

Symposium on **The Protocols of the Elders of Zion**

**120 Years of Antisemitic
Propaganda and Conspiracy**

MONDAY, APRIL 24 — TUESDAY, APRIL 25
COPLEY FORMAL LOUNGE | GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

AJC
**American Jewish
Committee**



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Foreign Service
Center for Jewish Civilization

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Words of praise for the symposium

“Your conference was first-rate, one of the best I’ve been to in a long time. Conceptually, organizationally, substantively, it all worked extremely well. I’m glad I came in for it, attended every session but the final one (I had to return to my hotel room to Zoom in on my class at IU that day), met some new and interesting people, and learned lots. So, heartfelt thanks for putting together such an interesting, timely, and engaging symposium. I was truly pleased to be part of it and thank you for inviting me.”

— **Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Professor and Irving M. Glazer Chair in Jewish Studies, Director of the Center for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, Indiana University**

“I just wanted to again express our gratitude for your partnership and to say congrats on a terrific symposium. I heard lots of positive feedback from attendees. It was so important to bring together researchers and practitioners — as well as a handful of students — on this topic.”

— **Vlad Khaykin, National Director, Programs on Antisemitism, AntiDefamation League (donor)**

“Emily, Thank you! You planned, organized and ran a splendid conference. I learned a great deal from everyone, including the excellent Georgetown students I met. It was an honor to have been invited.”

— **Pamela S. Nadell, Professor and Patrick Clendenen Chair in Women's & Gender History, Director, Jewish Studies Program, American University**

Words of praise for the symposium

“Please let me echo my sincerest gratitude on behalf of AJC for such an enriching symposium.”

— **Holly Huffnagle, U.S. Director for Combating Antisemitism, American Jewish Committee** (donor)

“Thanks and congratulations again... it was perfect.”

— **Jacob Kovalio, Associate Professor of Japanese History, Carlton University, Canada**

“What a pleasure and honor to meet you both and participate in this incredible two-day Symposium. You all (Southerism,: Y'all) are to be commended for envisioning it and making it happen. Kudos all around.”

— **Steve Jacobs, University of Alabama**

“Emily, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this fantastic symposium! You have done amazing work choosing speakers and topics.”

— **Dr. Anna Sommer Schneider, Associate Professor of the Practice of Jewish Civilization, Georgetown University**

“Thank you so much for putting this incredible conference together and for inviting me to take part in it. It was truly amazing.”

— **Mike Rothschild, author, investigative journalist**

Day 1: Protocols of the Elders of Zion: The Perennial Conspiracy

The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a forgery designed to look like the minutes of a conference of elder Jewish statesmen, who, through a number of meetings, established 24 protocols, or strategies, to secretly gain power; persecute and subjugate non-Jews; and ultimately create an international super-state.

Opening Keynotes

What *is* the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and what does it say?

The foremost authority on the *Protocols*, Dr. Michael Hagemeister of the University of Bochum tackled this fundamental question in his opening remarks. He told us about the journey of this curious and disjointed text, from obscure and forgettable, to one of the most consequential propaganda texts in the world.

We then heard from another luminary in his field, Steven Zipperstein, Professor in Jewish Culture and History at Stanford University, who offered a response to and critique of Hagemeister's remarks. He discussed his own breakthrough research on the author of the text, which he included his award-winning book, "Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History".



What are The Protocols?

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Panel 1: Why the Jews?

What is it about the Protocols that has captured the minds of so many people across history? What explains its endurance and popularity, now, one hundred and twenty years later? Would Protocols be so successful without the Jews? And more directly, why the Jews?

Who better to address this last question than the first panelists. America was fortunate to have Ira Forman as its Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism from 2013 to 2017. The current Special Envoy, Deborah Lipstadt, was not able to join us, but we were honored to have Deputy Special Envoy, Aaron Keyak, in her stead.

We were also joined by Dr. Izabella Tabarovsky from the Wilson Center and Dr. Pamela Nadell, Patrick Clendenen Chair in Women's and Gender History at American University, who, with Aaron and Ira, talked about the defining features of antisemitism, how it differs from anti-Zionism, and how the *Protocols* fits into the larger study of antisemitism and hate.

This panel was moderated by Dr. Bruce Hoffman, Professor and Director of Center for Jewish Civilization at Georgetown University





Panel 2: The Global Career of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The reach of the Protocols is not confined to one country or culture. It is a global phenomenon, with a global career.

Dr. Henryk Baran, Professor Emeritus of Russian Studies at the University of New York, Albany, looked at the complicated origin story of the Protocols in Russia, while Dr. Kirsten Fermaglich, Professor of History and Jewish Studies at Michigan State University, talked about Protocols in the US including her new research in the National Archives.

Another curious characteristic of this antisemitic text is that it is popular in places where there are few or no Jews. Dr. Jacob Kovalio, Associate Professor at Carleton University, talked about the career of the Protocols in one such country, Japan, while Yigal Carman, President and Founder of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), shared the Institute's extensive media research on the Protocols in today's Middle East.

This panel was moderated by Dr. Emily Blout of Georgetown University

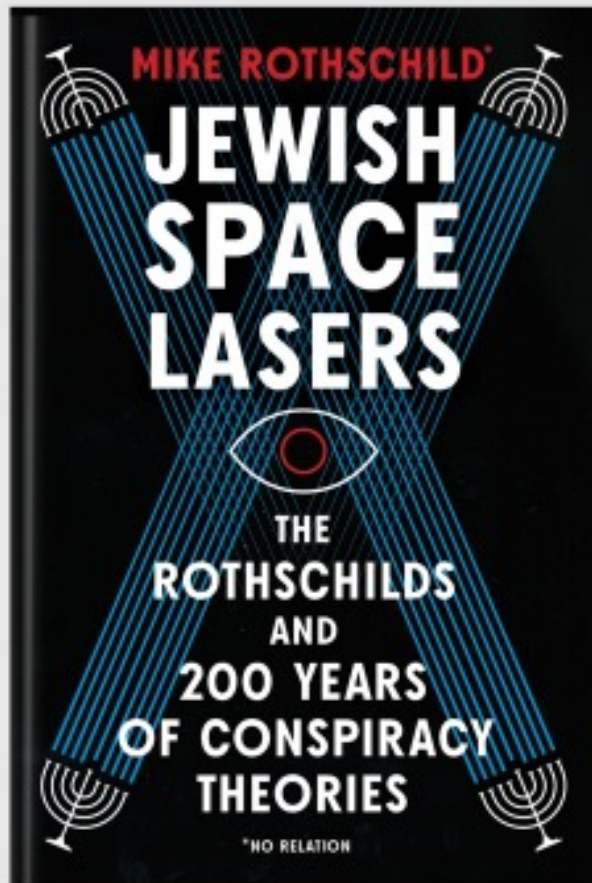




Lunch Keynote: Mike Rothschild

Mike Rothschild is an investigative reporter and author of “The Storm Is Upon Us: How QAnon Became a Movement, Cult, and Conspiracy Theory of Everything.”

He joined us for a lunch-time keynote about his new book, “Jewish Space Lasers: The Rothschilds and Two Hundred Years of Conspiracy Theories.”





Panel 3: The Lie That Will Never Die

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a conspiracy text. As such, it joins thousands of other conspiracy theories. But The Protocols is unique in that it is both an articulation of a conspiracy — that of a secret international Jewish plot to control the world — and proof that such a conspiracy exists.

As such, it is exceptionally difficult to debunk. In fact, one can argue that it is, by its very nature, irrefutable. And yet, there have been numerous attempts to do just that.

Dr. Steven Leonard Jacobs, Professor of Religious Studies & Emeritus Aronov Chair of Judaic Studies at the University of Alabama, discussed findings of his book “Dismantling the Big Lie,” while his co-author, Mark Weitzman, COO of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, talked about the problem of holocaust denial today. We heard from a pioneer in the field, Dr. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Irving M. Glazer Chair in Jewish Studies and Founding Director of Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University, who spoke about the stubbornly enduring image of the conspiratorial and diabolical Jew.

This panel was moderated by Dr. Anna Sommer of Georgetown University.





Day 2: Protocols in Practice: Contemporary Echoes

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a forgery that has captured the imagination of bigots, zealots, and tyrants.

It has served as a warrant for genocide and a call to action, blended with conspiracy culture and antisemitic tropes to fit the time, political objective, or private interest of the peddler and his audience.

Its sheer longevity, reach, and persuasive power is baffling... until you tap into the experience and insight of researchers, educators, and advocates in the field.

While Day 1 was largely focused on the history of the book, Day 2 looked at its contemporary iterations and impacts. We heard from people who do on the ground research on conspiracy movements and those whose life's work is to combat anti-Jewish hate.

Panel 1: Propaganda and Conspiracy on the Web

Kicking off Day 2, Dr. Katja Valaskivi of the University of Helsinki, and Dr. Amarnath Amarasingam, Assistant Professor in the School of Religion at Queen's University, talked about their research on open platforms and the dark recesses of the web.

Dr. Patrick Burkart, Professor of Communication and Journalism, Texas A&M University moderated the panel.







Panel 2: On the Frontlines of the Fight Against Antisemitism

Holly Huffnagle, U.S. Director for Combating Antisemitism at the American Jewish Committee, Oren Segal, Vice President of the Center on Extremism, Anti-Defamation League, and Gil Preuss, CEO of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, talked about the Jewish community's response to rampant antisemitism in America.

Marie Harf of Georgetown University moderated the panel.





Lunch Roundtable: Overcoming Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism: The Abraham Accords

Some experts consider the Abraham Accords a game changer for Israel's national security and the dynamics of the Middle East. In our lunch roundtable, Dr. Edmund Husain, Senior Fellow and Andrew H. Siegal Professor in American Middle Eastern Foreign Policy at Georgetown joined Ambassador (frm) Dennis Ross of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Michael Doran, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Peace and Security in the Middle East at the Hudson Institute, to discuss the pact and the dual challenges of antisemitism and Anti-Zionism.

This panel was moderated by the Center for Jewish Civilization Director and distinguished professor, Dr. Bruce Hoffman.





Panel 3: What Is To Be Done: The Danger to Democracy and Challenge for Practitioners

January 6 showed us that hyper-mediated, antisemitic conspiracy theories like Qanon are a threat to our national security and our democracy.

And who better to tackle the issue than John T. Picarelli, Director for Counterterrorism, National Security Council, David Andrew Weinberg, Policy Advocate, Protect Democracy and Seamus Hughes, Deputy Director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University.

The discussion grappled with questions such as how democratic countries might weather periods of intense violence against Jews and other minorities and what the astronomical increase in antisemitism means or the fate of liberal democracy.

This panel was moderated by Dr. Vlad Khaykin, National Director of Programs on Antisemitism at the Anti-Defamation League.





Panel 4: What Is To Be Done: The Challenge and Promise of Technology

Today, networked communication technology is a double-edged sword. Powerful platforms have enabled and inspired communication, collaboration, and creation unimaginable just a decade ago. Yet such technology has also inspired and enabled the creation and spread of antisemitic messages and conspiracy theories, too often with deadly ends.

While the first panelists in the series discussed the problem, Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss, Professor and Founding Director of the Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab (PERIL) at American University, Elizabeth Neumann, Chief Strategy Officer at Moonshot, and Justin Erlich, Global Head of Issue Policy & Partnerships at TikTok, talked about how technologists, social scientists, and company leaders are working to solve it.

Georgetown University professor, Dr. Dan Byman moderated this panel.









Our sincere thanks for the generous support of our sponsors, advisors, students, faculty, and staff:

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And the students of the CJC and the Antisemitic Propaganda Research and Literacy Lab (C-Lab)

Signed, with much appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily L. Blout', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Emily L Blout, Symposium Director, 2023

Thank you!

