

ANTISEMITISM POLICY TRUST

THE PROTOCOLS OF THE LEARNED ELDERS OF ZION:

Unpacking the Notorious
Antisemitic Forgery

Background

The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, first published in Russia in 1903, is a notorious work of forgery containing many antisemitic conspiracy theories. Its twenty-four protocols depict a detailed sinister Jewish plot to gain world domination. Building on age-old antisemitic blood-libels and myths, the *Protocols* modernised many of those tropes and launched them into the twentieth century. The publication quickly gained popularity worldwide and has become a primary source of inspiration for antisemites.

Many of the conspiracies included in the book existed prior to its publication. These include the notion of Jewish world domination, control over governments, media and finance, and plots to destabilise the world order by promoting disorder and wars to benefit Jews. The *Protocols* have been translated from Russian into English, Arabic, Japanese, Polish, Spanish, and many other languages.

The main narrative in the *Protocols* depicts Jews as hating the goyim, or gentiles – anyone who is not Jewish. Jews and their agents, who, according to the *Protocols*, are present everywhere, plot to undermine world order by various means, including instability, financial control and control over primary sources of information, such as the press and academia. Jews, according to the *Protocols*, plan to eventually destroy or subjugate their enemies and gain total world domination. Throughout the *Protocols*, there is a sense that Jews see themselves as ‘the chosen people’ and view everyone else as there merely to be ruled, used, looked down upon, or to have contempt against. ‘We’ are powerful, ‘they’ are not smart, not sophisticated and greedy. The *Protocols* also exhibit Jewish contempt towards liberalism and freedoms, and set a plot to take advantage of these to serve their ambitions.

Despite the horror of the Holocaust, which showed how antisemitism can mobilise publics against Jews, and which resulted in genocide, these conspiracies continue to flourish today, in part thanks to the popularity of the book. The *Protocols* has become a major source of anti-Jewish propaganda for extreme right-wing and left-wing groups in Europe and the US, such as the

Ku Klux Klan, and has also been used for anti-Jewish and anti-Israel indoctrination by some Arab and Muslim perpetrators of propaganda.¹ Despite being proven false, the themes that appear in the *Protocols* have influenced political discourse against Jews, Zionism and Israel, to this day – not only among extremists. Some of these themes are commonly accepted among many in the general public.

In the 1920s, the *Protocols* were promoted to the American public by auto-magnate and notorious antisemite, Henry Ford. In the UK, The Morning Post published the *Protocols* in the 1920s, but in 1921, The Times, having previously published the *Protocols*, eventually had uncovered it as a fake document that was copied from a French political satire published by Maurice Joly in 1846, called ‘Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu.’ The French work had not mentioned Jews.²

Despite being proven false, the *Protocols* was used by Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler to justify violence against, and persecution of Jews in Germany and the USSR. Today, antisemites around the world continue to use the protocols to rationalise their hatred of Jewish people. Those on the neo-Nazi, far-right in particular, use it as imagined proof that Jews plan to rule the world by gaining control over governments, media, financial markets and other sources of power.

Much has been written about the *Protocols*. This briefing is different, because it unpacks each of the protocols and explains how the conspiracies included in it are still used today to justify hatred, and even terrorism and violence against Jews. Many have heard of the *Protocols*, but few have read it. This document helps explain the extensive influence that the *Protocols* had on perpetuating antisemitic conspiracy theories and the lasting effect this book still has today.

The next section includes summaries of each protocol. The symbols by each protocol relate to different themes in antisemitic conspiracy theories. The explanation of each theme, nine in total, is in the following section.

This is a list of the themes and their corresponding symbol:

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|---|--|
| 1. Jewish power, control and subjugation ⚡ | 6. Global or domestic wars 🧛 |
| 2. Killing non-Jews 💀 | 7. Jews in control of the media 📡 |
| 3. Economic instability 🌀 | 8. Destroying other religions 🏛️ |
| 4. Dual loyalty or disloyalty to the state 👁️ | 9. Devil worshipping/Satanic rituals 🔥 |
| 5. Jews associated with money 💰 | |

Summary of the Twenty-Four *Protocols*

Protocol 1: A Jewish Plot



The first of the *Protocols* stipulates that Jews view liberalism and liberal governments as weak and vulnerable. It refers to non-Jews as a savage mob and as 'alcoholised animals'³ who cannot handle freedom without turning it into chaos and anarchy.⁴ It claims that Jews, through their control of the press and their agents in strategic places, such as in education and government, will be able to employ cunning methods in order to bring a new world order and absolute power to Jews.

The protocol claims that Jewish secret agents are putting ideas into the minds of *goyim* 'putting an end everywhere to peace, quiet, solidarity and destroying all the foundations of the Goya states.'⁵ It depicts Jews as power hungry, planning to use merciless violence to gain submission and power '...by the doctrine of severity that we shall triumph and bring all governments into subjection to our super-government' and crush disobedience.⁶

Protocol 2: Jewish Secret Agents, Ideas And Activity ⚡👁️🌀📡🧛

The second protocol continues the myth about the millions of secret agents everywhere. It claims that economic wars serve Jews and are in fact the foundation for their predominance.⁷ To achieve economic and political instability, Jews are alleged to have been disseminating theories like Darwinism, Marxism and Nietzsche-ism to distract 'the goyim'.⁸ Jews are also alleged to have been using the press as a force for

creating discontent among 'the people' and it is through press that Jews will supposedly gain power and control.

Protocol 3: Jewish Cunning



This protocol claims that Jewish people symbolise themselves with a sign of a snake, that closes around European nations, that 'will be locked in its coil as in a powerful vice.'⁹ Jewish leaders supposedly believe that European monarchies have become weak and cannot defend themselves. Jews therefore allegedly plan to stir up instability, including inciting people from different classes against one other, in order to bring down rulers and the aristocracy: 'we have stirred up every form of enterprise, we have armed all parties.'¹⁰

The protocol continues to argue that Jews have power and control and '...are interested in ... the killing out of the *goyim*'.¹¹ This arrangement is supposedly a part of the plan to cause an economic crisis, chronic food shortages, and unhealthy, physically weak workers, to make sure that 'he [the worker] will not find in his own authorities either strength or energy to set against our will.'¹²

Protocol 4: Tricking the Non-Jews



The fourth protocol suggests that Jews have an invisible force, and that they have a secret Jewish plan of action. Jews are said to want to 'undermine all faith'¹³ and replace it with material needs, diverting the 'goyim's' mind to industry and trade and the pursuit of gain, distracting them from their common enemy. This will be exploited by

the Jews, who it is said plan to create 'cold and heartless communities ... [this] will foster a strong aversion towards the higher political and towards religion,'¹⁴ thereby weakening governments and religious institutions, leaving a power vacuum that will be exploited by Jews.

Protocol 5: Centralisation of Power



The fifth protocol sets out an alleged Jewish plan to rule communities by creating an 'intensified centralisation of government'¹⁵ and regulating, and controlling, 'all actions of political life of our subjects.'¹⁶ Under this hypothesised Jewish rule, liberty-stripping laws will be drafted and enforced. This protocol includes a discussion on how to control and manipulate the masses. Jews will, it suggests, set the gentiles against one another by creating religious and racial hatred, in order to prevent unification against Jewish power. The final goal of the Jews, according to this protocol, is to gradually and without violence set up a 'super-government'¹⁷ and 'its hands will reach out in all directions... it cannot fail to subdue all the nations of the world.'¹⁸

Protocol 6: Accumulating Wealth



The sixth protocol sets out an alleged Jewish plan to establish monopolies and accumulate great wealth, and in the process, make the *goyim* financially dependent on Jewish institutions. The 'masses' will submit to the super-government willingly because Jews will present it as their 'protector and benefactor'¹⁹ and because they will be gradually drained from their money and become proletariat (working class). This plan will, according to the text, be carried out by increasing the price of necessities, such as food, pushing gentiles into drunkenness and anarchy, and taking land away from the aristocracy.

Protocol 7: Jews Planning a Universal War



In this protocol, the mythic Jewish leaders assert that to gain control it is essential to intensify armaments and increase police forces. To achieve this, Jews will allegedly plant discords and hostilities in Europe and elsewhere, causing wars – and if necessary – a 'universal war.'²⁰ Jews supposedly intend to be cunning

to achieve this; they will appear honest and compliant. Eventually, Jews will compel 'the governments of the *goyim* to take action in the direction favoured by our widely-conceived plan.'²¹

Protocol 8: Control of the Elites



The eighth protocol alleged that Jews would rule using a 'constellation' of economists, bankers, industrialists and millionaires. They will also employ judicial right ambiguously, according to the text.

Protocol 9: Manipulating National Governments And National Characteristics



Protocol 9 alleges that Jews plan to subjugate people by manipulating their national characteristics. This will allow Jews to enforce their own rule over people and nations and wipe out existing rules. The Jewish super-government will be a dictatorship and Jews will control everything: 'we... shall execute judgement and sentence, we shall slay and we shall spare.'²² This protocol also alleges that Jews plan to harness all forms of ideology in order to exert control. Supposedly, Jews have already started gaining control of different government mechanisms and institutions, including the law, elections, press, and education.

Protocol 10: Undermining Liberal Freedoms



The tenth protocol includes a Jewish plan to keep up appearances with regards to basic liberal freedoms such as expression, religion and press, in order to keep their true intentions a secret.

When conflicts and instability strike, Jews will present themselves as saviours and pretend to offer something better to the masses than their own governments, manipulating them into believing it was their choice to be led by the Jews. The Jews in the 'meeting' recorded by the protocol argue that it is mostly the masses who will vote in favour of the Jews, not the 'educated propertied classes'.²³

Jews will also use liberal freedoms to undermine governments, arguing that liberalism produces constitutional governments and this suffers from 'quarrels, disagreements, fruitless party agitations [...] A school of everything that serves to destroy the personality of State activity.'²⁴

As part of their plan, Jews will arrange voting results in favour of presidents with a dark stain or secret in their past, because they can then be coerced by the Jews to act out their plans, for fear their secret will be revealed, giving Jews control. Gradually, Jews supposedly will obtain enough power to destroy constitutions and establish despotism.

Protocol 11: Secret Jewish Laws



Protocol 11 alleges Jews will make new laws in the guise of proposals to the Legislative Corps through which governments rule. These laws will then be decreed by presidents, or other heads of state, of those countries to give them legitimacy. Jews will use existing national authorities to infiltrate and revolutionise to gain control. This will be done in part through control of the press.

Jews, according to the protocol, will make many personal freedoms a thing of the past, including expression, association, voting and others.

To establish their power without resistance and promote obedience, Jews will keep promising to give back all freedoms and liberties as soon as it is peace time. The Jewish leader in this protocol claimed that because the *goyim* are sheep and Jews are the wolves, the masses will be kept under control.

Jews are dispersed, which is perceived by others as a weakness, but it 'has now brought us to the threshold of sovereignty over all the worlds.'²⁵

Protocol 12: Secret Jewish Laws and Control of their Dissemination



Jews, this protocol asserts, will be law makers, creating laws that serve them. They plan to use the press to inflame in ways that serve their master plan. In the future 'not a single announcement will reach the public without our control.'²⁶ This protocol lays out plans for taking control over the printing press and periodical press – making them too costly for most people to be able to read, reducing their number and making sure publishers do not publish anything against Jews. Additionally, Jews will publish material on their own, that will influence people and have greater reach in society.

The future Jewish government will control journals, because they are an educative force, along with literature. Jews will establish a 'newspaper militia'²⁷, but some of the press under Jewish control will look like they are attacking Jews, in order to give the falsehood of freedom of expression until the plan to gain absolute power has been completed.

Protocol 13: Control of the Media



This protocol sets out a myth that Jews are in control of the press and other establishments. These establishments are referred to as 'agents' that will act on orders from the leaders. The Jewish leaders are discussing ways to distract the masses from what Jews are trying to achieve, with games, amusements, pastimes, and sports. All these are promoted through the press - manipulating people's thinking in a direction that suits Jews and gives them power, planting ideas of 'fantastic theories,' removed from truth, as means of distraction, through media and education.

Protocol 14: Destroying Religions and Spreading Pornography



This protocol contends that Jews plan to annihilate all other religions, so that only Judaism will exist. Errors made by so-called *goyim* governments will be highlighted in order to present Jewish rule as preferable and mean that the *goyim* will come to prefer Jewish rule to previous authorities even if they enjoyed more freedoms under non-Jewish rule.

The Jews in the 'meeting' recorded in the protocol refer to freedoms, rights and liberalism which are presented as roots of chaos that have 'tortured humanity.'²⁸

This protocol also states that Jews have created senseless and filthy literature in 'progressive and enlightened'²⁹ countries; these are used to influence and corrupt the minds of the *goyim* in order to control them.

Protocol 15: The Coup



This protocol sets out chillingly violent plans by Jews to kill, without mercy, members of secret societies, and even *goyim* who served Jews blindly, who will be shot or exiled, including the 'Goy Masons who know too much.'³⁰

Jews will come to power through global *coup d'etat*, carried out on the same day. They will enforce rules that will be final, with no right of appeal.³¹ The new laws made and enforced by Jews will be clear and offer no interpretations. The main feature of this mythical coup will be submission to orders. Any diversion will be 'mercilessly punished.'³²

Until the time of the *coup*, Jews will act in a different way not to raise suspicions. They will be non-violent, creating free masonic lodges in all countries and use them for intelligence gathering and exerting influence around the world. Members of the lodges will be *goyim* agents serving the Jews.

The Jewish leader depicted in the 'meeting' maintained that 'death is the inevitable end for all. It is better to bring that end nearer to this who hinder our affairs than to ourselves.'³³

Protocol 16: Higher Education



Jews will 'emasculate' universities in order to control education, according to protocol 16. Under their rule, university appointments will also be controlled, freedom of instruction will be abolished, and universities will be wholly dependent on the government: 'when we are in power, we shall remove every kind of disturbing subject from the course of education and shall make out of the youth obedient children of authority.'³⁴

People are guided by ideas, therefore educational institutions controlled by Jews will, according to this protocol, indoctrinate young people to ideas, ideologies and philosophies that serve the Jews.

Protocol 17: An Anti-Christian Agenda



This protocol asserts that Jews plan to destroy the religion of the *goyim*, and abolish the Papal court, which their agents will penetrate and ruin from the inside. In this protocol there is a claim that 'the king of the Jews will be the real pope of the universe.'³⁵ The press will help lower the prestige of religion in the eye of people. Jewish 'agents' from all levels – publishers, booksellers, clerks, workmen – will work together to carry out their plan.

Protocol 18: Usurping World Leaders



The allegation in protocol 18 is that Jews will force leaders to acknowledge their weakness and destroy their authority by simulating disorder and discontent. Jewish rulers will look like they are serving the entire nation, although in reality their rule will only benefit Jews.

Protocol 19: Control of the Masses



This protocol proposes that through manipulation of the press and speeches, many *goyim* have 'come into our ranks of livestock cattle.'³⁶ Jews plan to incite *goyim* against governments using the right of presenting petitions.

Protocol 20: An Economic Plan



This protocol sets out a complex financial plan that will help Jews gain power. It claims that Jews have taken as much money out of circulation as possible to create economic crisis and destabilise governments.

Once in power, the new Jewish Government will make sure that people will not be burdened by taxes, for the purpose of self-preservation. However, substantial resources will be needed because state running is costly. Jews will therefore enforce a progressive tax on properties, in a move to tax the rich, instead of taxing the poor because 'the tax upon the poor man is a seed of revolution.'³⁷

The Jewish leaders in the 'meeting' were pleased that the *goyim* have been borrowing from Jews at high interest rates which was, it suggests, an easy way to take their money.

Protocol 21: Controlling the Markets



Jews have been taking advantage of the 'cattle' governments to get money, says protocol 21. Supposedly, when Jewish rule is established, all financial matters will be under Jewish control. Free markets will be destroyed and replaced with Jewish government-controlled credit institutions.

Protocol 22: Masters of Gold



Jews hold the greatest power – gold. This is proof that Jewish rule had been predestined by God, making Jewish authority all-powerful.

Protocol 23: Ruling through Cunning and Divine Right



Jews plan to improve morale and prevent drunkenness and unemployment in order to keep the calm. The protocol contends that Jews will rule by force and power, believing that God will kill existing secret societies, drench them in his blood and then resurrect them in the form of troops (a depiction of the Jewish God as resembling the Devil). This will mean blind obedience from the *goyim*. The Jewish king will be 'the chosen one', sent by God.

Protocol 24: A Jewish King



The final protocol depicts a description of the Jewish king. Those with roots to King David will prepare the kings and their heirs and the king will not be selected by heritage but by capacities. He will be irreproachable and not succumb to passions – especially sensuality.

Antisemitic conspiracy theories featured in the *Protocols*

1. Excessive Jewish Power, Control and Subjugation ⚡

The first protocol uses antisemitic tropes about excessive Jewish power and control. The myth that Jews hold political and financial power, as well as control over banking, academia, the media and other sources of information and influence, and are constantly plotting to enhance it in order to dominate all other non-Jews, is the underlying premise of the *Protocols*. It is a myth that has existed for decades, and – to some degree because of the popularity of the *Protocols* – continues to thrive today.³⁸ A 2018 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

looking at the experience of European Jews within EU member states, found that many of the respondents had to deal with antisemitic remarks on a regular basis. 43% of these have heard or seen the statement that 'Jews have too much power.'³⁹ This shows the extent to which the conspiracy thrives in Europe.

The *Protocols* is still being referenced to support this common trope about Jews, and it still inspires white-supremacists and other far-right extremists. It has also been peddled by some Muslim leaders, such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and by the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who use

it to blame their countries' misfortunes on Jews and a Jewish conspiracy against them.⁴⁰ This allegation includes claims that Jews control the U.S. and other Western governments and use this power to undermine Arab and Muslim countries. The Arab press routinely invokes myths from the *Protocols*, including claims that US presidential candidates are controlled by Jews, or by the Jewish or Israel lobby.⁴¹ Arab textbooks also perpetuate antisemitic myths about Jewish power, disloyalty and feature blood libels.⁴²

This myth has also inspired acts of terrorism and violence against Jews. The attack on a synagogue in Texas on 15 January 2022, during which the attacker, a British Pakistani, held congregants hostage and demanded the release of a prisoner with ties to al al-Qaeda, is one example. The attacker believed that Jews held enough power to get a prisoner released and made demands they did so– based on the myth of Jewish power and influence.⁴³

In the first protocol, Jews are depicted collectively as an all-reaching entity, with agents everywhere, who are being fed instructions from the head – the leadership. This is reminiscent of the notoriously antisemitic depiction of Jews as an octopus, which has been commonly used in caricatures as early as the 19th century and was also exploited by the Nazis for their anti-Jewish propaganda. These caricatures often show an octopus with a star of David or other Jewish identifying marks, as controlling the world, governments or powerful political leaders and leaders of industry. It is still used frequently today.

2. Jews Killing Non-Jews

This relates to age-old conspiracies that claim Jews advance ways to kill non-Jews, such as by promoting wars and by spreading diseases. Jews, famously, were also blamed for killing Jesus.⁴⁴ Jews were blamed for spreading the Bubonic plague in the mid-14th century, causing the death of between 20 and 25 million people.⁴⁵ Such conspiracies continue to thrive today, with Jews being blamed for the Covid-19 pandemic. Conspiracies alleging that Jews are responsible for creating the virus and/or for spreading it have been commonly found on, and off-line. It has been alleged that Jews have done this in order to

sow death, devastation and economic and political instability and reap the rewards – including financial gains and increased power.¹⁹ Antisemitic conspiracy theorists have blamed the spread of the virus on rich and powerful Jews, who they believe control banking, the media and more, such as American-Hungarian philanthropist George Soros and the Rothschild family.⁴⁶

This conspiracy is inspired by much older blood libels, that were particularly widespread during the Middle Ages. According to these, Jews have been engaged in ritual killing of non-Jews and have drunk their blood.⁴⁷ Protocol 15 goes beyond ritual killing and expands it into mass killing of non-Jews – not for their blood, but in quest for world domination. This also relates to the myth of Jews as warmongers as mentioned earlier.

The *Protocols* subsequently had a substantial influence over Nazi ideology and propaganda. The claim that Jews plan the mass killing of non-Jews was used by the Nazis to incite against them and justify the killing of Jews.⁴⁸ These false blood libels are still repeated today, especially in relation to Israel and Israeli soldiers,⁴⁹ but the conspiracy of Jews killing non-Jews, through diseases, terrorism and wars, as established by the *Protocols*, has become more widespread these days, as shown here earlier.

The White-supremacist conspiracy theory of 'White Genocide' can also be traced back to the *Protocols*, and in particular to the narrative of killing or subjugating all goyim. According to this conspiracy, there is a deliberate plot – most often blamed on Jews – to eradicate the white race by promoting diversity, immigration, low birth rate and miscegenation. It is a myth that still exists in far-right circles in the U.S. and Europe. This conspiracy has motivated violence against ethnic and religious minorities, carried out by extremists. This included the shooter who killed 22 people in El Paso, Texas in 2019. The shooter was motivated by a belief that ethnic minorities are 'invading' the US, replacing its white ethnicity and culture.⁵⁰ The killer of 77 people in Norway in 2011 claimed to be motivated by a 'demographic warfare' on white Europeans by non-whites, and primarily Muslims.⁵¹ Many on the extreme right believe that rising immigration and ethnic diversity are driven by Jews in order to bring instability and make the white race extinct.

3. Economic Instability

The *Protocols* assert that to establish their plan for world domination, Jews use their wealth, and control over financial institutions and the media to create economic instability for their own gain. Indeed, various serious economic crises in the twentieth century have been blamed on Jews, from the 1929 economic crash to the 1931 banking crisis in Germany that paved the way for Hitler's rise to power and was exploited for Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda. These unfounded beliefs are relatively mainstream, and as one poll showed, 31% of Europeans blamed Jews for the 2009 global financial crisis.⁵²

4. Dual Loyalty or Disloyalty to the State

Several of the protocols have amplified another widespread conspiracy – that Jews are disloyal to their own countries and are instead loyal to Jews globally. The *Protocols* portray Jews as agitators of political and social unrest in their countries, using the disorder as a means to undermine the power of the state and fulfil a dream of Jewish world domination.

This conspiracy originated two thousand years ago from the belief that Judas had betrayed Jesus Christ, linking the word 'traitor' with Jews.⁵³ The myth continued to flourish, especially in Europe, during medieval and early modern times.⁵⁴ It has also been prevalent in the Middle East during the twentieth century. It continues to exist today, having also evolved into a false belief about loyalty of Jews to Israel, regardless of their nationality, over loyalty to the country of which they are citizens.

The Dreyfus Affair in France, in which Captain Alfred Dreyfus was found guilty of treason in 1884 – nearly twenty years before the publication of the *Protocols* – is a famous example of this conspiracy. Dreyfus faced antisemitic abuse, and was exonerated in 1906, but the trope about Jewish disloyalty continues to exist.

In the US, Jewish public servants have been repeatedly accused of having dual loyalties; to the U.S. and Israel.⁵⁵ In 2019, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) tweeted that senators who promoted legislation against the boycott of Israel 'forgot what country they represent.'⁵⁶

In 2000, when senator Joseph Lieberman was running for Presidency of the U.S., Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, publicly questioned Lieberman's loyalty to the US, claiming that he is more loyal to Israel.⁵⁷ A poll conducted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the U.S. in 2020, found that a shocking 24% of respondents thought that '[American] Jews are more loyal to Israel than to America.'⁵⁸

In the UK, Jewish parliamentarians have faced antisemitic accusations of being Israeli agents and serving the interests of Israel rather than their own communities of those of the UK.⁵⁹

5. Jews Associated with Money

The trope of Jewish control over banks and other financial institutions, finds its origins roughly 2,000 years ago, when Jews started to be commonly associated with money.⁶⁰ This belief was strengthened during the Middle Ages, when money-lending was one of the few professions Jews were not barred from in Europe, prompting many of them to adopt the trade.⁶¹ Later, this myth appeared in the *Protocols*, repeating itself throughout the publication. Emanating from this, is the accusation that Jews manipulate markets to cause financial crises. This is also associated with the myth that Jewish people are greedy.⁶² It asserts that Jews are constantly in pursuit of wealth, mostly through devious means such as taking advantage of non-Jews. The notion of greed is repeated throughout the *Protocols* and forms the basis for many of the supposed Jewish 'plots.'

The trope about Jewish greed and control of banking still exists among antisemites today. The American white supremacist hate group Ku Klux Klan for example, claims that Jews control the Federal Reserve.⁶³ Many also falsely believe that Jews control the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. A common trope regards the Rothschild family (and by extension, all Jews), who are accused of controlling banks and standing behind plots to gain money and power and expanding their control. The Rothschild name has become synonymous with greed, financial power and excessive wealth, and fed conspiracies about Jews funding wars and political instability. The

conspiracies involving Jews and control of banks and financial institutions is so deeply embedded, despite being false,⁶⁴ that it can be found in mainstream online platforms, popular culture and other sources, and not only in extremist outlets. It has therefore become a common belief also among those who are not on the extreme right or left, or who would not be classified as Jew-hating or antisemitic.

A poll conducted in the UK in 2021 by the social research company ICM Unlimited, found that 11% of respondents thought that Jews have a high level of control over the banking system.⁶⁵ Ethnic and religious minorities seem to have an ever-higher rate of believing this myth; the same study found that among Black respondents, that number was 21%.⁶⁶ A poll conducted for the Henry Jackson Society regarding attitudes of Muslims towards Jews, found that 34.1% of respondents believed that Jews have too much control over the banking system.⁶⁷ Roughly the same percentage also believed that Jews have control of the media.⁶⁸ A poll conducted by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the U.S. in 2020, found that 15% of respondents think that 'Jews have too much power in the business world' and 14% believe that 'Jews have too much influence on Wall Street.'⁶⁹

6. Jews are Behind Global Wars 🕒

The false claim that Jews are behind global wars and terrorism, and that they are using wars for their own financial benefit, has existed for hundreds of years. Jews have been accused of being responsible for the French revolution, the Bolshevik revolution, for Germany's loss in the First World War, and many other wars and instances of political instability.

The *Protocols* mentions warmongering as one of the methods to be utilised by Jews in order to carry out their plan to achieve world domination. This was echoed in Nazi propaganda, which blamed the World Zionist Organisation for starting the Second World War as part of a wide Jewish conspiracy.⁷⁰ This myth was used to blame Jews for the war, and to incite the German public against Jews – primarily German Jews – who were accused of disloyalty to Germany and plotting to undermine it.⁷¹ This is an example of how this accusation often overlaps with the accusation that

Jews are disloyal to their own countries.

This myth is also still being advocated by Neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers. The 11 September terror attack in the US has produced many popular conspiracies, claiming that Jews and/or Israel are behind the attacks.⁷² Conspirators falsely claimed that Jews were somehow informed in advance about the attacks, which is the reason no Jews died in them (this is untrue. Jews were among the casualties). It was also claimed that Jews carried out the attack in a plan to cause a war between Christians and Muslims and bring political instability that would benefit them politically and economically.

In relation to the myth that Jews control the media, it was claimed that Jews have been using the media to manipulate narratives about the 9/11 attack in order to hide the truth.⁷³ All of these directly draw on the claims established in the *Protocols* regarding Jewish power, control, ambition and motivation behind plans to promote wars, and national and global instability.

American Jews, and primarily the 'Israel lobby,' were also blamed for pushing the US government into the war in Iraq and for the casualties incurred in that war.⁷⁴ Particularly concerning, is the fact that this has been a widespread belief that was not confined to the fringes of the far-right and far-left.

The attack on the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021, was also blamed on Jews and on Israel by antisemitic conspiracy theorists. One of these – Adam Green – claimed, in a way that resembles the content of the *Protocols*, that this was orchestrated by Jews to justify implementing tyrannical laws that will undermine the U.S.⁷⁵

7. Jews Controlling the Media 🕒

The conspiracy that Jews control the media and use it to manipulate the masses to achieve political and financial power is mentioned numerous times throughout the *Protocols* and received considerable enforcement from the publication. Such tropes are still common today, including online, where antisemitic conspiracy theories that perpetuate the myth of Jewish control over the media thrive and include books,

caricatures, posts on social media, and memes.⁷⁶ Many of these draw on the themes mentioned in the *Protocols*, whereby Jewish control over the media serves their conspiracy and quest for world domination by helping them to advance their secret agenda, influence the midst of the masses while masking their evil plan.

The *Protocols* were published when mass media – media that reaches large parts of the population – was still in its infancy, and indeed, the term was not coined until the 1920s. In the twentieth century, media expanded its reach, with the introduction of radios, followed by television sets in households and later with the internet. Rising literacy rates and a widening middle class in this period led to greater media consumption. Media has become a powerful source of information, and the claim advocated by the *Protocols*, that Jews hold vast control over media, including newspapers, news channel and even the film industry in Hollywood, has become popular and commonly believed globally.

High profile Neo-Nazis, such as William Pierce⁷⁷, promote the myth that Jews control the media, and are using it to “push miscegenation, homosexuality and other race-polluting practices.”⁷⁸ In the UK, the leaders of the far-right British National Party (BNP), Nick Griffin, also helped popularise this conspiracy.⁷⁹

The belief that Jews control the media is not confined to the fringes of society. A YouGov poll from 2018 for example, found that 11% of respondents believed that Jews control the media.⁸⁰ However, looking at those at the top of large media outlets today, they are not Jewish. The BBC’s Baron Hall of Birkenhead, News Corp’s Rupert Murdoch and Netflix’s Reed Hastings are all not Jewish. There are, of course, Jewish people who work in broadcast and print media, but the idea of some form of collective Jewish control of ‘the media’ is a false antisemitic charge.

8. Destroying other Religions

The myth that Jews dismiss other religions and seek to destroy them has been inspired by the two-thousand-year-old myth of deicide; the claim that all Jews are collectively responsible for the killing of Jesus. Despite

being discredited by Pope Paul VI in 1964, this myth continues to live, and is present in films, such as Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, and in literature.⁸¹

The *Protocols* have expanded this conspiracy to include a Jewish plot against all religions, not only Christianity. This has been used to demonise Jews and feed hatred, fear and conspiracies against them.

9. Devil Worshipping/Satanic Rituals

This relates to an old trope by which Jewish people worship the devil and are the children of Satan.⁸² Jews have also been accused of having horns and of drinking sacrificial blood as a way of worshipping the devil.⁸³ This conspiracy received additional reinforcement in the 19th century, following the publication of the successful novel *Biarritz* by German author Hermann Goedsche in 1868.⁸⁴ In the novel, the Devil appears before a cabal of Jews to help with their conspiracy to rule the world – a theme that inspired the author of the *Protocols*.⁸⁵

This conspiracy has existed well into the 20th century, and although it is less popular today, it continues to circulate among anti-Jewish groups.

QAnon is an example of where the conspiracy of a pact between the Jews and the Devil, as well as blood libel and sacrifice of non-Jewish children, still flourishes. QAnon, which emerged in the US and has gained popularity in European countries too, advances many antisemitic tropes, including those mentioned in the *Protocols* and older tropes. One of the most basic premises of this movement is a belief that former US President Donald Trump has been fighting a powerful cabal, that includes many Jews, such as George Soros. This cabal has been sexually abusing children, worshipping Satan and plotting to gain world domination – bearing a striking resemblance to antisemitic conspiracies, including those included in the *Protocols*.

Endnotes

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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.

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