For the third time in five years, 2022 showed the highest total of antisemitic incidents in the United States ever recorded since the Anti-Defamation League began its tallies more than 40 years ago.1 The incident total was 36 percent greater than the year before and nearly a fivefold increase compared with 2013. The differentials may be due, in part, to changes in data collection methods and victims’ willingness to report. But numbers also suggest that something has changed.

On May 25, 2023, the Biden administration released its U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism (hereafter referred to as “Antisemitism Strategy” or “Strategy”).2 It was an unusual document partly in its level of detail laying out the strategy and its accompanying actions. But it was also remarkable for its focus on an issue that relatively few U.S. adults are aware of and fewer experience directly. Since it was issued, the events of October 7, 2023, carried out in the Israeli communities and households bordering the Gaza Strip, along with the still-unfolding consequences at the time of this writing—most especially the horrendous toll on Gaza’s
civillian population and the widespread reaction—have made the Antisemitism Strategy’s appearance even more timely than its drafters had imagined.³

The problems of the Middle East and the issue of domestic antisemitism in the United States are distinct, but they easily become intertwined. Many reactions to Israel’s military measures in prosecuting the war begun by Hamas’s attack on its civilians and defense establishment have brought into stark relief fundamental questions about what antisemitism is and the meaning of its effects. It is both legitimate and important to inquire where criticism founded on moral, political, or partisan opposition to Israel’s policies and actions ends and where antipathy toward Israel as a Jewish state begins. What is not in question are the physical and verbal assaults that have been unambiguously aimed at Jews because of their Jewishness. The Anti-Defamation League survey of 2023 will almost surely peg the meter once more and show that the United States has not been immune.

The virulence, suddenness, and chilling effectiveness of the Hamas onslaught was a surprise. The resurgence of antisemitism leaves the United States similarly on the back foot. Less than ten years ago, the rising virulence of antisemitism in the United States would have been expected by few objective observers. Considered by most to have been a holdover from a bygone United States, antisemitism was regarded as a malady on the wane that did not require much serious policy attention. The post–October 7 world brings to an even finer point the recognition of the serious problem that confronts us. And if antisemitism has become a more serious problem, it is time to become serious about it. The issuance of the Antisemitism Strategy by the U.S. government provides a strong step in that direction.

This document is not a reaction to the events of October 7 and thereafter. Neither can it avoid cognizance of changed circumstances that have made policy attention to this domestic issue—one with global antecedents and associations—even more timely. But, as of this writing, passions are high and mutually agreed facts few. Therefore, the focus of this joint effort is to draw upon the research and experience of its authors to discuss first the meaning and relevance of pursuing the Strategy at this point in U.S. life, what may be distinctive in combating this form of hate, and which communities and interests may be directly or indirectly served by doing so. It then provides a brief analytical overview of the Antisemitism Strategy and suggests where the discipline of policy analysis may offer support of the Strategy and guidance in its implementation.

Finally, this document presents examples of efforts that could lend support to achieving the Antisemitism Strategy’s objectives. These include creating toolkits for civil sector program developers, implementers, and evaluators; capturing the benefits of qualitative data on the experience of antisemitism; developing better understanding of the relationship between antisemitism and the concept of political belief; training and evaluating online influencers; and creating a sophisticated data clearinghouse for researchers, program developers, and program evaluation.

The topics touched on in this document are many and far-ranging. It by no means supplants other discussions or suffices to treat fully the experience of and the political, legal, and social issues surrounding antisemitism and antisemitic activity in the contemporary United States. The intent is to suggest and motivate avenues of effort for meeting this age-old scourge’s most recent manifestation.
The Case for a National Strategy on Antisemitism in the 21st Century

Jewish Americans have always been aware of antisemitism in several forms but had come to believe it to be a residual of earlier eras. In the early 20th century, the theory of race, eugenics, and racial inferiority was taught at West Point and was routinely expressed in popular culture and by social norms. Beyond the familiar targeting of the U.S. Black population, the dangers posed by immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe were deplored. Among the latter, an influx of Jews was considered by many to be a potential source of national decline for reasons variously perceived as stemming from moral, hygienic, or intellectual shortcomings. Such attitudes persisted to some extent beyond World War II (as portrayed in the 1947 Gregory Peck film, A Gentleman's Agreement) but then attenuated over time—at least in overt manifestations. During the 1950s, long-standing informal barriers for Jewish access to housing, recreation, universities, business, and government fell. By the 21st century, the Jewish experience in the United States was compared with the experience during the golden age of Islamic Spain, the rise of the Dutch Republic, and the treatment received as a minority community under Ottoman rule, all highlights in the Jewish people’s long and frequently tragic history.

Therefore, the rise in antisemitic attitudes, discourse, and violence in the latter 2010s came as a shock. Although perhaps not as widely perceived by U.S. society at large, for the U.S. Jewish community, sensitized by generations of experience with the dolorous cycle of Jewish diaspora history, the change has been both abrupt and of considerable concern. (Most synagogues in the United States in 2023 have armed security for which the congregants are assessed an additional fee; few churches of similar scale do.) Should this current turmoil be viewed as a temporary setback for Jewish Americans in what otherwise has been slow but steady progress in gaining acceptance in the United States? Or is it a harbinger of their future in the goldene medina, the promised land of the United States?

Clearly a matter of concern to Jewish Americans, the direct consequences of resurgent antisemitism—in popular discourse, the media, and as overt violent acts against people or property—would appear to affect only a relatively small slice of the U.S. population. Why should this particular hatred become a focus of national policy attention, the subject of an executive branch task force, and the framing of an interagency, cross-government, and multifaceted strategy? The questions have several potential answers.

The first has to do with the historical and geographic ubiquity of antisemitism. Its earliest thread emerged in the time of Alexander the Great and persists into the 21st century. Although the direct effects fall on only a narrow slice of the U.S. public, many more find the presence of antisemitism in U.S. society to be abhorrent. Because of the persistence and recent rise—or perhaps because of them—immediate action appears to be warranted. It might even be taken as a manifestation of U.S. exceptionalism that broad elements of the society and the most senior government level will not countenance antisemitism’s spread and resurgence on U.S. soil. This appears to be a unifying issue as two bipartisan congressional task forces on antisemitism have also arisen, suggesting the presence of an opportunity for direct action to reduce transmission in the United States. It also is an avenue for U.S. leadership. The United States was the first nation to create a post of Special Envoy
Antisemitic discourse tends to confer permission to add in other minority classes once the pattern is set. 

A second general interest that suggests the wider value of confronting resurgent antisemitism early on is that it is a leading-edge hate. That is, antisemitic discourse tends to confer permission to add in other minority classes once the pattern is set. There is a large component of antisemitic thinking in anti-Black, anti-Asian, and anti-Muslim hate narratives on the far right. Such groups are sometimes classed together as inferior, alien polluters of White America’s culture and gene pool, thus consciously or unconsciously reiterating the social Darwinist discourse of the 1910s and 1920s. But often the core of most Great Replacement narratives portrays Jews (not considered as truly part of the White population) as the cynical instigators of the recent influx of immigrants. Jews are seen as the facilitators of the legal, economic, political, and cultural inroads all such groups are perceived to have made into U.S. life. This represents a plausible explanation in such discourse for why people supposed by them to be inferiors appear to be beating “us.” Antisemitism can serve as either a gateway to other specific forms of hate or as an intensifier to fan the flames of hatreds that may already be present.

The greatest general concern may be antisemitism’s corrosive effect on democracy itself. This is not an unintentional outcome. It may be said that, since the birth of modern political antisemitism in late 19th-century Vienna and Paris, most contemporary manifestations of antisemitism are at their core political. The rhetoric is about the “Jewish menace.” The target, however, is core democratic values. The goal is to gain political objectives by alienating the population from democracy’s institutions and ethical foundations. Through this mechanism, antisemitic narratives (if spread widely enough to take sufficient root) have the potential to transform society and political discourse at large. As has happened elsewhere, the effect might be to weaken democratic institutions and their effectiveness in addressing the actual root causes of national concerns.

Claims of Jewish capture of business, banking, culture, media, and government serve to discredit those institutions. The doubt being sown undermines authority and respect for these institutions. This, in turn, strains the bonds of trust that are necessary for participatory democracy to function sufficiently well to address the true concerns and problems confronting the nation. The resulting stultified process then becomes a vicious cycle adding ever more credence, by virtue of perceived institutional dysfunction, to claims of government indifference, incompetence, or malfeasance.

When viewed in this light, the stakes in confronting antisemitism or failing to do so might be larger than they first appear. Especially during the current times of escalating overt antisemitic discourse and action, the promptness
and effectiveness of countervailing action may have a much larger influence on the future course of the United States than many would suppose.

We next lay out several ways of viewing the problem from the perspective of pursuing effective policy to counter both antisemitism and its effects.

**Confronting Antisemitic Discourse and Actions**

A first step of framing is to begin at the end: What outcomes would we wish to see from the framing and implementation of policy?

Even before the Antisemitism Strategy, state leaders, such as in France, have come to recognize in antisemitism a threat to their entire society through its effects on Jewish communities. The phenomenon of antisemitism is not unrelated to the general rise in racism, bias, and radicalized violence. But within its narrowest focus, the fundamental values that are directly threatened include the:

- physical security of Jews as individuals
- physical security of Jewish communities
- ability to exercise individual rights of citizenship such as freedom of movement and an absence of other *de jure* or *de facto* restrictions
- ability to communicate political beliefs and engage in political activities
- ability to establish and maintain Jewish communal institutions
- ability to engage freely in legal economic activities
- ability to engage in Jewish religious rites and practices

The stakes in confronting antisemitism or failing to do so might be larger than they first appear.

- right to engage in nurturing and preserving Jewish national identity and aspirations.

These specific values that are or could come under threat in the United States suggest a framework of four main facets by which antisemitism and its consequences might be assessed. Useful for assessing the comprehensiveness of policy against antisemitism’s resurgence, the first two are:

- antisemitic attitudes
- antisemitic actions.

These are the most common focus areas for measurement of antisemitic incidents and phenomena. This police blotter approach to measuring antisemitism is the most common because it is easiest to compile. But for the purpose of measurement, antisemitic actions should also include trespasses against civic norms and legally permitted speech and action that are nevertheless intended to foster antisemitic attitudes and encourage further antisemitic actions. These last phenomena are notoriously difficult to detect—but perhaps increasingly less so as digital platforms have become the most important venues for transmission.

In addition, there are two further aspects to consider when weighing costs, benefits, and effect of potential policy
actions. These two have not been tracked to the same extent as the others:

- **direct effects** on Jewish individuals and communities
- **attitudes and sense of well-being** of Jews and indirect effects on the larger society where they reside.

Some data are easier to acquire than others. There is a need to guard against the common trap of addressing only what is most readily measured—looking for the proverbial lost keys under the lamppost—and not what a consideration of community and national interests would suggest ought to be measured. One purpose in laying out these four categories is to balance the books and provide cross-checks among data sources. But doing so also provides the means to identify what important bodies of data or reporting are being missed. The categories also provide a perspective for assessing the Antisemitism Strategy and its component goals and actions.

### What Is in the Antisemitism Strategy

The Antisemitism Strategy frames its goals for policy on four main pillars. Table 1 shows the four pillars and the strategic goals for each. Each strategic goal, in turn, lists executive branch actions, calls on Congress for legislation (and funding), and calls for specific actions by nonfederal actors both public and private.

The strategic goals map unevenly across the four main aspects for antisemitism policy listed. The goals under the first pillar are focused on antisemitic attitudes. The strategic goals under the second pillar focus on antisemitic actions as physical threats. Those under the third pillar also implement the reduction of antisemitic attitudes and, to a degree, actions that are more discriminatory in nature (Strategic Goals 3.4 and 3.5). The fourth pillar broadens the struggle and seeks to create coalitions addressing all forms of hate.

The other two aspects for policy consideration, direct effects on Jewish individuals and communities and indirect effects on both Jewish communities and the wider society, do not receive as much formal emphasis in the stated goals with the exception of Strategic Goal 2.6 to strengthen support of victims of harassment and attack. The goals focused on data and research (Strategic Goals 1.3 and 2.1) are places where these connections may be evaluated for wider understanding of antisemitism’s scope and potential for policy actions. It is also true that a strategy would necessarily emphasize some aspects over others. But with 18 announced strategic goals, questions regarding priority and choice naturally arise. As with any broad strategic document, events will require later policy adaptation. What is the basis within the document for advising such changes?

### What Is Not in the Antisemitism Strategy

At 60 pages, the Antisemitism Strategy is an unusually comprehensive document (e.g., the publicly released version of the *U.S. National Security Strategy* is 48 pages). Ultimately, ability to achieve stated goals will depend on how well some practical questions can be successfully addressed, such as the following:

- On what basis should alternatives for policy and action be weighed in terms of presumed effective-
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<td>4.2: Expand and Mobilize Multi-Faith Partnerships</td>
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**SOURCE:** Features information from White House, *U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.*
ness, requirements for implementation, or chances for success?

- Will some policy instruments be more effective than others depending on the origins and characteristics of different forms of antisemitic discourse and action?
- How well are different causal explanations for the rise, spread, and effect of antisemitic discourse and action supported by data?

This section discusses several means for addressing these questions that are intended to provide analytical support for the Strategy’s implementation and adaptation.

**Analytical Lenses**

The Strategy really does not spell out a *logic model* for its policy prescriptions or a *theory of change* for combating or reversing antisemitic processes. The two concepts are related and both useful lenses to apply.

**Value of Logic Models**

A logic model describes what actions planners propose, the resources to be deployed, and what results are intended. This model elaboration can be done on a post-facto basis once a plan is in place and used, among other things, as a way of conveying to a wider audience the logic behind the proposed course of action. However, although the logic may be clear, there is no guarantee that underlying realities will not differ from what the planners have conceived. In this instance, the Antisemitism Strategy does lay out ways and means; it does not detail the intended outcomes except in broad terms. It does not describe why some actions were included and others not. This will be discussed further next.

**Value of Theories of Change**

A theory of change includes most elements of a logic model but also describes *why* planners believe that the proposed course of action will achieve its results: What is the chain of causation that will bring about the change. In contrast to the logic model, the theory of change considers context and the wider issues involved with action in the real world. The theory of change behind the Antisemitism Strategy is only implicit.

This idea is not in itself surprising. The sources and courses of antisemitic attitudes and actions are many, deep, and long-standing. We do not possess a shared understanding of how antisemitic attitudes lead to antisemitic actions in the form of either antisemitic discourse (for either active transmitters or the passive receiving audience) and antisemitic acts. A better understanding would aid in discerning policy alternatives and best means for their implementation to enhance effectiveness. Strategic Goal 1.3 is directed toward funding more research. In the absence of a well-
The theory of change behind the Antisemitism Strategy is only implicit. This idea is not in itself surprising. The sources and courses of anti-semitic attitudes and actions are many, deep, and long-standing.

grounded theory of change, it is difficult to determine how well-suited specific actions within the strategy document might prove to be in implementation. Delving into theories of change would be one avenue for analysis to support the effort embodied in the Strategy and certainly help inform what needs to be part of the research agenda.

Example of an Analytical Opportunity
Consider several representative calls to action found within the Antisemitism Strategy that are from a family of similar recommendations. They are directed at regional and state governments, nongovernmental organizations, and various private-sector groups:

We call on employers to leverage DEIA [diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility] efforts to share information with employees about American Jewish heritage, culture, and history and provide resources on countering anti-semitism. . . .

We call on employers to develop and disseminate workshops on the intersection of anti-semitism, racism, and xenophobia. . . .

We call on employers to have a plan to address anti-semitism specifically when Jews are attacked or face discrimination, such as a double standard because of their perceived power. . . . Employers should know that anti-semitism can manifest distinctively.¹²

These calls appear under Strategic Goal 1.2 (Raise Awareness About Anti-semitism and Jewish American Heritage Outside of the Classroom, and Increase Workplace Training on Countering Anti-semitism). The call is bold and the goals both worthy and admirable. The tacit logic model is that such efforts will bring change of a measurable magnitude in the implied direction. It might well do so under one theory of change: Greater familiarity with facts will change attitudes. But under another, the results could be precisely the opposite of what is intended. One distinctively anti-semitic trope in the United States is that the government itself is under the domination of Jews (the “Zionist Occupation Government”). The prominence of Jews in high office and in federal departments is taken as proof of this assertion. Might not such efforts in the workplace, encouraged and coaxed by U.S. government suasion, be viewed as one more bit of evidence that Jews somehow receive special treatment and regard from government and also wield it to
To point out the absence of a theory of change is not to disparage the Antisemitism Strategy. Doing so illustrates the enormous challenge that it admirably sets for itself. At the current level of understanding it is difficult to tell. The specifics of the actual efforts would surely matter. But a better exposition and exploration of alternative theories of change would be beneficial.

To point out the absence of a theory of change is not to disparage the Antisemitism Strategy. Rather, doing so illustrates the enormous challenge that it admirably sets for itself. But it is simply the case that some policy instruments may prove to be more effective than others depending on the origins of antisemitic attitudes and discourse and the chains of causation that lead to discriminatory or physical actions. Does, for example, an antisemitic attitude rooted in New Testament depictions of Jews as the betrayers of Christ lead to different outcomes and possibly different steps toward remediation than does one that stems from a belief that Jews are engineering the exclusion of White adults from U.S. political life? It would be valuable to determine how well different causal explanations are supported by data. This is a weak point that arises generally in research on antisemitism that bears on the effectiveness of the Antisemitism Strategy.

Data Issues

There are considerable problems with data that the Strategy itself recognizes (Strategic Goal 2.1). Several respected groups nationally and globally have dedicated themselves to providing information and policy guidance on the phenomenon of antisemitism. Yet, there remain several fundamental issues of data, including the problem of defining antisemitism itself, a phenomenon that morphs to suit the times and takes so many forms. The issue was addressed directly by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Its working definition has been adopted by many nations and organizations (including the U.S. federal government in 2019). Yet, the IHRA definition has several competitors. Differences arise, among other reasons, over the adequacy of applying the IHRA formula to the wide variety of concerns beginning with domestic policing issues but extending to defining the line between antisemitism and dissent over Israel government policy. This line is hard to define. The widespread protests since October 7, 2023, have not made this delineation any easier. What is clear is the considerable uptick in antisemitic and anti-Muslim incidents in the United States during the last three months of 2023. In some cases, the facile conflation between anti-Israel and anti-Jewish has stirred physical attacks and verbal assaults on non-Israeli Jews, their property, and their community institutions.
Furthermore, different bodies of national law raise difficulties in comparing tallies and intensities of antisemitic incidents. If the most common approach to classification and measurement is to take a police blotter approach—that is, a focus on legal transgressions motivated by hatred of (and so directed toward) Jews—then the fact that laws differ across jurisdictions means that cross-national or even cross-regional comparisons are difficult. For example, public statements denying the Holocaust or registering doubt about its extent, course, and causes are permitted free speech in the United States while being legally proscribed in Germany. As with many other incidents or crimes of this type, there are also differences in the likelihood of formal reports being made by victims. Even within organizations working to understand and combat antisemitism, their own data (such as survey results) have changed over time as the instruments for gathering such information have changed. These factors also make comparisons across time difficult.

**Need for Measurement**

Data issues are more than just an academic concern. A better understanding of cause and effect would place policy planning on a more solid footing. This leads to one last issue regarding the Antisemitism Strategy: measurement of outcomes. A strategy requires some definition of what would constitute a favorable outcome if only so that implementation progress can be monitored. Such an explicit statement of objectives and some metric by which future outcomes can be assessed also serves as a tool for navigation and adjustment during implementation. The Antisemitism Strategy does not provide such a detailed breakdown or criteria for measurement of effect. It may be inferred from the document that there are, for example, several appropriate targets for policy and actions to combat resurgent antisemitism. But such a listing is not present in the Strategy itself. Neither is there exposition of relative priorities nor of interactions, either complementary or possibly conflicting, among proposed actions. The inferred objectives differ in who are the target actors or sources of antisemitic discourse and intended target audiences:

- Reduce **generation** of antisemitic discourse/ideation
- Reduce **dissemination** of antisemitic discourse/ideation
- Reduce **effectiveness** of antisemitic discourse/ideation on target audiences
- Reduce susceptibility of individuals to antisemitic discourse/ideation
- Reduce **number and severity** of antisemitic discriminatory or physical actions
- Create greater **transparency and awareness** of antisemitic tropes, discourse, and actions.

This discussion, albeit brief, of (1) causal linkages among the various forms of antisemitic discourse and the

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**Different bodies of national law raise difficulties in comparing tallies and intensities of antisemitic incidents.**
types of actions (both legal, albeit transgressive, and illegal that might result), definitions, and data, and (2) of the linkage of proposed actions to the measurement of outcomes suggests some of the avenues by which policy analysis can lend support to the Antisemitism Strategy’s objectives. This document concludes with a similarly brief outline of some contributions that RAND and policy analysis in general could supply to enhance the federal and regional efforts.

Opportunities for Policy Analysis

The complexities surrounding antisemitism and its hydra-headed manifestations make combating it a *RAND-hard problem*: The contours of the many associated problems make solutions nonobvious, and the obvious solutions may well lead to disappointing or even counterproductive outcomes. After the May 2023 White House release of the Antisemitism Strategy, discussions occurred among RAND staff to better understand where their professional experience might contribute to dealing with the complexities involved. The objective was to draw on existing expertise and RAND capabilities to develop a set of specific initiatives. The intent was to create a portfolio of efforts that could be pursued individually as manageably sized projects while also operating synergistically to allow the outputs from one project to be leveraged by those from the others. The full list varies in magnitude, scope, and focus.

Examples of Potential Analytical Support

In this final section, we present a selection of results from these deliberations. They fit with prior and ongoing RAND efforts on Truth Decay, DEIA, anti-Asian racism, policing and civil justice, and education and labor and a variety of work on internet communications and hate speech, domestic terrorism, and the influence and effects of emerging technology. Each finds a niche within the outlines of the Antisemitism Strategy. In laying them out, the authors of this
document also speak to their RAND colleagues in answering the question of what capabilities exist to assist Strategy implementation. The Strategy does not presume that the political right is the exclusive source of antisemitic discourse. Although it has historically been the most prevalent and is almost exclusively the source of the most violent discourse and actions, that situation may be shifting. Similarly, although the discussions of individual analytical measures we share here most often refer to the traditional antisemitic ideation on the right, the Strategy needs to also address the more subtle phenomenon of antisemitism finding place with some discourse and actions of the progressive left.

**Toolkit to Help Civil Society Develop Highly Effective Programs to Counter Antisemitism**

The Antisemitism Strategy anticipates civil society organizations will play a leading role in developing and executing programs designed to counter and mitigate the effects of hate and antisemitism. Fully one-third of the strategic goals rely largely on these mechanisms. That is a difficult task. Implementers must identify and understand target audiences, craft and implement compelling and effective programmatic content, evaluate outcomes, and then use those outcomes for continuous improvement. Even the best-outfitted organizations struggle to get all of these steps right.

RAND researchers have developed and evaluated the Getting to Outcomes (GTO) program. GTO is a ten-step process that guides users through the key tasks needed to make a program a success. The core GTO process has been tailored to address issues including community emergency preparedness, teen pregnancy, and underage drinking. Research has shown that organizations that use GTO improve their programs and get better outcomes than organizations that do not. RAND researchers also created a separate toolkit to help programs that counter violent extremism to conduct their own assessments.

The experience and knowledge to date can be used to create and publish a GTO Toolkit to help programs design, implement, and evaluate community-based programs for countering antisemitism. The development and publication of an easy-to-use guide will not only improve the quality and impact of developed counter-antisemitic programs but also help community-based organizations more quickly and easily on-ramp new programs. The effort to do so would require five tasks of combined analysis and synthesis:

1. Identify best practices for conducting formative research and needs assessment and typologies for counter-violent-extremism and counter-disinformation-communication campaigns.
The number of antisemitic incidents captured by the Anti-Defamation League’s annual audit increased from 751 in 2013 to 3,697 in 2022.

Survey implementers from established counter-antisemitism and counter-hate programs to identify the goals and objectives that various counter-antisemitism programs have adopted.

2. Synthesize findings and draw on expert interviews to identify and summarize best practices for counter-antisemitism programming and use this analysis to draft guidelines for applying best practices in program development.


4. Adapt experience and practice from previous GTO toolkits to lay out guidelines for program fit, capacity, planning, continuous quality improvement, and sustainment of individually tailored programs for countering antisemitism and other hatreds.

5. Publish and disseminate the final GTO Toolkit, pilot test the toolkit with select counter-antisemitism programs, and host online training events to help implementers in the counter-antisemitism program space make best use of the published guide.

Address Lack of Qualitative Data

The number of antisemitic incidents captured by the Anti-Defamation League’s annual audit increased from 751 in 2013 to 3,697 in 2022. The tally included incidents of harassment, vandalism, and assault. Also in 2022, the organization found that 20 percent of U.S. adults agreed with at least six or more of the most common anti-Jewish tropes—the highest since 1992.

Yet, sources of data that document the full extent of individual’s daily experiences with antisemitism in the United States remain limited. In addition, much of the existing data on rising antisemitism is taken from surveys. This results in failure to fully capture the possible range of individuals’ experiences with antisemitism, the frequency of the incidents, and the ways that people and institutions respond. This is a general problem and one of the reasons that the third and especially the fourth aspects of antisemitism cited above (direct effects on Jewish individuals and communities but also effects on the attitudes and sense of well-being of Jewish Americans) tend to have been largely unaccounted for.

At the same time, there is a growing body of qualitative research on how members of marginalized groups experience and navigate racism and discrimination. Much of this work draws on qualitative data to develop a more nuanced understanding of how experiences with discrimination affect daily life. These approaches should be tested and employed to capture more fully the range of Jews’
experiences with antisemitism in the United States. This could be a particularly powerful tool to better understand how more-covert forms of antisemitism operate in everyday life, such as prejudices and stereotypes about Jews. It will also help us to understand the context in which these incidents occur whether in schools, workplaces, and public spaces. This more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of everyday antisemitism will inform policy solutions.

The Antisemitism Strategy is notable for its whole-of-society comprehensiveness in both laying out the venues where the problems of antisemitism manifest themselves and where the solutions may possibly be found. Being able to take a similarly comprehensive approach to understanding causes and effects would provide a vital input to framing and carrying out meaningful policies. This work would be critical to realizing the full potential of the key Strategic Goal 2.1 on data.

Understand Linkage Between Rising Antisemitism and Political Attitudes

One distinguishing aspect of antisemitism is its extraordinary mutability. It will morph to suit the political sensibilities of its times.\(^\text{21}\)

In the 21st century United States, there appears to be a potential coalescing of antisemitism across the political spectrum as just one constituent of a more encompassing rejection of multiculturalism. In near-simultaneous news cycles in 2023, both former President Donald Trump and Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., made remarks that would appeal to antisemitic sensibilities.\(^\text{22}\) These statements were made in the context of a growing section of the U.S. public (10 percent to 20 percent) who believe in Great Replacement conspiracy theories that immigration is a plot to replace the White population of the United States with foreigners of other races.\(^\text{23}\)

Few studies document the political partisan dynamics of these beliefs. Yet, our prior discussion of theories of change requires better understanding, especially for such goals as Strategic Goals 1.2, 1.3, 2.4, and 2.5 (see Table 1). For example, although endorsement of Great Replacement theories was a motivator for rioters during the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol,\(^\text{24}\) prior works by RAND researchers and others suggest those or similar beliefs may lurk commonly among both Democrats and Republicans, perhaps waiting to be mobilized into action.\(^\text{25}\) Anecdotal evidence of convergence validate this as a policy question worth exploring more systematically. Political partisan dynamics of antisemitism could be investigated through surveys, social media data, or both.

Perhaps surprisingly, surveys have confirmed that respondents are often quite willing to espouse the racist, antisemitic, and otherwise distasteful views they hold
Surveys have confirmed that respondents are often quite willing to espouse the racist, antisemitic, and otherwise distasteful views they hold when directly elicited through an anonymous survey. Use could therefore be made of general surveys or of established survey panels to explore the question of linkages. The RAND American Life Panel (ALP), for example, offers a mechanism by which to study political partisanship and antisemitism. The panel includes some 2,000 individuals who participate across several years. This factor means that their self-reported political and demographic characteristics are known for years leading up to any new survey. Prior work with the ALP has demonstrated that 9 percent of the panelists agree with the following statement: “Immigration is part of a plot to decrease the number of White people.” This finding suggests that (1) the representative sampling strategy used by the ALP has been effective to gather a diversity of U.S. views and (2) panelists feel sufficiently comfortable with the ALP’s guarantee of anonymity to espouse their actual beliefs.

Social media are also potentially valuable yet relatively untapped sources. Prior RAND research has shown that data from social media can be highly concordant with representative surveys of the U.S. population. This likely is because more than 70 percent of the U.S. population is on social media, comparing favorably with most survey response rates that are well below this level. This finding suggests that social media could be a way to investigate the political partisanship dynamics of antisemitic tropes. Algorithms exist for inferring an individual’s political party based on that person’s social media posts. This makes it straightforward to then compare inferred party affiliations with antisemitism espoused online. A series of RAND tools, such as AI-powered RAND-Lex, can be used to scrape the web purposefully for relevant content.

Simply gathering the data would be insufficient in itself to examine the linkages of interest. But the means do exist, when combined with analysis of the resulting data in a systematic and path-breaking manner, to finally come to grips with the connection between antisemitism and what lies at the essence of most of its modern instigation—pursuing political power by eliciting fear.

**Train Online Influencers to Counter Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial**

At several points the Antisemitism Strategy directly references influencers (see Strategic Goals 1.2, 3.1 and 3.4 in Table 1) or indirectly hints at such channels. One challenge in countering Holocaust denial is that many of the conventional messengers—government officials and representatives of the U.S. Jewish community, for example—
are unlikely to serve as credible messengers among the populations that are most at risk of harboring antisemitic attitudes. In contrast, peers associated with at-risk communities may be able to credibly target hate and extremism. Given the viral nature of social media, such messages can spread into diverse social networks. This has been well understood within the commercial marketing sector. Ninety-two percent of consumers in one survey report that they trust earned media, such as word-of-mouth or recommendations from friends and family, above all other forms of advertising.28

A potential asset may be to identify and enlist targeted social media activists, influencers, and videographers in an active program that seeks to (1) dramatically increase their ability to create viral social media content; (2) educate them on the experience of the Holocaust and the challenge of Holocaust denial; and (3) focus their content-creation skills on developing social media campaigns that raise awareness about the Holocaust and address other forms of religious intolerance. In essence, this program would be about helping influencers design, create, and spread compelling and credible film and other sharable social media content that counters Holocaust denial and other forms of religious-based intolerance. A capstone event for such an initiative would be take the most effective filmmakers and influencers to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camps near Krakow and in Warsaw, Poland, and help them communicate this experience by developing content for social media.

RAND experience with similar efforts in the Middle East suggests that such an effort could be conducted in three discrete phases. The first would identify suitable influencers to enlist in such a program. Ideally, a review of survey data could identify at-risk communities, and a follow-on analysis of social media data, such as X or preferably TikTok, could uncover specific accounts that could potentially influence the at-risk audience and benefit from the type of training that the overall program could provide.

The second step is implementation of the influencer training and engagement. Participants would receive training and mentorship to improve their film and social media skills and professional assistance in developing compelling content countering antisemitism. A select list of high-performing participants could then be awarded with a group visit to Poland where they would receive further training and create documentaries about visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camps near Krakow and in Warsaw, Poland.

What makes this an analytical effort is the final phase of measuring impact. Following the implementation phase, the program could collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative outcome data on realized program outcomes. The evaluation should document the degree to which participants (1) show a rise in knowledge about digital storytelling, filmography, the challenges confronted by religious minorities, and the experience of the Holocaust and consequences
[R]ectifying and comparing data from widely differing sources to render them compatible would alone be a considerable challenge and a significant achievement.

of Holocaust denial; (2) demonstrate improved willingness to address religious intolerance and Holocaust denial; (3) become more influential on social media as evidenced by social network analysis; and (4) create and disseminate content that addresses religious intolerance and Holocaust denial that will have high levels of reach and engagement.

Create a Knowledge and Effectiveness Clearinghouse

The previous discussion has raised a series of questions regarding antisemitism in the United States and the efforts to combat it. There is another issue in U.S. life that echoes the data and effectiveness issues associated with combating antisemitism: Because of the interpretation that federal agencies placed on prior congressional action, there has been what amounts to a ban on gun policy data collection and research over several decades. We possess less knowledge about gun violence than we do for other threats to population health with incomplete and sometimes difficult-to-rectify information on local initiatives and systematic documentation of their outcomes.

With foundation funding, RAND established its Gun Policy in America initiative. The tools and data found on its webpages are the result of extensive collation, reconciliation, and assessment of many different sources of information including thousands of prior studies. The site makes available results and findings that have been analyzed both for findings and for the evidentiary support for those findings. The information is presented in a variety of formats to make it accessible to different audiences. Many of the main findings are presented in a comparative visual format. This makes it easier to gain insight from cross-jurisdictional comparisons.

Although the specific focus of attention differs and the challenges are of a distinctive character, the Gun Policy in America endeavor is a template for what needs can be met and what service can be provided in gaining a better understanding of antisemitism in the United States. As with the Gun Policy website, the effort would be substantial. The problem of rectifying and comparing data from widely differing sources to render them compatible would alone be a considerable challenge and a significant achievement. Gathering information on policy effectiveness would be similarly complex and hampered as it would be by the scarcity of specific studies on combating the phenomena surrounding antisemitism specifically and the uncertainty of how well efforts at combating other hatreds would correspond to the underlying drivers of antisemitism.

That being said, an effort along these lines would go a long way in making more explicit the issue of finding out
what works in combating antisemitism—and potentially even providing answers. For new polices and actions to be effective in the fight against resurgent antisemitism, having a systematic framing and fact base would be necessary to build tools for measuring progress and assessing effects. Providing such a foundation to federal efforts would be a significant asset. However, the Antisemitism Strategy places a great deal of emphasis on efforts at the state and local levels and by private actors. Having available such a knowledge repository and a platform for shared and collaborative learning, policy tool assessment, resources, and reported outcomes might prove crucial to seeing this hope be translated into reality.

**Conclusion**

In seeking to counter resurging antisemitism in the United States, the federal government has set itself an enormous challenge. It acknowledges the magnitude by clearly indicating that this is a whole-of-society undertaking. Given the nature of antisemitism in its many modern forms and the access antisemitic discourse has to social, technological, and political assets to further its spread and turn words into deeds, nothing less than such a massive undertaking could hope to have an effect. At the same time, in flying blind, there is a risk that the uncertainties in data, measurement, and causality (as laid out in this document) might cause the well-intended efforts to combat antisemitism to fall short and the generational opportunity to be lost.

The matter is pressing, and time is short. If antisemitism is now being recognized as a serious problem, then it is time to get serious about addressing it. The Antisemitism Strategy is a large step in this direction. But it requires support to succeed. This effort will require a comprehensive, cross-disciplinary effort in identifying and gathering crucial information, conducting key analyses, and, most importantly, providing results swiftly and in a form that can be readily absorbed by those charged with the implementation, measurement, and necessary course correction of this bold social strategy. Support means bringing academic research in contact with public policy analysis, ongoing engagement with both the governmental and private sectors, and introducing integral and ongoing measurement into a process of review and update.

A characteristic of RAND work is that the resulting output should clearly answer the questions: So what? How does any piece of analysis contribute to addressing the
serious problems that have been raised? RAND researchers have begun exploring how their capabilities and knowledge can be placed at the disposal of those charged with implementing the Antisemitism Strategy. We and our other RAND colleagues will seek entry points to enhance the chances for success. This means seeking opportunities to assist the bipartisan congressional efforts, working with federal and state offices seeking to implement the actions and policies being called for in the Antisemitism Strategy, and developing lines of direct support to nongovernmental organizations and civil society groups working at the forefront of change.

Notes
1 Anti-Defamation League, “Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022.”
2 White House, U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.
3 Although not the focus of this document, at the time of this writing, there has also been a documented rise in other forms of hate speech, including Islamophobia and anti-Arab rhetoric. This trend is worthy of separate analysis (see Council on American-Islamic Research, “CAIR Received ‘Staggering’ 2,171 Complaints Over Past Two Months as Islamophobia, Anti-Palestinian Hate ‘Spin Out of Control’”).
4 As one indication of the pervasiveness of these beliefs in the United States during the first part of the 20th century, Joseph Bendersky details, among other things, antisemitic teachings included as part of regular instruction at West Point (see Bendersky, The “Jewish Threat”).
6 The term golden country is a poetic Yiddish-language reference to the United States.
7 The philosophy of Hellenism sought to bring about a unifying civilization and ethos. Its proponents, both scholastic and political, were offended by the perceived intransigence and particularism of Jewish thought, practices, and community life. The next still-current thread emerged from medieval Christian anti-Jewish rhetoric. The more-recent elements were contributed by the growth of nationalist sentiment in early 19th century Europe and resistance to capitalist industrialization in that century’s latter half. More recently, nuances with a political core have emerged from both the left and the right based on their respective ideological shibboleths and from Muslim political leaders and immigrant communities in the West.
9 Goldberg, “French Prime Minister: If Jews Flee, the Republic Will Be a Failure.”
10 Several passages in this section first appeared in different form in Popper et al., Evaluating Contemporary Antisemitism, and were presented in a dedicated session at the Sixth Annual Global Conference on Combatting Anti-Semitism in March 2018 in Jerusalem, Israel.
Some phenomena on the U.S. left now introduce a similar overtone to activities and positions that are still largely characterized by opposition to Israeli policy rather than to Jewish people per se. Increasing influence of perspectives on intersectionality have done little to counter a growing animus by some on the left against “white,” “colonialist,” “wealthy,” and, of course, “powerful” Israel. The conflation with Jews more generally then becomes only a short step that some have failed to resist.

18 See especially Strategic Goals 1.1, 1.2, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, and 4.2 in Table 1.

19 Helmus et al., RAND Program Evaluation Toolkit for Countering Violent Extremism.

20 Lamont et al., Getting Respect.

21 Voigtländer and Voth, “Persecution Perpetuated.”

22 President Donald Trump made statements intimating that Special Counsel Jack Smith, the lawyer prosecuting the government’s classified documents case against him, would have diminished credibility if Smith were Jewish (Margolick, “Donald Trump Sinks to a New Low by Dog-Whistling an Old Racist Tune”). Kennedy asserted that coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infections had lower fatality rates specifically for the Jewish and Chinese populations (Weisman, “Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Airs Bigoted New Covid Conspiracy Theory About Jews and Chinese”).

23 See Matthews et al., Individual Differences in Resistance to Truth Decay; and Becker and Jipson, “Replacement Theory Isn’t New.”

24 Pape, “What an Analysis of 377 Americans Arrested or Charged in the Capitol Insurrection Tells Us”; Matthews et al., “Belief Correlations with Parental Vaccine Hesitancy.”

25 Matthews et al., “Belief Correlations with Parental Vaccine Hesitancy.”

26 Nowak et al., “Comparing Covariation Among Vaccine Hesitancy and Broader Beliefs Within Twitter and Survey Data.”

27 Pew Research Center, “Social Media Fact Sheet.”

28 Cunningham, “92% of Consumers Trust Word of Mouth.”

29 RAND, “Gun Policy in America.”

30 For example, see RAND, “Understanding Firearm Deaths by State—and How to Reduce Them.”
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About This Paper

On May 25, 2023, the Biden administration released its U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism (or Antisemitism Strategy). In doing so, it took a bold and, to some extent, risky step because the Antisemitism Strategy addresses an age-old scourge that is notorious for its complexity, many manifestations, and resilience. The authors draw on their research and experience to first discuss the meaning and relevance of pursuing the Antisemitism Strategy at this point in U.S. life, what may be distinctive in combating this form of hate, and what communities and interests may be directly or indirectly served by doing so. Second, the authors provide a brief analytical overview of the Antisemitism Strategy and suggest where the discipline of policy analysis may offer support for the Antisemitism Strategy’s objectives and guidance in its implementation. Finally, they present examples of efforts that could lend support to achieving the Antisemitism Strategy’s objectives. The authors draw on prior RAND efforts to suggest further applications of the tools of policy analysis in support of the whole-of-society endeavor called for in the Antisemitism Strategy.

In this document, the authors aim to discuss the promise and opportunities of the May 2023 Antisemitism Strategy. Therefore, the discussion does not reflect the horrific events of October 7, 2023, in the Israeli communities and households bordering the Gaza Strip nor the still-unfolding consequences for civilians in Gaza. The authors maintain their focus specifically on the U.S. Antisemitism Strategy. However, as that Strategy rolls out, the context in which it is implemented must account for diverse perspectives related to the current conflict and its historical underpinnings. The discussion here is still highly pertinent; if anything, events unfortunately have made the Antisemitism Strategy’s appearance even more timely.

Social and Behavioral Policy Program

RAND Social and Economic Well-Being is a division of the RAND Corporation that seeks to actively improve the health and social and economic well-being of populations and communities throughout the world. This research was conducted in the Social and Behavioral Policy Program within RAND Social and Economic Well-Being. The program focuses on such topics as risk factors and prevention programs, social safety net programs and other social supports, poverty, aging, disability, child and youth health and well-being, and quality of life, as well as other policy concerns that are influenced by social and behavioral actions and systems that affect well-being. For more information, email sbp@rand.org.

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