existing order. This group usually uses proxies to help hide and carry out its plans. These proxies may be politicians, the media, financial institutions, armed forces, or any kind of government agencies, all working for this 'dark force' to satisfy its malicious intent. Events overseas have demonstrated the power of conspiracy theories to generate unrest and violence. It is imperative that Members of Parliament and candidates understand how conspiracy theories function and the distinct threat that they can pose to democratic elections.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
What are Conspiracy Theories?	6
Why Do People Believe in Conspiracy Theories?	7
Conspiracy Theories as a Threat to Democracy	8
Case Studies	9
Diagram 1: Links between Conspiracy Theories	10
Table 1: Summary of Conspiracy Theory Case Studies	11
Antisemitism	12
Global Control, the Great Reset and the World Economic Forum	14
QAnon	16
The Great Replacement	18
Covid-19	19
5G	20
Ukraine War	21
Climate Lockdown	23
The 15-Minute City	24
Chemtrails	25
How to Recognise Conspiracy Theories?	26
Recommendations	27
Conclusion	28

Introduction

Conspiracy theories appear to be taking hold in Britain. A 2018 study found that 60% of the British public believe at least one conspiracy theory.¹ A more recent study found that in the US, nearly half of 13 to 17 year olds believe in at least four conspiracy statements, including believing in deepstate, climate change conspiracies and anti-vaccine conspiracies.² These findings are particularly concerning as believing in one conspiracy theory is a strong predictor of adopting additional conspiracies in the future.³

Although conspiracy theories are as old as time – many antisemitic conspiracy theories, including blood libels, have existed since the Middle Ages⁴ – the internet and globalisation have expanded the scope and speed with which the general public are exposed to conspiracy theories. In recent years, with the rise of social media and global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories are posing distinct challenges to democracies and democratic elections.

Conspiracy theories can pose a danger to democracies, public health, social cohesion, public safety and more; they reduce trust in democratic institutions, in governments, and in mainstream, regulated media outlets. Conspiracy theories can also reduce political participation and conformity to the rule of law, as well as increase fear, prejudice and hatred. They have resulted in violent hate crimes, terrorism, and abuse. Conspiracy theories can also contain, foster or

inspire hate speech, which discriminates and enhances prejudice against a person, or a group of people, based on what are in many cases protected characteristics.⁵ The harm caused by conspiracy theories is broad, and has, for example, led some to reject science-based medicine resulting in the return of once-cured diseases in some parts of the world.⁶

Conspiracy theories are abundant. Some are very specific, whilst others are broad. Some conspiracy theories are very much on the fringe, whilst others have become more mainstream. In this study, we have chosen to present several of the more well-known mainstream conspiracy theories, and others that are more marginal. This guide aims to show the common threads shared by these conspiracy theories, in an effort to help readers better understand and identify emergent conspiracies.

This document provides a guide for Members of Parliament to understand modern and older conspiracy theories highlighting their structure, themes, and supporters. We hope that this document will be a useful guide to anyone who seeks to understand and combat the devastating impact of conspiracy theories on our society. We also hope that a more comprehensive insight into conspiracy theories will encourage people with a public platform to refrain from assisting the spread of false, harmful and divisive themes.

What are Conspiracy Theories?

There is no single definition of a conspiracy theory, however, most scholars use the same components. Throughout this guide, we draw on the definition provided by Uscinski: 'an explanation of historical, ongoing, or future events that cites as a main causal factor a group of powerful persons, the conspirators, acting in secret for their own benefit against the common good.'⁷ In other words, a conspiracy theory claims the existence of a person or a covert and powerful group of people or an organisation with evil intent that seeks to harm or change existing orders. This group is usually presented as using proxies to help hide and carry out its plans. These proxies may be politicians, the media, financial institutions, armed forces, or any form of government agency, all working for this 'dark force' to satisfy its malicious intent.

The existence of 'enemies' is the most fundamental basis on which conspiracy theories rely. Traditionally this 'enemy' had to be real in order to be demonised, blamed for hardships and for the world's ills. In more recent times, references to 'elites' challenge the 'real' nature of this framing. This enemy in modern discourse tends to be Jews (or 'Zionists'), Muslims, migrants, women, ethnic minorities, other political actors and so on. Conspiracy theories also tend to hold contradictions and inconsistencies about the 'villains' and their plans, and many people who believe conspiracy theories tend to believe in mutually contradicting conspiracies.⁸

Conspiracy theories thrive at times of uncertainty or crisis, whether it is personal, national or international. They exploit people's existing fears, anxieties and the quest for someone to blame, and they nurture anger towards certain groups in society, such as ethnic or religious minorities and immigrants. Conspiracy theories also exploit, or are anchored in negative events, such as financial crises, pandemics, natural disasters or tragedies, to gain popularity.

Conspiracy theories have historically been a fixture in politics. Politicians from all sides of the political spectrum have been known to embrace and use conspiracy theories⁹ including for manipulation of the public. However, conspiracy theories are now also being identified within extremist ideologies and connected to violent extremism and acts of terrorism. For example, the perpetrators of the 2011 Norway attack, the 2019 Christchurch Mosque attack, and the 2019 El Paso shooting all cited the 'Great Replacement' conspiracy theory. The Great Replacement conspiracy is rooted in a belief that there is a plan to replace the European white population with ethnic minority groups.¹⁰ Many of the proponents of the 'Great Replacement' theory believe that Jews are manipulating events in order to create wars and instability, and undermine the white race. This is also a prominent theme in the infamous work of antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which has been a significant source of anti-Jewish racism that has fuelled violence against Jews since its publication in 1903.

Why Do People Believe in Conspiracy Theories?

Conspiracy theories have simple, compelling narratives that divide the world into good and evil. Conspiracy theories insert ideas based on misinformation or disinformation into people's gaps in knowledge or understanding, creating false causation or links between events that sound plausible.¹¹ Conspiracy theories are particularly appealing at times of crisis. They help explain momentous events such as a pandemic, financial crisis or wars, or events that hold mystery, such as a plane disappearing or suddenly crashing, in simple, accessible and digestible ways. Conspiracy theories bring people a degree of comfort, order, rationale, and a feeling of empowerment and offer control to those who are feeling powerless.

There are numerous predicated factors that make believing in conspiracy theories more likely. These include personality traits, such as narcissism (a belief in one's superiority and a sense of entitlement), which was found to have a strong correlation with a tendency to endorse conspiracy theories.¹² Suffering from anxiety, a feeling of alienation and believing in paranormal phenomena have also been found to predict conspiracy beliefs.¹³ Underlying psychological

disorders, such as paranoid ideation and schizotypy are also strong predictors of a tendency to believe in conspiracy theories.¹⁴

Ideology can also be a predictor of a predisposition to conspiracies, with those on the fringes or extremes, either on the left or right, more likely to believe in conspiracy theories.¹⁵ A recent study conducted by researchers from King's College London, found that antisemitism is more likely among those believing in conspiracy theories – whether they hold right wing or left wing views.¹⁶ This finding correlates with holding pre-existing prejudicial attitudes, which can also increase the likelihood of believing that a powerful group is secretly working towards a malicious goal.¹⁷ As outlined earlier, existing belief in one conspiracy theory, is a very strong predictor for a belief in additional ones.¹⁸ As such, people who already believe in one conspiracy theory can be more easily persuaded to believe in increasingly more radical and hateful conspiracy theories, which may lead them to commit hate crimes and various forms of violent extremist behaviour.

Conspiracy Theories as a Threat to Democracy

Conspiracy theories are a global phenomenon. They exist in countries regardless of the type of government, whether dictatorships, authoritarian regimes or liberal democracies. Conspiracy theories often claim that governments and official institutions manipulate events on behalf of an evil group of conspirators.

Conspiracy theories are particularly concerning for democracies. They erode trust in democratic institutions, including financial institutions, the justice system, healthcare providers, in governments at every level, and in regulated media outlets, undermining the most basic foundations of democratic rule. Democracies rely on the public's confidence in their institutions to operate effectively. When confidence

exists, people are more likely to comply with the laws and policies set by their governments – this does not however preclude parliamentary scrutiny, investigative journalism and media freedom which are also critical to functioning, transparent and free democracies.

Conspiracy theories are not only spread online or through the general public. Events overseas have highlighted the danger of politicians and government officials supporting and sharing conspiracy theories, especially around elections. When politicians spread conspiracy theories – knowingly or unwittingly – that have a wide appeal to the public, they can provide significant encouragement for their proliferation. This is because politicians have a position of power and influence.

CASE STUDIES

Case Studies

In this section, we provide an overview of several common conspiracy theories that we have identified as being promoted in the United Kingdom. We seek to demonstrate the links and common structure between these conspiracy theories in terms of core claims, the perceived ‘enemy’, and connections to other conspiracy theories. A summary of the eight cases is provided in Table 1. Diagram 1 shows how these conspiracies are connected to reach other.

What is evident in the case studies presented in this guide is the thread of antisemitism throughout. References to a ‘Global Elite’, ‘cabal’, or ‘dark forces’ usually imply a Jewish conspiracy of control for a secret world order. Similarly, references to shape-shifting

reptiles—as is the case of some QAnon offshoots—or the existence of ‘lizard people’ are all connected to historical antisemitic conspiracies about Jewish people as humanoids with mind control capabilities.¹⁹

We recognise that many members of governments, parliaments and civil society have little information on the origins and threats of conspiracy theories. As such, the sharing or amplification of conspiracy theories is not always intentional. By providing a guide to some of the most prominent conspiracy theories, we hope to inform Members of Parliament and candidates on how to identify conspiratorial narratives and help prevent their proliferation, including amongst constituents or local groups.

Diagram 1: Links Between Conspiracy Theories

(*click on each conspiracy to be directed to the relevant section about it).

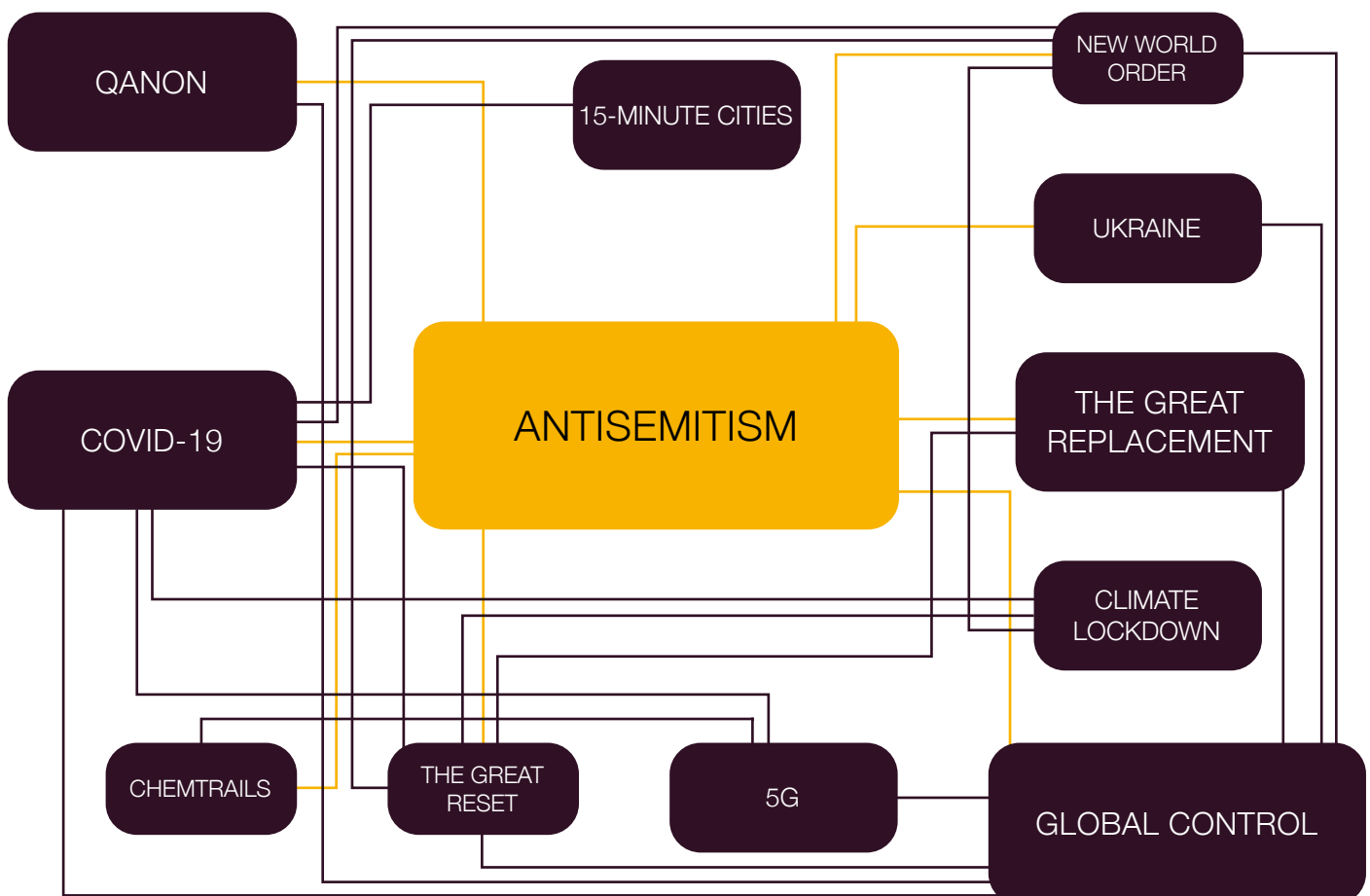


Table 1: Summary of Conspiracy Theory Case Studies²⁰

CONSPIRACY	CORE CLAIMS	ASSOCIATED CONSPIRACY THEORIES
ANTISEMITISM	Claims that there is a vast Jewish conspiracy that seeks to control global politics, economies, the media, and social and cultural values	Covid-19 War in Ukraine 5G QAnon The Great Replacement Global control New World Order The Great Reset
COVID-19	Claims range from Covid-19 not being real but a means of government control to anti-vaccination narratives such as vaccines containing 5G traceable microchips. There were also claims that Covid-19 was intentionally being spread to cause chaos and destruction	The Great Reset Antisemitism 5G Global control 15-Minute Cities New World Order
5G	Claims that 5G technology is unsafe due to radiation from 5G waves	Covid-19 Great Reset Theory
CHEMTRAILS	Claims that chemtrails are full of chemicals that are deliberately sprayed to control or reduce populations. This also includes claims that chemtrails are used for vaccination from Covid-19	5G Covid-19 Global Control Antisemitism
UKRAINE	Claims centre around two themes: 1. Pro-Russia narratives of the invasion countering power-grabs by Global Elites 2. Antisemitic conspiracy theories	Antisemitism Global Control
QANON	Claims the existence of a paedophile ring run by a Global Elite. There are also claims of this Global Elite being shape-shifting reptilians	Global Control Antisemitism
CLIMATE LOCKDOWN	Claims government overreach or the 'green tyranny' will be enforced under the pretext of climate change to strip people of civil liberties	Covid-19 Great Reset Theory Great Replacement Theory New World Order Global Control
15-MINUTE CITIES	Claims the urban design principle of 15-minute cities is a means of controlling movement and personal freedoms	Covid-19 Global Control
THE GREAT REPLACEMENT	A claim that is rooted in a belief that there is a plan to replace the European white population with ethnic minority groups	Antisemitism Global Control
NEW WORLD ORDER	A plot by governments and international bodies, such as the IMF and World Bank, to establish a new world order against the wishes of the local populations	Antisemitism Global Control Climate Lockdown Covid-19 The Great Reset
THE GREAT RESET	Originally a plan by the World Economic Forum to encourage governments to move toward fairer and more sustainable policies. Highjacked by conspiracy theories claiming the plan is used to control populations and economies to benefit a small group of powerful people	Covid-19 Antisemitism Global Control Climate Lockdown New World Order The Great Replacement

Antisemitism

Community Security Trust and the Antisemitism Policy Trust

Antisemitism, at its core, is a conspiratorial view of Jews, who are portrayed as a cunning, manipulative and demonic force that threatens all that is good in our world. As well as a basic prejudice towards Jewish people as different or inferior, antisemitism claims that there is a vast Jewish conspiracy that seeks to control and subvert our politicians, our economies, our media and our social and cultural values. It relies on the assumption that Jews (and each individual Jew in this case is an agent for the collective) are always up to no good and cannot be trusted, and that they always have a hidden agenda to promote some nefarious Jewish goal to the detriment of the rest of humanity. It encourages the belief that whatever is going wrong in the world, whether it is war, plague, economic disaster or some other misery, there will usually be a Jewish hidden hand secretly pulling the strings behind the scenes. It is a malicious and untrue fantasy, but a potent one that has appealed to millions of people throughout history.

This conspiracy charge gives energy to every significant and enduring anti-Jewish libel. In the Middle Ages, Jews were accused of kidnapping Christian children and murdering them in a religious ritual as a mock re-enactment of the crucifixion. Sometimes this false charge included the macabre detail that they supposedly drained their victim's blood to consume or to use for religious purposes referred to as 'blood libel'. Accusations of Jews murdering children are almost always entrenched in this conspiracy: Jews in Norwich, Lincoln and elsewhere were accused not only of murdering a child, but of doing so on behalf of, and in arrangement with, all Jews. Similarly, when rumours spread in the 1340s that Jews were spreading the Black Death across Europe by poisoning the wells – another false libel – the allegation that this was a transnational effort orchestrated by Jewish leaders across the continent – arose.

In modern times, this conspiracy motif has grown and transformed into what people imagine as a vast, global enterprise of Jewish manipulation and control. Terms such as 'Global Elite' are often used as codewords meaning a Jewish plot.

Books such as *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* and *The International Jew* sold millions of copies. The conspiracies within these texts were taken seriously by political leaders and mass media. Nazi Germany became so enthralled by the notion that there was a Jewish plot to destroy Germany that it sought to exterminate every Jew living in Europe. The Soviet Union and its postwar communist satellites viewed Jewish organisations as fronts for a supposed Zionist conspiracy run from Tel Aviv or New York. Jews have also been blamed for the 9/11 terrorist attacks,²¹ for the Covid-19 pandemic²² and for tricking the United States and its allies into invading Iraq in 2003.²³ Sometimes Israel, Zionism or 'The Lobby' act as a placeholder, but the meaning is usually the same: it is the supposed Jewish hidden hand yet again being blamed. For example when fingers were pointed at the Israeli military or police for training the policemen who took part in the racist murder of George Floyd in America.

These themes are the central, defining characteristics of antisemitism, and it is impossible to understand its appeal, or its danger, without those conspiratorial components.

The Jewish American-Hungarian philanthropist George Soros has been targeted by far-right and far-left populists. Drawing from the conspiratorial beliefs about Jews, Soros has been commonly, and falsely, accused of promoting wars and of promoting social unrest by financing illegal immigration, attempts at revolutions and anti-government protests.²⁴ Conspiracies about Soros are repeated by far-right activists and politicians in the US, Hungary and elsewhere in Europe, as well as in Turkey and Malaysia.²⁵ Soros has been accused of orchestrating the Black Lives Matter movement and the anti-fascist movement Antifa.²⁶ He has also been accused of being responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic and using it to increase his power and wealth.²⁷ Similarly, the Rothschild family, a wealthy Jewish family that rose to prominence for its success in banking, has also become synonymous in far-right and far-left circles, with corrupt Jewish power that seeks global domination and undermines governments and existing social order.²⁸



Figure 1: Top image falsely depicts Soros as a Nazi. Bottom image shows him as 'Dr. Evil' from the Austin Powers film series, showing a Covid-19 related conspiracy theory, claiming that Soros is behind lockdown policy.

Antisemitism can often be found in many other conspiracy theories, when the notion of Jewish power and influence is used to explain events. Antisemitic conspiratorial claims have been at the heart of conspiracy theories that promote misogyny,²⁹ the war in Ukraine and aspects of the QAnon movement.

Although Britain is a safe place for Jews, antisemitic attitudes and conspiracy theories are common. Roughly 30% of the UK population holds at least one antisemitic idea to be true.³⁰ The Community Security Trust, a charity that monitors antisemitic incidents in the UK, recorded 1,652 incidents in 2022.³¹ Its yearly figures suggest an upward trend in antisemitic incidents, including violence against Jews. 2023 is set to be the year in which the largest number of antisemitic incidents has ever been recorded in the UK.³² This anti-Jewish racism can be enabled by public figures, as well as by Members of Parliament, who can – sometimes unintentionally³³ – reinforce antisemitic attitudes by spreading conspiracy theories that are inherently antisemitic.

This is particularly prevalent when violence erupts between Israel and Palestinian terror organisations. Anti-Israel demonstrations in the UK that include MPs as speakers, often include antisemitic remarks and placards.³⁴ Whilst legitimate political criticism of Israel is of course not antisemitic, examples of anti-jewish racism must be confronted. This include blood libels, blaming all British Jews for the actions of the Israeli government, calling for violence against Jews, conspiracy theories claiming that Jews control the media and banking³⁵ and comparison between the conflict and the Holocaust.³⁶ When MPs participate in these demonstrations, without challenging observable antisemitism, or share such content on social media, it legitimises antisemitic conspiracy theories and helps them spread to a wider national audience.

Global Control, the Great Reset and the New World Order

Arieh Kovler

While the content and subjects of conspiracy theories change, one of the archetypal forms or structures of conspiracy theory is the idea that world events are being controlled or manipulated by a secret transnational cabal that works against local or national interests for its own purposes.

In the 19th and early 20th century, one version of this conspiracy theory had the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) as the secret rulers of the world,³⁷ causing the Titanic to sink.³⁸ Even earlier, many saw the occultish symbolism, exclusive membership and camaraderie of the Freemasons and other 'secret society' clubs as proof that they were nefarious Satanic forces working to control governments.³⁹ Often it was "the Jews" who were claimed to be the real cabal, the Elders of Zion steering history to their own malign ends (see the section on antisemitism, above).

This form of this conspiracy theory found new subjects in the late 20th century with the rise of international institutions: the United Nations, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, all feature in conspiracy theories popular among both the far right and far left that present these bodies as seeking to establish a **New World Order**⁴⁰ and a global government that would control the world against the wishes of local populations.

International conferences became another candidate for the true rulers of the world. The Bilderberg conference, an annual secretive gathering of world leaders and opinion-formers, was an obsession among conspiracy theorists in the 1990s and 2000s.⁴¹ However, today that role is filled almost exclusively by one organisation: the **World Economic Forum** (WEF).

The WEF, best known for its annual conferences in Davos, Switzerland, was founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab and claims to be "the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation", engaging the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas."⁴² The Davos conference hosts around 3,000 politicians, business leaders, celebrities and opinion leaders. Many of the hundreds of sessions at Davos

are broadcast online, as are articles and papers on a variety of international issues like AI, future governance and climate change.

In 2020, the WEF's work began to focus on the changes that the Covid-19 pandemic was causing to the world and how best to respond to them. The campaign, launched by then-Prince Charles,⁴³ was called **the Great Reset**. The Great Reset promoted a shift to greener industry, and finding positive opportunities to rebuild better after the havoc of the pandemic.

Very quickly, conspiracy theorists began to claim that the measures governments were taking to limit the spread of Covid-19 were part of the Great Reset (see "Climate Lockdowns" section) and even that the virus itself was created by the WEF in order to cause the Great Reset.

After the release of Covid-19 vaccines, the conspiracy theorists claimed that the vaccines, too, were part of the Great Reset and were deliberately engineered to cause infertility, make people weak-willed so they would comply with the conspiracy, etc.

With the fading of the pandemic, the Great Reset theory did not go away. Instead, it continued to absorb pre-existing conspiracy theories about the climate, economics and world events.

In 2016, Danish MP Ida Auken wrote an essay imagining a future where car-sharing, appliance sharing and even clothing sharing would be possible using timeshare apps. Like a lot of speculative writing about the future by elected officials, the essay was later published on the World Economic Forum website, which added a sentence summing up its message: "*You'll own nothing and be happy.*"⁴⁴ Conspiracy theorists latched onto this sentence and insisted it proved that the WEF was seeking a future where private property would be abolished in favour of techno-communism.⁴⁵

In a similar vein, some Great Reset conspiracy theorists believe the WEF is seeking to replace all physical currencies with "central bank digital currencies"⁴⁶ 'or a

social credit system, with the implication that people would no longer ‘own’ their money. Piers Corbyn went internationally viral among believers in this theory when he demanded to pay in cash in a cashless Aldi in July 2023,⁴⁷ insisting it was his legal right.

Attempts to reduce meat consumption fuelled claims that the WEF wants to force people to eat insect proteins (aka “eat the bugs”) instead.⁴⁸ Claims about 5G (see 5G section) and using environmentalism for social control (see 15-minute cities section) are also characteristic of the Great Reset conspiracy theory.

Of particular note in the UK context is the claim that certain politicians are “WEF stooges”. When Rishi Sunak became leader of the Conservative party and prime minister, X/Twitter was filled with claims that he was installed by the “WEF Globalists”, a claim that persists among the Far Right.⁴⁹

Unsurprisingly, this conspiracy theory also found a way to incorporate antisemitism. One variant claims the German-Catholic Klaus Schwab is secretly Jewish and a member of the Rothschild family.⁵⁰ Another theory states that Israeli public intellectual Yuval Noah Harari is Schwab’s “right hand man” and key advisor, with many misquotes and selective misunderstandings of Harari’s work cited as proof of some WEF plot. In fact, Harari has no association with the WEF beyond having given a couple of sessions at Davos conferences.⁵¹

Much like QAnon (see the QAnon section), the Great Reset is a syncretic and intersectional conspiracy framework, absorbing all sorts of existing and new conspiracy theories. It is likely to continue to develop as a way of explaining new and frightening technology and world events.

QAnon

Institute for Strategic Dialogue

California surf instructor Matthew Coleman told federal law enforcement agents in 2021 that he drove his children to Mexico and killed them with a spearfishing gun because he thought they possessed “serpent DNA” from their mother.⁵² Coleman was later charged with two counts of murder. A year prior, Texas woman Cecilia Fulbright cornered a teenager in a parking lot and repeatedly rammed her car into theirs, believing the random driver “was a paedophile and had kidnapped a girl for human trafficking.”⁵³

Both individuals committed their attacks while under the influence of the QAnon conspiracy theory movement. Coleman told agents after his arrest that he had been “enlightened” by QAnon before killing his children, and a former roommate described Fulbright indulging in a “three-day bender” of conspiracy theories that included QAnon before her car attack. Though conspiratorial beliefs were not sole drivers in either case, they motivated Coleman and Fulbright’s choices of victims and served as catalysts for their actions. QAnon beliefs of reptilian humanoids (bearing similarity to David Icke’s claims about Jews being shape-shifting reptiles) and widespread child-trafficking and paedophilia network run by a powerful ‘Global Elite’⁵⁴ are reflective of antisemitic conspiracy theories.

QAnon began with posts on the anonymous messageboard 4chan in late October 2017, claiming to be from a top US government insider and stating that Hillary Clinton would be arrested in days. Despite the arrest and other initial predictions not occurring, the anonymous poster, who began signing messages as “Q”, quickly gained a following known as QAnon.⁵⁵ The core QAnon beliefs, rooted in the Q posts, claimed that Donald Trump and the US military was about to defeat an evil Deep State cabal. Later, the Q poster began to echo the claims of the earlier Pizzagate⁵⁶ conspiracy theory, claiming that US political elites were engaged in collective child abuse and murder.

Many of the elements associated today with QAnon don’t find their source in the posts from “Q”. Aliens, reptilians, time travel, JFK Junior being alive and the trade in imaginary drug adrenochrome were all pre-existing conspiracy theories that the QAnon

movement absorbed, in some cases despite Q’s explicit instructions otherwise. Nor do all QAnon supporters believe in every element.

Few QAnon conspiracy theory movement supporters will ever engage in violent activity, even if animating premises of QAnon—beliefs that former President Donald Trump will eventually unleash a “storm” of destruction against cabals corrupting the world—do reflect desires to see violence done unto people thought to be responsible for evil. Leaders in the QAnon movement almost universally do, however, encourage followers to reject the notion of shared reality: a divorce that makes the adoption of particularly dangerous beliefs more probable and the threat of conspiracy-motivated violence possible.^{57 58}

Figure 2: Post published on Telegram promoting QAnon and ‘the storm’



For many followers of QAnon theories, reality exists not as a series of events with unique contexts, impacts, and considerations, but instead as instalments in a stage play meant to distract the public from clandestine battles between good (i.e., Trump) and evil. In this frame of mind, nothing is as it appears to be, everything is connected, and the supposed veiled meanings behind all events are open for one’s wildest interpretations.

Such a rejection of reality is also inherently isolating. In seclusion, individuals can become more susceptible to elaborate and outlandish alternative explanations for the world, and more easily overwhelmed by the contemplation of those elucidations. It can separate believers from their immediate contextual reality,

removing them from social influences that may have otherwise offered stability and comfort against the kinds of intrusive false beliefs encouraged by conspiracy theory movements.

The Great Replacement

Tell MAMA

The white supremacist terrorist who murdered 51 Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 19 March 2019 propagated the racist conspiracy of the so-called “Great Replacement.” The main premise of the Great Replacement claims that falling birthrates among white women will ‘doom’ white populations to demographic ‘replacement’ by nonwhite communities through immigration. Some claim this ‘replacement’ is a deliberate plan by the Jews or the Globalists.

The far-right French ideologue Renaud Camus popularised the conspiracy years earlier, but the theory exists in other iterations of Europe and North America.⁵⁹ Hungary’s Victor Orban endorsed the conspiracy in a 2022 speech.⁶⁰ Self-styled far-right “Identitarians” also helped push the conspiracy in Europe.⁶¹

The ‘White genocide’ that is at the heart of the Great Replacement, is perpetrated by a powerful cabal of Jews, according to those on the far-right, in an attempt to destroy the ‘white race’ through miscegenation and immigration.⁶² It also links to demographic myths and so-called “Islamification” (that Europe will become Muslim-majority in a few decades) found in older conspiracies like “Eurabia,” which some mainstream media columnists in Europe claim was an ideological driver for the far-right terrorist behind the attack in Utoya, Norway.⁶³

Both terrorists situate themselves within a broader, mythologised view of Europe where they see themselves as ‘soldiers’ in a narrow historical continuum of a cultural, civilisational war for a

monocultural, ethnically white Europe that seeks to inspire more racist terror and violence.⁶⁴

Tell MAMA’s ‘Decade of anti-Muslim Hate’ report noted how “digital hate cultures sanctify white supremacist terrorists by situating them as cultural figureheads and warriors who populate a more profound historical struggle that engages with, promotes and celebrates such violence in retrospect and hopes of what it will further inspire.”⁶⁵ The screed of the Christchurch terrorist also called for violence towards Jewish communities and echoed antisemitic canards about control over immigration and banking.

In the years ahead, multiple cases of those convicted of far-right terror offences demonstrate the lingering influence of Christchurch and racist, conspiratorial racist views about Jewish communities. Examples include Alan Madden,⁶⁶ Thomas Leech,⁶⁷ to a 16-year-old who plotted a terror attack on mosques in West Yorkshire and called Muslim and Jewish communities “invaders” on Telegram.⁶⁸ Ultimately, when we think of racialised conspiracies, whether they target Muslims or other minorities, many will invoke antisemitism and antisemitic tropes in their overall world-views and ideologies. The Dover petrol bomber Andrew Leak evoked antisemitic language around the pandemic in a broader racist worldview online that turned into real-world terror.⁶⁹

Covid-19

Full Fact

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic there was a lack of information about the virus.⁷⁰ The rapid pace of changes in scientific understanding and public information contributed to an information vacuum. This information vacuum allowed misinformation and conspiracy theories to spread. Despite Government attempts to provide accurate information to the public, government advice was often shared online alongside misinformation about the virus. This can be seen in the mixed messages online about whether it was harmful to take ibuprofen to alleviate the symptoms of Covid-19, on social distancing, lockdown rules, wearing face masks, or on handwashing.⁷¹

The delay in accessible information allowed conspiracy theories to multiply. Conspiracy theories ranged from denial that the virus existed to claims that it caused only mild illness and that its effects were being exaggerated. Conspiracy theories surrounding the pandemic have argued that the pandemic is being used by governments or 'dark forces' to manipulate and control the public. Antisemitic conspiracy theories relating to the virus were also common online. Claims that Jews are the primary spreaders of the virus and that the virus is a Jewish conspiracy, used to expand Jewish global influence and profit, flourished online.⁷²

The confusion and uncertainty relating to the pandemic meant that individuals who already had mistrust for the Government, the pharmaceutical industry or scientists, or those that already believed existing conspiracy theories, were more likely to believe unfounded claims.⁷³ Theories included that the Covid-19 vaccine was a cover for a plan to implant trackable microchips into people or that the virus was genetically engineered.

Throughout the pandemic, General Practitioners in the UK saw patients taking tips from posts they saw

online,⁷⁴ including holding their breath to diagnose themselves, that drinking hot drinks would fight off the virus, and some cited President Trump's statements about drinking disinfectant. The BBC also tracked Covid-19 misinformation and found links to wider conspiracy theories on 5G, and to assaults, arsons, and deaths.⁷⁵

As the pandemic continued, the safety of the Covid-19 vaccine for pregnant women was a key area of concern for many. Full Fact found that online discussion about the topic quickly became dominated by speculation, low quality or partial information, and misinformation. Both women and vaccination centres received mixed messages and pregnant women were not given second doses or thought they needed to start their course again, causing confusion, fear and inaction among pregnant women.⁷⁶ In the first half of 2021, only 42% of pregnant women who were offered the vaccine had accepted it.⁷⁷ Reasons cited were waiting for more evidence to reassure them that it was safe for their baby. By the end of 2021, 1 in 5 of the most critically ill Covid-19 patients were unvaccinated pregnant women.⁷⁸

Globally, in 2020 it was estimated that around 5,800 people were admitted to hospital because of false information online pertaining to Covid-19.⁷⁹ In Canada between March and November 2021, it is estimated vaccine hesitancy because of misinformation may have contributed to 2,800 deaths.⁸⁰ Covid-19 and the misinformation and conspiracy theories that spread throughout the pandemic demonstrate how harmful they can be and how it can negatively impact people's physical and mental health and delay the provision of care.

5G

Full Fact

5G wireless technology uses radio waves to transmit mobile data. It is the fifth generation (hence 5G) of wireless cellular technology, replacing the now-standard 4G. 5G has been trialled in the UK since 2018, with network roll out to consumers since 2019 now covering major cities. There is no evidence that 5G technology is harmful to human health.

5G conspiracy theories raise concerns that the impact of 5G has not been sufficiently tested to prove it is safe, and that there is risk to human health from radiation from 5G waves.⁸¹ Common themes include 5G ‘towers’ causing the deaths of large groups of birds or killing trees, that standing too near 5G ‘infrastructure’ was harmful to human health, with symptoms that include nosebleeds, an irregular heartbeat and memory loss. Many of the claims made about 5G were also made about the rollout of 3G back in the early and mid-nineties.⁸² Prior to this, people worried about the internet on phones, and about mobile phones.

Conspiracy theorist David Icke⁸³ was an early celebrity proponent of 5G conspiracy theories, first mentioning the technology to his hundreds of thousands of Facebook followers in mid-2018. Despite starting on a niche corner of the internet, one of the key successes of the 5G conspiracy was how it has managed to infiltrate so many online communities, including anti-vaccination groups and alternative health and nutrition groups.

Full Fact has provided guidance on the supposed link

between 5G and Covid-19.⁸⁴ Despite warnings, the information gap around the safety of 5G was not acted upon by the Government or public health authorities in time. This allowed conspiracy theories around 5G to spread rapidly. These theories drew on selective attention to official statements or academic studies, were endorsed by celebrities, and included claims that Covid-19 symptoms were a “mass injury” from 5G, or that Covid-19 was a hoax to enable the Government to install 5G under the cover of lockdown.

There have been attacks and arson on phone masts⁸⁵ and telecoms engineers being filmed or berated at work on new infrastructure. Those orchestrating the attacks were convinced that the Government was hiding something.⁸⁶ The Government recognised the existence of information gap about 5G and worked with health bodies and mobile infrastructure companies to create materials on the safety of 5G. Internet companies also took steps later on to reduce the spread of 5G conspiracies to promote good information on their sites. However, this was not enough to stem the tide of harmful misinformation.

Since the emergency phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories around 5G have remained a mainstay of misinformation online. The hashtag “#5G” is included on posts about the Covid-19 vaccine,⁸⁷ without any explanation, and misinformation that the UN Agenda 21⁸⁸ as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030⁸⁹ include plans for 5G monitoring.

Ukraine War

Antisemitism Policy Trust

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, came at a time when Covid-19 was becoming less dominant in the news cycles in many countries. This provided new terrain on which conspiratorial narratives could be deployed by those who had achieved some prominence in the world of Covid-19 and vaccine-misinformation. As noted in the introduction, those susceptible to conspiratorial thinking are often more receptive to narratives that are sympathetic to so-called "pariah states" and other actors that act in opposition to the goals of those bodies. Many supporters of Covid-19 conspiracies now support conspiracies about the conflict. There are two core themes among conspiracy theories focusing on the Ukraine War: Putin and Russia as 'truthseekers', and antisemitism.

Most conspiracies support Russia's invasion. Beyond anti-globalism, another factor that saw conspiracy theorists favouring the Russian narrative is Russia's self-conception as an enlightened but powerless vanguard of "truth-seekers", battling to purvey their insights to the brainwashed masses. Such beliefs can be self-fuelling, with believers tending to adopt the opposite position to anything that is considered a "normie" majority viewpoint. This is illustrated well by variants of the "Current Thing" meme, in which many widely held - and often unrelated concepts are dismissed as merely the fads of an unthinking and conformist populace. A few weeks after the invasion began, Elon Musk tweeted a version of this meme that had a variety of LGBTQ+ symbols and a Ukrainian flag, while other incarnations included representations of vaccines, facemasks and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Figure 3: Meme of I Support the Current Thing shared by Elon Musk



With these twin motivations – a hostility to intranational organisations and a tendency to reject any stance with widespread public support – many conspiracy theorists were quick to disparage the public outpouring of solidarity with Ukraine and promote, with varying degrees of boldness, the pro-Russia narratives in support of the invasion.

One former candidate for the UK Independence Party, to take an example, was increasingly drawn into anti-lockdown and anti-vaccination campaigning since 2020. Three days after the invasion began, this individual warned their followers that "the mainstream media and WEF/NWO controlled regimes cannot be trusted to tell the truth about Ukraine."⁹⁰ They posted a poll on Twitter two weeks earlier that showed that over 90% of respondents - likely drawn largely from their own followers - trusted Vladimir Putin over a trio of pro-Ukraine Western leaders.

Figure 4: David Kurten Twitter post with a poll asking users who they trust more between Putin and Western leaders

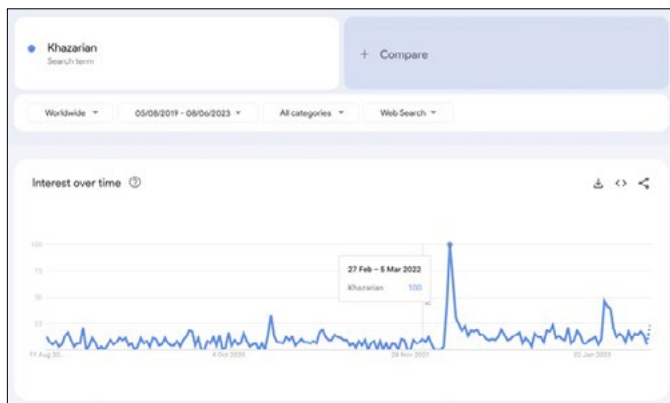


Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories and the War in Ukraine

The conspiracy theory scene produced and promoted a tableau of pro-Russia and anti-Ukraine narratives that blended newly confected disinformation with older, more established themes that included antisemitic tropes that have pervaded the conspiracy theories of the Western world for centuries. These included the narrative that international hostility to Putin was rooted in his rejection of the Rothschild Family, which had been circulating online for many years prior to the invasion but was revived to explain: "Putin successfully extracted Russia from the stranglehold of the Rothschilds. For this heroic feat, Putin has been characterised as the bad guy ever since."⁹¹

Popular conspiracy theorists promoted the idea that the Russia-Ukraine conflict was rooted in Ukraine's history as part of the Khazarian Empire. These conspiracy theories were successful in bringing this concept to new audiences as shown by the spike in Google searches for 'Khazarian' to an alltime high in the week following the launch of the invasion (figure 5). The discredited Khazarian hypothesis claims the Ashkenazi Jewish population of Europe is descended not from the people of ancient Israel but instead from the mass-conversion of the Khazarian a Turkic people of the Caucasus. The theory is regularly cited by fringe ideological groups with an interest in dissembling Jewish identity and historic attachment to the land of Israel, but in this case was instead used to smear Ukraine as being a hotbed of the "Khazarian mafia".

Figure 5: trends of Khazarian mafia mentions



Other antisemitic conspiracy theories relating to the war in Ukraine have been advanced by pro-Russian, far-right actors.⁹² This included blaming Jews for the war – a claim that accuses Jews of creating the conditions for the war in an effort to sow destruction and instability to

increase Jewish power. Proponents of this theme have argued that Ukraine is a 'puppet' state controlled by 'Zionists.'⁹³ Jews have also been used as scapegoats to explain Russia's difficulties in the war.⁹⁴ Russian authorities have been using rhetoric that dehumanises Russian Jews and incites hatred against them. Partly as a result, over 20,000 Jews have left Russia since the start of the war.⁹⁵ Antisemitic tropes have also been used by Russia and its supporters to justify the war, by claiming to 'denazify' Ukraine, for example.⁹⁶ Russian officials have falsely claimed that Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is not Jewish, but is in fact Nazi and a fascist.⁹⁷ This was done in order to justify Russian aggression. Contrary to this, far-right elements have been claiming that Jewish Zelenskyy is sending non-jewish Ukrainians to die in the war as part of a Jewish conspiracy:⁹⁸



Figure 6: The image above blames Ukraine's President Zelenskyy for sending white soldiers to their death, and considers it part of a Jewish conspiracy

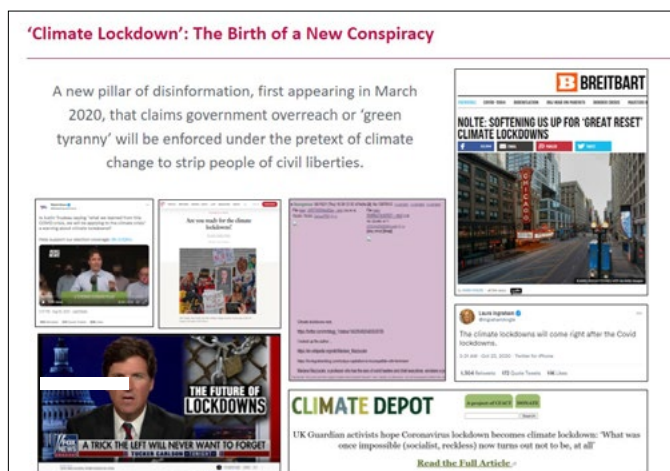
Climate Lockdown

Institute for Strategic Dialogue

The phrase 'climate lockdown' emerged after the first COVID-19 restrictions were imposed in Wuhan on 23 January 2020, appearing a mere two days later in social media posts.⁹⁹ Over the past three years it has become mainstreamed across both the Anglosphere and other language/geographic contexts (e.g. German, French, Spanish) as the catchphrase of a conspiracy: namely, that climate change will be used as a pretext for 'green tyranny' to enable state control and strip people of their civil liberties.

Most initial uses of the phrase had positive connotations, contrasting the relative urgency with which one deadly threat (Covid-19) was being handled to another seismic issue (climate change) where action is still slow or lacking. However, pieces in outlets like The Guardian and Project Syndicate were republished to support allegations of state control.^{100 101 102 103 104 105}

Figure 7: Examples of media content promoting fears of a 'climate lockdown'



Reviewing their social media history, we can see these actors had tried to 'land' the conspiracy theorist framing on social media from April 2020 onwards; however, it was only once they could

position themselves in opposition to so-called 'mainstream media' that such content gained any momentum. Within just six months, these actors had successfully normalised the narrative via right-wing media outlets (e.g. Fox News, OANN, Breitbart, The Washington Times and GB News), and climate lock-down soon penetrated more explicitly conspiracist and extremist communities online (e.g. QAnon channels on Telegram; 8kun boards).

In the process, the conspiracy began to merge with other prominent theories such as The Great Reset, The Great Replacement and the New World Order, rallying people around central themes such as government overreach, globalist cabals, individual freedom and surveillance.^{106 107 108} By mid-2021, discussions of the term were endemic across social and traditional media, including in groups that had originally formed to oppose public health measures, vaccine mandates etc. and subsequently pivoted to other policy issues.

Figure 8: Examples of how fears of 'green tyranny' are enveloped into wider conspiracy theory narratives



The 15-Minute City

Antisemitism Policy Trust

The 15-minute city (15mc) is an urban planning concept which envisages all of life's necessities to be within a short walk or bike ride from people's home. Living within a short distance from grocery stores, school, a GP practice, parks and more, is meant to improve the quality of life for people living in large cities and make it more sustainable. 15-minute cities also aim to encourage people to use their cars less and reduce emissions and pollution in neighbourhoods. This is a strategy that has been adopted by cities around the world, including in Paris, Oxford, Melbourne, Barcelona, Portland and Ottawa.

In recent times this concept has been adopted and warped by conspiracy theorists who claim that instead of a way to improve conditions, it is in fact a way of controlling people and reducing personal freedoms, including and specifically, the freedom of movement. The core concepts in this conspiracy theory are closely related to conspiracies surrounding Covid-19 lockdown and mask-wearing policies, as reviewed earlier in this guide. Introducing new traffic systems has also led to the adoption of the same narratives spread by conspiracy theorists relating to climate change, including rebranding the 15-minute plans as 'climate tyranny.'¹⁰⁹ The connection was pushed by campaigners with links to the fossil fuel lobby, who warned that governments would impose travel restrictions not for the purpose of cleaner air, but as a control mechanism.¹¹⁰

Conspirators include the claim that a 'Global Elite' is using the 15-minute city planning method to create a new world order that includes surveillance and curtailment of freedoms.¹¹¹ It has also been

claimed that this group is planning to impose its plans through the World Economic Forum.¹¹² The term 'globalist' has for decades been an antisemitic codeword for Jewish people and their quest for international power and control.¹¹³ That many of the conspiracy theories about the 15-minute city are either on the far-right or the far-left, where antisemitism is rife, once again demonstrates that a connection between antisemitism and this particular conspiracy theory, is not far-off.

In late 2022, news emerged that Oxfordshire City Council in the UK was planning to implement a traffic management scheme, part of which would split the city into walkable neighbourhoods.¹¹⁴ Though the scheme had no relationship to Covid-19 lockdowns, the move was soon conflated with the idea of '15-minute cities' (15mc).¹¹⁵ It was then linked to authoritarianism by bloggers including Vision News, Daily Sceptic and WattsUpWithThat.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁷ ¹¹⁸

Content described 15-minute cities as a form of 'communism' and a 'plan for Command and Control' (Vision News); illustrated a story about Oxford with black-and-white pictures of a crowd giving the Nazi salute (DailySceptic); and stated that the scheme was symbolic of Britain 'edging closer to naked communism' (WattsUpWithThat). The 15mc has since achieved virality at a transnational level.¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰ In just a few months, protests have mobilised in contexts including the UK, Canada, Australia and France, often with representation from far-right politicians or movements, local officials and academics have received death threats, and references to the conspiracy have even bled into Parliamentary debates.¹²¹ ¹²² ¹²³

Chemtrails

Full Fact

Contrails (short for “condensation trails”) are long thin lines of cloud which are formed when water vapour produced at high altitudes by aeroplane engines freezes as it is released into the cold air surrounding the aeroplane. The chemtrails conspiracy theory claims that contrails are full of chemicals, deliberately being sprayed into the atmosphere from scheduled passenger flights to pacify or reduce populations as part of a plot by governments or shadowy forces.¹²⁴ The conspiracy theories around chemtrails can be traced back to the 1990s,¹²⁵ but have since been linked to everything from spreading Covid-19, distributing vaccines, climate denialism, to the vague notion of promoting a “new world order.”

Groups and individuals believing in chemtrail conspiracy theories see evidence of a clandestine globalist conspiracy involving a pick-and-mix selection of the UN, the military, national governments, the Rothschilds, climate scientists, pilots and big business (see also the Great Reset, above).¹²⁶ Full Fact has observed these

false claims online. For example, claims that Bill Gates is part of a secretive geoengineering plot designed to manipulate the weather and try to “block out the sun”,¹²⁷ that various governments¹²⁸ had approved “Big Pharma” to allow its citizens to be forcibly vaccinated via chemtrails.¹²⁹ Similarly, there are false claims that the Rockefeller family wrote a “secret covenant” that proves the public is being controlled by an elite class through secretive methods such as poison through chemtrails.¹³⁰

Chemtrail conspiracy theories have been fuelled by an increase in conspiratorial thinking during the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise of the QAnon conspiracy theory during the Trump presidency. Popular conspiracy theorists also support a belief in chemtrails, linking this relatively innocuous theory with more harmful conspiracy theories around cover ups of a cure for cancer, that HIV does not exist, on the link between autism and vaccination, and on the ‘pandemic’ of Covid-19.¹³¹

How to Recognise Conspiracy Theories?

These are a few simple-to-apply ways to help recognise a conspiracy theory:

- 1. Structure:** as shown here, conspiracy theories tend to follow similar structure and themes. They include a secret plot managed by a small group of conspirators who are 'in the know' and who have sinister intentions. This group will often be portrayed as having power beyond imagination, a supernatural ability to collaborate and a grand scheme to change existing order or power balance, usually using a proxy group of collaborators who may or may not be aware of the scheme.
- 2. Good versus evil:** conspiracy theories divide the world into good versus bad. They will nearly always present an imbalanced, extreme explanation to events. The tone of conspiracy theories is nearly always sensationalist.
- 3. Paranoia:** conspiracy theories all present a high level of suspicion of any formal institutions, including governments, international organisations and financial institutions, and regulated mainstream media outlets. These are all assigned nefarious intentions.
- 4. Nothing is accidental:** according to conspiracy theories, nothing is spontaneous, coincidental or random. Every detail, including big and small events, is a part of a well-conceived evil plan.
- 5. Mixing facts with falsehoods:** conspiracy theories present information that relies on a mix between facts, that are usually partial or taken out of context, in combination with unfounded speculations that are derived from ideological beliefs and fear. This creates a smoke screen that makes implausible theories sound believable.
- 6. Dogmatism:** conspiracy theories are often presented as the only possible truth. Conspirators will not consider any other explanation to events but their own, and will interpret any related occurrence as part of a plot.

Recommendations

Conspiracy theories cause harm to individuals, communities and to our democratic way of life. They inspire hatred and prejudice. As influential public figures, it is vital that Members of Parliament understand the effect caused by spreading and legitimising conspiracy theories and help contain the harm caused by conspiracies.

These are recommendations for how this can be achieved:

1. Check before sharing. It is vital to check that information has a solid factual basis. Many conspiracy theories may sound true, they will use figures, statistics, or references to historical events, but those may either be untrue, partial or taken out of context. Knowing the origin of the information can also help judge its reliability. These days, conspiracy theories can be backed up by content generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. This includes images and deep fake videos. As AI becomes increasingly sophisticated, it can be difficult to differentiate fake content from real content. AI is also cheap and easy to use, and it is therefore likely that those who want to spread conspiracy theories and disinformation will use it prolifically.

2. Consider the harm caused by misinformation. Do not share information or make public re-marks lightheartedly. Consider who might be the potential victim of spreading false, and particularly hateful, content. It may be against Jews, women, minorities, immigrants, or others. The victim may also be a public institution or the government, who may lose credibility and trust. Conspiracy theories will tend to use language that is divisive, biased and

inflammatory. When encountering such content, be aware of who is spreading it and what their agenda is, and take care not to act in ways that reinforce such theories.

3. Recognise and counter conspiracy theories.

This can be done by using educational material from credible sources and by engaging with expert organisations such as ours, who specialise in a variety of conspiracy theories and are not partisan.

4. Protect yourself from being sucked in. Learn to recognise how your own bias and political views may make you susceptible to believing in conspiracy theories. People tend to believe claims that align with their attitudes,¹³² even when those claims are untrue or misleading. Recognising this can help analyse information using analytical reasoning rather than intuitive reasoning,¹³³ which can guard against the pitfalls of conspiracy theories.

Conclusion

The purpose of this guide is to present a comprehensive explanation to conspiracy theories. It illustrated how conspiracy theories follow similar patterns, have overlapping themes, and are recognisable when following a simple set of guidelines.

The prevalence of conspiracy theories has a deep effect on our community, security and values. Our organisations have been working relentlessly to uncover conspiracy theories. Some of us have been working to support victims of prejudice and racism that are the product of conspiracy theories. We have advised Parliament, policy makers and regulators on this and related subjects. We believe it is essential that our elected representatives in Parliament use their influence

to help combat conspiracy theories. Once conspiracy theories have taken root, it is nearly impossible to control their spread and influence. It is therefore equally important that MPs and prospective MPs do not reinforce conspiracy theories.

We know how difficult it is to combat conspiracy theories. When doing so, people who believe in conspiracy theories will likely view the person who is debunking them as naive or as a co-conspirator. However, when people are presented with verified, reliable facts that are presented logically and without ridicule, a change may be possible. We hope that this guide will be helpful in achieving this.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/23/study-shows-60-of-britons-believe-in-conspiracy-theories>
- 2 https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/STAR-Report_FINAL.pdf pp.11-13.
- 3 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-021-01258-7>
- 4 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/myths-and-misconceptions-may-2020-1-1.pdf>
- 5 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381958> p.5
- 6 <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/pops.12568>
- 7 Joseph E. Uscinski, "The Study of Conspiracy Theories," *Argumenta* 3, no. 2 (October 2017): 235, <https://www.argumenta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/3-Argumenta-Joseph-Uscinski-The-Study-of-Conspiracy-Theories.pdf>.
- 8 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/09567976231158570>
- 9 <https://academic.oup.com/book/25369/chapter-abstract/192463024?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- 10 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/APT-Protocols-Guide.pdf>, p.8
- 11 Misinformation is false or misleading information that can be harmful, but is shared without direct intent to cause harm. Disinformation is similar, except it is spread with the intention to harm and polarise. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381958> p.5
- 12 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352250X22001051>
- 13 <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00205/full>
- 14 <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00205/full>
- 15 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-021-01258-7>
- 16 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-01624-y>
- 17 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2352250X20300245>
- 18 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-021-01258-7>
- 19 A comprehensive glossary of antisemitic phrases can be found here: <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/6847-Antisem-Glossary-2023-10-WEB.pdf>
- 20 We included the term Global Elites here, because it is an element that is common to most conspiracy theories. It represents a power group of conspirators that is secretly manipulating the public to achieve their goal. This may be a political elite, a financial one, and very commonly, it refers to a powerful Jewish cabal.
- 21 <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-conspiracies-about-911-endure-20-years-later>
- 22 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Coronaviru-antisemitism-May-2020.pdf>
- 23 <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iraqi-scholar-jews-persuaded-bush-to-invade-iraq-in-2003-because-of-torah-prophecy-376670>
- 24 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Final-George-Soros-Briefing.pdf>
- 25 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Final-George-Soros-Briefing.pdf>
- 26 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Final-George-Soros-Briefing.pdf>
- 27 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Final-George-Soros-Briefing.pdf>
- 28 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/myths-and-misconceptions-may-2020-1-1.pdf> p.11
- 29 More on the link between far-right antisemitic conspiracy theories and misogyny in this guide by the Antisemitism Policy Trust: <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Antisemitism-and-Misogyny-Overlap-and-Interplay.pdf>
- 30 <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/antisemitism-contemporary-great-britain>
- 31 <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/e/6/CST%20Incidents%20Report%202022.1675768185.pdf>
- 32 <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/e/6/CST%20Incidents%20Report%202022.1675768185.pdf>
- 33 for example, confusion over what accounts as legitimate political criticism of Israel and what constitutes antisemitism have in the past resulted in Members of Parliament spreading antisemitic attitudes. More on this: <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/6648-Antisemitism-Trust-Chants-Report-v4.pdf>
- 34 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/6648-Antisemitism-Trust-Chants-Report-v4.pdf>
- 35 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/6648-Antisemitism-Trust-Chants-Report-v4.pdf> p.8
- 36 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/6648-Antisemitism-Trust-Chants-Report-v4.pdf> p.5
- 37 *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France*, Cubitt, Geoffrey, OUP 1993
- 38 "The uncomfortable truths behind crazy Jesuit conspiracy theories", McDermott, Jim, 14 June 2022, America: the Jesuit Review <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2022/06/14/jesuit-conspiracy-theory-great-replacement-243137>
- 39 "Nearly two centuries ago, a QAnon-like conspiracy theory propelled candidates to Congress", Bjork-James, Sophie, The Conversation, 2 September 2020 <https://theconversation.com/nearly-two-centuries-ago-a-qanon-like-conspiracy-theory-propelled-candidates-to-congress-144838>
- 40 "The 'New World Order'", Institute for Strategic Dialogue <https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/new-world-order-explainer/>
- 41 "Debunking the Bilderberg Myth", ADL, 1 March 2007 <https://www.adl.org/resources/news/debunking-bilderberg-myth>
- 42 Our Mission, World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum/>
- 43 #TheGreatReset, Royal Family YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRPQqfwuhU>
- 44 "Fact check: The World Economic Forum does not have a stated goal to have people own nothing by 2030", Reuters 25 February 2021 <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-wef-idUSKBN2AP2T0>
- 45 "The World Economic Forum isn't planning the 'end of national sovereignty'", Fullfact, 30 June 2023 <https://fullfact.org/online/world-economic-forum-cashless-15-minute-central-bank/>

- 46 "How digital cash got caught up in the culture wars", Venkataramakrishnan, Siddharth, The FT, 6 September 2023 <https://www.ft.com/content/ab8f8e73-34bf-4624-b394-97f995551f7a>
- 47 "Piers Corbyn splits opinion in latest stunt as he pays with cash at cashless Aldi", Tetzlaff-Deas, Benedict, the Mirror, 1 August 2023 <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/piers-corbyn-splits-opinion-latest-30601946>
- 48 "How a conspiracy theory about eating bugs made its way to international politics", Jingnan, Huo, NPR, 31 March 2023 <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/31/1167550482/how-a-conspiracy-theory-about-eating-bugs-made-its-way-to-international-politics>
- 49 Twitter thread by Arie Kovler, 24 October 2022. <https://twitter.com/ariekovler/status/1584278341917413377>
- 50 "Fact Check-Inaccurate WEF Founder Klaus Schwab family tree shared online", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-klaus-schwab-rothschild-idUSL1N3AD1ZD>
- 51 "Fact Check-World Economic Forum did not declare 'God is dead' or that humans would become gods", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/fact-check-wef-schwab-harari-idUSL1N33D18N>
- 52 Fry, Wendy. *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. August 11, 2021. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/border-baja-california/story/2021-08-11/coleman-charged-mexico-killings-qanon>
- 53 Feeld, Julian. *Right Wing Watch*. August 20, 2020. <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/texas-qanon-car-attack-cecilia-fulbright/>
- 54 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/20/qanon-conspiracy-child-abuse-truth-trump>
- 55 <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/how-three-conspiracy-theorists-took-q-sparked-qanon-n900531>
- 56 <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/12/5/13842258/pizzagate-comet-ping-pong-fake-news>
- 57 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/opinion/qanon-conspiracy-theory-arg.html>
- 58 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/02/05/are-conspiracy-theorists-plotting-to-blow-up-the-u-s/>
- 59 Ekman, Mattias. "The great replacement: Strategic mainstreaming of far-right conspiracy claims." *Convergence* 28, no. 4 (2022): 1127-1143
- 60 <https://www.vox.com/2022/5/19/23123050/hungary-cpac-2022-replacement-theory>
- 61 Goetz, Judith. "'The Great Replacement': Reproduction and population policies of the far right, taking the Identitarians as an example." *DiGeSt-Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 8, no. 1 (2021).
- 62 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/myths-and-misconceptions-may-2020-1-1.pdf>
- 63 Bergmann, Eirikur. "The Eurabia conspiracy theory." *Europe: Continent of conspiracies: Conspiracy theories in and about Europe* (2021): 36-53.
- 64 Gardell, Mattias. "Crusader dreams: Oslo 22/7, Islamophobia, and the quest for a monocultural Europe." In *Lone wolf and autonomous cell terrorism*, pp. 139-165. Routledge, 2017.
- 65 <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/A-Decade-of-Anti-Muslim-Hate-TellMAMAREport.pdf>
- 66 <https://tellmamauk.org/recent-neo-nazi-terror-convictions-show-christchurchs-ongoing-propaganda-influence/>
- 67 <https://tellmamauk.org/neo-nazi-terrorist-who-called-for-violence-against-muslims-and-jews-jailed/>
- 68 <https://news.sky.com/story/far-right-teenager-found-guilty-of-plotting-terror-attack-on-mosques-and-ex-girlfriend-12845560>
- 69 <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/The-Tangled-Web-of-Far-Right-and-Anti-Muslim-Hate.pdf>
- 70 https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/addressing_health_misinformation_lessons_from_2020_report_12_03_21.pdf
- 71 https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/online_health_misinformation_in_the_uk_full_fact.pdf
- 72 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Coronaviru-antisemitism-May-2020.pdf>
- 73 <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.201199>
- 74 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-52731624>
- 75 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-53755067>
- 76 https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/online_health_misinformation_in_the_uk_full_fact.pdf
- 77 <https://www.rcm.org.uk/media-releases/2021/march/vaccination-provides-the-best-protection-against-covid-19-in-pregnancy-say-experts/>
- 78 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/10/nhs-encourages-pregnant-women-to-get-covid-19-vaccine/>
- 79 <https://www.ajtmh.org/view/journals/tjmd/103/4/article-p1621.xml>
- 80 <https://cca-reports.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Report-Fault-Lines-digital.pdf>
- 81 <https://fullfact.org/online/5g-and-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-came/>
- 82 <https://fullfact.org/online/5g-and-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-came/>
- 83 <https://fullfact.org/online/5g-and-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-came/>
- 84 https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/online_health_misinformation_in_the_uk_full_fact.pdf
- 85 <https://www.businessinsider.com/77-phone-masts-fire-coronavirus-5g-conspiracy-theory-2020-5?r=US&IR=T>
- 86 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/05/02/5g-conspiracy-theories-drive-abuse-towards-broadband-workers>
- 87 <https://fullfact.org/online/flucloxacillin-magnetic>
- 88 <https://fullfact.org/online/Agenda-21-Agenda-2030>
- 89 <https://fullfact.org/online/Agenda2030-cartoon-UN>
- 90 <https://twitter.com/davidkurten/status/1497938607478349824>
- 91 <https://expose-news.com/2022/04/04/khazaria-rothschilds-ukraine-and-nephilim-agenda/>
- 92 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/6657-Antisem-Russia-Report.pdf>
- 93 <https://www.polygraph.info/a/fact-check-malaysia-ukraine-zionist-conspiracy/6743346.html>
- 94 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/6657-Antisem-Russia-Report.pdf>
- 95 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/6657-Antisem-Russia-Report.pdf> p.13
- 96 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/6657-Antisem-Russia-Report.pdf>

- 97 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/6657-Antisem-Russia-Report.pdf>
- 98 <https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/6657-Antisem-Russia-Report.pdf> p.12
- 99 <https://www.isdglobal.org/isd-publications/climate-lockdown-and-the-culture-wars-how-covid-19-sparked-a-new-narrative-against-climate-action>
- 100 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/12/the-guardian-view-on-the-climate-and-coronavirus-global-warnings?CMP=share_btn_tw
- 101 <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/radical-green-overhaul-to-avoid-climate-lockdown-by-mariana-mazzucato-2020-09>
- 102 <https://www.desmog.com/steve-milloy/>
- 103 <https://www.desmog.com/marc-morano/>
- 104 <https://twitter.com/JunkScience/status/1249777006885117957>
- 105 <https://twitter.com/ClimateDepot/status/1341235056359202823>
- 106 <https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/the-great-reset/>
- 107 <https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/the-great-replacement-explainer/>
- 108 <https://www.isdglobal.org/explainers/new-world-order-explainer/>
- 109 <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/26/world/15-minute-cities-conspiracy-theory-climate-intl/index.html>
- 110 <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/15-minute-cities-conspiracy-climate-denier>
- 111 <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/01/world/europe/15-minute-city-conspiracy.html>
- 112 <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/01/world/europe/15-minute-city-conspiracy.html>
- 113 https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-02/AJC_Translate-Hate-Glossary-2021.pdf
- 114 <https://www.rappler.com/environment/climate-change-misinformation-struggle-limit-cars-oxford-england/>
- 115 <https://www.dw.com/en/15-minute-cities-what-are-they-and-how-do-they-work/a-64907776>
- 116 <https://www.visionnews.online/post/oxfordshire-county-council-pass-climate-lockdown-trial-to-begin-in-2024>
- 117 <https://dailysceptic.org/2022/12/05/oxford-county-councillors-to-introduce-trial-climate-lockdown-in-2024>
- 118 <https://wattsupwiththat.com/2022/12/04/oxfordshire-council-to-trial-a-climate-lockdown-starting-2024>
- 119 <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/26/world/15-minute-cities-conspiracy-theory-climate-intl/index.html>
- 120 <https://www.rappler.com/environment/climate-change-misinformation-struggle-limit-cars-oxford-england/>
- 121 <https://twitter.com/davidrvetter/status/1626962297766744067>
- 122 <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/28/technology/carlos-moreno-15-minute-cities-conspiracy-theories.html>
- 123 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carltonreid/2023/02/09/tory-mp-uses-conspiracy-theory-in-uk-parliament-against-15-minute-city-concept/?sh=1ba229f056ef>
- 124 <https://fullfact.org/online/contrail-and-chemtrail/>
- 125 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-62240071>
- 126 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-42195511>
- 127 <https://fullfact.org/online/contrails-not-geoengineering/>
- 128 <https://fullfact.org/online/spanish-chemtrails/> and <https://fullfact.org/online/chemtrails-dispersal-vietnam/>
- 129 <https://fullfact.org/online/vaccine-chemtrails-australia/>
- 130 <https://fullfact.org/online/secret-covenant-Rockefellers/>
- 131 <https://fullfact.org/health/nih-pubmed-scamdemic/>
- 132 <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/controlling-misinformation>
- 133 <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/03/controlling-misinformation>

The Antisemitism Policy Trust's mission is to educate and empower parliamentarians, policy makers and opinion formers to address antisemitism. It provides the secretariat to the British All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism and works internationally with parliamentarians and others to address antisemitism. The Antisemitism Policy Trust is focussed on educating and empowering decision makers in the UK and across the world to effectively address antisemitism.

Contact APT



www.antisemitism.org.uk



[@antisempolicy](https://twitter.com/antisempolicy)



Antisemitism Policy Trust



mail@antisemitism.org.uk

The Antisemitism Policy Trust is a registered charity (1089736) [England]
and company (04146486) [England and Wales]