

ERIC P. KAUFMANN

# They Might Not Be Giants

*Are we overestimating the influence of  
the online Right?*



O ANTISEMITIC online influencers pose a threat to American Jews? Are they conditioning their followers, including many young people, to be antisemitic, raising a generation to transform the hitherto positive climate for Jews in America? Based on my research and extensive survey data, I am pleased to say that while there may be some reason for concern, there is little cause for alarm.

To be sure, there *is* evidence of blatant antisemitism entering public discourse in more overt ways than many of us are used to.

From the political Right, Rod Dreher warns that his administration sources say that close to half of young Republican staffers are “groypers” — followers of young antisemitic media personality Nick Fuentes. Fuentes has appeared on Tucker Carlson’s popular, often anti-Israel podcast, where the two agreed on many matters. Carl-

son scrupulously avoided asking Fuentes tough questions about his nakedly pro-Hitler and anti-Jewish pronouncements. And when criticized for his lack of journalistic probing, Tucker was defended by the Heritage Foundation, a pillar of the conservative Washington establishment. Reading these signs, one might reasonably conclude that America's political Right has slipped into the grips of Jew-hatred.

Meanwhile, from the Left, the surge of pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel encampment protests on campuses and in metropolitan areas—many immediately in the wake of the October 7 attacks—led to a spike in reported antisemitic incidents. On Ivy League campuses, Jewish student self-censorship shot up. In progressive discourse, Israel came to be routinely accused of settler colonialism, apartheid, and, of course, genocide. Hasan Piker, the popular streamer on the Left, says he doesn't "have an issue with" Hezbollah, considers Hamas to be "a thousand times better than a fascist settler-colonial apartheid state," meaning Israel, and sees Zionism as sharing with Nazism "an ethno-religious supremacist ideology that is exterminationist." A number of left-wing politicians have campaigned with Piker or appeared on his show. Ezra Klein defends such engagement as a valid exercise of free speech, warning against a "no-platform" approach to Piker that he says is likely to backfire.

But on both the Left and the Right, the role that influencers actually play in shaping public opinion is overblown. I recently fielded the first survey of young Republicans' media diet in relation to their attitudes toward Jews, blacks, and white nationalism. Results were combined with data from numerous other surveys. I found, as expected, that hostility toward Israel is indeed on the rise, with disproportionate attention focused on the country and its military actions. In addition, many young Republicans believe in conspiracy theories involving Israeli and Jewish influence over American affairs. These are deeply offensive to most Jews and are experienced as antisemitic.

It sounds dire, but in order to declare an epidemic of influencer-fueled antisemitism, we should also be able to identify clear indicators of Jew-hatred and map the causal patterns. We would expect those who regularly consume the output of anti-Israel, right-wing hosts such as Nick Fuentes, Candace Owens, or Tucker Carlson to express significantly more antisemitic attitudes than those who tune in to relatively pro-Israel outlets like Ben Shapiro or Fox News. Does the evidence support the alarmist hypothesis?

It does not.



New media are certainly becoming more important. Data from the Pew Research Center show that an increasing share of Americans “often or sometimes” get their news from podcasts or YouTube videos. This is true of 40 percent of Americans under 50 and 20 percent of Americans over age 65. Indeed, the proportion rose 10 points among all age groups between 2020 and 2025 alone. Republican voters are twice as likely as Democratic voters to trust the news they get from podcasts more than other news sources. This would indicate that podcasts are increasingly important in shaping the views of voters, especially on the Right.

Yet while leading right-wing influencers such as Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens, Megyn Kelly, and Marjorie Taylor Greene opposed the war in Iran, 79 percent of self-identifying Republicans supported it when polled in late March 2026. Moreover, Republicans who oppose the war are concentrated among leaners and moderates, while 85–90 percent of self-identified MAGA Republicans support military action. This exasperated Fuentes, who subsequently railed against Donald Trump and endorsed the Democrats.

When Tucker Carlson in December 2023 defended Muslims at

Turning Point USA's AmericaFest, where conservative activists gather, he was booed. An internal poll of 30,000 attendees showed that 87 percent viewed Israel as an ally, with only 13 percent saying it was not. The same poll revealed that TPUSA delegates viewed radical Islam as the top threat to the nation.

The popularity of the revisionist anti-Israel Right was put to the test when representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky was primaried by a Trump-endorsed challenger: a retired Navy SEAL and farmer, Ed Gallrein. Massie ran on an anti-war, anti-Israel message, while Gallrein supported Trump's stance on both. In the end, Massie was defeated 55–45 percent, prompting left-wing commentator Cenk Uygur to declare on X, "Israel won in Kentucky. They will 100% control the Republican Party now," while his fellow traveler Hasan Piker fumed that "Massie's defeat proves that the republican party is a pro epstein pro israel cult led by their cult leader, epstein affiliate, servant of israel - donald trump."

A similar disjuncture can be found in European public opinion: Britain's far-right Restore Britain party boasts a larger membership than the established Conservative Party. At the time of writing, Restore Britain's leader, Rupert Lowe, is closing in on 900,000 followers on X, easily doubling the number of people following Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader. Yet, despite these numbers and the boldness of its leader and young activists, Restore Britain polls at only 3–4 percent nationwide.

In order to make sense of these incongruencies, we should take a look at how fundamentally different the new media platforms are from their mainstream predecessors. As economics journalist Noah Smith points out, today's media environment is fragmented into smaller ponds than in the past. Even a wildly popular host such as Tucker Carlson, with his 1 million YouTube viewers, is a minnow compared with Rush Limbaugh in the 1990s, with his 15 to 30 mil-

lion listeners. In addition, many listeners consume multiple podcasts, sometimes for entertainment rather than education, and do not see eye to eye with hosts and guests on all issues. This means that new media output can gain a spike of likes and listens while remaining relatively unimportant in shaping public opinion.

The distance between the online ecosystem and real life has caught observers off guard on several occasions, and in the two-part survey I conducted of nearly 400 Trump voters under age 35 and 400 from a nationally representative sample, much was revealed that cut through the noise. First, just 5–10 percent of American adults tune in to Tucker Carlson or Candace Owens. For Nick Fuentes, the figure is 2–3 percent—similar to the following of Alex Jones. Among Republicans under 35, however, 15–20 percent say they regularly follow Carlson or Owens, while 7 percent consume Fuentes’s content. These are more substantial numbers, though it is worth noting that 45 percent of young Trump voters in my sample regularly watch Fox, and 25–30 percent routinely read the *New York Times*. The idea that young right-wingers have a vastly different media diet from their older counterparts is wrong: Trump voters over 35 consume new media at only slightly lower rates than their younger peers.

While the audience for right-wing influencers is often stereotyped as young, white, and male, the truth is more complex. Around one-third of Fuentes’s and a quarter of Carlson’s young audience are nonwhite, and around one-third are women. Over half of Owens’s followers are female, perhaps not as surprisingly. Older listeners are only somewhat underrepresented. In addition, there is considerable consumer overlap between anti-Israel podcasters such as Carlson or Fuentes and pro-Israel sources such as Ben Shapiro. New-media listeners tune in to a variety of influencers, even as mainstream news and cable audiences are less likely to consume new media.

Pew surveys find that the share of Americans expressing negative

views toward Israel has increased from 42 percent in 2022 to 60 percent in 2026. This number has increased from 53 to 80 percent among Democrats and 27 to 41 percent among Republicans. The negative shift is more pronounced among young Republicans (from 35 to 57 percent) and older Democrats (from 43 to 76 percent).

This said, there are somewhat different dynamics on Left and Right. In the gold-standard American National Election Study (ANES) in 2024, both partisanship and age determine support for Israel or the Palestinians. Nearly half of Democrats under 35 favor Palestine over Israel in the conflict, with only 5 percent on Israel's side. By contrast, among Republicans over 35, nearly 6 in 10 back Israel, with just 2 percent on the Palestinian side.

Republicans under age 35 are less pro-Israel than older Republicans (35 percent versus nearly 60 percent), but just 8 percent of young Republicans support the Palestinians. Most opt for the "neither" category. This is a disengagement, not a switching of sides. Older Democrats in 2024 supported "both" sides in the conflict, a position held by only 7 percent of young Republicans. Older Democrats appear genuinely conflicted in their sympathies while many young Republicans adopt a detached isolationist approach.

ANES has asked respondents how they feel about Jews, blacks, and other groups since 1964. Focusing only on the under-35s by party shows that young Democrats have grown increasingly warm toward Jews, especially since 2008. While young Democrats' warmth dipped a few points between 2020 and 2024, their average warmth toward Jews remained at a very high 73 degrees in that year. Young Republicans evince lower but still positive feelings toward Jews, even as sentiment dropped slightly from 65 to 61 degrees between 2020 and 2024. Young independents score about the same as young Republicans. There is always volatility in polling, even in top-tier surveys like ANES. Yet, when we look back 60 years, what is striking is that young Americans'

current sentiment toward Jews is solidly within its long-run range. Current youth sentiment toward Jews is well above the low point of 53 recorded for independents, in 1976.

Looking at the same thermometer rating in my survey, I find that Republicans assign Jews a 57 out of 100. The difference from the analogous data for 2024 from ANES (a 61) is modest. Regular listeners to Nick Fuentes are cooler toward Jews, at around 42, though even there, they are more positive toward Jews than toward Palestinians. Regular consumers of Carlson and Owens rate Jews a 55, which is mildly positive for this kind of measure. This is only slightly below the Republican sample average of 57, and only modestly below the Jewish thermometer reading among regular viewers of Fox News (62) and Ben Shapiro (65). In statistical tests (controlling for demographic factors including age, sex, education, and race), regularly tuning in to Fuentes and, to a lesser degree, Owens does predict cooler attitudes toward Jews, but listening to Carlson has no effect.

Ultimately, the most antisemitic influencer, Fuentes, appears to boost antisemitism to some degree, but the larger anti-Israel outfits like Carlson's have no significant effect. Medium-size influencers such as Owens have a modest negative impact on attitudes toward Jews. Even for listeners of Fuentes and Owens, it could partly be the case that antisemites are opting to listen to these shows rather than the shows turning them into antisemites.

The influence of these influencers is similar when it comes to feelings toward Israel. Nick Fuentes's regular followers are 15 points cooler toward Israel than those who do not follow him. For Tucker Carlson, the equivalent figure is negative 6 points, and for Ben Shapiro, regular followers are 9 points more positive toward Israel than the overall sample.

The bottom line, therefore, is that right-wing influencers are either insufficiently radical, like Carlson, or too small, like Fuentes, to

greatly move public attitudes on Jews or Israel. This helps to explain why the aggregate youth trend in feelings toward Jews in the ANES shows little change against its long-run average.

More concerning than such feelings is support for Jewish conspiracies. Sixty percent of Fuentes's regular followers agree that "Israel can get away with anything because its supporters control the media," as do 50 percent of Carlson's and Owens's regular audience. But nearly 40 percent of MSNBC viewers and 30 percent of New York Times readers in the sample also agree with that notion. A considerably greater share of people believe in conspiracy theories involving Jews than express negative attitudes toward Jews. Why?

A further set of questions from a Manhattan Institute survey reveals that among Republicans under 50, a quarter identify as antisemites, a third as racists, and nearly half say the Holocaust did not happen or is exaggerated. The sampling frame makes these figures unrepresentative nationally, but they do tell us interesting things about the relationship between different attitudes within people. Nonwhite young voters and those who switched from the Democrats in 2024 are more likely to hold these beliefs. Be that as it may, what my analysis of the data shows is that the strongest correlate of Holocaust denial is believing that the moon landings were faked. The idea that 9/11 was an inside job is as associated with Holocaust denial as identifying as an open antisemite. A large minority of voters believe in conspiracies, and those who believe in one are highly likely to believe in others.

The pattern that emerges is that nonspecific conspiracism is one orientation and dislike of Jews is another, but policy attitudes occupy a largely separate sphere. Young Republicans who identify as antisemitic or racist are actually *more* supportive of affirmative action than those who oppose antisemitism and racism. Open antisemites are

*more* likely to say that whites are advantaged in American society than that Jews are.

Putting this together with my survey results leads me to conclude that conspiracism is a transgressive, magical, recreational orientation that cuts across feelings toward groups. Belief in conspiracy theories largely bisects support for policies such as affirmative action. It's important not to interpret belief in Jewish conspiracies, as shocking to Jewish sensibilities and counterintuitive as it may be, as primarily motivated by Jew-hatred. In 2024, only 8 percent of Americans under 30 told the General Social Survey (GSS) that most people can be trusted, an all-time low since records began in 1972. Young voters' trust in the federal government is also at a historic trough, and confidence in institutions has tanked. Conspiracy thinking grows in this climate.

"Shock jock" new-media accounts titillate their audiences and compete to appear antiestablishment and transgressive. Audiences "prefer magical thinking" and "crave drama and plot twists," observes national-populist pro-Trump podcaster Scott Greer. "As long as influencers present their idiotic notions as something the 'elites' don't want you to know, their 'freethinking' listeners will gobble up without hesitation."

My read is that these japes have a limited overall impact on public attitudes toward Jews. Many on the Right have attacked Fuentes, Owens, and Carlson for being fantasists who are weak on Islam, and almost no MAGA conservatives support the Palestinians. On the young Left, there is no statistical correlation between feelings toward American Jews and feelings toward Israel. Young anti-Zionist Americans may be insensitive to the concerns of most Jews who are attached to Israel as a Jewish homeland, but they are not Jew-haters.

What the research shows is that social media influence vis-à-vis antisemitism has much in common with social media more gener-

ally — exaggerated and relatively divorced from the off-screen reality. Whether that will remain the case is, of course, a matter of prophecy rather than an answerable question, but American Jews should resist the clickbait. \*

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ERIC P. KAUFMANN is a professor of politics at the University of Buckingham, where he directs the Centre for Heterodox Social Science.