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ANTISEMITISM

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# The "ZOG" Surge: A Data-Driven Analysis of Antisemitic Narrative Shifts During the Iran War

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## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
Executive Summary	3
Methodology	3
Quantitative Findings	4
Platform Dynamics & Public Engagement	7
The Enforcement Failure: Post-Report Platform Outreach	8

## Executive Summary

Following the qualitative report by Fighting Online Antisemitism (FOA) on March 10, 2026, *How Antisemitic Conspiracies Are Hijacking the Iran War Narrative*, this report provides data to assess the increase of online hate during the Iran war. By applying a quantitative methodology to a cross-platform dataset over two 38-day periods in 2026, developed in a targeted monitoring partnership with TEV (Action and Protection Foundation), a leading European anti-antisemitism watchdog - we found that **"Zionist Occupied Government" (ZOG) conspiracy theory, which accuses Jews/Israel of controlling the United States, increased more than three-fold during the war.** The "ZOG" conspiracy theory falsely claims a secret Jewish cabal controls global institutions and sovereign governments. The increased volume of hate content was accompanied by focus explicitly around the term 'ZOG' - which increased from 49% prevalence in the baseline period to 63% share of the wartime dataset.

Public engagement with this rhetoric also intensified dramatically during the conflict - conspiracy theory content, including 'ZOG' references, received double the amount of likes and a tenfold increase in shares compared to pre-war levels.

Geopolitical crises, like the US-Israel-Iran conflict, act as catalysts that rapidly unite fragmented extremist communities around this framework. Ultimately, this process mainstreams fringe neo-Nazi rhetoric, weaponizing legitimate foreign policy debates to drive systemic antisemitism online.

## Methodology

To isolate the conflict's specific impact on digital discourse, this study conducts a comparative chronological analysis of two symmetrical 38-day periods in 2026:

- **Baseline Period (January 21 – February 27, 2026):** Establishing the normative distribution of narratives prior to the war.
- **War Period (February 28 – April 6, 2026):** Capturing immediate rhetorical adaptation following the onset of military operations.

**The research was conducted in three core steps:**

1. **Defining the Keyword List:** Developing a comprehensive list of targeted keywords, phrases, and dog-whistles representing or implying Jewish, Zionist, or

Israeli covert control and manipulation of sovereign national governments and global foreign policy.

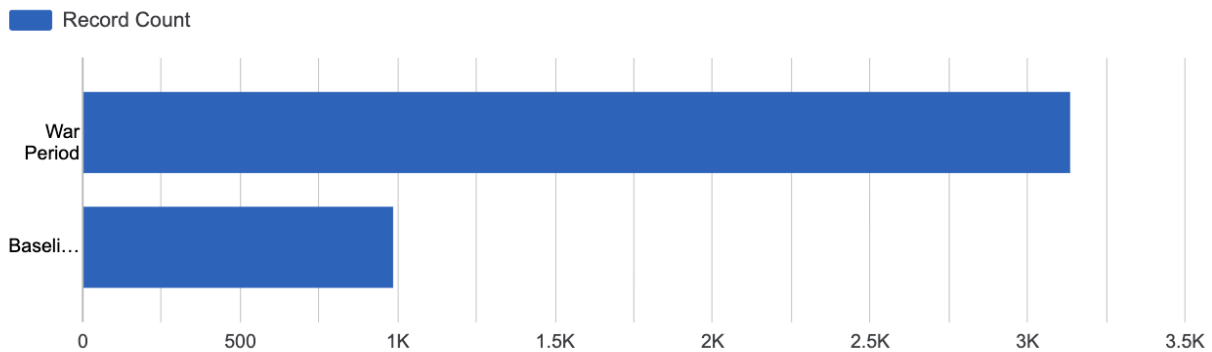
2. **Data Collection & Monitoring Partnership:** In a targeted collaboration with TEV (Action and Protection Foundation), a leading European anti-antisemitism watchdog organization based in Hungary, keyword-specific posts were filtered and extracted from massive, cross-platform datasets. This joint monitoring framework captured thousands of relevant posts across Telegram, X, Reddit, LinkedIn, TikTok, and VK during both designated research timeframes.
3. **Comparative Frequency Data Analysis:** Measuring and comparing the frequency, distribution, and user engagement metrics of these specific terms across the baseline and wartime datasets to track structural mutations in online hate.

## Quantitative Findings

Prior to the conflict, shadow-government and anti-regime conspiracy narratives maintained a steady, fragmented baseline. Within our monitoring parameters, which filtered a specific keyword taxonomy out of an estimated macro pool of 10,000 general geopolitical posts across the web- the 38-day Baseline Period yielded a targeted sample of 988 posts.

The outbreak of military operations on February 28 acted as a massive accelerant for this discourse across the digital ecosystem. During the 38-day War Period, the volume of conspiracy posts captured within our sample **exploded by 217.6%, reaching a total of 3,138 posts** (bringing the combined sample dataset to 4,126 posts across both periods). This increase highlights how the geopolitical crisis functioned as a direct volume multiplier specifically for ZOG-related content across the monitored networks.

### Shadow-Government & ZOG Post Volume (Pre-War vs. Wartime)



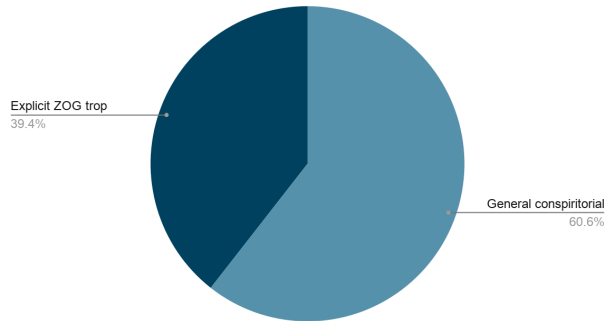
This graph compares the absolute volume of posts within the monitored sample that contain the designated shadow-government and ZOG keyword taxonomy.

### Focusing the Narrative

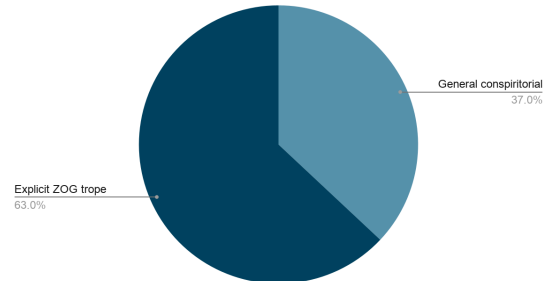
The sampled data indicates that this increase was accompanied by a thematic consolidation. The fragmented "shadow government" terminology within the sample rapidly converged around a single, explicit narrative: **the "Zionist Occupied Government" (ZOG) trope.**

- **In the Baseline Sample:** Explicit ZOG and targeted antisemitic framing were relatively contained, appearing in **485 posts** and accounting for **49.1%** of the baseline sample traffic, heavily localized within fringe far-right nodes.
- **In the War Period Sample:** Explicit ZOG framing completely dominated the captured data, more than quadrupling to **1,977 mentions** and capturing a dominant **63.0%** share of the entire wartime sample dataset.

Pre-War

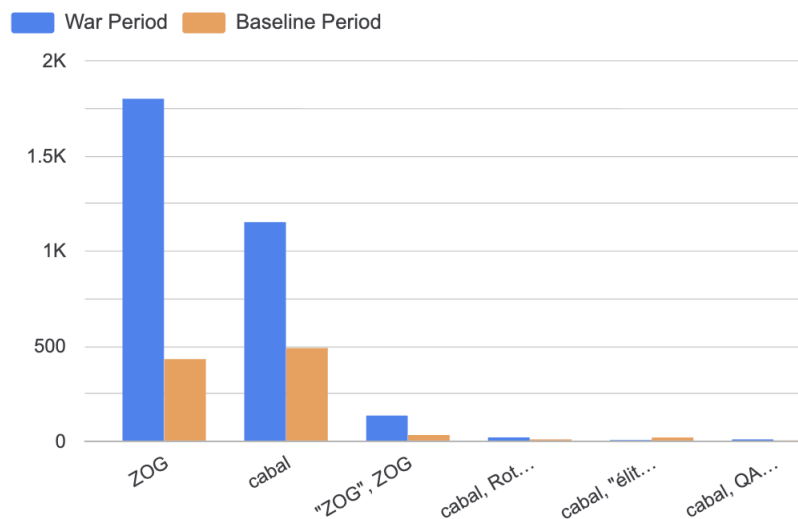


War Period



This structural realignment within the sample demonstrates that generalized terms like "Cabal" (which rose to **1,148 mentions** within the wartime sample) did not operate independently. Instead, they functioned as a rhetorical funnel. Populist anti-regime grievances and standard anti-war isolationism captured in the sample were systematically retrofitted into the ZOG framework. This allowed a highly specific antisemitic libel, that Western democratic sovereignty has been compromised by Jewish and Israeli interests- to masquerade as legitimate foreign policy debate or conventional anti-war sentiment.

Keyword Frequency Distribution: Baseline vs. War Period



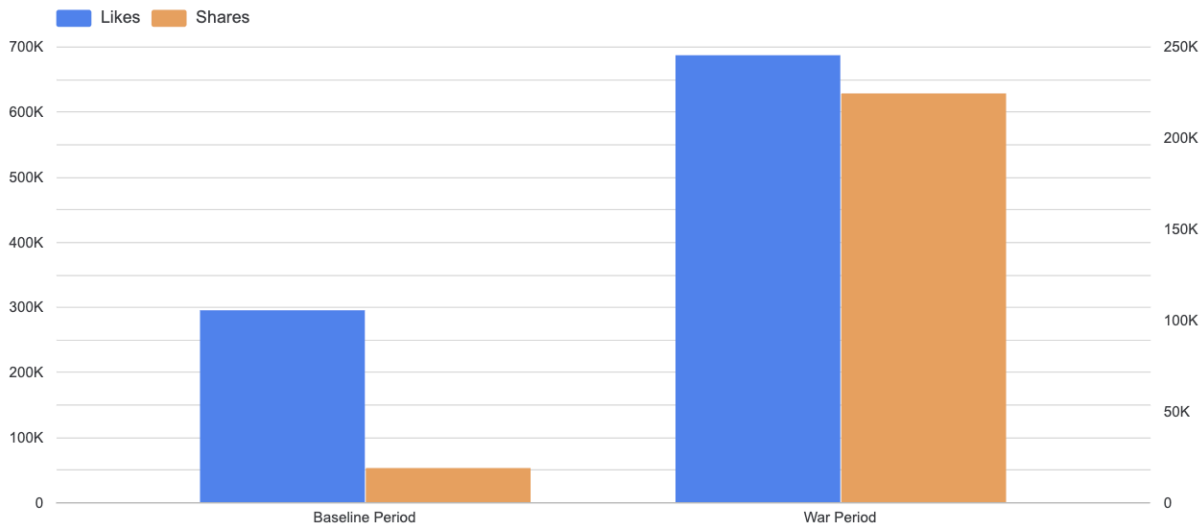
*This graph tracks the shift in specific conspiracy keywords within the monitored sample. During the baseline period, generalized terms like "cabal" were more prominent. However, following the outbreak of hostilities, the explicit antisemitic term "ZOG" experienced a massive surge, becoming the dominant keyword and accounting for over 61% of the wartime dataset.*

The outbreak of the US-Israel-Iran war instantly focused broad online anger into a single direction. Within 48 hours of initial military strikes, broad anti-establishment targets were systematically replaced by localized labels: "Zionists," "Mossad," and "Jewish control". Extremist networks executed this tactical shift using two primary rhetorical bridges:

- **The Blackmail Weapon:** Propagandists quickly weaponized the existing fixation on Jeffrey Epstein to explain the conflict. They claimed the U.S. joined Operation Epic Fury only because **Israel was blackmailing American leaders**, rather than for actual foreign policy reasons. These claims drove a massive 350% spike in posts combining Epstein and the Mossad.
- **The "America Last" Isolationist Funnel:** Standard isolationist arguments were weaponized by funneling populist anti-war sentiment into the slogan "Israel First means America Last". Traditional political critiques mutated into explicit claims of treason, asserting U.S. sovereignty was surrendered to the "Zionist Lobby".

## Platform Dynamics & Public Engagement

During the war, the ZOG conspiracy theory quickly spread into much broader digital spaces. Posts pushing this narrative saw a major surge in public interaction compared to the pre-war period. Specifically, **the average number of likes per post grew by 21% (from 1,858 to 2,246), while average shares rose by 29% (from 284 to 367)**. This measurable growth proves that the conflict heavily amplified public engagement, causing antisemitic rhetoric to spread much faster across social media.



*This graph illustrates the dramatic surge in public interaction with posts promoting shadow-government and "ZOG" conspiracy narratives. Following the outbreak of the conflict, the rhetoric became highly viral, yielding more than double the total volume of likes and a tenfold (10x) explosion in shares compared to the baseline period. This sharp increase highlights how the geopolitical crisis functioned as a direct multiplier for the reach and velocity of antisemitic content online.*

## The Enforcement Failure: Post-Report Platform Outreach

Social media platforms rely on basic keyword filtering that fails when extremist networks disguise classic antisemitic tropes as legitimate foreign policy debate. Following FOA's March 10, 2026 report, we flagged explicit violations - including the use of "ZOG" and additional conspiracy theories, to platform trust and safety teams. The official responses and enforcement actions were highly deficient:

- **Meta:** In its formal response, Meta's response relied on generic policy recitations rather than addressing FOA's specific data. Its enforcement remains ineffective due to a major loophole: Meta conditions its ban on "ZOG" to instances where it is "clearly" used as a proxy for Jewish people. Extremists easily exploit this ambiguity by framing antisemitic tropes as political debate. This structural flaw explains why Meta's automated systems failed to remove 70% of the reported content, exposing a severe gap between corporate rhetoric and actual enforcement.
- **Twitter (X):** The platform failed to provide any substantive response or official commentary regarding the report's findings. To date, the only correspondence received is an automated system confirmation acknowledging that the report was received.

This widespread failure to effectively intervene, evidenced by Meta's systemic lack of enforcement despite clear policy definitions, and Twitter's complete lack of engagement - underscores a critical disconnect between stated platform policies and actual moderation practices during live geopolitical crises.

### Targeted Action Items for Digital Safety

To address these systemic vulnerabilities, FOA recommends the following structural interventions:

- **Establish Crisis Fast-Tracks for Trusted Flaggers:** Platforms must provide priority queues for verified civil society organizations (such as FOA and TEV) during active geopolitical crises. When a recognized watchdog flags a high-reach post combining crisis terminology with antisemitic tropes (like "ZOG"), the report must bypass automated bots and go directly to a human moderator for rapid review within a strict 24-hour window.
- **Demonetize Trending Conspiracy Rhetoric:** Platforms must cut off the financial incentives that drive viral hate. Accounts participating in creator revenue-sharing programs (specifically on X and YouTube) should be instantly demonetized if they leverage explicit or coded antisemitic frameworks to drive engagement during international conflicts.
- **Deploy UX "Friction" and Contextual Labels:** Instead of relying solely on binary "remove or ignore" choices, platforms should introduce user-interface friction. Trending posts that cross-reference mainstream events with conspiracy topics (e.g., the Epstein narrative combined with military recruitment) should automatically trigger informational overlays or warning labels, pointing users to verified, neutral reporting.
- **Update Reporting Categories for Coded Hate:** Current user-reporting menus are too generic (e.g., "Hate Speech"). Platforms should add specific sub-categories or contextual reporting tags during crises, allowing users to explicitly flag "Coded Antisemitism" or "Conspiracy-Driven Harassment." This provides cleaner data for trust and safety teams to act upon.