

The War for Western Minds

*Iran's
thirty-year
campaign
to
divide
the
West*



The Adler Report

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Executive Summary

In 2026, the United States and Iran went to war. But that is not the only war between these adversaries, and perhaps not the one that matters most. The other is older, quieter, and has no ceasefire: an information war Iran has waged against the United States since the 1990s, a sustained campaign aimed at dividing American society and turning its citizens against one another and the state. The first war is fought with weapons. The second is fought with narratives, and the central narrative is antisemitism.

“The first war is fought with weapons. The second is fought with narratives, and the central narrative is antisemitism.”

The West has misread that second war from the start. Iran’s antisemitism looks, from the outside, like the reflexive bigotry of a hostile regime, a matter for civil-rights monitors and interfaith panels. That reading is wrong. Iran’s antisemitism is not a sentiment, but a method, a precision instrument aimed at the United States, refined over three decades, and designed to turn the country’s own citizens into carriers of a foreign state’s narratives. It runs through conference halls and film festivals, through news outlets and a constellation of websites that pose as independent journalism, through hackers and fake personas and the open-editing pages of Wikipedia. It has reached tens of millions of Americans, subtly shifting what they accept as fact.

This report documents that campaign: who built it, how it works, why it succeeds, and what it will take to stop it.

“Iran’s antisemitism is not a sentiment, but a method, a precision instrument aimed at the United States.”

Why Antisemitism

Why wage that war through antisemitism? Because it is the one narrative that crosses every ideological border. The same claim about Jewish or Zionist power can be sold as anti-imperialism to the radical left, as civilizational defense to the religious right, and as racial grievance to Black nationalists. Nothing else unites a white nationalist, a campus socialist, and a Christian fundamentalist around a single enemy the way antisemitism does. Iran did not invent this kind of warfare (which it inherited from Soviet and Russian tradecraft), but it sharpened the method and gave it a name: soft war, the effort to defeat a stronger enemy not on the battlefield but in the minds of its people.

An Infrastructure Built Over Decades

The campaign is not, at bottom, a digital one, and that is the finding with the greatest consequences for anyone hoping to counter it. It rests on a human network built slowly, in person, over decades. It began in a series of conferences in Tehran that did what no algorithm can, strategically placing people in rooms who would never otherwise meet, among them a Holocaust denier and a Black nationalist, a neo-fascist and an anti-war activist. They were introduced, given a shared vocabulary, and sent home with the relationships and material they would carry into American media for years. The Iranian filmmaker who built and ran this network for more than a decade was eulogized on his death as “General Soft War.” When the U.S. Treasury sanctioned his organization in 2019, it confirmed that the conferences had been a platform for Iran’s Revolutionary Guard to recruit, gather intelligence, and seed its narratives into American discourse.

From the Conference Hall to the Feed

What the conferences began, the internet scaled. The same people and narratives moved online, into fake news sites dressed as local papers, networks of invented personas, and a wider ecosystem of more than 340 influencers analyzed for this report. The route a story travels rarely varies. A real report or a genuine grievance is stripped of context, reframed, passed through intermediaries who lend it credibility, and laundered into the mainstream, where it lands with people who have no idea where it began. The danger is not confined to opinion. Narratives that move through this ecosystem have surfaced in real-world violence: the perpetrator of the 2022 Buffalo massacre cited one of its outlets in the manifesto he left behind.

October 7 and After

On October 7, 2023, the infrastructure Iran had spent decades building was unleashed. Within days, the network was reframing the war in apocalyptic terms, a frame Iran and its Russian ally Aleksandr Dugin had refined for years, in which the conflict is not political but cosmic, a final reckoning with a demonic West. The framing is not decoration. It is a delivery system, built to reach audiences, the American Christian Right, chief among them, for whom the language of spiritual warfare carries a force ordinary geopolitics never will.

The campaign’s largest gain since then has been the distance it has closed between the fringe and the mainstream. Claims about Jewish control of American foreign policy that once lived only in white-nationalist corners now surface on widely watched conservative programs. The older accusation that Israel and American Jews are to blame for domestic racial violence returns whenever a new event invites it, carried by the same channels to the same audiences, without anyone having to push it. The most effective influence operations are the ones that no longer require operating. By that standard, Iran has been succeeding.

What This Report Demonstrates

Five findings follow from the evidence presented in this report. Each is developed in full in the chapters that follow.

First, Iran's influence infrastructure is structural, not digital. It rests on human relationships and institutions that the internet amplifies but did not create. Disrupting its digital symptoms without addressing its offline foundations will not stop it.

Second, antisemitism is the operation's load-bearing structure, not an incidental feature. Any response that treats it only as a civil-rights concern, rather than as a national-security vulnerability, addresses a symptom rather than the cause.

Third, the architecture of American social-media platforms is a structural enabler of state-sponsored information warfare, and the legal framework gives those platforms little incentive to act.

Fourth, the convergence of the far left and far right around a shared set of enemies is not an organic accident of polarization. It was deliberately engineered, and the conference circuit was its laboratory.

Fifth, existing countermeasures, including sanctions, indictments, and platform bans, have disrupted individual operations but have not degraded Iran's overall capacity. The network is too redundant and too deeply embedded in legitimate discourse to be defeated by removing one node at a time.

What Must Change

The report's recommendations are addressed to the actors with the most leverage. Congress should create a narrow national-security exception to the platform-liability shield of Section 230, removing immunity for content attributable to designated foreign adversaries. Technology platforms should be required to disclose coordinated influence operations to government, to label AI-generated content, and to share threat intelligence through formal public-private channels. The executive branch and intelligence community must invest in AI-enabled counter-influence capabilities at the pace adversaries are investing in AI-enabled influence. The Foreign Agents Registration Act, a powerful transparency tool, should be enforced against those who act as agents of Iranian state messaging. Journalists should be offered practical diagnostic tools for recognizing coordinated operations in real time. And civil society, which holds the community trust that governments and platforms lack, is the natural home for the targeted public education that makes a society resilient.

None of this is a call to police legitimate criticism of any government, including Israel's. The report is precise on this point throughout. The distinction between political speech and a foreign influence operation lies not in the opinion expressed but in the coordinated, deceptive, state-directed machinery behind it.

The War Does Not End When the Missiles Stop

In 2026, joint American and Israeli action attacked Iran's navy and missile arsenal. It did not touch the influence infrastructure described in this report. The conferences, the media ecosystem, the academic networks, the influencers, the hacking units, and the eschatological framing strategy all remain intact and operational. Iran's military capacity took a generation to build and has been partially degraded. Its information infrastructure took thirty years to build and remains completely untouched.

This report, the first in a projected series examining how hostile states wage war on Western societies from within, is an attempt to make that infrastructure visible. Understanding the machine is the beginning of defeating it.

Prologue

The Story Goes Out at 3 A.M.

Somewhere in Tehran, late on a March night in 2026, a message goes out.

It appears first on a Telegram channel that calls itself a news service. The channel has no named editor, no listed address, no About page that would allow a reader to establish who runs it or where it originates. It has 340,000 subscribers. The message it posts, in the first hours after midnight Tehran time, reports that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has died of injuries sustained in an Iranian ballistic-missile strike. The post includes a photograph. It presents what appear to be quotes from Israeli officials. It carries a timestamp.

None of it is true.

Within the hour, the story reaches Jackson Hinkle, an American social-media personality with millions of followers on X, who is among the most prominent amplifiers to post it without verification. Within two hours it has been shared by dozens of other accounts across X, Telegram, and TikTok, some of them other nodes in the influence network, some of them ordinary users who have no idea where the story came from and no reason to doubt it. By morning the fabricated report has been viewed millions of times. It has been cited by influencers across the ideological spectrum. It has generated news coverage asking whether the story is true, which means millions more people have now encountered it.

A correction eventually circulates. It reaches a fraction of the audience the original story reached. By the time the correction arrives, the original has already done its work. It has injected doubt, generated confusion, and consumed the attention of journalists, fact-checkers, and ordinary citizens who might otherwise have been focused on something else. In the information environment, a story does not need to be true to be effective. It needs only to be believed long enough, and by enough people, to shape how those people understand the moment they are living in.

No law was broken. No money visibly changed hands. No one was arrested. The Telegram channel is still online.

* * *

This is a report about how that happens, who built the system that makes it possible, and what it will take to dismantle it.

The story of Iran's information war against the United States does not begin with Telegram, or TikTok, or artificial intelligence. It begins in 1996, when the Nation of Islam

leader Louis Farrakhan visited Tehran and Iranian leaders discovered something important: that the American political landscape contained constituencies, on the far right, on the far left, in Black nationalist movements, and in conspiratorial communities, whose grievances, ideological commitments, and contempt for Israel as well as America's liberal democratic institutions could be made useful. It continues through twenty years of conferences in Tehran, through the patient cultivation of Holocaust deniers and anti-war activists and 9/11 conspiracy theorists, and through the construction of a media ecosystem that now reaches tens of millions of Americans daily. And it arrives at this moment, when Iran's military has been partially degraded, yet its information war against the United States and its allies runs uninterrupted and unchecked.

The weapon at the center of this operation is antisemitism. Not incidentally, and not as a byproduct of other grievances, but deliberately and systematically, because antisemitism is uniquely suited to the operational objective. It is the one narrative that travels across ideological borders almost nothing else can cross, packaged for the left, the religious right, Black nationalists, and mainstream audiences alike. Iran recognized this, built an infrastructure around it, and has been deploying it, with increasing sophistication, against the United States for thirty years.

**“The weapon at the center of this
operation is antisemitism.”**

This is the story of how that infrastructure was built, how it operates today, and what a fabricated story about a political leader's death, posted at three in the morning on a nameless Telegram channel, has to do with a thirty-year campaign to weaken the most powerful democracy in the world from within.

The answer, as this report demonstrates, is everything.

* * *

A note on this report. The Simon Wiesenthal Center has monitored antisemitism in its many forms for decades. This report applies that expertise to antisemitism as an instrument of foreign state power, deployed at scale against democratic societies. The threat it describes is neither hypothetical nor historical. It is ongoing.

Why Iran Chose Hate

Antisemitism as National Security Doctrine

There is a question that runs beneath everything in this report, and it warrants direct address at the outset: why antisemitism? Iran has no shortage of grievances against the United States, no shortage of ideological frameworks for expressing them, and no shortage of foreign audiences it seeks to reach. The question of why it has built a three-decade influence campaign with hostility toward Jews at its operational center is therefore not incidental but central to understanding the campaign's design.

The answer is not principally theological, though Iran's clerical leadership has long incorporated antisemitic tropes into its revolutionary ideology. The answer is strategic. Antisemitism is not a byproduct of Iran's information operations. It is the mechanism that renders those operations effective. Its singular utility lies in its adaptability: the same underlying narrative can be recoded for audiences that share no common ground and would reject one another's politics outright, reaching each in the idiom it already trusts. That quality, examined in detail later in this chapter, is what allows a single operational infrastructure to address the entire ideological spectrum at once, and it is why the pages that follow treat antisemitism not as one theme among several but as the organizing principle of the whole campaign.

Moreover, antisemitism draws on deeply embedded narratives. Centuries of repetition in religious teaching, political rhetoric, popular culture, and public discourse have given these narratives an unparalleled historical momentum that can make them seem intuitive, plausible, or even self-evident. Their familiarity can allow old tropes to circulate in updated language and contemporary contexts without being immediately recognized as antisemitic. Repetition does not make these claims true, but it can make them more acceptable.

This report documents how Iran identified that mechanism, constructed an infrastructure around it, and deployed it, with increasing sophistication and scale, against the United States and its allies over the course of thirty years. Understanding why the operation is built as it is requires understanding three elements: Iran's strategic predicament, the doctrine of soft war that emerged from it, and the role of one Russian ideologue whose intellectual framework supplied Iran's antisemitism with a well-worn and stress-tested vocabulary that Western audiences could receive without immediately recognizing it for what it was.

A State That Cannot Win a Conventional War Learns to Fight a Different One

Iran is, by most conventional measures, outmatched. In 2026, that assessment was tested and confirmed. Operation Epic Fury, the joint American and Israeli military campaign against the Islamic Republic, destroyed much of Iran's naval capacity, partially degraded its missile arsenal, decimated much of its leadership, and struck at the infrastructure of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps itself. By the metrics of conventional warfare, Iran's military has been on a mostly defensive posture.

Its military budget has long been a fraction of America's. Its air force has long flown aging hardware, and sanctions have constrained its economy for decades. None of this is new. What is new is that an outcome once described as hypothetical is now established fact, and what it clarifies in retrospect is how long Iran has understood that conventional warfare was never the contest it could win.

The Islamic Republic has recognized this since its founding. The response its leadership developed was asymmetric warfare. It is the deliberate exploitation of an adversary's vulnerabilities through means that avoid direct confrontation. In the physical domain, this has meant proxy militias — Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, Hamas in Gaza, Shi'a militias in Iraq — capable of projecting Iranian power while preserving deniability. In the information domain, it has meant something more ambitious: a sustained campaign to weaken the domestic cohesion, institutional trust, and political will of adversary societies from within.¹

Iran's leadership has a name for this doctrine: *jang-e narm*, or soft war. The concept, now hegemonic in Iranian ruling circles and state media, holds that the United States has waged a non-kinetic war against Iran since the revolution. It is a war of cultural infiltration, media manipulation, and psychological pressure intended to destabilize the Iranian state and corrupt its youth. Iran's response, as conceived by the Supreme Leader and operationalized through state institutions, is to fight back in kind and to turn the instruments of cultural and informational warfare against the West.²

¹Iran's asymmetric defense strategy and use of disinformation as power projection. Alexander Donlon, "The Pacing Threat of Iran's Influence Operations," Middle East Policy Council, December 8, 2023, <https://mepc.org/commentaries/the-pacing-threat-of-irans-influence-operations/>; Sonja Swanbeck, "How to Understand Iranian Information Operations," *Lawfare*, February 19, 2021, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/how-understand-iranian-information-operations>.

²On the concept of soft war (*jang-e narm*) in Iranian state doctrine. See Monroe Price, "Iran and the Soft War," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012): 2397–2415, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1654/799>; Emily L. Blout, "Soft War: Myth, Nationalism, and Media in Iran," *The Communication Review* 20, no. 3 (2017): 212–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2017.1346976>; Rachel Kantz Feder, "New Horizons' in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy: Nader Talebzadeh, Alexander Dugin, and Iran's Soft War" (paper presented at the 47th Annual Conference of the Middle East & Islamic Studies Association of Israel, Open University of Israel, Ra'anana,

This framing is significant because it explains the architecture of what follows. Iran's information operations are not a sideline to its foreign policy, nor the work of rogue actors or freelance propagandists; they are a deliberate, institutionally supported, and strategically directed component of how the Islamic Republic competes with the United States in arenas where it cannot compete militarily. When the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps conducts influence operations, funds conferences, and cultivates foreign propagandists, it is executing state strategy.

Even where conventional military confrontation has failed, Iran employs disinformation as a form of power projection that operates beyond the battlefield.³ Its campaigns are directed not primarily at electioneering but at more durable objectives such as eroding trust in democratic institutions, deepening social polarization by exploiting strategic fracture points in U.S. society, and creating conditions in which extremist ideas may take root.⁴ Iran also employs information operations retaliatorily. Following cyberattacks on Iranian infrastructure, Tehran has responded with cyber-enabled disinformation campaigns against American targets.⁵

**“Iran has made antisemitism an instrument of statecraft...
and not as a side effect of other operations,
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Antisemitism Is Not a Byproduct; It Is the Product

The central argument of this report is one that most national security analysts have been reluctant to state plainly. Iran has made antisemitism an instrument of statecraft. Not

Israel, May 8, 2024); Rachel Kantz Feder, “Cultural Diplomacy in the Struggle against the United States: ‘New Horizons’ in Iran’s Soft War” (paper presented at the *Iran: 45 Years of Revolution: Challenges and Achievements* Conference, Alliance Center for Iranian Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel, February 7, 2024); and Rachel Kantz Feder, “‘New Horizons’ in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism” (paper presented at the *21st Century Antisemitism* Conference, London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, London, United Kingdom, September 11–13, 2022), <https://londonantisemitism.com/conference-21st-century-antisemitism/>.

³Iran uses disinformation as power projection without provoking direct escalation. Swanbeck, “How to Understand Iranian Information Operations.”

⁴Iran seeks to sow distrust in the U.S. political system and undermine democratic processes. Kevin Collier, “Iran’s History of Elaborate Election Interference Efforts, before the Trump Campaign Hack,” NBC News, October 1, 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/irans-history-elaborate-election-interference-efforts-trump-campaign-h-rca171312>; Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, “Iran Steps into US Election 2024 with Cyber-Enabled Influence Operations,” August 9, 2024, <https://cdn-dynmedia-1.microsoft.com/is/content/microsoftcorp/microsoft/final/en-us/microsoft-brand/documents/5bc57431-a7a9-49ad-944d-b93b7d35d0fc.pdf>.

⁵Swanbeck, “How to Understand Iranian Information Operations”; Collier, “Iran’s History of Elaborate Election Interference Efforts”; Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, “Iran Steps into US Election 2024.”

incidentally, and not as a side effect of other operations, but deliberately, systematically, and with increasing sophistication.

To understand why, consider the operational problem Iran confronts in reaching American audiences. The United States is a diverse, fractured, and ideologically polarized society. Its far right and far left hold almost nothing in common. Its Black nationalist and white nationalist movements are, by definition, in opposition. Its Christian evangelical and secular progressive communities occupy entirely different cultural and informational universes. A conventional state propaganda operation can reach one of these audiences effectively, or none of them at all.

Antisemitism reaches all of them. It does so not in identical form (it shapeshifts as it moves across ideological terrain) but with a structural consistency that makes it uniquely useful as a cross-spectrum organizing principle. For the far right, the imagined enemy is “Jewish global domination:” Jews are said to control banks, media, governments, immigration, and cultural change. For the far left, the corresponding narrative is often expressed as “Zionist imperialism:” an allegedly unified Zionist power is said to control American policy, global capital, the media, and Western intervention throughout the Middle East. The preferred vocabulary changes—race, nation, and demographic replacement on the right; colonialism, capitalism, and anti-imperialism on the left—but the underlying structure remains strikingly similar: a vast and uniquely malevolent Jewish or “Zionist” network operating behind visible institutions and conflicts. Anti-Zionism is frequently misunderstood as an exclusively left-wing phenomenon, but it has been a feature of the right for a century. Hitler, Henry Ford, and David Duke all represent, in their respective ways, far-right anti-Zionism. For Black nationalist movements, antisemitism arrives as racialized grievance: Jewish complicity in the slave trade, Zionist control of American policing. For Christian nationalist audiences, it arrives as eschatology: a cosmic battle in which the Jews and the Jewish state play a prophetically scripted role in end-times narratives. The content varies but the operational function is constant: to activate pre-existing resentments, validate conspiratorial thinking, and draw disparate communities toward a shared enemy.

The structural logic is self-evident, because antisemitism uniquely allows people with otherwise opposite ideals to adopt the same grievance, and because centuries of conspiratorial material have primed the association, those searching for someone to blame for their troubles reliably arrive at a Jewish target.

“...antisemitism uniquely allows people with otherwise opposite ideals to adopt the same grievance...those searching for someone to blame for their troubles reliably arrive at a Jewish target.”

The operational logic behind this choice reflects a broader doctrine that runs through all of Iran's influence operations: the exploitation of what strategists term strategic fracture points. These are pre-existing vulnerabilities within a target society that can be widened from without, without requiring the attacker to manufacture the underlying tension. Every democratic society contains such fracture points: racial grievance, class resentment, religious division, distrust of institutions, partisan polarization. Iran does not create these fractures. It locates them, maps them, and applies pressure precisely where the structure is already weakest. Antisemitism's fungibility, its capacity to travel across all of these fracture points simultaneously in different packaging for each, is not incidental to Iran's strategy. It is the strategy. A weapon effective against every audience relieves Iran of the need to choose among them, allowing it to operate on every front at once, through the same operational infrastructure, the same conference circuit, and the same media ecosystem, while each target community believes it is receiving a message crafted specifically for its own concerns.

Iran invented none of these antisemitic traditions; they existed in American society long before Tehran identified their utility. Nor did Iran invent the techniques by which they are exploited. The deliberate aggravation of a rival society's internal divisions was developed and stress-tested by Soviet and later Russian intelligence services over decades before Iran adapted and sharpened it.⁶ What Iran did was to recognize these traditions as an infrastructure it could exploit: to invest in the people and platforms that carried them, to amplify their reach through state media and digital operations, and gradually to connect communities that had previously operated in isolation from one another. The result is not a centrally directed conspiracy but something more durable and more difficult to disrupt in that it is engineered convergence that now functions, in significant part, on its own. Much of this content is, by design, self-perpetuating. It is constructed to turn its targets into true believers, who then become its distribution system, propagating the narrative through their own networks without further direction from its origin.

This is why antisemitism, in the context of this report, is not treated merely as a problem of social prejudice or a question of civil liberties. It has been weaponized, and it is a national security vulnerability actively exploited by hostile state actors to attack American

⁶These techniques are not Iranian innovations. Soviet and later Russian intelligence services developed and field tested the strategy of exploiting strategic fracture points — extant divisions within a target society — decades before Iran adapted it. The tactical appropriation of anti-imperial and anti-colonial grievances used to court formerly colonized peoples and minorities in the West has a still longer lineage: Nazi propagandists sought to turn resentment of British and French colonial rule to Germany's advantage, cultivating collaborators and sympathetic movements abroad while also exploiting American racial discrimination in propaganda directed at Black U.S. military personnel. See Calder Walton, "What's Old Is New Again: Cold War Lessons for Countering Disinformation," *Texas National Security Review* 5, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 49–72, <https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/43940>; Meredith L. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928–1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012); Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), esp. 36–56.

democracy and to rend U.S. society from within.⁷ It is an existing fracture in American society that a sanctioned foreign adversary has spent thirty years learning to exploit, and understanding it in those terms is the first requirement of countering it.

“antisemitism...has been weaponized, and it is a national security vulnerability actively exploited by hostile state actors to attack American democracy and to rend U.S. society from within.”

The Dugin Factor: Iran Finds Its Ideological Architect

In the early 2000s, Iran's information operations confronted a problem that antisemitic content alone could not solve. Raw hostility toward Jews was useful for reaching the fringes, but reaching mainstream Western audiences, among them academics, journalists, policy thinkers, and the educated center-left and center-right, required a more sophisticated vocabulary. It required a framework capable of making Iran's anti-Americanism sound like geopolitical analysis rather than revolutionary grievance, and of making its antisemitism sound like civilizational philosophy rather than bigotry.

Iran found that framework in the work of Aleksandr Dugin.

Dugin is a Russian political philosopher whose influence on this story can scarcely be overstated, though his precise relationship to the Kremlin remains a matter of ongoing debate. He is widely designated across Western sanctions regimes (including the U.S. Specially Designated Nationals list, the EU, and the UK) and his work is promoted extensively by Russian state-controlled RT International.⁸ Whether he functions as a

⁷The repackaging of antisemitism to suit the sensibilities of each era is itself a recurring feature of its history. The coining of the term “antisemitism” was driven by precisely these considerations: Wilhelm Marr sought to modernize Jew-hatred into something less superstitious and anachronistic, more congruent with the Enlightenment values of nineteenth-century European civilization. In similar fashion, David Duke set aside the Klan robe and hood for public appearances in favor of a suit and tie. In every generation, antisemitism must be made palatable and congruent with the times.

⁸Dugin's sanctions designations and promotion by Russian state media. Dugin is designated on the U.S. Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list and sanctioned by the EU and UK. He is promoted extensively by RT International (formerly Russia Today). Russia and Iran maintain formal agreements between their state media agencies. See “Russia's TASS Offers Condolences to Iranian Media, Citizens amid Israeli Strikes,” *Tehran Times*, June 19, 2025, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/514635/Russia-s-TASS-offers-condolences-to-Iranian-media-citizens>. See also U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, “Aleksandr Dugin,” Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN), accessed August 18, 2026, <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/Details.aspx?id=17760>; European Union, “Aleksandr Dugin,” EU Sanctions Tracker, accessed August 18, 2026, <https://data.europa.eu/apps/eusanctionstracker/subjects/144495>; UK Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation, “Aleksandr Dugin,” UK Sanctions List, accessed August 18, 2026, <https://search-uk-sanctions-list.service.gov.uk/?searchValue=Aleksandr%20Dugin>.

Kremlin instrument or as an ideologically aligned fellow traveler whose usefulness the Kremlin exploits, the practical effect on this report's subject matter is the same. His ideas have furnished the intellectual scaffolding for a generation of anti-American, anti-liberal, and antisemitic content now circulating in Western media ecosystems. His own writing is explicit about the objective. In *Foundations of Geopolitics* (1998), he advised that Russia work to introduce geopolitical disorder into American domestic life by encouraging separatism and ethnic, social, and racial conflict, and by supporting dissident and sectarian movements in order to destabilize the United States from within.⁹

Dugin's central project is a geopolitical vision he terms neo-Eurasianism: the construction of a multipolar world order in which a Moscow-centered Eurasian alliance challenges and ultimately displaces American global dominance. In *The Fourth Political Theory* (first published in Russian in 2009; English translation 2012), and across decades of lectures, essays, and media appearances, he argues that liberalism, with its emphasis on individual rights, free markets, and universal democratic norms, is not merely mistaken but spiritually corrupt: the Antichrist in secular dress, the force of modernity destroying traditional civilizations and authentic human communities.¹⁰

Iran, in Dugin's framework, is not merely a geopolitical partner but a civilizational and spiritual ally, a society that has resisted modernity, preserved a traditional religious identity, and stood against American imperialism. He regards the alliance between Russia and Iran as not merely political but metaphysical, grounded in shared eschatological convictions about the end of the liberal world order and what ought to succeed it.

His advocacy of a strategy he calls "beyond left and right, but against the center" is what renders him operationally useful to Iran. He does not argue for a conventional political position. He argues for a coalition of all forces, from the far right to the radical left, from Christian traditionalists to Islamist revolutionaries, united in opposition to American

⁹ In his influential 1997 treatise *Foundations of Geopolitics*, Aleksandr Dugin advised that Russia "introduce geopolitical disorder into internal American activity, encouraging all kinds of separatism and ethnic, social and racial conflicts, actively supporting all dissident movements—extremist, racist, and sectarian groups, thus destabilizing internal political processes in the U.S.," adding that it "would also make sense simultaneously to support isolationist tendencies in American politics." John B. Dunlop, "Aleksandr Dugin's *Foundations of Geopolitics*," *Demokratizatsiya* 12, no. 1 (2004): 48, quoting and translating Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* (Moscow: Arktogetya, 1997), 367.

¹⁰Dugin's *The Fourth Political Theory* and anti-liberal geopolitical framework. Aleksandr Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (London: Arktos Media, 2012). On Dugin's views and their relationship to Middle Eastern politics, see Dmitry Shlapentokh, "Alexander Dugin's Views on the Middle East," *Space and Polity* 12, no. 2 (2008): 251–268, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562570802173448>; Kantz Feder, "New Horizons in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy"; Kantz Feder, "Cultural Diplomacy in the Struggle against the United States"; and Kantz Feder, "New Horizons in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism."

liberalism and the global order it sustains, a system he frames as American unipolarity. Within this framework, antisemitism and anti-Zionism function not as tribal bigotries but as markers of civilizational resistance. To oppose Jewish power, in Dugin's telling, is to oppose the liberal modernity that Jewish influence supposedly represents.

This is the vocabulary that renders Iran's message palatable to audiences that would otherwise reject it. When Dugin's framework is in play, opposition to Israel presents as geopolitical realism, and opposition to American foreign policy presents as the pursuit of a multipolar world. Multipolarity is, in fact, central to Dugin's stated aims. He returns to it incessantly, framing his objective as the creation of a multipolar order and casting that objective as resistance to U.S. hegemony, which lends it the appearance of a virtuous struggle against domination rather than what it is. Antisemitic conspiracy theory, similarly recast, presents as critique of elite power structures. The ideas are unchanged. The packaging makes them mobile across audiences that raw Iranian propaganda cannot reach.

His use of the language of "colonization" and "decolonization," together with his disparagement of American neoconservatives, has made his geopolitical positions appealing to left-wing and mainstream audiences as well as to the far right. In recent years he has appeared on platforms hosted by Glenn Greenwald, Alex Jones, and Tucker Carlson, a range that illustrates precisely the cross-spectrum reach his framework affords.

One recent development merits note. Although Dugin had previously expressed support for Donald Trump and the MAGA movement, he denounced many of Trump's appointments and turned against the administration from the outset of Trump's current tenure. The reversal is consistent with his ideological commitments, since he opposes any American administration that sustains the liberal international order, but it also demonstrates that his alignments are instrumental rather than tribal. He is the ally of no American political faction. He is an opponent of American power, and he will work with whoever advances that opposition at any given moment.

What Narrative Intelligence Reveals

This report employs a discipline known as narrative intelligence (designated in national security settings as NARINT) to track and analyze the operations it describes. Narrative intelligence is the systematic study of how stories are constructed, deployed, and disseminated. It is not merely what is said, but how it is framed, which emotional registers it activates, and how it travels through information ecosystems.¹¹

¹¹Narrative intelligence (NARINT) definition and role in national security. Joe Stradinger, "Narrative Intelligence: Detecting Chinese and Russian Information Operations to Disrupt NATO Unity," Foreign Policy Research Institute, November 5, 2024, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/11/intelligence-china-russia-information-operations-against-nato/>; Kandace Miller, "The Power of OSINT, Narrative Intelligence, and

The distinction is consequential because Iran's operations are not primarily concerned with spreading false information. Falsehood is one tool among many. The more important tool is narrative architecture: the construction of interpretive frameworks that shape how audiences understand events, assign blame, and identify enemies. This is a more durable form of influence than ordinary propaganda, and the difference is fundamental. Where traditional propaganda seeks to persuade an audience of a specific falsehood or to make it disbelieve a specific fact, narrative architecture seeks instead to shape the very framework through which the audience interprets all information. A narrative need not be factually false to be weaponized; it need only be selectively true, emotionally resonant, and structurally designed to lead audiences toward predetermined conclusions.

By tracking how narratives emerge, evolve, and circulate across platforms and communities, analysts can identify coordinated influence efforts that would otherwise appear organic. The United States Intelligence Community continues to treat narrative intelligence (frequently categorized under Foreign Malign Influence) as a core national security priority.¹² The challenge is that the mission has grown markedly more complex as artificial intelligence enables the production of narrative content at scale, and as the boundary between coordinated state operations and genuinely organic ideological movements grows harder to discern.

Throughout this report, narrative intelligence analysis is applied to Iran's operations: mapping the actors who carry its messages, tracing the pathways through which those messages travel, and identifying the mechanisms, among them content laundering, legitimacy transfer, and cross-spectrum amplification, by which state propaganda becomes indistinguishable from domestic discourse. The objective is not to attribute every antisemitic post or anti-American statement to Tehran, but to demonstrate how Tehran's sustained investment has shaped the information environment in which such posts and statements flourish.

Cybersecurity in a Post-Truth World," Blackbird.AI, accessed August 17, 2026, <https://blackbird.ai/blog/osint-public-trust/>.

¹²USIC tracking of narrative intelligence / Foreign Malign Influence as a core national security priority. The United States Intelligence Community continues to track Foreign Malign Influence (FMI) as a core national security concern in 2026. While specific interagency task forces have faced recent restructuring — the Foreign Malign Influence Center's own website has been archived and is no longer updated — the mission has shifted toward integrated, AI-driven monitoring and asymmetric response strategies. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Foreign Malign Influence Center," accessed August 17, 2026, <https://archive.dni.gov/index.php/fmic>; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "How We Work," Foreign Malign Influence Center, accessed August 17, 2026, <https://archive.dni.gov/index.php/fmic/how-we-work>; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Artificial Intelligence Ethics Framework for the Intelligence Community*, accessed August 17, 2026, https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/AI_Ethics_Framework_for_the_Intelligence_Community_10.pdf.

The Eschatological Dimension: When Religion Becomes a Weapon

One element of Iran's information operations that Western analysts have been slow to take seriously is the use of religious and apocalyptic framing. The protracted tensions and conflicts in the Middle East have generated a digital information ecosystem saturated with eschatological symbolism — red moons, red heifers, the rapture, demonic imagery, end-times prophecy — that is not incidental to Iran's messaging but central to it.¹³

This report takes no position on whether Iran's clerical leadership is genuinely driven by apocalyptic theology in its strategic decision-making. That debate lies beyond its scope. What the report does argue is that eschatological framing functions as a deliberate communication strategy, one that allows Iran and its allies to reach audiences, particularly on the American Christian right, that are unreachable through conventional geopolitical language.

When Dugin frames the conflict between Iran and the United States as a struggle between spiritual forces of resistance and the Antichrist of liberal modernity, he is not speaking metaphorically to his intended audiences. He is speaking their language. When Iranian state media deploys imagery of red heifers, the burning of demonic effigies, and apocalyptic military symbolism, it targets communities whose interpretive frameworks are shaped by biblical prophecy. The intersection of geopolitics and eschatology is not a curiosity but an operational domain that Iran entered long before most Western observers recognized it as a domain at all.

One of the central goals of this eschatological strategy is the construction of a Christian-Muslim interfaith convergence — not a genuine dialogue, but a manufactured theological common ground designed to sever the perceived Judeo-Christian affinity that underpins American support for Israel. If Christian audiences can be persuaded that Islam and Christianity share an enemy, whether the Jewish state, Zionist power, or the liberal-satanic order, the political consequences within the United States are considerable. This project, initiated by the Iranian filmmaker Nader Talebzadeh in the mid-2000s and deepened through his collaboration with Dugin, is traced in detail in the chapters that follow.

¹³Eschatological and apocalyptic symbolism in the digital information ecosystem surrounding the Iran-Israel-U.S. conflict. Conspiracy theorists and influencers including Dugin frequently reference biblical texts — Ezekiel 38 and Zechariah 12 — to frame the conflict as a final apocalyptic battle between a Eurasian-led coalition and the forces controlling Jerusalem.

What This Report Is, and What It Is Not

Several clarifications are necessary before proceeding.

This report documents influence operations conducted by the Iranian in coordination with Russian elements. It does not argue that every individual or organization named in its pages is a knowing participant in those operations. The network described here comprises a spectrum of actors: at one end, Iranian state officials and IRGC operatives who design and direct the operations; at the other, ordinary Americans whose pre-existing beliefs render them susceptible to narratives that Iranian actors have deliberately seeded and amplified. Between these poles lie journalists, academics, activists, and influencers who are variously willing collaborators, ideological fellow travelers, unwitting agents of influence, and opportunists.

Nor does this report argue that legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy is inherently antisemitic, or that opposition to American foreign policy is evidence of Iranian manipulation. Both positions are held by millions of Americans in good faith, and this report has no interest in conflating them with the operations it describes. The distinction that matters is between political disagreement and the engineered radicalization pipelines that begin with political disagreement and end in the dehumanization of Jewish people.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center produced this report. The Center has monitored antisemitism in its many forms for decades, and what this report represents is the application of that expertise to a threat that most antisemitism-monitoring frameworks are not constructed to perceive. These frameworks are built to register the lone bigot and the street-level hate crime, but not antisemitism as an instrument of foreign state ginpower, deployed at scale, through sophisticated information infrastructure, against the democratic societies of the West.

The chapters that follow are organized to build an argument rather than merely to accumulate evidence. Chapter Two establishes the historical foundation: how Iran built its American network in the 1990s and 2000s, before social media existed, through the patient cultivation of personal relationships and institutional infrastructure. Chapter Three examines the expansion of that network through the New Horizon and Hollywoodism conferences, where the red-brown alliance was engineered and the Deadly Exchange, the report's central case study in antisemitism-as-statecraft, was institutionalized. Chapter Four turns to the digital battlefield: how Iran's offline network became the foundation for sophisticated online influence operations, and how platform architecture enables rather than impedes them. Chapter Five traces the current state of the operation since October 7, 2023, including the eschatological campaigns, the new generation of influencers, and the wartime escalation of 2026. Chapter Six closes with findings and recommendations.

The argument and the evidence behind this report is that Iran has been waging a sustained information warfare campaign against the United States using weaponized antisemitism as a central instrument of that campaign. The campaign is working. And the architecture that enables it remains largely intact: the platforms that carry it, the legal frameworks that shield it, and the institutions that have failed to name it for what it is.

They Came as Guests

How Iran Built Its American Network, 1996–2009

The network that now floods American social media with antisemitic propaganda, fractures political coalitions, and amplifies Iranian state narratives to millions of followers was not born on the internet. It was built in person, over decades, in Tehran conference rooms and Washington mosque basements, over meals in Mashhad and on the sidelines of international film festivals. This chapter examines how Iran identified its American recruits, what it offered them, and what it received in return. By 2009, before most Americans had heard of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and before the phrase “influence operation” had entered common usage, Iran had already laid the foundation for one of the most consequential foreign influence campaigns in American history.

This Is Not Disinformation; It Is Something More Dangerous

The operations documented in this chapter are frequently described as disinformation, a term that has grown so broad as to obscure more than it reveals. Disinformation, properly understood, is the effort to make people believe a specific falsehood or disbelieve a specific fact. It operates at the level of facts: this event did not happen, that person did not say this, these numbers are fabricated.

What Iran has conducted for thirty years is something categorically different. The term used in Iranian strategic doctrine is *jang-e narm*, or soft war. In Western intelligence analysis it falls under the broader category of ideological subversion, a long-term strategy whose objective is not to change what people believe about specific facts, but to reshape the paradigm through which they interpret all facts.

The distinction is of considerable consequence for understanding both the threat and the appropriate response. A disinformation operation can be countered with a correction; ideological subversion cannot. Once a narrative framework has been successfully installed, such that a person interprets every news event through the lens of Zionist conspiracy, Jewish financial control, or Israeli manipulation of American foreign policy, individual corrections to specific false claims have little effect. The framework absorbs and reinterprets the correction itself as further evidence of the conspiracy. Fact-checking does not operate on a worldview. Only the dismantling of the framework does.

**“Once a narrative framework has been successfully installed...
through the lens of Zionist conspiracy, Jewish financial
control, or Israeli manipulation...
fact-checking does not operate on a worldview.”**

This is why the operations described in this chapter matter beyond their immediate political effects. Nader Talebzadeh was not attempting to persuade Americans of specific false facts. He was attempting to install a lens. Everything that follows in this report, including the conference circuit, the digital operations, and the eschatological strategy, is best understood as successive stages in that process of installation.

Louis Farrakhan Lands in Tehran, 1996

In January 1996, the Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan embarked on what he called his “World Friendship Tour” — a series of visits to countries maintaining adversarial relationships with the United States, among them Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, and Iran.¹⁴ When Farrakhan arrived in Tehran, he addressed religious seminary students, met with senior Iranian officials, and laid a wreath at the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini during the anniversary commemorations of the Islamic Revolution.¹⁵

For the Iranian leadership, the visit was a revelation.

Here was one of America’s most prominent and polarizing public figures, a man who had spent decades delivering antisemitic speeches to large and loyal audiences, accusing Jewish Americans of controlling the media, the government, and American foreign policy, now arriving in Tehran as a willing guest and ideological ally. Farrakhan’s anti-Americanism was not the soft criticism of a domestic dissident. It was the full-throated condemnation of a man who shared Iran’s view of the United States as an imperial power in the service of Zionist interests. Iranian leaders welcomed him with a warmth that made the point unmistakable.

The visit catalyzed something important. It demonstrated to Iran that the American extremist landscape contained figures, not only on the white nationalist far right but also within Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist organizing, whose grievances, audiences, and ideological commitments could prove useful. Iran had long positioned itself as the natural defender of the *mustad’afin*, the oppressed and the dispossessed, and as the

¹⁴Farrakhan’s World Friendship Tour (1996). Maize Woodford, “A Chronology: Farrakhan’s ‘World Friendship Tour’ to Africa and the Middle East: January–February 1996,” *Black Scholar* 26, no. 3–4 (1996): 35–40; George Michael, “Louis Farrakhan’s Outreach to Muslims in Africa and the Middle East,” *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 40, nos. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2015): 77–93.

¹⁵Louis Farrakhan (b. 1933) has led the Nation of Islam, a Black nationalist religious movement founded in 1930, since the late 1970s. Over several decades, he delivered numerous addresses characterizing Jewish Americans as exercising disproportionate control over finance, media, and government, rhetoric widely documented and condemned as antisemitic. The Nation of Islam combines Black separatist theology with a long record of antisemitic and anti-Zionist messaging, and its newspaper, *The Final Call*, remains its principal organ. See also: Anti-Defamation League, “Farrakhan: In His Own Words,” January 17, 2019, updated August 2, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/background/farrakhan-his-own-words>.

indispensable ally of movements worldwide resisting American imperialism and Zionism. Farrakhan's appearance in Tehran gave that positioning concrete American expression.

This was not yet an influence operation in any formal sense but rather something more foundational. Iran had discovered a constituency, and would spend the next decade determining how to cultivate it.

Durban, September 2001: A Blueprint Is Drafted

In February 2001, Tehran hosted the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations World Conference against Racism, a gathering that would culminate, eight months later, in the notorious Durban conference in South Africa. The Tehran meeting produced what became known as the Tehran Declaration, an official document accusing Israel of committing "a new kind of apartheid, a crime against humanity, a form of genocide and a serious threat to international peace and security."¹⁶

The declaration was not merely inflammatory. It was strategic. Iran had used an international anti-racism forum to engineer an ideological convergence, fusing anti-imperial frameworks, leftist anti-Americanism, Black internationalist organizing, and antisemitism into a single coherent position carrying UN-adjacent legitimacy. The United States and Israel withdrew from the Durban conference in protest when the resulting document equated Zionism with racism.¹⁷ Organizations operating in the orbit of the Nation of Islam, such as the Universal African Peoples Organization, participated in the Durban proceedings. Activists who would later become prominent voices in American progressive politics, including Ajamu Baraka, a future Green Party vice-presidential candidate and founder of the Black Alliance for Peace, were involved in the preparatory process.¹⁸

Then, eleven days after the Durban conference opened, the World Trade Center fell.

The spectacle of Jew-hatred at Durban, the leaflets, the walkouts, the street clashes at the parallel NGO Forum, was swept from the news cycle overnight. Iran's role in engineering

¹⁶The Tehran Declaration (February 2001). United Nations, *Report of the Asian Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Tehran, 19–21 February 2001: Note by the Secretary-General*, A/CONF.189/PC.2/9 (Geneva: UN, April 10, 2001), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/439865>.

¹⁷U.S. and Israeli withdrawal from Durban. United Nations, *Report of the Asian Preparatory Meeting*, A/CONF.189/PC.2/9; the withdrawal context is established in that report and in contemporaneous news coverage of the Durban conference. See Tom Lantos, "The Durban Debacle: An Insider's View of the World Racism Conference at Durban," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 26, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2002): 31–52, <https://ngo-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Lantos-Durban-PDF.pdf>

¹⁸Ajumu Baraka's involvement in the Durban preparatory process. The People's Forum, "Ajumu Baraka," accessed August 14, 2026, <https://peoplesforum.org/instructor/ajamu-baraka/>.

the affair was forgotten before it was fully understood. But the ideological framework Iran had helped construct did not disappear. It survived, circulating in activist and academic networks, and would resurface in more powerful forms in the years that followed.

Iran moved immediately to exploit September 11.

September 11 as Opportunity: Iran Meets the Truthers

Within weeks of the attacks, Iran's hardline press was amplifying a claim that had originated with the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese television network al-Manar: that four thousand Jewish employees had stayed home from the World Trade Center on September 11, having received advance warning of the attack. The claim was false. Iran broadcast it through its proxy Al-Manar regardless, repeatedly and prominently.¹⁹

This was the opening move in what would become a sustained strategy of positioning September 11 conspiracy theories, specifically those attributing the attacks to Israeli or Jewish coordination, as a recruiting instrument for building transnational antisemitic networks. Iran grasped something that Western intelligence agencies were slower to recognize. 9/11 Trutherism was not simply a fringe phenomenon but a gateway. It drew in Americans from across the political spectrum who were already disposed toward anti-establishment thinking, furnished them a shared cause, and created the conditions for ideological cross-pollination with more explicitly antisemitic worldviews.

“9/11 Trutherism was not simply a fringe phenomenon but a gateway.”

Two American figures illustrate how the strategy worked in practice.

For decades, Lyndon LaRouche led a fringe political movement whose ideology shifted sharply from its origins on the radical left toward an idiosyncratic form of authoritarian nationalism, while retaining an intense reliance on conspiracy theories. During the 1990s, LaRouche's organization cooperated with representatives of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam in campaigns against the Anti-Defamation League, reflecting the movements' overlapping antisemitic conspiracy narratives and hostility toward Israel and purportedly British-controlled financial interests. Following September 11, LaRouche alleged that the attacks had been organized by rogue elements within the United States as part of an attempted coup and a campaign against the Muslim world. His theories subsequently received favorable attention in Iranian media, were cited by senior Iranian officials, and formed the subject of at least one interview he gave to the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran. LaRouche, in turn, praised Iran for being among the first governments to

¹⁹The "4,000 Jews" claim and Iran's amplification of it. Linda Grant, "The Hate That Will Not Die," The Guardian, December 18, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/dec/18/september11.israel>.

challenge the prevailing account of September 11 and to question the motives behind the ensuing “war on terror.”^{20 21 22 23}

David Duke presented a simpler profile: a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, white supremacist, and Holocaust denier who operated the website DavidDuke.com. As early as 2002, Duke was traveling through Arab countries and the Islamic world, lecturing on what he called “The Global Struggle against Zionism” and “Israeli Involvement in September 11.”²⁴ Iran took notice. Here was a man whose antisemitism was explicit and unambiguous, and who came with an established American audience and decades of organizational infrastructure. His readiness to frame the September 11 attacks as an Israeli operation made him especially valuable.

Iran had found its American far right. It now required an architect to build with what it had found.

The Filmmaker Who Ran Iran’s Soft War

Nader Talebzadeh was not a household name in the West. In Iran, he was something close to indispensable.

Born in the early 1950s, Talebzadeh was a filmmaker, journalist, and cultural strategist who served for years as a senior figure in the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting authority.²⁵ Iranian media would later eulogize him as “the leading intellectual figure on the cultural front of the revolution,” a title that captured both his status and his self-understanding. He did not regard himself primarily as an entertainer, or even as a propagandist in the conventional sense, but as a combatant in a war for the minds of Western audiences, and he pursued that war with the creative energy and organizational tenacity of one who believed the stakes to be civilizational.

²⁰Dennis King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* (New York: Doubleday, 1989)

²¹Nizkor Project, “Uncommon Ground: Another Black-White Extremist Link, NOI and Lyndon LaRouche,” accessed July 26, 2026, <https://www.nizkor.org/uncommon-ground-another-black-white-extremist-link-noi-and-lyndon-larouche/>.

²²Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr., “LaRouche Urges: Calm Down! The Enemy Is Right Here in the U.S.A.,” interview by John Sigerson, September 18, 2001, Schiller Institute, https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/radio_lar_sep_2001/sdi_lar_jws_9_18_01.html.

²³Mahmoud Alinejad, “Political Islam in Iran and the Emergence of a Religious Public Sphere: The Impact of September 11,” in *Media, War, and Terrorism: Responses from the Middle East and Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Shoma Munshi (London: Routledge, 2004), 105–106.

²⁴George Michael, “Deciphering Ahmadinejad’s Holocaust Revisionism,” *Middle East Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 11–18, <https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/deciphering-ahmadinejads-holocaust-revisionism>.

²⁵Nader Talebzadeh: identity, role, and death. “Nader Talebzadeh, filmmaker and TV producer of revolutionary programs, dies at 69,” *Tehran Times*, April 30, 2022, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/472237/Nader-Talebzadeh-filmmaker-and-TV-producer-of-revolutionary>.

Talebzadeh had grasped something important about the opportunity available to Iran. The country's genuine international prestige in cinema, built over decades by a generation of acclaimed directors whose work had won prizes at Cannes and Venice, could be leveraged as cover for cultural diplomacy of a very different kind. He used that leverage to cultivate relationships with film and media figures not only from the international arts community but from far-right and far-left circles in the United States and Europe, many of them active in the 9/11 Truther movement.

One such figure was Michael Collins Piper, an American author, radio host, and conspiracy theorist who described himself as standing in the progressive LaFollette-Wheeler tradition: anti-establishment, anti-imperialist, and hostile to both major political parties. In practice, Piper was a prolific author of antisemitic conspiratorial literature. Several of his books had been translated into Persian and Arabic and had circulated widely in Iranian anti-imperialist intellectual circles since the early 2000s.²⁶ In 2005, Talebzadeh personally introduced Piper to President Ahmadinejad. The following year, Piper attended the Holocaust denial conference in Tehran.²⁷

The relationship between Talebzadeh and figures such as Piper was not incidental to his work. It *was* his work. He was assembling a roster of Americans who could appear on Iranian state media as credible Western voices, who would validate Iranian narratives about Israel and Jewish power before audiences that Iranian broadcasters could not reach directly, and who would carry those narratives back into American media ecosystems upon returning home.

The Holocaust Conference and What It Announced

In December 2006, Ahmadinejad hosted the "International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust" in Tehran. David Duke attended. So did Piper, whom Talebzadeh had introduced to the president the year before. So did representatives of neo-Nazi and white nationalist organizations from across Europe and North America.

²⁶"Biography, Eulogies, and Lingering Questions," The Mike Piper Report, accessed August 14, 2026, <https://www.mikepiperreport.com/Biography/BiographyIndex.html>. See also Kantz Feder, "New Horizons in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy."

²⁷Michael, "Deciphering Ahmadinejad's Holocaust Revisionism"; George Michael, "Michael Collins Piper: An American Far Right Emissary to the Islamic World," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 9, no. 1 (2008): 61–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760701856390>.

The conference was widely condemned internationally and dismissed by many Western commentators as a grotesque provocation by an erratic leader. That framing missed the point.

The Holocaust denial conference was not an act of provocation. It was a proof of concept. It demonstrated that Iran could convene Western antisemites on Iranian soil, grant them a platform with the formal trappings of state-level legitimacy, and export the resulting content, through Iranian state media and the participants' own networks, directly into Western discourse. Piper returned home and wrote that "Ahmadinejad has established himself as a firm voice against the forces that demand submission to a New World Order."²⁸ Kevin Alfred Strom, founder of the white supremacist organization National Vanguard, expressed solidarity with Ahmadinejad and urged him to use alternative media and cooperate with far-right activists to reach antiwar Americans and challenge what Strom called the "mainstream media monopoly."²⁹

"Antisemitism was now the explicit organizing principle of Iran's outreach to the West."

The far right, it transpired, was not merely willing to be courted. It was grateful, and it said so publicly upon returning home.

Ahmadinejad understood what he possessed, as did Talebzadeh. Antisemitism, long embedded in the regime's anti-Americanism as a background assumption, was now the explicit organizing principle of its outreach to the West. The cultural diplomacy of the Ahmadinejad era had taken a boldly antagonistic turn, and Talebzadeh stood at its center. He would spend the remainder of his life building on what this moment had revealed.

"The Holocaust denial conference demonstrated that Iran could export content, directly into Western discourse."

Building the Bridge: Iran Courts the Far Left

The Holocaust conference had demonstrated Iran's appeal to the far right, but Talebzadeh was not interested in a single-constituency operation. He understood that a network

²⁸Michael Collins Piper, "Iranian President Resists NWO," *American Free Press*, October 9, 2006, https://www.mikepiperreport.com/Articles_Archive/AmericanFreePress/AFP2006_07-12/Michael_Collins_Piper_AFP20061009_Iranian_President_Resists_NWO.html.

²⁹Michael, "Deciphering Ahmadinejad's Holocaust Revisionism," 14–15; Kevin Alfred Strom, "In the Cause of Peace and Freedom: An Open Letter to Ahmadinejad," *American Dissident Voices*, National Vanguard, June 25, 2006, <https://nationalvanguard.org/2010/09/in-the-cause-of-peace-and-freedom-an-open-letter-to-ahmadinejad/>.

capable of disrupting American democratic society would need to reach audiences a figure like David Duke could not.

By 2007, Iranian state media had launched Press TV, a satellite news network that, while broadcasting in multiple languages, maintained a continuous English-language service designed to reach Western audiences directly. Talebzadeh became one of its most prominent contributors, hosting a program titled “The Secret.” The network furnished Iranian narratives with a professional broadcast infrastructure and a platform for Western guests who could frame those narratives in language their home audiences would recognize: the language of anti-imperialism, media criticism, and dissent.

In 2007, Iranian state television also broadcast what was then one of the country’s most expensive productions:³⁰ a drama series titled *Zero Degree Turn*, which followed an Iranian diplomat who rescued French Jews from Nazi persecution during the Second World War, a story inspired by the real wartime conduct of the diplomat Abdol Hossein Sardari. The series was a work of sophisticated ideological engineering, expressing sympathy for Jewish victims of Nazism while simultaneously likening Zionism to Nazism and seeking to delegitimize the founding of Israel.³¹ This was precisely the kind of content in which Talebzadeh specialized: emotionally engaging, visually polished, and designed to move an international audience toward conclusions it might resist were they stated plainly.

That same year, Talebzadeh released his own film, *The Messiah — Jesus, the Spirit of God*, a state-funded production presenting an Islamic Christology in which Judas, rather than Jesus, is crucified. He framed it publicly as an act of interfaith bridge-building. “It is fascinating for Christians to know that Islam gives such devotion to and has so much knowledge about Jesus,” he said. “By making this film I wanted to make a bridge between Christianity and Islam, to open the door for dialogue, since there is much common ground between Islam and Christianity.” The film also emphasized the theological affinity between Jesus and Imam Mahdi, the messianic figure central to Shi’a eschatology. “We Muslims pray for the Return of Imam Mahdi, and Jesus is part of the return and the end of time,” Talebzadeh said. “Should we, as artists, stand idle until that time? Don’t we have to make an effort?”³²

³⁰Scott Peterson, “In hit Iranian TV drama, Holocaust no ‘myth,’” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 27, 2007, <https://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1127/p01s06-wome.html>.

³¹On the Soviet and Nazi lineage of this technique. See note 6.

³²Talebzadeh quotes on *The Messiah*, Jesus, the Spirit of God. Bei Chatlai Beita, “Iranian Filmmaker’s Islamic Jesus to Make TV Debut,” *The Christian Post*, January 17, 2008, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/iranian-filmmaker-s-islamic-jesus-to-make-tv-debut.html>.

The question was rhetorical. Talebzadeh was already making the effort. The film was the opening move in a deliberate, long-term project to forge a Christian-Muslim theological common ground. That project is the foundation of the Christian-Islamic alliance that would become central to the information warfare strategy of what analysts term the Moscow-Tehran axis. Dugin, whose role is examined in the preceding chapter, argues explicitly in *Foundations of Geopolitics* for an alliance between the Christian Orthodox and Islamic worlds directed against Western liberalism, and Talebzadeh's cultural production gave that abstract geopolitical prescription a concrete and emotionally resonant form. In the years ahead it would become a cornerstone of Iran's operations targeting American Christian audiences, particularly on the right.

**“Dugin...argues explicitly...for an alliance between
the Christian Orthodox and Islamic worlds directed
against Western liberalism.”**

By 2008, Talebzadeh was hosting American delegations in Iran, framing the visits as exercises in citizen diplomacy, artistic exchange, and interfaith dialogue. Medea Benjamin, co-founder of the anti-war organization CODEPINK,³³ wrote that on her first trips to Iran that year she was accompanied by the filmmaker Habib Ahmadzadeh, a figure with a long career in the Basij, the IRGC-affiliated paramilitary militia that serves as one of the regime's principal instruments of domestic repression.³⁴ The cultural

³³CODEPINK is a U.S. anti-war advocacy organization founded in 2002 by Medea Benjamin and Jodie Evans, known for its activism against U.S. military intervention and, in later years, for its participation in delegations to Iran and its prominence in anti-Israel campaigning. See "What Is CODEPINK," CODEPINK: Women for Peace, accessed August 14, 2026, <https://www.codepink.org/about>. As of the writing of this report, the group is under federal scrutiny on two fronts: members of Congress have called for a Department of Justice investigation into potential violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and possible material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations, and the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has opened an inquiry into the group's March 2026 trip to Cuba. See Tom Cotton, letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi, November 7, 2025, <https://www.cotton.senate.gov/news/press-releases/cotton-to-bondi-investigate-code-pink>; Asra Nomani, "CodePink's Medea Benjamin confirms getting 'serious' Treasury Department query over Cuba trip," Fox News, May 29, 2026, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/codepinks-medeabenzamin-confirms-getting-serious-treasury-department-query-cuba-trip>.

³⁴Linda Milazzo, "US Citizen Diplomats Arrive in Iran, Invited by Ahmadinejad," Common Dreams, November 23, 2008, <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2008/11/23/us-citizen-diplomats-arrive-iran-invited-ahmadinejad>. See also: Reza Fiyozat, "Code Pink in Iran," Dissident Voice, November 28, 2008, <https://dissidentvoice.org/2008/11/code-pink-in-iran/>, for Medea Benjamin's 2008 Iran trip; Narges Bajoghli, "Debating the Iran-Iraq War on Film," MERIP, July 12, 2014, <https://www.merip.org/2014/07/debating-the-iran-iraq-war-on-film/>, for Habib Ahmadzadeh's Basij background. The Basij is a volunteer paramilitary militia, one of the five branches of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, operating under the direct authority of Iran's Supreme Leader and serving as a principal instrument of domestic security, social control, and the suppression of dissent. Hossein Aryan,

exchanges were genuine in one sense, in that people met, relationships formed, ideas moved across borders. But the infrastructure organizing those cultural exchanges was not neutral. It was Iranian state infrastructure, in the service of Iranian state objectives.

Talebzadeh's network by this point extended across the American political landscape in ways that defied conventional categorization. He maintained relationships with far-right activists and Holocaust deniers, with Black nationalists and Nation of Islam figures, with far-left anti-war organizers and Green Party politicians, with fringe academics, conspiracy theorists, former American intelligence officers, and celebrities. That breadth was not accidental. It was the operational design. A network reaching only one ideological constituency was a limited instrument. A network reaching across the spectrum was something far more powerful.

A Foundation, Not an Accident

By 2009, Iran had built something that most Western observers had not yet recognized for what it was.

It was not simply a collection of useful contacts or a roster of sympathetic foreign voices. It was an infrastructure: personal relationships cultivated over years of conferences, film festivals, and cultural exchanges; media platforms, including IRIB and Press TV, capable of amplifying those relationships to international English-speaking audiences; a cultural diplomacy model that could present Iranian state objectives in the language of anti-imperialism, Third World solidarity, interfaith dialogue, and artistic exchange; and a tested method for identifying and recruiting American figures across the ideological spectrum.

The individuals in whom Iran had invested during this period, among them Farrakhan, Duke, LaRouche, and Piper, together with the networks they represented, were not passive recipients of Iranian attention. They were active participants who shared, to varying degrees, Iran's contempt for American democratic institutions, for Israel, and for Jewish political influence. Iran did not manufacture their worldviews. It located them, validated them, amplified them, and furnished them an international platform they could not have built alone.

What Iran had also begun to construct, though no one was yet using the language, was what would come to be known as a red-brown alliance: a convergence of far-right and far-left actors united not by ideological coherence but by shared enemies. (Some analysts

"Iran's Basij Force -- The Mainstay of Domestic Security," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, December 7, 2008, https://www.rferl.org/a/Irans_Basij_Force_Mainstay_Of_Domestic_Security/1357081.html. Kantz Feder, "Cultural Diplomacy in the Struggle against the United States: 'New Horizons' in Iran's Soft War."

“By 2009, Iran had built something that most Western observers had not yet recognized for what it was.”

append a third term, rendering it red-brown-green, the green denoting the Islamist component supplied in this instance by Iran itself.) The connective tissue was antisemitism. It was the one position that could allow a white supremacist and a Black nationalist, a LaRouche follower and an anti-war Green, to occupy the same Tehran conference room and find common ground.

“Farrakhan, Duke, LaRouche, and Piper...were not passive recipients of Iranian attention. They were active participants who shared...Iran’s contempt...for Israel, and for Jewish political influence.”

In 2009, Nader Talebzadeh was about to scale everything he had built. The New Horizon conferences, the ideological gatherings he would construct around Iran’s film festival circuit, and the arrival of the Russian ideologue Aleksandr Dugin into Iran’s orbit all lay ahead. Those developments would transform a network into a machine. But the machine required a foundation first.

Iran had gone looking for allies in America. It had found them. And it had found, in Nader Talebzadeh, the man who knew what to do with them.

The Conference Circuit

How Iran Turned a Tehran Hotel into a Radicalization Network, 2009–2023

In September 2014, a conference convened in Tehran under the banner of the New Horizon International Institute for Independent Thinkers and Artists. Its agenda included panels on “The Israeli Lobby vs. the U.S. National Interest,” “AIPAC Influence,” and “Islam as Authentic Universal Religion vs. Zionist Memes of Islam.” Seated around the same tables were Hamas’s representative to Iran, the founder of CODEPINK, a former Occupy Wall Street activist who contributed to Russian state television, Nation of Islam delegates, European neo-fascists, and Holocaust deniers. They were present because Nader Talebzadeh had invited them.

The New Horizon conferences, and the Hollywoodism gatherings that preceded them, are the operational heart of Iran’s influence infrastructure. They are where the red-brown alliance was not merely observed but engineered. It was here that people who shared almost nothing beyond contempt for Israel, the United States, and Jewish power were systematically introduced to one another, given a common platform, and sent home with relationships, content, and a shared narrative vocabulary they would carry into American and European media ecosystems for years.

The U.S. Treasury Department eventually confirmed from the outside what this chapter documents from within. The New Horizon Organization, designated under sanctions in February 2019, served as a platform for the IRGC-Quds Force to recruit and collect intelligence from foreign attendees, including U.S. persons, while propagating antisemitic and anti-American narratives.³⁵ The conferences were not cultural diplomacy gone awry. They were hybrid propaganda-and-intelligence operations that happened to wear the aesthetics of a film festival.

“...people who shared almost nothing beyond contempt for Israel, the United States, and Jewish power were...sent home with...a shared narrative vocabulary they would carry into American and European media ecosystems for years.”

³⁵U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, “Treasury Sanctions Iranian Organizations and Individuals Supporting Intelligence and Cyber Targeting of U.S. Persons,” February 13, 2019, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm611>.

This chapter traces how that operation was built, how it functioned, and what it produced.

The Invitation Said ‘Film Festival.’ The Agenda Said Otherwise

In 2010, Talebzadeh founded the Ammar Popular Film Festival, a platform for Iranian revolutionary cinema and its global sympathizers. Through his work on this festival and on Iran’s prestigious Fajr International Film Festival, he forged relationships that would prove operationally significant, among them with the American director Oliver Stone and his son Sean Stone, who would convert to Shi’a Islam, embrace Mahdism, and become admirers of Aleksandr Dugin,³⁶ and with a growing network of American and European figures whose contempt for Hollywood’s alleged Zionist influence matched Iran’s own.

Between 2011 and 2013, Talebzadeh convened the Hollywoodism conferences in Tehran, held annually under the auspices of the Fajr Film Festival and opened with addresses by President Ahmadinejad. The conferences brought together a deliberately assembled coalition that included former American politicians, self-styled CIA whistleblowers, LaRouche-movement figures, neo-fascist Third Position Party activists, and an assortment of Holocaust deniers and 9/11 conspiracy theorists.³⁷ Their nominal subject was Hollywood’s cultural influence. Their actual purpose was the amplification of antisemitic conspiratorial thinking under the cover of film criticism.

“The conferences brought together...former American politicians, self-styled CIA whistleblowers...and an assortment of Holocaust deniers and 9/11 conspiracy theorists.”

Conference programming and contemporary commentary combined criticism of Hollywood with claims about Zionist influence over the film industry, Holocaust denial, and allegations that American films promoted Satanism. ³⁸ Participants critiqued

³⁶Talebzadeh, Ammar Festival, Oliver Stone and Sean Stone. Kantz Feder, "New Horizons in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy: Nader Talebzadeh, Alexander Dugin, and Iran's Soft War"; Mehr News Agency, "Nader Talebzadeh's Live Conversation with Oliver Stone on Channel 4" [گفتگوی زنده نادر طالبزاده با الیور استون در شبکه چهار] April 24, 2018, <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4279485/گفتگوی-زنده-نادر-طالبزاده-با-الیور-استون-در-شبکه-چهار>; Paideuma, "Sean Stone & Alexander Dugin," February 10, 2023, <https://paideuma.tv/en/video/sean-stone-alexander-dugin>.

³⁷Hollywoodism conference participants: Third Position Party, LaRouche, far-right. On Third Position fascism, Matthew N. Lyons, "Two Ways of Looking at Fascism," *Socialism and Democracy* 22, no. 2 (2008): 121–156. On LaRouche's trajectory, King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism*.

³⁸Thomas Erdbrink, "Stung by 'Argo,' Iran Backs Conference Denouncing 'Hollywoodism,'" *New York Times*, February 18, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/19/world/middleeast/stung-by-argo-iran-backs-conference-denouncing-hollywoodism.html>. See also Alireza Doostdar, "Hollywood Cosmopolitanisms and the

Hollywood's propagation of "Zionist values" and its "cultural assault." Film screenings celebrated the legacy of Roger Garaudy, a notorious Holocaust denier admired in Iranian circles,³⁹ and the conferences took up Hollywood's alleged role in perpetuating what participants called the "myth of the Holocaust."

The conference's official website also identified a network of outside "partners." They included Americana Pictures, a film company run by Merlin Miller, the 2012 presidential candidate of the white-supremacist American Third Position Party, and Truth Jihad, the website and internet-radio program operated by former University of Wisconsin–Madison instructor and 9/11 conspiracy theorist Kevin Barrett.¹ Barrett's programming has promoted claims concerning 9/11, alleged false-flag terrorism, Zionism, political assassinations, and other conspiratorial subjects.⁴⁰ It listed the Council for the National Interest, led by Philip Giraldi and Alison Weir, both of whom attended Talebzadeh's events. Giraldi, a former CIA officer and a regular contributor to the *Unz Review*, a publication known for platforming white supremacism and Holocaust denial, has promoted the notion of Zionist and Israeli control of American foreign policy and has made unfounded allegations regarding September 11.⁴¹

Occult Resonance of Cinema," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 13, nos. 1–2 (2017): 121–49, esp. 130–35, <https://doi.org/10.1558/cis.32526>

³⁹Hollywoodism: Holocaust myth panels, Roger Garaudy film screenings. Joshua Keating, "Mike Gravel on Movies, Sanctions, and What We Can Learn from Iran," *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/22/mike-gravel-on-movies-sanctions-and-what-we-can-learn-from-iran/>; Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA), "Sean Stone Returns to Iran / Announcing Details of the Third Hollywoodism Conference" [Shān Estūn Dobārah bā Irān Mi-Āyad], January 15, 2013.

⁴⁰Kevin Barrett / Truth Jihad Radio description. Kevin Barrett, "Farrakhan Draws 4,000 for 9/11 Truth," *American Free Press*, March 10, 2017, <https://americanfreepress.net/farrakhan-draws-4000-for-911-truth/>; Kevin Barrett, "About Kevin Barrett," Truth Jihad, accessed July 27, 2026, <https://truthjihad.com/about/>. See also Anti-Defamation League, "Iran 'Hollywoodism' Conference Partners with U.S. & International Anti-Semites, Conspiracy Theorists," February 5, 2013, archived July 5, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190705150722/https://www.adl.org/blog/iran-hollywoodism-conference-partners-with-us-international-anti-semites-conspiracy-theorists>; Mark Weber, "Another Productive Visit to Iran: Tehran Conference Critically Examines 'Hollywoodism,'" Institute for Historical Review, February–March 2013, https://ihr.org/other/iranvisit_feb2013-html.

⁴¹Philip Giraldi and Alison Weir; Giraldi's 9/11 allegations. Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism." On Giraldi's specific claims about Israel and 9/11, see Philip Giraldi, "Israel's Role In 9/11," *Freepress.org* (Columbus Free Press), September 11, 2019, <https://freepress.org/article/israel-s-role-911>. See also London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, "Rachel Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism," YouTube video, January 11, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTW8ilJ3efs&t=98s>. Presentation given at the LCSCA conference, September 2022.

Other attendees included Art Olivier, a former Libertarian Party vice-presidential candidate and 9/11 Truther who disclosed that conference organizers had sponsored his trip;⁴² former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel, who has alleged that 9/11 was “an inside job;” and Mark Weber, founder of the Institute for Historical Review and one of America’s leading promoters of Holocaust denial.

One attendee stands apart for his subsequent trajectory: E. Michael Jones, a traditionalist Catholic writer and editor of *Culture Wars*, who has spent decades portraying Judaism and Jews as corrosive influences on Christianity and Western society. He has associated what he calls “Jewish modernity” with abortion, same-sex marriage, pornography, and other developments he condemns. Jones has also participated in Iranian-sponsored conferences, appeared in programs concerning Iran, and operated within transnational traditionalist and anti-liberal milieus that overlap ideologically with circles receptive to Alexander Dugin.⁴³ He is a critical connective node between Duginist intellectual circles and Iranian-aligned media ecosystems. A decade after appearing at Talebzadeh’s conferences, Jones appeared on Candace Owens’s show in July 2025.⁴⁴ That trajectory, from a Tehran conference room to one of the most-watched conservative media platforms in America, measures precisely how far these networks have moved toward the mainstream in the years since 2011.

“That trajectory, from a Tehran conference room to one of the most-watched conservative media platforms in America, measures precisely how far these networks have moved toward the mainstream in the years since 2011.”

⁴²Art Olivier’s disclosure that conference organizers sponsored his trip. Ramin Mostaghim, “Tehran film conference denounces ‘cultural assault’ of Hollywood,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 2013, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-xpm-2013-feb-05-la-fg-wn-tehran-conference-denounces-cultural-assault-of-hollywood-20130205-story.html>.

⁴³Anti-Defamation League, “E. Michael Jones,” July 13, 2023, <https://go.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/e-michael-jones>. The profile documents Jones’s characterization of Judaism as possessing a “particularly malignant spirit” and his description of abortion, same-sex marriage, and pornography as “Jewish sacraments.” See also Mark Weber, “Another Productive Visit to Iran: Tehran Conference Critically Examines ‘Hollywoodism,’” Institute for Historical Review, February–March 2013, https://ihr.org/other/iranvisit_feb2013.html; E. Michael Jones, “E. Michael Jones Visits Iran: The Hijab Protest Reality,” *Culture Wars*, June 7, 2023, <https://culturewars.com/videos/e-michael-jones-visits-iran-the-hijab-protest-reality>; Kamal Gasimov and Marlene Laruelle, “Eurasia and Eschatology: Dugin’s Antiliberal Resonances in the Muslim World,” *Studies in East European Thought* 78, nos. 1–2 (2026): 377–399, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-025-09810-1>.

⁴⁴Candace Owens, “Candace Owens x E. Michael Jones,” *Candace*, podcast, July 18, 2025, <https://podcasts.apple.com/be/podcast/candace-owens-x-e-michael-jones/id1750591415?i=1000717998368>.

The conferences also attracted an unlikely second contingent of American participants: African Americans from Black Muslim circles and organizations. Among them was Marzieh Hashemi, an American-born convert from New Orleans who had moved to Iran in 2008 and immediately began working for Press TV.⁴⁵ Hashemi became a close colleague of Talebzadeh and was central to his cultural diplomacy and outreach, hosting her own programs on which she regularly interviewed American activists and politicians sympathetic to Iran's narratives, including, as we will see, Cynthia McKinney.

One of Hashemi's most prominent recurring guests was indeed Cynthia McKinney, the former Georgia congresswoman and Green Party presidential candidate, who had participated in a conference in Iran in May 2011 and became a regular Press TV interviewee.⁴⁶ McKinney visited Iran several times, performing the Arba'in ritual pilgrimage in 2017 alongside several of Talebzadeh's guests, Dugin among them. In 2011 she had led a "Dignity Delegation" to Libya that included Nation of Islam representatives, journalists tied to Russian state media, and Malcolm X's grandson Malcolm Shabazz, among others. Many of these individuals became recurring participants in Talebzadeh's gatherings and then connective nodes in Russian and Iranian state media networks.

A separate incident involving Shabazz illustrates how Iranian state media operated as a propaganda instrument even in relation to peripheral figures. In February 2013, Press TV reported that Shabazz had been arrested by the FBI while en route to that year's Hollywoodism conference, a claim his family immediately and publicly rejected.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Marzieh Hashemi: American-born convert, naturalized Iranian citizen, Press TV. "Iranian Reporter Tells The Other Side Of The Story," interview by Scott Simon, *Weekend Edition Saturday*, NPR, July 4, 2009, <https://www.npr.org/2009/07/04/106268425/iranian-reporter-tells-the-other-side-of-the-story>.

⁴⁶Cynthia McKinney as a regular Press TV interviewee on Marzieh Hashemi's shows. The River Mersey, "Cynthia McKinney: Face to Face 05-20-2011," YouTube video, May 21, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFSmcYx8z-Y>.

⁴⁷JET Staff, "Malcolm X's Grandson Arrested by FBI," *JET*, February 5, 2013, <https://www.jetmag.com/news/malcolm-xs-grandson-arrested-by-fbi/>; Kirsten West Savali, "Malcolm Shabazz, Malcolm X's Grandson, Releases Statement," *NewsOne*, March 18, 2013, <https://newsone.com/2287421/malcolm-shabazz-arrested-statement>. See also "Malcolm X's Grandson Reportedly Arrested, FBI Refuses to Provide Details," *Atlanta Daily World*, February 5, 2013, <https://atlantadailyworld.com/2013/02/05/malcolm-x-s-grandson-reported-arrested-en-route-to-iran/>; and Keith Nelson Jr., "Malcolm X's Grandson Releases Statement, Details Lengthy Police Investigation," *AllHipHop*, March 20, 2013, <https://allhiphop.com/mobile/malcolm-xs-grandson-releases-statement-details-lengthy-police-investigation/>.

Shabazz himself disputed the report, clarifying that his arrest by Middletown police was unrelated to any trip to Iran.⁴⁸ Iranian state media had used an unverified claim about the grandson of Malcolm X to generate anti-American propaganda, and retracted nothing when the claim collapsed.

Abdul Alim Musa, founder and director of the Sabiqun organization and imam of Masjid Al-Islam in Washington, D.C., was also documented as a Hollywoodism participant. Musa, who founded the Islamic Institute of Counter-Zionist American Psychological Warfare, has accused American Zionists of engineering September 11.⁴⁹ He became a prominent figure in Iranian propaganda efforts in the United States, participating in Iran's campaigns to indict America ideologically for its treatment of Black Americans. In a 2017 interview, Musa argued that American carceral methods and the disproportionate incarceration of Black Americans were modeled after "the Zionist police in Palestine," adding, "That's what Ferguson was about."⁵⁰

Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, the former NBA player Chris Jackson, appeared in the 2013 Hollywoodism participant roster and subsequently became a regular on Russian and Iranian media platforms. In February 2026 he appeared in an Iranian Quranic television reality program broadcast on IRIB during Ramadan. His trajectory, from an American basketball court to Iranian state television, is not unique. It is representative.

The Red-Brown Alliance: Engineering the Impossible Coalition

Political theory has long held that the far left and the far right are mirror images of each other, separated by an unbridgeable ideological gulf and incapable of sustained cooperation. The Hollywoodism and New Horizon conference circuits constitute among the most significant documented evidence that this assumption can be falsified by a sufficiently determined external actor.

The convergence visible in the conference participant lists is what analysts have begun to call the red-brown alliance: a syncretic ideological network bringing together the far left (Red) and the far right (Brown) around a shared set of targets, namely Israel, the United

⁴⁸Shabazz arrest story; his later appearance in a Press TV documentary. "Malcolm X's Grandson Reportedly Arrested, FBI Refuses to Provide Details," Atlanta Daily World, February 5, 2013.

⁴⁹Abdul Alim Musa / Sabiqun: founding of the Islamic Institute of Counter-Zionist American Psychological Warfare; 9/11 allegations. Anti-Defamation League, "Sabiqun and Anti-Semitism on Campus," November 14, 2011, <https://www.adl.org/resources/backgrounders/sabiqun-and-anti-semitism-campus>.

⁵⁰Abdul Alim Musa interview: American carceral methods modeled on "Zionist police in Palestine." "US Black Community: From Oppression under Capitalism to Liberation in Islam," interview by Setareh Sadeqi, Khamenei.ir, 2017, <https://english.khamenei.ir/news/4508/US-black-community-From-oppression-under-capitalism-to-liberation>.

States, Jewish institutions, and the liberal democratic order, while permitting each component to retain its own ideological framing and community identity.

This convergence did not emerge organically. It was engineered, and the conference circuit was its laboratory.

“...why do figures from opposite ends of the ideological spectrum so consistently arrive at the same positions on Israel, Jewish institutions, and American foreign policy?”

Consider what the Hollywoodism participant lists actually represent when read as a deliberate assembly rather than an accidental collection. On one side of the table sat Mark Weber, founder of the Institute for Historical Review and a leading American Holocaust denier, alongside neo-fascist Third Position Party figures. On the other sat Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam delegates, Abdul Alim Musa of the Sabiqun organization, and Malcolm X’s grandson Malcolm Shabazz. These are not natural allies. The white supremacist right and the Black nationalist movement have spent decades in explicit mutual hostility. Their agreement on Israel and Jewish power does not make them allies in any conventional political sense.

Yet in Talebzadeh’s conference rooms they shared panels. They listened to the same presentations. They were introduced to one another by a common Iranian host who understood, as Dugin’s strategic framework made explicit, that the convergence of these movements around a single shared enemy was more valuable than the ideological coherence of any one of them.

Add CODEPINK on the far left, Kevin Barrett and his 9/11 Truth network on the conspiratorial right, and European neo-fascists from the Third Position movement, and the full architecture of the red-brown alliance becomes visible. These are not people who agree with one another. They are people who have been assembled around a common target and furnished with the relational infrastructure — personal relationships, shared platforms, common media outlets — to sustain that assembly long after the conferences ended.

The red-brown convergence helps answer a question that has puzzled observers of American political discourse for years: why do figures from opposite ends of the ideological spectrum so consistently arrive at the same positions on Israel, Jewish institutions, and American foreign policy? The answer is not that they reasoned their way there independently. It is that they were brought there together, by a deliberate program, in a hotel conference room in Tehran.

Beyond Left and Right, But Against the Center

In 2014, Talebzadeh formalized what the Hollywoodism conferences had begun. He established the New Horizon International Institute for Independent Thinkers and Artists and launched a series of international conferences that would run until 2019, when U.S. Treasury sanctions forced their suspension.⁵¹ The OFAC designation issued in February 2019 under Executive Order 13224 was, as Talebzadeh himself declared, a vindication, confirmation that his operation had been consequential enough to warrant the attention of the United States government.

The New Horizon conferences assembled a broader cross-ideological network than the Hollywoodism gatherings, bringing together self-described left-wing activists, far-right and Third Position figures, and 9/11 conspiracy theorists. Aleksandr Dugin and his associate Leonid Savin—editor-in-chief of *Geopolitika.ru* and head of administration for the International Eurasian Movement—were recurring participants in this milieu. Its cross-ideological composition was consistent with the Fourth Political Theory's stated aspiration to operate "beyond left and right but against the center." New Horizon's "Friends" page reinforced that breadth: it listed the Voltaire Network, the Nation of Islam's *Final Call*, Al-Awda, Science of 9/11, and the Dugin-associated outlets *Geopolitika.ru* and *Katehon*, among numerous other organizations.⁵²

In practice, this meant that alongside the Holocaust deniers and white supremacists who had populated the Hollywoodism conferences, the New Horizon gatherings also drew Green Party politicians and activists, Occupy Wall Street veterans, Democratic Socialists

⁵¹New Horizon as IRGC recruitment platform; operational significance of the conferences. U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, "Treasury Sanctions Iranian Organizations and Individuals Supporting Intelligence and Cyber Targeting of U.S. Persons," February 13, 2019. Speeches by Western attendees were repackaged into digital clips, shared by Iranian media outlets, and circulated by bot networks to create the appearance of global legitimacy. See also Lizzie Porter, "What Sanctions? An Iranian Conference in Beirut Just Happened," Atlantic Council (IranSource), October 24, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/what-sanctions-an-iranian-conference-in-beirut-just-happened/>.

⁵²FOIA Research, "New Horizon Conference," April 25, 2020, <https://www.foiaresearch.net/event/new-horizon-conference>. The report documents the participation of both self-described left-wing and far-right activists, identifies Savin among the participants in 2012, 2014, and 2019, and reproduces the organizations listed in New Horizon's "Friends" directory. See also Alexander Reid Ross, "The Anti-Semitism Fest Where Russian Spies, Code Pink, David Duke and the Nation of Islam Make Friends and Influence People," Haaretz, March 14, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/.premium-russia-s-role-in-an-anti-semitism-fest-for-fascists-feminists-spies-and-neo-nazi-1.7003563>. Erik Piccoli, "The Dugin Network: Multipolarity, Traditionalism, and Transnational Liaisons in the West," *Studies in East European Thought* 78, nos. 1–2 (2026): 335–354, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-025-09807-w>. Piccoli identifies Leonid Savin as editor-in-chief of *Geopolitika* and head of administration for the International Eurasian Movement. "The Fourth Political Theory," accessed July 27, 2026, <https://www.4pt.su/en>. The site uses the slogan "beyond left and right but against the center."

of America members, CODEPINK delegations, religious leaders, Nation of Islam representatives, radical Black internationalists, and Pan-Africanists. The connective tissue was not shared ideology but shared contempt: for Israel, for American foreign policy, and for Jewish power as they collectively conceived it.

“The connective tissue was not shared ideology but shared contempt: for Israel, for American foreign policy, and for Jewish power as they collectively conceived it.”

The cross-pollination extended beyond Tehran. A review of the Left Forum, a premier annual conference for American left-wing organizers, reveals that several regular New Horizon participants also appeared there, among them Alison Weir, Philip Giraldi, Kevin Barrett, and Sander Hicks.⁵³ New Horizon’s participants were not siloed within an Iranian-aligned fringe ecosystem. They moved freely between it and spaces at the center of American progressive organizing.

The 2014 New Horizon Conference in Tehran is illustrative. Panel topics included “The Israeli Lobby vs. the U.S. National Interest,” “AIPAC Influence,” “Islam as Authentic Universal Religion vs. Zionist Memes of Islam,” and “Tangible Manifestations of the End of the Unipolar Moment.”⁵⁴ A panel on “The Gaza War and BDS Movement Strategies against the Zionist Regime” featured Hamas’s representative to Iran, Khaled Qaddoumi; CODEPINK founder Medea Benjamin; Pastor Randy Short; and the Occupy Wall Street activist Caleb Maupin, formerly of the World Workers’ Party, a contributor to RT, and a participant in a 2018 Alternatives to Globalization conference in Moscow alongside Dugin.⁵⁵ The Iranian attendees included the Director of the Cultural Front for the Revolution, the director of a think tank representing the Supreme Leader in universities,

⁵³Left Forum cross-participation by New Horizon regulars. Kantz Feder, “‘New Horizons’ in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism.” A cross-check of Left Forum programs confirms participation by Alison Weir, Philip Giraldi, Kevin Barrett, and Sander Hicks. See also London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, “Rachel Kantz Feder,” YouTube video.

⁵⁴ Panels from the 2014 conference. NGO Monitor, “NGO Activists, Including Stephen Sizer, Attend Antisemitic Conference in Iran,” accessed August 14, 2026, <https://ngo-monitor.org/reports/ngo-activists-including-stephen-sizer-attend-antisemitic-conference-in-iran/>.

⁵⁵Caleb Maupin: World Workers’ Party, RT contributor, Moscow conference with Dugin. New Horizons Conference website, archived April 28, 2020, <http://web.archive.org/web/20200428234125/http://newhorizon.ir/friends/>; on Maupin’s red-brown populism, Chris Butters, “Signaling Left, Turning Right: The ‘Radicals’ Rebranding Populism,” CPUSA, December 17, 2021, <https://www.cpusa.org/article/signaling-left-turning-right-the-radicals-rebranding-populism/>. See also NGO Monitor, “NGO Activists, Including Stephen Sizer, Attend Antisemitic Conference in Iran.”

the former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, a senior advisor to the late Supreme Leader, and an Iranian professor discussed in the following chapter.⁵⁶

After the conferences ended, participants did not simply return home. They began writing for Iranian outlets, appearing on Press TV, and contributing to Khamenei's online platforms. They collaborated at independent alternative-media outlets, operating simultaneously in left-wing and right-wing spaces.⁵⁷ The conference circuit was not merely a convening mechanism. It was a radicalization pipeline with a graduation ceremony.

“The conference circuit was not merely a convening mechanism. It was a radicalization pipeline with a graduation ceremony.”

The Deadly Exchange: From a Tehran Conference Room to a National Movement

In 2015, as multiple high-profile police killings of Black Americans launched a national protest movement, Talebzadeh made explicit what the New Horizon conferences had been doing implicitly. At a press conference launching a two-week conference program on police brutality in America, which he titled “On the Brink,” Talebzadeh announced that “we have invited around 30 anti-Israel African Americans to visit Iran,” because Iran is “not very innovative in soft war,” and “for this reason, the presence of these people and intellectuals” was important. The initiative illustrated how Talebzadeh's conference network incorporated American racial grievances into Iran's international outreach, leveraging a moment of socio-political crisis.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Iranian political and religious figures at the 2014 New Horizon Conference. Iranian participants included Vahid Jalili (Director of the Cultural Front for the Revolution), Hujjat al-Islam Alireza Panahian, Saeed Jalili, Mohammad-Javad Larijani, and Fuoad Izadi. See “New Horizon Conference,” FOIA Research, accessed August 15, 2026, <https://www.foiaresearch.net/event/new-horizon-conference>.

⁵⁷Conference participants writing for Iranian outlets; collaboration in alternative media. Kantz Feder, “‘New Horizons’ in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism.” See also London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, “Rachel Kantz Feder,” YouTube video.

⁵⁸ Nick Allen, “Iran Invites Families of Black Men Shot by Police to a Tehran Anti-Discrimination Conference,” *The Telegraph*, September 27, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/11895197/Iran-invites-families-of-black-men-shot-by-police-to-a-Tehran-anti-discrimination-conference.html>. See also “Iran Invites Black Americans to Discrimination Conference,” *Times of Israel*, September 28, 2015, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-invites-black-americans-to-discrimination-conference/>; “Iranian Conference Focuses on ‘Police Racism’ in the

He was not being coy. He was describing his operational strategy in plain terms, to an Iranian press audience, in Persian.

The 2015 conference drew Nation of Islam delegates; the political scientist and RT and Press TV contributor Wilmer Leon III; Cynthia McKinney; the law professor Vernellia Randall; the Pan-Africanist leader Kemi Seba; and Cecile Johnson of the African Development Plan, who would later participate in Dugin's 2023 World Online Conference on Multipolarity.⁵⁹ Conference content included Caleb Maupin's lecture "The Struggle Against Racism, Zionism, and Imperialism within U.S. Borders" and the Irish activist Declan Hayes's lecture "Israel: The Harvard University of American Police Brutality."⁶⁰

The central theme, stated repeatedly in lectures, in videos produced by the conference organizers, and in the event's promotional materials, was what this report calls the Deadly Exchange accusation: the claim that Israel and American Jews bear direct responsibility for police brutality against Black Americans. The specific allegation holds that Israeli security forces train American police in the racist and militarized tactics they employ against Black communities, rendering the American-Jewish relationship to Israel not merely a matter of foreign-policy sympathy but one of domestic complicity in racial violence.

US," *The New Arab*, October 29, 2015, <https://www.newarab.com/news/iranian-conference-focuses-police-racism-us> (quoting Talebzadeh's remarks about inviting "30 anti-Zionist black leaders from America").

⁵⁹2015 New Horizon police-brutality conference participants; Cecile Johnson at Dugin's 2023 World Online Conference on Multipolarity. Nisa Islam Muhammad, "Nation of Islam Delegation Attends International Conference," *The Final Call*, November 11, 2015, http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/National_News_2/article_102703.shtml; Cecile Johnson, "My Speech at the Multipolarity Conference," African Development Plan, April 29, 2023, <https://africandevdevelopmentplan.org/f/my-speech-at-the-multipolarity-conference>.

⁶⁰Caleb Maupin, "The Struggle Against Racism, Zionism, and Imperialism within U.S. Borders," New Horizon Conference: On the Brink, Tehran, Iran, October 29, 2015, video, racism.org, <https://racism.org/articles/worldwide/georegions/149-the-americas/168-united-states-of-america/205-daeus-descendants/201-on-the-brink-02/1861-the-struggle-against>; Declan Hayes, "Israel: The Harvard University of American Police Brutality," New Horizon Conference: On the Brink, Tehran, Iran, October 28, 2015, video, racism.org, <https://racism.org/articles/worldwide/georegions/149-the-americas/168-united-states-of-america/205-daeus-descendants/201-on-the-brink-02/1859-israel-the-harvard>.

The accusation is false. But its falsity is less significant than its architecture. It is constructed to reach Black communities through their most urgent grievance, the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police, and to redirect that grievance toward Israel and American Jews. It takes legitimate anger about racial injustice and weaponizes it as antisemitism. In structural terms, it is one of the most sophisticated antisemitic operations this report documents.

Two years after Talebzadeh's conference, in 2017, the domestic American organization Jewish Voice for Peace launched what it called the Deadly Exchange campaign, a political effort to end security-exchange programs between U.S. law enforcement and Israeli security agencies on the argument that these exchanges share "worst practices" that intensify racial profiling and militarized policing. The campaign gave the accusation a new name, a domestic organizational home, and mainstream progressive credibility, and it has since been cited, repeated, and amplified across American activist and academic networks as an established political position.⁶¹

The framing had roots in early-2010s activist critiques of police militarization. Academic and activist figures had begun drawing connections between Israeli security practices and

"The...Deadly Exchange accusation: the claim that Israel and American Jews bear direct responsibility for police brutality against Black Americans."

⁶¹The accusation that would crystallize as the Deadly Exchange campaign had a documented evidentiary and rhetorical lineage predating it by several years. In 2011, the journalist Max Blumenthal described what he termed the "Israelification" of American domestic security, tracing the transfer of surveillance and crowd-control techniques from Israeli security forces to U.S. law enforcement. Max Blumenthal, "From Occupation to 'Occupy': The Israelification of American Domestic Security," Mondoweiss, December 2, 2011, <https://mondoweiss.net/2011/12/from-occupation-to-occupy-the-israelification-of-american-domestic-security/>. In 2014, Rania Khalek, writing in The Electronic Intifada, drew connections between Israeli military training and the policing of protests in Ferguson, Missouri. Rania Khalek, "Israel-Trained Police 'Occupy' Missouri after Killing of Black Youth," The Electronic Intifada, August 15, 2014, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/rania-khalek/israel-trained-police-occupy-missouri-after-killing-black-youth>. The International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network advanced parallel critiques of U.S.-Israel security cooperation in the same period. "Apartheid Israel and US Police," International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, July 23, 2020, <https://www.ijan.org/2020/07/23/apartheid-israel-and-us-police/>. When Jewish Voice for Peace launched its Deadly Exchange campaign — beginning in 2017 and formalized in a 2018 report produced with Researching the American Israeli Alliance — it consolidated these earlier threads into a coordinated advocacy effort centered on the Anti-Defamation League's facilitation of such exchanges. "Deadly Exchange Report Reveals Extent of Massive Training Programs between U.S. Law Enforcement and Israeli Police, Military and the Shin Bet," Jewish Voice for Peace, September 12, 2018, <https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/2018/09/12/deadlyexchangereport/>. The framework has continued to find new anchors; outlets such as Quds News have extended it to allegations of Israeli training ties to U.S. immigration enforcement. "After Killing Woman and Blocking Doctor from Helping Her in Minneapolis: Are ICE Agents Trained by Israel?," Quds News Network, January 8, 2026, <https://qudsnen.co/post?id=67023&slug=after-killing-woman-and-blocking-doctor-from-helping-her-in-minneapolis-are-ice-agents-trained-by-israel>.

American policing before Iran's conferences institutionalized the argument.⁶² But Iran's New Horizon conferences accelerated the trope's passage from fringe to mainstream, and Talebzadeh's deliberate program, described in his own words at his own press conference, was central to that acceleration. Iran did not invent the Deadly Exchange. It institutionalized and internationalized it as a strategy to contest Western democratic legitimacy and to delegitimize Israel and American Jews through race-based moral critique.⁶³

The Deadly Exchange is one of this report's clearest illustration of antisemitism-as-statecraft. It exhibits the complete operational cycle: Iran identifies an existing American racial grievance, organizes conferences that attach antisemitic claims to that grievance, cultivates the American activists who carry those claims home, and observes as those claims achieve mainstream legitimacy through domestic organizations that may have no awareness, or may choose to have no awareness, that they are amplifying an operation designed in Tehran.

(The network mapping of anti-Zionist and antisemitic content flows across the ecosystem is shown in Appendix B.)

The trope has proved durable. It resurfaced with striking ease following the January 2026 ICE shooting in Minnesota, which furnished a new domestic anchor for redeploying Deadly Exchange-style claims, this time concerning Israeli influence on American immigration enforcement rather than policing. Because the narrative architecture had already been normalized across ideologically heterogeneous communities, it re-emerged without apparent coordination, as though it were simply common sense.

That is precisely the point. The most successful influence operations are those that no longer require operation.

⁶²Origins of the Deadly Exchange framing in early-2010s activist critiques. Angela Davis has noted that since 2010–2011 she and others had discussed linking Israel to police brutality and solidarity with Palestine. London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, "Rachel Kantz Feder."

⁶³Iran's institutionalization and internationalization of the Deadly Exchange. Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism." Iran did not invent the trope but institutionalized and internationalized it as a strategy to delegitimize Israel and American Jews through race-based moral critique. See also David Michael Swindle, "Iran, Russia Push Disinformation to Spread Antisemitism, Undermine the West," *The Algemeiner*, March 11, 2026, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2026/03/11/iran-russia-push-disinformation-spread-antisemitism-undermine-west/>.

Two Pilgrimages and an Eschatological Alliance

In 2017, Aleksandr Dugin performed the Arba'in pilgrimage alongside Nader Talebzadeh, walking in one of the world's largest annual religious gatherings, a Shi'a ritual commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn at Karbala, Iraq. Images of the Russian philosopher and the Iranian filmmaker walking together among millions of mourners were widely circulated in Iranian media. They were not accidental. They were a statement.

Following his participation, Dugin expanded his articulation of the eschatological alignment between Shi'ism and Russian Orthodox Christianity. The 2015 "International Conference of All Against Arrogance" in Tehran had already illustrated what this alliance looked like institutionally: Dugin addressed the conference by video link while his associates and ideological sympathizers participated in person alongside the ambassadors of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Syria, as well as representatives of Hezbollah.

The 2018 New Horizon conference in Mashhad, themed "Jerusalem/Al-Quds, the Eternal Capital of Palestine," and the 2019 conference in Beirut, which addressed Israeli influence on U.S. foreign policy, the impact of American sanctions, and "the role of religious convergence in dialogue among civilizations,"⁶⁴ gave Dugin a formal stage for his most developed eschatological arguments. He drew on the French traditionalist philosopher René Guénon's conception of a shared struggle against modernity transcending religious boundaries, arguing that Christianity ought not to be fighting other religions but modernity itself, and that all forces — Islamic, Orthodox, traditionalist — must be mobilized against what he termed "the eschatological modern Western reality." Drawing on French traditionalist philosopher René Guénon's framework of sacred tradition versus Western modernity, Aleksandr Dugin argued that Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and other traditional religious cultures could unite against liberal secularism. While preserving the theological distinctions among these faiths, he increasingly cast their shared opposition to individualism and Western universalism as part of a broader eschatological struggle between tradition and the modern West.⁶⁵

⁶⁴2019 Beirut conference themes. "International New Horizon Conference Kicks Off in Lebanon," Press TV, September 23, 2019, <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2019/09/23/606930/New-Horizon-Conference-Beirut-Nader-Talebzadeh>.

⁶⁵Mark Sedgwick, "Aleksandr Dugin's Traditionalist Roots," *Studies in East European Thought* 78, nos. 1–2 (2026): 209–224, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-025-09708-y>. Sedgwick shows that Dugin retained Guénon's fundamental opposition between the traditional East and modern West, while replacing Guénon's principally Indian and Islamic "East" with a Russian-dominated Eurasia. He also notes Dugin's assertion that Russian Orthodoxy preserved the primordial tradition. See also Kamal Gasimov and Marlene Laruelle, "Eurasia and Eschatology: Dugin's Antiliberal Resonances in the Muslim World," *Studies in East European Thought* 78, nos. 1–2 (2026): 377–399, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-025-09810-1>. The authors explain that Dugin's reliance on Guénonian Traditionalism provides a bridge to Muslim audiences and that he presents Islam as an anti-systemic force in a global struggle against Western imperialism and modernity.

On the sidelines of the Beirut conference, in an interview with Talebzadeh, Dugin claimed that Vladimir Putin, before deciding to intervene in Syria in 2012, had consulted Athonite monks who encouraged Moscow's participation in the civil war as part of "the final battle" against the forces of the Antichrist at Armageddon. He declared that "we," a spiritually aligned coalition of Russia, Iran, and the region's awakened Shi'i communities, had saved Syria from "a complete destruction that was the will of the West and Dajjal." He likened American leaders to the Antichrist.⁶⁶

Soleimani's assassination in January 2020 provided Dugin with another occasion to integrate Iranian "resistance" narratives into his Eurasianist worldview. During an appearance at the University of Tehran shortly afterward, Dugin described Soleimani as a "hero" of the Eurasian project and presented Iran as a central partner in the construction of a multipolar order.⁶⁷ Dugin interpreted Soleimani's assassination in explicitly metaphysical terms. In an essay published four days after the killing, he called Soleimani a "martyr of the multipolar world" and situated his death within a civilizational "Great War of Continents," treating the episode as part of a cosmic struggle whose meaning extended beyond conventional geopolitics.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Dugin's Beirut conference statements: Putin consulting monks; "we saved Syria"; American leaders as Antichrist. "Interview with Aleksandr Dugin on the Sidelines of the New Horizon Conference in Beirut," Mashregh News, September 2019, <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/995583>; "Mashregh's Report on the Interesting Sidelines of New Horizon: From Mahdism in the Words of a Russian Philosopher to the Conversion of a Polish Activist," Mashregh News, October 5, 2019, <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/998180/>.

⁶⁷Islamic Republic News Agency, "Russian Philosopher: Iran Has a Key Role in the Eurasian Project," February 17, 2020, <https://www.irna.ir/news/83677791/>; Faravaz Davar, "Putin's Mastermind, a Good Friend of the Islamic Republic: Who Is Aleksandr Dugin?," IranWire, August 22, 2022, <https://iranwire.com/fa/features/106805/>; Kamal Gasimov and Marlene Laruelle, "Eurasia and Eschatology: Dugin's Antiliberal Resonances in the Muslim World," *Studies in East European Thought* 78, nos. 1–2 (2026): 377–399, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-025-09810-1>. See also "Heidegger, Schmitt, Dugin: Exploring Intellectual Sources of Illiberalism," Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES), George Washington University, accessed August 15, 2026, <https://ieres.elliott.gwu.edu/project/heidegger-schmitt-dugin-exploring-intellectual-sources-of-illiberalism>.

⁶⁸Aleksandr Dugin, "Qasem Soleimani, Martyr of the Multipolar World, and the New Geography of the Great War of Continents," *Geopolitika.ru*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/article/qasem-soleimani-martyr-multipolar-world-and-new-geography-great-war-continents>; Kamal Gasimov and Marlene Laruelle, "Eurasia and Eschatology: Dugin's Antiliberal Resonances in the Muslim World," *Studies in East European Thought* 78, nos. 1–2 (2026): 377–399, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-025-09810-1>.

This eschatological framing is not rhetorical excess. It is a communication strategy, one that allows Iran and Dugin to reach audiences, particularly on the American Christian right, that are unreachable through conventional geopolitical language. When Dugin frames the conflict between Iran and the United States as a battle between spiritual forces of resistance and the Antichrist of liberal modernity, he is not speaking metaphorically to his intended audiences. He is speaking their language. Chapter Five shows how effectively that language has traveled.

The Media Ecosystem That Carries the Signal

Conferences leave. Media stays.

The network Talebzadeh built through the Hollywoodism and New Horizon gatherings required a permanent media infrastructure to carry its narratives between events, across borders, and into American households. That infrastructure exists, and it is considerably more sophisticated than a collection of fringe websites.

Iran's institutional communications apparatus combines formal state media, including IRIB, Press TV, and Hispan TV, with semi-autonomous cultural foundations, NGOs, and event networks. The Atlantic Council has described this as “guerrilla broadcasting”: a deliberately distributed media architecture designed to be resilient to targeted takedowns and to leverage intermediaries for local legitimacy. When one digital node is disrupted, others continue amplification across platforms and regions.⁶⁹

“guerrilla broadcasting:’ a deliberately distributed media architecture designed to be resilient to targeted takedowns and to leverage intermediaries for local legitimacy.”

At the center of the parallel American-facing ecosystem is MintPress News, an online media platform founded around 2012 by Mnar Adley in Minneapolis.⁷⁰ MintPress

⁶⁹Iran's "guerrilla broadcasting" media architecture. Emerson T. Brooking and Suzanne Kianpour, "Iranian Digital Influence Efforts: Guerrilla Broadcasting for the Twenty-First Century," Atlantic Council, February 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/IRAN-DIGITAL.pdf>; U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Iranian Organizations and Individuals Supporting Intelligence and Cyber Targeting of U.S. Persons," February 13, 2019, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm611>.

⁷⁰MintPress News is an American online media platform launched in January 2012 by Mnar Adley (formerly Muhawesh), based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "Mnar Adley," *MintPress News*, accessed August 15, 2026, <https://www.mintpressnews.com/author/mnarmuhawesh/>.

presents itself as an independent progressive watchdog. In practice it functions as a relay node for Iranian and Russian narratives, recruiting a deliberately eclectic mix of left- and right-wing contributors to produce content that mimics the tone of progressive investigative journalism while consistently aligning with Iranian foreign-policy positions. MintPress drew early attention when it published an article deceitfully attributing a Syrian chemical-weapons attack to rebels rather than the Assad regime.⁷¹ It has since expanded, notwithstanding its documented links to Russian state-backed media operations.⁷²

The MintPress constellation extends outward through several connected entities. Basira Press, founded by Ali Salaam, a California libertarian convert to Islam formerly known as Alex Fidel, publishes interviews with Iranian English-speaking figures operating within state-aligned or state-amplified media ecosystems, framing its content through anti-imperialism and opposition to U.S. and Israeli influence. A central Basira Press contributor also convenes Palestine conferences in Yemen at which figures including Jackson Hinkle have participated. TMJ News Network, connected to MintPress's founder and to Setareh Sadeghi Mohammadi, an assistant professor at the University of Tehran and a member of Mohammad Marandi's circle of Iranian academics active in English-language outreach, functions as another node in the same circuit.

Clarity Press, an independent publisher incorporated in Atlanta, operates within an overlapping alternative-media ecosystem that includes MintPress News and Basira Press. The overlap includes distribution channels and contributors—Cynthia McKinney, for

⁷¹MintPress article deceitfully attributing a Syrian chemical attack to rebels. Hadas Gold, "Reporter Denies Writing Article Linking Syrian Rebels to Chemical Attack," *Politico*, September 23, 2013, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2013/09/reporter-denies-writing-article-linking-syrian-rebels-to-chemical-attack-173282>; Dale Gavlak and Yahya Ababneh, "EXCLUSIVE: Syrians In Ghouta Claim Saudi-Supplied Rebels Behind Chemical Attack," *MintPress News*, August 29, 2013, <https://www.mintpressnews.com/syria-ghouta-claim-saudi-supplied-rebels-chemical-attack/168135/>.

⁷²MintPress links to Russian state-backed media operations. Maffick LLC and Redfish were identified by social media platforms and researchers as Russian state-backed entities; Redfish, a Berlin-based cooperative funded by the Russian state agency Ruptly, closed in 2023. Charles Davis, "'Grassroots' Media Startup Redfish Is Supported by the Kremlin," *The Daily Beast*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/grassroots-media-startup-redfish-is-supported-by-the-kremlin/>; see also Melynda Fuller, "Kremlin Has Deep Ties to Global Grassroots News Organization," *MediaPost*, February 12, 2018, <https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/314334/kremlin-has-deep-ties-to-global-grassroots-news-or.html?edition=107520>. On Maffick LLC's ties to Redfish, see U.S. Department of State, Global Engagement Center, *Kremlin-Funded Media: RT and Sputnik's Role in Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, January 2022), https://2021-2025.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Kremlin-Funded-Media_January_update-19.pdf.

example, is published by Clarity Press and listed as a Basira Press author—and the use of some of the same online amplification platforms.⁷³ Dialogue Works, a YouTube channel run by the Iranian academic Nima Rostami Alkhorshid from Brazil, hosts many of the individuals documented in this report alongside credentialed left-wing academics, amplifying Duginist multipolarity discourse to English-speaking audiences.

The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT), based in the United Kingdom, describes itself as an international intellectual hub for the global Islamic movement. Its affiliated publication, Crescent International, promotes Iranian positions and narratives to a global Muslim readership.⁷⁴ Imam Muhammad al-Asi, a principal ICIT figure based in Washington, D.C., has for decades spoken at conferences and written for outlets aligned with Iranian-backed “resistance” currents, seeking to bridge Sunni and Shi’a political thought within a framework of anti-Zionist and anti-American activism.

“The reach and real-world consequences of this media ecosystem were illustrated with...the manifesto of...the perpetrator of the May 2022 Buffalo massacre, which killed ten Black Americans.”

The reach and real-world consequences of this media ecosystem were illustrated with particular clarity by the manifesto of Payton Gendron, the perpetrator of the May 2022 Buffalo massacre, which killed ten Black Americans at a Tops supermarket. Gendron’s 180-page document revealed not only his embrace of the Great Replacement conspiracy theory but also his consumption of media outlets documented throughout this report, including MintPress News, whose 2016 article “Thousands of Israelis Take to the Streets

⁷³Clarity Press, “About Clarity Press,” accessed July 27, 2026, <https://www.claritypress.com/about/>. The site describes Clarity Press as “an independent publisher on global issues” incorporated in Atlanta in 1988. Clarity Press, “How the US Creates ‘Sh*t-hole’ Countries,” accessed July 27, 2026, <https://www.claritypress.com/product/how-the-us-creates-shthole-countries/>; Basira Press, “About Us,” accessed July 27, 2026, <https://basirapress.org/about-us/>. Both pages identify Cynthia McKinney as an author. MintPress News, homepage, accessed July 27, 2026, <https://www.mintpressnews.com/>; Basira Press, “About Us,” accessed July 27, 2026, <https://basirapress.org/about-us/>. Both sites link to accounts on Telegram, Rumble, Facebook, X, and Instagram. Clarity Press, “How to Order,” accessed July 27, 2026, <https://www.claritypress.com/HowtoOrder.html>. Clarity identifies SCB Distributors, Marston Book Services, Ingram, and Baker & Taylor among its distribution and wholesale channels.

⁷⁴ICIT and Crescent International. Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought, “About ICIT,” accessed August 19, 2026, <https://www.icit-digital.org/abouticit>; *Crescent International*, “Crescent International,” accessed August 19, 2026, <https://crescent.icit-digital.org/>.

Calling For Palestinian Genocide” he specifically cited.⁷⁵ Gendron’s text called for further red-brown convergence and for a populist movement transcending left and right.

Gendron was a lone actor driven by white supremacist ideology, and his actions are not evidence of Iranian direction. They are evidence of something more troubling. The content ecosystem this report describes has real-world consequences extending far beyond the manipulation of political opinion. The pipeline from a Tehran conference room to an American supermarket is not a straight line. But it is a line.

What the Conference Circuit Built

In April 2022, Nader Talebzadeh died at the age of sixty-nine. Iranian media eulogized him as “General Soft War.” The general was gone. His army remained.

“General Soft War.”

By 2019, when U.S. Treasury sanctions forced New Horizon’s suspension, the network Talebzadeh had spent a decade constructing no longer required his conferences in order to operate. It required only the continued existence of the media ecosystem he had helped build and the continued activity of the individuals he had helped connect.

Those individuals had been transformed by their participation. They had gone to Tehran as fringe figures, conspiracy theorists, third-party politicians, activist academics, marginal journalists, and had returned with relationships, platforms, and a common narrative framework. They had been introduced to one another across ideological lines that would otherwise have kept them apart. They had been given content: interviews on Press TV, articles in Iranian outlets, documentary appearances, conference proceedings. And they had been given a validation the American mainstream would never have offered them, the validation of a state that assured them their conspiratorial views about Israel and Jewish power were not bigotry but insight.

⁷⁵Payton Gendron manifesto citing MintPress; red-brown convergence call. Tahir Abbas et al., “The Buffalo Attack – An Analysis of the Manifesto,” International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), May 18, 2022, <https://icct.nl/publication/buffalo-attack-analysis-manifesto>. Chris York, “The Pro-Russian Attempt to Link the Buffalo Shooting to Ukraine,” *New Lines Magazine*, May 24, 2022, <https://newlinesmag.com/argument/the-pro-russian-attempt-to-link-the-buffalo-shooting-to-ukraine/>. The Great Replacement theory is a far-right conspiracy theory asserting that elites are deliberately orchestrating the replacement of white European populations with non-white immigrants.

The Hollywoodism and New Horizon conferences are now over. The ideas they amplified are not. The Deadly Exchange resurfaces whenever a Black American dies at the hands of police. The eschatological framing of the Israel-Iran conflict intensifies with every military escalation. E. Michael Jones appears on Candace Owens's show. Cynthia McKinney posts on X about Zionist police. The network Talebzadeh built has become self-sustaining.

“The Deadly Exchange resurfaces whenever a Black American dies at the hands of police. The eschatological framing of the Israel-Iran conflict intensifies with every military escalation.”

Chapter Four turns to the digital infrastructure that replaced the conference circuit as Iran's primary operational theater, and to the platforms that, by design and by neglect, made that theater possible.

The Algorithm Is Not Neutral

Iran's Digital Battlefield and the Platforms That Enable It

The network described in the preceding two chapters, built over decades through conferences, film festivals, personal relationships, and state media, required a force multiplier. It found one in the architecture of American social-media platforms: in the algorithmic amplification systems that reward engagement regardless of origin or accuracy, in content-moderation frameworks that are reactive rather than proactive, and in a legal liability shield so broad that platforms bear virtually no responsibility for the consequences of what they distribute.

“The network...built over decades through conferences, film festivals, personal relationships, and state media, required a force multiplier. It found one in the architecture of American social-media platforms.”

This chapter connects Nader Talebzadeh's conference rooms to the contemporary social-media feed.

Iran's digital operations are not a program separate from its offline influence infrastructure. They are the same program running on a different medium. The people, narratives, and relationships built through the Hollywoodism and New Horizon conferences became the content and the distribution nodes for Iran's online campaigns. The state-media apparatus, including Press TV, IRIB, and MintPress, became the upstream source for content that then traveled through influencer networks, sock-puppet accounts, fake news sites, and Wikipedia articles into the mainstream American information environment.

This chapter documents how that digital operation works, what it has achieved, and who, beyond Iran, bears responsibility for the environment that makes it possible.

Iran Did Not Build This Network Alone. Silicon Valley Helped

In 2026, Iran is operating a sophisticated, multi-platform influence campaign against the United States. It runs fake news sites that mimic legitimate American media. It deploys networks of sock-puppet accounts, fake online personas engineered to impersonate American activists and to simulate grassroots opinion, that insert Iranian narratives into domestic political conversations while concealing their origin. It hacks political campaigns and leaks the results. It manipulates Wikipedia which is a primary source for AI models. It targets American voters with intimidation emails, and it embeds operatives in the networks of American banks, airports, and defense contractors.

Much of this is not formally prohibited by platform terms of service. The permissive environment in which Iran operates is not an accident of the internet age. It is the product of specific policy choices made and maintained by American lawmakers, technology companies, and regulatory agencies.

“In 2026, Iran is operating a sophisticated, multi-platform influence campaign against the United States.”

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act grants social-media platforms near-total immunity from liability for content posted by third parties. This provision, designed in 1996 to allow the early internet to develop without litigation risk, now functions as a structural enabler of state-sponsored information warfare at scale. A platform that knowingly hosts and algorithmically amplifies content produced by a designated foreign terrorist organization faces no legal consequence. The content is the third party’s problem. The platform is merely the pipe.

Yet the platforms are not merely passive pipes. Their algorithms are written by the companies themselves and determine what content to deliver to whom, when, and in what way. Social media algorithms are active amplification systems that reward engagement, and engagement is maximized by content that provokes emotion: outrage, fear, contempt, tribal solidarity. The antisemitic narratives Iran has spent thirty years refining are precisely optimized for algorithmic amplification. They are emotionally intense, identity-activating, and shareable across ideological lines. A platform algorithm does not distinguish between organic outrage and engineered outrage. It amplifies both equally.

The technology companies that host these operations possess far more visibility into their own systems than any government agency. They know, or are positioned to know, more than they disclose about what operates on their platforms, at what scale, and from where. This chapter returns to that question in its conclusions.

“The permissive environment in which Iran operates is not an accident of the internet age. It is the product of specific policy choices made and maintained by American lawmakers, technology companies, and regulatory agencies.”

The Architecture: State Media, Front Organizations, and the Space Between

Iran’s digital influence apparatus is deliberately redundant. The Atlantic Council has described it as “guerrilla broadcasting”: a distributed media architecture designed so that

no single takedown can collapse the system.⁷⁶ When one node is disrupted, whether a domain seized, an account banned, or a fake news site exposed, others continue amplifying across platforms and regions.

**“The Atlantic Council has described it as “guerrilla broadcasting:”
a distributed media architecture designed so that no single
takedown can collapse the system.”**

At the formal center of the apparatus are Iran’s state-media institutions: IRIB, Press TV, and Hispan TV. Both IRIB and Press TV are designated Specially Designated Nationals by the United States government, and both continue to produce content that circulates in American information ecosystems.

Below the formal state-media layer sits a semi-autonomous infrastructure of cultural foundations, NGOs, event networks, and alternative-media outlets that disseminate Tehran’s narratives in local languages while maintaining plausible separation from direct state control. The New Horizon conferences, documented in Chapter Three, were the most prominent example of this.

At the fully covert outer layer are networks of fake websites posing as independent American news outlets, sock-puppet account clusters impersonating domestic activists, AI-assisted content farms, and Wikipedia editing teams. The U.S. government has documented this layer extensively. In 2019, the Digital Forensic Research Lab identified the International Union of Virtual Media (IUVM), an Iranian information ecosystem distributing political content across hundreds of websites and social-media accounts, all posing as independent news outlets.⁷⁷ In 2020, the FBI seized ninety-two domains operating as part of a covert Iranian network that used U.S.-based web hosting.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Brooking and Kianpour, "Iranian Digital Influence Efforts."

⁷⁷Digital Forensic Research Lab identification of the IUVM ecosystem. Ben Nimmo and Nika Aleksejeva, "Key Findings: Iranian Propaganda Network Goes Down," DFRLab, Atlantic Council, March 26, 2019, <https://dfrlab.org/2019/03/26/key-findings-iranian-propaganda-network-goes-down/>. See also Ben Nimmo, "#TrollTracker: An Iranian Messaging Laundromat," DFRLab, August 29, 2018, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/trolltracker-an-iranian-messaging-laundromat-218c46509193>; Mario Ritter, "Report: Iranian Media Group Seeks Worldwide Influence," VOA Learning English, August 2018, <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/report-iranian-media-group-seeks-worldwide-influence/4549369.html>.

⁷⁸FBI seizure of 92 Iranian domains (2020). Swanbeck, "How to Understand Iranian Information Operations"; U.S. Department of Justice, "United States Seizes Domain Names Used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard

The architecture provides redundancy, deniability, and reach that no single-channel operation could achieve. It is also self-healing: when the New Horizon conferences were shut down by Treasury sanctions in 2019, the content they had been producing continued circulating through the alternative-media ecosystem their participants had already built.

When Hackers and Propagandists Work Together

Iran's cyber operations and its influence operations are not parallel programs run by separate bureaucracies. They are integrated. The same institutional infrastructure, principally the IRGC Intelligence Organization (IRGC-IO) and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), directs both. The convergence of hacking capabilities and propaganda infrastructure within a single strategic framework is what makes Iran's operations qualitatively different from conventional state propaganda.

“The convergence of hacking capabilities and propaganda infrastructure within a single strategic framework is what makes Iran’s operations qualitatively different from conventional state propaganda.”

The hacking groups that Western intelligence agencies designate as Advanced Persistent Threats, or APTs, are the instruments through which this convergence operates. Iran's APT ecosystem includes groups operating under names such as Charming Kitten, OilRig, MuddyWater, and Void Manticore.⁷⁹ Each has its own operational profile and technical methods. What they share is coordination, at the strategic level, with Iran's broader influence objectives. Their operations are not primarily about espionage. They are about

Corps," October 7, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/united-states-seizes-domain-names-used-iran-s-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>.

⁷⁹Iran's APT ecosystem: Charming Kitten, OilRig, MuddyWater, Void Manticore. "Iran Cyber Threat Overview and Advisories," Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), accessed August 15, 2026, <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/cyber-threats-and-advisories/advanced-persistent-threats/iran>; Mandiant Intelligence, "APT42: Crooked Charms, Cons, and Compromises," September 7, 2022, <https://cloud.google.com/blog/topics/threat-intelligence/apt42-charms-cons-compromises/>; Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, "Iran Steps into US Election 2024 with Cyber-Enabled Influence Operations"; Kurt Baker, "Advanced Persistent Threats (APT) Explained," CrowdStrike, March 4, 2025, <https://www.crowdstrike.com/en-us/cybersecurity-101/threat-intelligence/advanced-persistent-threat-apt/>.

narrative. Stolen material is the raw content of influence operations: the hack enables the leak, the leak enables the story, and the story does the damage.

**“Stolen material is the raw content of influence operations:
the hack enables the leak, the leak enables the story,
and the story does the damage.”**

The 2024 hack-and-leak operation against the Trump presidential campaign illustrates the model at its most consequential. Three members of Iran’s IRGC were indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice for hacking into the campaign and leaking stolen materials. It was the largest hack-and-leak election-influence operation since Russia’s breach of Democratic organizations in 2016.⁸⁰ Microsoft’s Threat Analysis Center separately reported that an IRGC-linked group had sent spear-phishing emails to a senior campaign official using a compromised former advisor’s email account, and had attempted to infiltrate county-level government accounts in swing states.⁸¹

Iran’s 2020 election operations were equally brazen. IRGC-linked operatives stole voter data from Alaska’s online voter-registration system and sent thousands of intimidating emails to registered Democrats in Florida and Alaska, spoofed to appear to come from the right-wing Proud Boys group, demanding that recipients switch their registration to Republican and warning, “You will vote for Trump on Election Day or we will come after you.”⁸² In the same cycle, Iranian state-linked hackers compromised a local election-night

⁸⁰2024 Trump campaign hack-and-leak; DOJ indictment of three IRGC members. “Three IRGC Cyber Actors Indicted for ‘Hack-and-Leak’ Operation Designed to Influence the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election,” U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, September 27, 2024, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/three-irgc-cyber-actors-indicted-hack-and-leak-operation-designed-influence-2024-us>; Collier, “Iran’s History of Elaborate Election Interference Efforts.” The indictment concerned the largest hack-and-leak election influence operation since Russia’s 2016 breach of Democratic organizations.

⁸¹Microsoft MTAC reporting on IRGC spear-phishing of a campaign official. Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, “Iran Steps into US Election 2024 with Cyber-Enabled Influence Operations,” 2; Collier, “Iran’s History of Elaborate Election Interference Efforts.”

⁸²2020 Proud Boys voter-intimidation emails; Emennet Pasargad / ASA operation. Anna Ribeiro, “FBI Reveals Iranian Cyber Group Emennet Pasargad Executing Hack-and-Leak Operations Using False-Flag Personas,” Industrial Cyber, October 21, 2022, <https://industrialcyber.co/critical-infrastructure/fbi-reveals-iranian-cyber-group-emennet-pasargad-executing-hack-and-leak-operations-using-false-flag-personas/>; Collier, “Iran’s History of Elaborate Election Interference Efforts”; Ari Ben Am, “A Year of Meming Dangerously: Iranian Influence Operations Targeting Israel Since October 7,” memo, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, August 28, 2025, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/08/28/a-year-of-meming-dangerously-iranian-influence-operations-targeting-israel-since-october-7/>; Hive Pro, “Hack, Leak, Repeat – Emennet Pasargad’s Quest to Destabilize Israel,” threat advisory, November 7, 2024,

reporting system, gaining access that could have allowed them to appear to manipulate vote totals in real time, and separately breached a U.S. media company serving multiple news outlets. After the election, Iranian actors promoted an “Enemies of the People” website listing election officials and public figures with personal information and crosshair imagery, designed to intimidate those who had certified the results.⁸³

In December 2024, the U.S. Treasury sanctioned the Cognitive Design Production Center (CDPC), an IRGC subordinate organization, for planning influence operations since at least 2023 aimed at inciting socio-political tension among the U.S. electorate and undermining confidence in democratic institutions.⁸⁴

Handala: A Cartoon Character Goes to War

In the summer of 1969, the Palestinian cartoonist Naji al-Ali drew a small barefoot boy for a Kuwaiti newspaper. He named him Handala, after a bitter wild plant, and from 1973 drew him with his back turned and his arms clasped behind him, the posture that became the character’s defining form. Handala became one of the most recognizable symbols in Palestinian political art.

In December 2023, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security gave the name to a hacking operation.

The Handala Hack group, technically designated Void Manticore and also known as Red Sandstorm and Banished Kitten, and operated by MOIS, established itself rapidly as one

<https://www.hivepro.com/threat-advisory/hack-leak-repeat-emennet-pasargad-quest-to-destabilize-israel>.

The firm Emennet Pasargad is also known as Aria Sepehr Ayandehsazan (ASA).

⁸³2020 election: election-night reporting-system breach; media-company breach; Enemies of the People website. Collier, “Iran’s History of Elaborate Election Interference Efforts”; Clint Watts, “Iran Targeting 2024 US Election,” Microsoft On the Issues, August 8, 2024, <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2024/08/08/iran-targeting-2024-us-election/>; Jiwon Lim, “Beyond Hacktivism: Iran’s Coordinated Cyber Threat Landscape,” Strategic Technologies Blog, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 14, 2026, <https://www.csis.org/blogs/strategic-technologies-blog/beyond-hacktivism-irans-coordinated-cyber-threat-landscape>; CTech, “Mapping Iran’s Hacking Threats,” March 2, 2026, <https://www.calcalistech.com/ctechnews/article/s1zm2ymtbx>.

⁸⁴Treasury sanctions on the Cognitive Design Production Center (CDPC), December 2024. U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Sanctions Entities in Iran and Russia That Attempted to Interfere in the U.S. 2024 Election,” December 31, 2024, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2766>.

of Iran's most operationally aggressive cyber personas after October 7.⁸⁵ It built a prominent presence on X and Telegram, using those channels to spread antisemitic and anti-American narratives, to publish threats against Israeli and American targets, and to announce its hacking operations in real time. Its communications were designed not merely to inform but to intimidate: to make Israeli and American audiences feel surveilled, exposed, and vulnerable.

In March 2026, a destructive malware attack against Stryker, a U.S.-based multinational medical-technologies company, was attributed to Handala. Stryker confirmed in a press release that it was "experiencing a global network disruption to our Microsoft environment as a result of a cyber-attack," and said it believed the attack was "contained to our internal Microsoft environment only."⁸⁶ Handala justified the attack to its followers as retaliation for a military strike on an Iranian elementary school. Lockheed Martin and civilian databases were separately targeted in the same period. In late March 2026, Handala claimed to have hacked the email and file servers of FBI Director Kash Patel, releasing emails and photographs. Whether every claim was entirely accurate matters less than the effect it was designed to achieve: to signal that no American institution was beyond reach.

⁸⁵Handala Hack group / Void Manticore / MOIS attribution. Idan Dror and Hadar Eichler, "Handala Hack: What We Know About the Rising Threat Actor," Cyberint, July 16, 2024, <https://cyberint.com/blog/threat-intelligence/handala-hack-what-we-know-about-the-rising-threat-actor/>; Avi Davidi, "Influence Operations Disguised as Cyber Operations: The Handala Hacking Group as a Case Study of Iran's Cyber Proxy Strategy During the 2026 War with Israel and the United States," Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, March 25, 2026, <https://jiss.org.il/en/davidi-influence-operations-disguised-as-cyber-operations/>; Avi Davidi, "Cognitive Warfare Disguised as Cyber Operations: The 'Handala' Case," Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, July 14, 2024, <https://jiss.org.il/davidi-cognitive-warfare-disguised-as-cyber-operations/>; Check Point Research, "'Handala Hack' – Unveiling Group's Modus Operandi," March 12, 2026, <https://research.checkpoint.com/2026/handala-hack-unveiling-groups-modus-operandi/>; Sophos X-Ops, "Cyber Advisory: Increased Cyber Risk Amid U.S.–Israel–Iran Escalation," Sophos, March 1, 2026, <https://www.sophos.com/en-us/blog/cyber-advisory-increased-cyber-risk-amid-u-s-israel-iran-escalation>.

⁸⁶Stryker cyberattack (March 2026). "Customer Updates: Stryker Network Disruption," Stryker, March 11, 2026, <https://www.stryker.com/us/en/about/news/2026/a-message-to-our-customers-03-2026.html>; Eduard Kovacs, "MedTech Giant Stryker Crippled by Iran-Linked Hacker Attack," SecurityWeek, March 11, 2026, <https://www.securityweek.com/medtech-giant-stryker-crippled-by-iran-linked-hacker-attack/>; Andy Greenberg, Matt Burgess, and Lily Hay Newman, "How 'Handala' Became the Face of Iran's Hacker Counterattacks," WIRED, March 12, 2026, <https://www.wired.com/story/handala-hacker-group-iran-us-israel-war/>.

In March 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice announced the seizure of four domains used by MOIS for these operations: Justicehomeland.org, Handala-Hack.to, Karmabelow80.org, and Handala-Redwanted.to.⁸⁷ The seizure disrupted specific infrastructure. It did not end the operation. Handala, like all components of Iran's guerrilla-broadcasting architecture, is designed to route around disruption.

How Wikipedia Became a Front

Wikipedia is among the ten most visited websites in the world. It is cited globally by journalists, referenced in congressional testimony, and used as a source of knowledge by students, educators, casual readers, and, critically, by AI models like ChatGPT and Claude and virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa. It is also among the most systematically manipulated information resources in the Western world.

“Wikipedia...is...among the most systematically manipulated information resources in the Western world.”

Iran, its allies, and aligned proxy groups have for years exploited Wikipedia's open-editing model as a component of their soft-war strategy. The mechanism is straightforward. Wikipedia permits anyone with an account to edit most articles, and its neutrality standard requires claims to be attributed to cited sources. If the cited sources are Iranian state media, whether IRIB, Press TV, or IRGC-affiliated outlets, those sources count. One study found IRGC-linked media cited approximately 78,000 times across Wikipedia articles.⁸⁸ The Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has held strategy

⁸⁷DOJ seizure of four Handala-linked MOIS domains (March 2026). U.S. Department of Justice, "Justice Department Disrupts Iranian Cyber Enabled Psychological Operations," March 19, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-disrupts-iranian-cyber-enabled-psychological-operations>; the domains were Justicehomeland.org, Handala-Hack.to, Karmabelow80.org, and Handala-Redwanted.to. Sophos X-Ops, "Cyber Advisory: Increased Cyber Risk."

⁸⁸IRGC-linked media cited approximately 78,000 times in Wikipedia articles. Ashley Rindsberg, "Wikipedia Editors Are Helping Iran Rewrite History," The Free Press, January 21, 2026, <https://www.thefp.com/p/wikipedia-editors-are-helping-iran-rewrite-history>; Mathilda Heller, "Wikipedia Cited IRGC-Linked Media over 78,000 Times, 'Post' Investigation Reveals," The Jerusalem Post, March 15, 2026, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-890041>; Eden Cohen, "Anti-Israel Activists Are Rewriting Jewish History on Wikipedia—Here's Why It Matters," Unpacked, August 4, 2025, <https://unpacked.media/anti-israel-activists-are-rewriting-jewish-history-on-wikipedia-heres-why-it-matters/>; Joseph Wilde-Ramsing, "Wikipedia's Challenges in Iran," SOMO, February 2, 2024, <https://www.somo.nl/wikipedias-challenges-in-iran/>.

meetings with Persian Wikipedia editors to shape official records, and the IRGC has dispatched digital operatives to expunge evidence of human-rights abuses, including the 1988 mass executions, crackdowns on contemporary protesters, and the killing of protesters during the January 2026 uprising that followed the outbreak of direct military conflict with the United States and Israel.

“Iran, its allies, and aligned proxy groups have for years exploited Wikipedia’s open-editing model as a component of their soft-war strategy.”

This state-directed editing campaign has been augmented by coordinated networks of Western-based editors and advocacy groups. Among these is a network that investigators and U.S. congressional inquiries have referred to as the “Gang of 40,” veteran Wikipedia editors accused of systematically manipulating articles related to the Middle East to remove critical historical context, to scrub details of Hamas atrocities, and to reframe Zionism as a movement of ethnic cleansing. According to U.S. congressional inquiries in 2025, this network coordinated to rewrite thousands of articles, rendering Wikipedia a venue for overt antisemitic discourse.⁸⁹

“veteran Wikipedia editors accused of systematically manipulating articles...to scrub details of Hamas atrocities, and to reframe Zionism as a movement of ethnic cleansing.”

A further and contested element of this broader editing ecosystem is the WikiRights program operated by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor. Pro-Israel research organizations and several news outlets have characterized the program as training anti-Israel editors to shape Wikipedia’s coverage of the conflict, while the organization itself maintains that WikiRights is a legitimate human-rights training initiative conducted within Wikipedia’s rules and denies any coordinated manipulation.⁹⁰

⁸⁹Gang of 40: U.S. Congressional inquiry and Wikimedia Foundation Human Rights Impact Assessment. U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, “Comer and Mace Investigate Efforts to Manipulate Information on Wikipedia,” August 27, 2025, <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-and-mace-investigate-efforts-to-manipulate-information-on-wikipedia/>.

⁹⁰The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor (Euro-Med Monitor), a Geneva-based NGO founded in 2011 by Ramy Abdu, has operated since 2015 a program titled WikiRights, which trains participants, primarily in Gaza, in Wikipedia research and editing in Arabic and English. Pro-Israel research organizations and several news outlets, including *The Daily Telegraph*, NGO Monitor, and HonestReporting, have characterized the program as training anti-Israel editors to shape Wikipedia coverage of the conflict, and Israeli authorities have linked Abdu to Hamas-associated networks. Euro-Med Monitor rejects this characterization, describing WikiRights as a transparent human-rights training initiative conducted in accordance with Wikipedia’s

The dispute remains unresolved. It is noted here because the contest over Wikipedia's Israel-related coverage extends well beyond Iranian state activity, and because Wikipedia's standing as a trust anchor makes it a contested space for many actors at once.

The scale of the coordinated interference triggered a Human Rights Impact Assessment by the Wikimedia Foundation and formal action by Wikipedia's Arbitration Committee (ArbCom). In the Palestine-Israel Articles 5 case, ArbCom implemented Extended Confirmed Protection as the default for all related articles, restricting editing to users with significant experience, and issued indefinite bans for several veteran editors for off-wiki canvassing and gaming of the system.⁹¹ Additional investigations led to the deletion of state-aligned accounts, including one identified as SwedishDutch, flagged by the watchdog Neutral Point of View for manipulating casualty figures during the 2025–2026 Iranian protests.⁹²

standards and denying any coordinated manipulation. The dispute is unresolved; the program is noted here as a contested element of the broader pro-Hamas editing ecosystem rather than as an Iranian state operation. Patrick Sawyer, "Palestinians 'Trained to Fill Wikipedia with Anti-Israel Propaganda,'" *The Telegraph*, March 14, 2026, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/03/14/palestinians-trained-wikipedia-anti-israel-propaganda/>; Mathilda Heller, " Hamas-Linked Org. Trains Gazans to Edit Wikipedia Pages about Israel, Palestine," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 17, 2026, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-887007>; NGO Monitor, "Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor," May 31, 2026, <https://ngo-monitor.org/ngos/euro-med-human-rights-monitor/>; Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, "Euro-Med Monitor Rejects Telegraph Smear over WikiRights Project," March 31, 2026, <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/7013/Euro-Med-Monitor-rejects-Telegraph-smear-over-WikiRights-project>; Ben M. Freeman, "The Human Rights Façade: How Euro-Med Uses Wikipedia to Amplify Hamas Narratives," *HonestReporting*, March 9, 2026, <https://honestreporting.com/the-human-rights-facade-how-euro-med-uses-wikipedia-to-amplify-hamas-narratives/>; HonestReporting Staff, "Who Edits the Truth? Wikipedia, Reddit, and the Battle for Reality," *HonestReporting*, February 18, 2026, <https://honestreporting.com/who-edits-the-truth-wikipedia-reddit-and-the-battle-for-reality/>; see also Sharon Levy, "Euro-Med Monitor Exposed: Ramy Abdu's Terror Links and Disinformation Campaigns," *HonestReporting*, May 24, 2026, <https://honestreporting.com/euro-med-monitor-exposed-ramy-abdus-terror-links-and-disinformation-campaigns/>.

⁹¹ArbCom rulings: the Palestine-Israel Articles 5 case; Extended Confirmed Protection; editor bans. Wikipedia Arbitration Committee (ArbCom), "Palestine-Israel Articles 5," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Dispute_resolution_requests/ArbCom; Shlomit Lir, "The Lone Editor as a Source of Knowledge Bias Concerning Israel on English Wikipedia: The Case of Iskandar323," Institute for National Security Studies, May 4, 2026, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/iskandar323/>.

⁹²SwedishDutch account deletion; Neutral Point of View watchdog. Neutral Point of View, led by journalist Ashley Rindsberg, "Inside Iran's Wikipedia War," January 20, 2026, <https://www.neutralpov.com/p/inside-irans-wikipedia-war>; Heller, "Wikipedia Cited IRGC-Linked Media"; "Pro-Government Editors Wiped Iran Rights Abuses from Wikipedia—Watchdog," Iran International, January 20, 2026, <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202601206922>.

Wikipedia's role in this story matters because of how it is used: as a trust anchor. When a journalist, a student, or a curious reader searches for basic background on a named individual, an organization, or an event, Wikipedia is typically the first result encountered. When executing a query through an AI model like ChatGPT, the answer is often shaped by Wikipedia content. Manipulating that result does not require hacking. It requires only patience, a Wikipedia account, and sources that the platform's editorial standards will accept, even when those sources are state media.

Fake News, Sock Puppets, and the Parallel Information Universe

Beyond Wikipedia, Iran operates an extensive network of fake news sites and sock-puppet accounts designed to simulate the appearance of American domestic discourse while advancing Iranian state objectives.

The model is consistent. Websites posing as independent American regional news outlets, with local-sounding names, stock photographs, and plagiarized wire-service content used as filler, intersperse pro-Iranian propaganda so that it appears as merely one item among many credible news stories. In 2024, Microsoft identified Iranian groups running AI-assisted fake news sites including Nio Thinker, targeting left-leaning audiences, and Savannah Time, targeting conservatives. Both plagiarized content from mainstream American outlets to manufacture the appearance of credibility.⁹³ End Times Today, another IRGC-linked fake outlet, was designed specifically to reach American Christian audiences by weaving political messages into religious and eschatological narratives.⁹⁴

Iran has been linked to takedowns of Facebook and X accounts in more than forty countries. In 2019 alone, more than seven thousand accounts tied to Iranian information operations were removed.⁹⁵ The sock-puppet networks serve multiple functions. They

⁹³Nio Thinker and Savannah Time: AI-assisted IRGC-linked fake-news sites (2024). Siladitya Ray, "Iran Is Using Hackers And Online Disinformation To Interfere In U.S. Elections, Microsoft Report Says," Forbes, August 9, 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2024/08/09/iran-is-using-hackers-and-online-disinformation-to-interfere-in-us-elections-microsoft-report-says/>; Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, "Iran Steps into US Election 2024 with Cyber-Enabled Influence Operations," 4; Watts, "Iran Targeting 2024 US Election." Both outlets were operated by the IRGC-affiliated Storm-2035.

⁹⁴End Times Today: IRGC fake-news site targeting American Christian eschatological audiences. FireEye, *Iranian Disinformation Operations and Fabricated Media Outlets*, FireEye Threat Intelligence Report (Milpitas, CA: FireEye, 2020); Watts, "Iran Targeting 2024 US Election." Operated by Storm-2035; designed to weave political messages into religious and eschatological narratives.

⁹⁵Iran linked to takedowns of more than 7,000 accounts across more than 40 countries (2019). Alexander Donlon, "The Pacing Threat of Iran's Influence Operations," Middle East Policy Council, December 8, 2023, <https://mepc.org/commentaries/the-pacing-threat-of-irans-influence-operations/>; Shimi Cohen et al., *SpearSpecter: Unmasking Iran's IRGC Cyber Operations Targeting High-Profile Individuals*, Israel National Digital Agency, November 2025, <https://govextra.gov.il/national-digital-agency/cyber/research/spearspecter/>.

create the appearance of widespread domestic support for Iranian-aligned positions, they amplify content from the fake news sites, and they insert Iranian narratives into organic conversations about American politics, race, and foreign policy in ways that make attribution nearly impossible for ordinary users.

When one network is exposed, others continue. The architecture is designed for resilience, not concealment. Iran does not expect its operations to remain secret indefinitely. It expects them to run long enough to do their work before the next network is built.

**“When one network is exposed, others continue.
The architecture is designed for resilience, not concealment.”**

ISNAD: How a Fake Account Becomes a Movement

The ISNAD campaign, an Iranian state-aligned AI persona operation targeting Israeli and American social media, is among the most technically sophisticated Iranian-linked disinformation operations documented in this report. ISNAD deployed artificial intelligence to generate fake Israeli social-media personas, complete with photographs, biographical details, posting histories, and apparent social networks, and then used those personas to flood social-media platforms with content designed to erode trust in Israeli and American democratic institutions while amplifying societal divisions. The campaign also operated through BugHunter, an application targeting Iranian dissidents and diaspora opposition, and maintained a coordinated multiplatform presence.⁹⁶

“The operation does not merely launder a narrative...it launders the source, making Iranian state propaganda appear to originate from Israeli citizens, American progressives, or conservative skeptics.”

⁹⁶ISNAD campaign: AI-generated Israeli personas, the BugHunter app, multiplatform operations. David Siman-Tov, "The ISNAD Campaign in the Israel–Iran War," INSS Insight No. 2028, Institute for National Security Studies, August 26, 2025, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/isnad-iran-israel/>; Abbee Corb, "Narrative Laundering and Extremist Propaganda: Digital Ecosystems of Influence," unpublished manuscript, 2025; Abbee Corb, "Content Laundering: Mechanics and Impact of Modern Disinformation," lecture, 2023. For more on sockpuppet networks, see Brooking and Kianpour, "Iranian Digital Influence Efforts."

What makes ISNAD significant is not merely its technical sophistication but its operational logic. The goal was not to deceive individual users about specific facts. It was to shift the perceived distribution of opinion: to make minority views appear to be majority sentiment, to make authentic Israeli voices feel outnumbered within their own information environment, and to normalize antisemitic and anti-American narratives by appearing to source them from within the targeted communities themselves.

“The goal was not to deceive individual users about specific facts. It was to shift the perceived distribution of opinion.”

This is content laundering at the level of identity. The operation does not merely launder a narrative through successive amplification. It launders the source, making Iranian state propaganda appear to originate from Israeli citizens, American progressives, or conservative skeptics, depending on which persona is posting it. When the source appears indigenous, the content bypasses both automated detection and human skepticism. There is no foreign accent to notice. There is no Iranian flag to see.

“to erode trust in Israeli and American...democratic institutions while amplifying societal divisions.”

ISNAD relied on ideological cross-pollination to maximize reach, targeting leftist movements, red-brown networks, pro-Palestinian organizing, and social-media influencers, and it integrated antisemitic narratives into its messaging by blending anti-Zionism with Holocaust denial, conspiracy tropes, and distortions designed to activate pre-existing social prejudices. Its effects on Western democratic systems were not incidental. They were the objective.

The Influencer Network: 340 Nodes, Five Pipelines, One Architecture

Over the past year, more than 340 influencers, media outlets, organizations, and affiliated entities were analyzed in order to visualize the cross-pollination among the ideological groups that Iran’s influence operations exploit and accelerate. The analysis revealed something difficult to perceive when individual actors are examined in isolation. What appears from the outside to be a chaotic and contradictory collection of voices — white nationalists and Black nationalists, MAGA commentators and socialist activists, Christian fundamentalists and secular progressives — is, from the inside, a highly interconnected ecosystem with consistent information flows, shared amplification networks, and a common operational logic.

The ecosystem is not centrally directed, and that is precisely what makes it resilient. No single instruction issues from Tehran to Jackson Hinkle, Candace Owens, or the Gray Zone. What issues instead is a set of narratives, refined over decades through the conference circuit documented in Chapter Three, that map onto pre-existing grievances, find natural amplifiers across the ideological spectrum, and travel through the network's existing channels without requiring explicit coordination. The complete network is reproduced in Appendix B, Figure B-1.

The central nodes in the network include figures such as Aleksandr Dugin, Jackson Hinkle, Max Blumenthal and the Gray Zone, and GodivaGoddess⁹⁷, together with organizations including CODEPINK, Jewish Voice for Peace, and the Party for Socialism and Liberation. These nodes connect multiple sub-clusters and function as bridges between communities that would otherwise have no contact.

The network's genius is what the mapping analysis terms ideological arbitrage: the same content flows simultaneously through left antiwar channels and right isolationist channels. A report on Gaza casualties becomes proof of both Zionist imperialism, in the left framing, and Israel manipulating the United States into wars, in the right framing. The network does not require ideological consistency. It requires only common targets.

“The network’s genius is what the mapping analysis terms ideological arbitrage: the same content flows simultaneously through left antiwar channels and right isolationist channels.”

⁹⁷GodivaGoddess is an American multiplatform influencer whose account initially focused on beauty and lifestyle content but shifted after October 7, 2023, toward the Israel–Hamas war, Iran, and broader Middle Eastern geopolitics. Her content frequently presents Iranian and Iran-aligned perspectives in sympathetic or humanizing terms, including through selective framing and personal stories from Iran, Gaza, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen; she has also referred familiarly to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei as “KK” and claimed to receive directives from him. The authors found no evidence establishing that GodivaGoddess is formally affiliated with, directed by, or compensated by the Iranian government or IRGC. Rather, her case illustrates how independent influencers can amplify state-aligned narratives through engagement-driven social media ecosystems and practices resembling content or narrative laundering — the process by which claims originating in fringe, partisan, conspiratorial, or otherwise low-credibility environments migrate through intermediaries and networks until their original provenance becomes obscured and they acquire greater perceived legitimacy. See Corb, “Narrative Laundering and Extremist Propaganda”; Corb, “Content Laundering”; Open Minds Foundation, “Narrative Laundering: The New Face of Disinformation,” April 25, 2023, <https://www.openmindsfoundation.org/blog/narrative-laundering-the-new-face-of-disinformation/>; Andreas Umland, “Don't Take 'Putin's Brain' Dugin at Face Value,” *The Moscow Times*, November 7, 2023, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/11/07/dont-take-putins-brain-dugin-at-face-value-a82989>.

Five Pipelines from the Fringe to the Mainstream

The mapping analysis identified five distinct radicalization pathways through which Iranian-aligned narratives travel from state-media origins into mainstream American discourse. These pathways are represented in Appendix B, Figure B-2.

Pathway One: Humanitarian to Explicit Antisemitism. A legitimate casualty report from an humanitarian NGO or the United Nations is stripped of its caveats by a Gray Zone contributor, reframed as deliberate genocide, amplified by Iranian state media with “Zionist regime” framing, translated and distributed across Persian networks by IRGC-linked channels, and eventually supplied to explicitly antisemitic voices such as Brother Nathanael and David Icke as “proof” of Jewish or Zionist bloodlust. What began as a humanitarian document with methodological qualifications ends as material for a conspiracy theory about Jewish control of global institutions.

Pathway Two: Academic Left to Campus Action. Academic delegitimization of Israel from figures such as Norman Finkelstein is repackaged as investigative journalism by the Gray Zone, distributed through the left-media ecosystem by MintPress and Rania Khalek, translated into organizational infrastructure by the People’s Forum and Samidoun, and then deployed as direct action by organizations such as Within Our Lifetime, producing campus environments in which Jewish students face exclusion and intimidation for identifying with Israel.

Pathway Three: Right-Wing Populism to Explicit Antisemitism. Policy skepticism about U.S. military aid to Israel begins with figures such as Judge Andrew Napolitano, escalates through Candace Owens to claims about Jewish media control and Holocaust minimization, accelerates through Jackson Hinkle’s algorithmic amplification on X, reaches Alex Jones in full conspiracy mode, and arrives at E. Michael Jones’s theological arguments that Jews are inherently subversive to Christian civilization. Each step feels incremental from the one before it. The starting point and the ending point are separated by an enormous moral and factual distance that the pathway renders invisible.

Pathway Four: Antiwar Left to Iranian Coordination. CODEPINK and the ANSWER Coalition function as entry points for well-meaning progressives whose humanitarian framing, “we just want peace,” obscures their coordination with authoritarian regimes. Delegations to Iran, platforms for Iranian officials, and consistent alignment with Iranian foreign-policy positions connect this pathway to the Iranian state apparatus. Russian state media amplifies. George Galloway bridges to British audiences. The content feeds simultaneously to the Gray Zone on the left and Infowars on the right. The antiwar movement becomes, without most of its participants realizing it, a distribution channel for Iranian state narratives.

Pathway Five: The Social-Media Influencer Pipeline. Emotional, decontextualized footage from conflict zones creates a moral urgency that short-circuits

critical thinking. Sympathetic photojournalism with large followings packages the imagery for millennial and Gen Z audiences. Intellectual framing about apartheid lends academic legitimacy. Jimmy Dore introduces conspiracy theories about Zionist control. Jackson Hinkle packages explicit Zionist-lobby conspiracies for algorithmic amplification. Sneako reaches young male audiences with extreme content; Stew Peters propagates Nazi framing. By the time a viewer reaches the endpoint of this pipeline, they have been moved through enough incremental steps that each one felt reasonable from the one before.

The Legitimacy Gradient and the Laundering Cycle

What makes these five pathways so effective is what the mapping analysis terms the legitimacy gradient: each node in the network is slightly more extreme than the last but cites sources that are more respectable. Stew Peters cites Jackson Hinkle, who cites Jimmy Dore, who cites Zeteo, which cites Oxfam. By the time a reader encounters explicit antisemitism, it has been laundered through enough layers to feel substantiated.

**“each node in the network is slightly more extreme than the last...
By the time a reader encounters explicit antisemitism, it has been
laundered through enough layers to feel substantiated.”**

The process has six identifiable stages. First, humanitarian organizations generate legitimate reports with appropriate caveats. Second, academic and credentialed figures supply intellectual frameworks that delegitimize rather than merely criticize. Third, alternative-media amplifiers such as the Gray Zone and MintPress strip the caveats, add inflammatory reframing, and cite the humanitarian organizations as authority. Fourth, cross-spectrum bridges such as Napolitano, Owens, Hinkle, and Dore repackage the content for left and right audiences, using different language for the same positions. Fifth, activist organizations translate online rhetoric into campus organizing, direct action, and environments hostile to Jewish students. Sixth, conspiracy voices complete the cycle by citing back to the Gray Zone and MintPress as proof of a Jewish conspiracy, closing a loop in which fringe material launders itself through respectable-sounding sources that were themselves laundered through the same process one layer up.

(The full content-laundering architecture across the network is shown in Appendix B.)

The Jewish-voice problem deserves specific attention. Figures such as Norman Finkelstein and Miko Peled, and the organization Jewish Voice for Peace, function within this ecosystem as inoculation against charges of antisemitism: “How can it be antisemitic if Jews are saying it?” The answer, that Jewish communities are not monolithic and that Jews can internalize and promote antisemitism, is not a comfortable one, but it is

documented in the network's operating logic. The name of Jewish Voice for Peace alone lends mainstream credibility to positions that delegitimize Jewish self-determination, and its tagline opposing both antisemitism and Zionism falsely implies that these are equivalent evils.

The 72-Hour Window: Recognizing Coordinated Operations in Real Time

The mapping analysis identified three diagnostic patterns that allow coordinated influence operations to be distinguished from organic discourse. For journalists covering breaking events, and for citizens navigating social media in moments of crisis, these patterns are practical tools.

The 72-Hour Window. Most coordinated influence operations follow a distinct narrative lifecycle. State media or alternative originators introduce a narrative; it is amplified by independent commentators within twenty-four hours; it achieves selective citation that lends it the appearance of corroboration within forty-eight hours; and it bridges to cross-spectrum audiences within seventy-two hours. If a narrative does not achieve mainstream pickup by the fourth or fifth day, the operation has likely failed, which is why monitoring is most productive in the initial seventy-two-hour window after a narrative emerges. The fabricated report of Benjamin Netanyahu's death following Iranian missile strikes in March 2026, which originated on IRGC-friendly Telegram channels and was picked up by Jackson Hinkle on X within the hour, reaching millions of shares before any correction achieved comparable scale, followed this pattern precisely.

The Crisis Exploitation Playbook. During breaking events, coordinated entities post fully formed geopolitical narratives within one to two hours. Organic analysis requires time, and the fog of war slows everything. If someone presents a complete geopolitical framework explaining a breaking event before basic facts are confirmed, they are working from a pre-existing template or had advance preparation. The appearance of polished, comprehensive narratives within two hours of a breaking event is among the clearest diagnostic signals of inorganic activity.

The Reversal Indicator. When figures suddenly reverse long-held positions to align with network narratives, when someone who spent years criticizing authoritarian regimes abruptly defends specific ones, or when antiwar activists selectively oppose only certain military interventions, the shift is a high-confidence signal of either ideological capture or deliberate positioning. The pattern of Aleksandr Dugin turning sharply against the Trump administration in early 2026, after years of expressing support, is illustrative. His alignments are instrumental, not tribal. He supports whatever advances his opposition to American power at a given moment. When the shift occurs suddenly, and the new position happens to align with Iranian state messaging, that alignment is diagnostic.

What the Platforms Know and Are Not Saying

The operations documented in this chapter — the IUVM fake-news ecosystem, the spoofed Proud Boys voter-intimidation emails, the ISNAD AI persona network, the Wikipedia Gang of 40, and Handala’s hack-and-leak operations — were all eventually identified and, in some cases, disrupted. But in each instance identification came late: after months or years of operation, after millions of impressions, after the narratives had already achieved significant circulation.

The social-media platforms on which most of these operations ran possessed detection capabilities far in advance of what they deployed. Coordinated inauthentic behavior, whether accounts created in the same time window, posting the same content from the same origin point, or using the same linguistic patterns, is detectable with tools these companies possess and use for commercial purposes daily. The question is not whether they can identify Iranian state-sponsored influence operations on their platforms. The question is when they choose to act, and what they choose to disclose when they do.

The answer, documented consistently across years of platform transparency reports and congressional testimony, is: late and partially. Platforms remove content after it has already done its work. They disclose what they are legally required to disclose. They resist requirements to share data with researchers, journalists, or government agencies that might reveal the scale of what they have permitted to run.

This is not a regulatory gap that can be closed by asking platforms to try harder. It is a structural misalignment between platform incentives, which reward engagement, including engagement with outrage-generating state-sponsored content, and the public interest in democratic societies under active information attack. Addressing that misalignment is the subject of Chapter Six.

Chapter Five turns to what happened when the offline network, the digital infrastructure, and the eschatological framing strategy activated simultaneously on October 7, 2023, and to what has followed in the two and a half years since.

The Apocalypse Has Been Scheduled

Iran's Information War Since October 7

On October 20, 2023, thirteen days after the October 7 Hamas-led attack that killed some 1,200 people in Israel, Aleksandr Dugin published a proclamation. “The eschatological aspect in Palestine conflict is crucial,” he wrote. “All other explanations are secondary ... Everything is about the End of Time. Now the real religion is back, without secular masks.”⁹⁸

Dugin had been building toward this moment for thirty years. The New Horizon conferences had assembled the network; the Hollywoodism gatherings had refined the messaging; the offline relationships had created the distribution infrastructure; and the digital apparatus documented in the previous chapter had built the amplification capacity. October 7 was the activation event, the moment at which everything constructed in preparation was deployed in operation.

**“October 7 was the activation event, the moment
at which everything constructed in preparation
was deployed in operation.”**

This chapter traces what happened when that deployment occurred: how Iran's decades-old influence infrastructure pivoted in real time to interpret October 7 through the eschatological frame that Dugin and Talebzadeh had been cultivating for years; how new and familiar influencers were drawn into the orbit of Iran's messaging machinery; how antisemitic tropes that had been normalized in fringe ecosystems crossed into mainstream conservative discourse; and how the operation has escalated further under the conditions of open military conflict in 2026.

The war on the ground may end. The information war will not.

Four Months Later, the Architecture Becomes Clear

Dugin elaborated with a specificity that left no ambiguity about how he understood the moment:

New strikes of US against Syria and Iraq. The real war is on the threshold. The Shi'a pole is formed in the Middle East: Iran, Houthis, Hezbollah, Iraq, Assad. We

⁹⁸Dugin proclamation, October 20, 2023. Published across Dugin's social-media channels and documented in Kantz Feder, “New Horizons’ in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy.”

see now what Shi'a civilization is, activated when the End Time approaches. That is Zuhur moment. Netanyahu is moved by alternative eschatological scenario — messianic (or pseudo-messianic as some traditionalist non-Zionist Jews think) building of Greater Israel. End Time regimes feel each other and recognize each other unmistakably. Post-gender and post-human satanic globalist liberal democracy is intermingled as Antichrist / Dajjal factor. Welcome to the Geopolitics of Judgment Day.

This passage is documented in the research record and was widely amplified by Iranian state media.⁹⁹

This is not the language of conventional geopolitical analysis. It is the language of eschatological mobilization, designed to reach audiences for whom the vocabulary of apocalyptic struggle is native, and for whom Dugin's synthesis of Russian Orthodox, Shi'a, and generic anti-liberal eschatology supplies a framework that renders the Middle East conflict not merely important but cosmically significant.

Dugin's claim that Iran's April 2024 missile attack on Israel had been foretold in scripture was carried and amplified by the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization.¹⁰⁰ His proclamations about U.S.-Russian apocalyptic clashes playing out in Lebanon, Syria, and Israel received extensive coverage in the Iranian press.¹⁰¹ For the two and a half years

⁹⁹Dugin's "Geopolitics of Judgment Day" statement, published approximately four months after October 7. Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy"; Mostazafin TV, "Aleksander Dugin padar-i nazariyya-yi Ūrāsiyāgarā'i: Pūtīn taht-i ta'thīr-i nigāhhā-yi ākhar-uz-zamānī [Alexander Dugin, the Father of Eurasianist Theory: Putin Influenced by Apocalyptic Views]," video, Aparat, February 17, 2016, https://www.aparat.com/mostazafin_tv (specific video no longer available); Mostazafin TV, "Ramz-gosha'i-ye Aleksander Dugin, Moshaver-e Putin az hozur-e Rusiyeh dar jang 'alayh-e Da'esh [Decoding Alexander Dugin, Putin's Adviser, on Russia's Presence in the War Against ISIS]," video, Aparat, February 17, 2016, https://www.aparat.com/mostazafin_tv (specific video no longer available); Aleksandr Dugin (@AGDugin), post on X, February 2, 2024, <https://x.com/AGDugin/status/1753634498099732680>.

¹⁰⁰Dugin interviewed on Iran's April 2024 missile attack and scripture. Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, "Mosāhebeh-ye Aleksāndr Dūgīn: Ḥamleh-ye Īrān be Esrā'īl dar ketāb-e moqaddas pīshbīnī shodeh ast [Interview with Alexander Dugin: Iran's Attack on Israel Is Predicted in the Holy Scriptures]," *Farhang-e Melal*, April 24, 2024, <https://farhangemelal.icro.ir/news/19205/> مصاحبه-الکساندر-دوگین-حملة-ایران-به-اسرائیل در کتاب مقدس پیش-بینی.

¹⁰¹Dugin's proclamations on U.S.-Russian apocalyptic clashes covered extensively in the Iranian press. KhabarOnline, "Tahlil-e taze-ye Dugin az amaliyat-e Hamas / Gharb va mutahidanash shar-e motlaq va tamaddon-e Dajjal hastand / Islam qotb-e jahan-e chand qotbi ast [Dugin's New Analysis of Hamas Operations: The West and Its Allies Are Pure Evil and the Civilization of the Antichrist / Islam Is the Pole of the Multipolar World]," October 11, 2023, <https://khabaronline.ir/xkw3W>; KhabarOnline, "Darbare-ye Andishmandi Ke Iran Va Rusiye Ra Hamrazman-e Akharal-Zamani Midanad Aya Dugin Iran Ra Dargir-e Neza'-e Hoviyati-ye Rusiye Ba Gharb Mikonad? [About the Thinker Who Views Iran and Russia as Apocalyptic Allies / Is Dugin Dragging Iran into Russia's Identity Struggle with the West?]," August 29, 2022; Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy."

since October 7, the New Horizon network's participants, the academics, journalists, activists, and influencers documented in Chapter Three, have operated as a distribution network for this eschatological framing of a military conflict in which the United States is now a direct participant.

The Red Heifer and What Hamas Understood

On January 14, 2024, marking one hundred days since the October 7 attacks, the Hamas military spokesman Abu Ubaida delivered a speech that drew limited coverage in Western media at the time. It warranted more attention than it received.

Ubaida declared that Israel's aggression had reached its peak with "the bringing of red cows as an application of a detestable religious myth designed for aggression against the feelings of an entire nation in the heart of its Arab identity, and the path of its prophet and Ascension to heaven."¹⁰²

The reference requires explanation. In September 2022, five red heifers, unblemished reddish-brown cows of the kind central to an ancient Jewish purification rite described in Numbers 19, were brought from Texas to Israel. In Jewish tradition, the ritual purification involving a red heifer is associated with preparations for the rebuilding of the Temple and, in some eschatological frameworks, with the approach of the messianic era. The arrival of the heifers consequently acquired a much larger symbolic significance among groups—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—that interpret events surrounding the Temple Mount through prophetic or eschatological frameworks.

For Hamas, however, the significance was more immediate. Ubaida situated the red heifers alongside what he portrayed as the growing encroachment on Al-Aqsa and the Temple Mount, presenting their arrival as evidence of a broader threat to Islamic sovereignty over Jerusalem. What Ubaida's speech revealed, and what has since been confirmed by researchers examining Hamas's communications, is that Hamas explicitly

¹⁰²Hamas military spokesman Abu Ubaida, 100-day speech (January 14, 2024): reference to red heifers. Chris Livesay, "What These Red Cows from Texas Have to Do with War and Peace in the Middle East," CBS News, March 5, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-war-hamas-red-heifers-from-texas-jerusalem-jewish-temple-al-aqsa/>; Magnus Ranstorp, "Inside Hamas: How It Thinks, Fights, and Governs," *CTC Sentinel* 18, no. 10 (October 6, 2025), <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/inside-hamas-how-it-thinks-fights-and-governs/>. The full passage refers to "an aggression that reached its peak against our path (Al-Quds) and Al-Aqsa ... and the bringing of red cows as an application of a detestable religious myth designed for aggression against the feelings of an entire nation."

incorporated eschatological symbolism into its justification for the October 7 attack.¹⁰³ The red heifers were not merely a detail. They functioned as a narrative anchor, a means of framing the attack as a religiously mandated response to a perceived existential threat to al-Aqsa and Islamic sovereignty over Jerusalem.

For audiences steeped in eschatological expectation, whether Muslim, Christian, or participants in secular conspiratorial subcultures, the red-heifer reference signaled that the conflict was operating on a register different from that of conventional politics. The same symbol could evoke fears of a threatened Al-Aqsa, expectations surrounding a Third Temple and the messianic era, Christian end-times prophecy, or conspiratorial claims about an impending Zionist religious project.

Iran's information ecosystem seized on this framing immediately. Iranian state media, IRGC-affiliated channels, and the network of alternative-media outlets documented in previous chapters amplified Abu Ubaida's speech and its eschatological context, translating it for diverse audiences. For Muslim audiences it activated narratives of sacred resistance; for Western Christian audiences it activated rapture and end-times prophecy frameworks; and for secular conspiracy audiences it activated Zionist-plot narratives. The same event, framed in the same eschatological register, reached each audience in the vocabulary it was prepared to receive.

Demons, Baal, and the Epstein Files: Antisemitism Goes Cosmic

The eschatological strategy took a new turn in the weeks preceding and following Operation Epic Fury, the 2026 American and Israeli military campaign against Iran. A cluster of narratives emerged simultaneously across the influencer ecosystem, each deploying apocalyptic and demonic imagery to frame Jewish people and Jewish institutions as instruments of cosmic evil.

On January 5, 2026, the internet personality Sneako posted a video of himself in New York City, narrating as he passed buses promoting Moshiach, the Jewish messianic concept. "They're promoting the Moshiach," he said, "which in Christianity is the Anti-Christ, and in Islam is the Dajjal."¹⁰⁴ The video, which reached millions of views,

¹⁰³Red heifer eschatological significance; Hamas's incorporation of eschatological symbolism. Ranstorp, "Inside Hamas: How It Thinks, Fights, and Governs." Five red heifers were brought from Texas to Israel in September 2022; see Don Wagner, "Palestinians Warn of a Jewish and Christian Zionist Plot to Threaten Al-Aqsa Mosque, Starting with a Red Heifer from Texas," *Mondoweiss*, April 21, 2024, <https://mondoweiss.net/2024/04/palestinians-warn-of-a-jewish-and-christian-zionist-plot-to-threaten-al-aqsa-mosque-starting-with-a-red-heifer-from-texas>.

¹⁰⁴Sneako video: Moshiach framing as Antichrist / Dajjal. The Political Geno (@thepoliticalgeno), "Spotted in NYC: SNEAKO points out a small van promoting a Jewish 'Mashiach,'" Instagram Reel, January 5, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTb3jYtWfC/>.

performed a specific operation: it took a Jewish religious practice visible in a public space and reframed it, for Christian and Muslim audiences simultaneously, as a public advertisement for the Antichrist.

On February 5, 2026, Dugin published an essay titled “Western Modernity as Antichrist: Epstein, Zionism, and Eschatology.” He wrote: “Elites still preach atheism for the masses (cattle, shrimps, goyim), but they themselves consciously embrace the Satanic cult, the devil’s faith. With cannibal rituals, killings, sacrifices of children, rapes. All that began with Western modernity, science, atheism. Western modernity is the Antichrist.” He further asserted that “Zionists are followers of the secret antinomistic messianic cult of Sabbatai Zvi and Yakob Frank,” a common antisemitic trope that has gained currency across both far-right and conspiratorial communities promoted by personalities like Candace Owens.¹⁰⁵

The Epstein files, the ongoing release of materials from investigations into Jeffrey Epstein’s sex-trafficking network, supplied Dugin and the wider influence ecosystem with a continually replenishing source of material for this framing. The revelations were presented not as evidence of specific criminal conduct by specific individuals but as proof of a demonic global elite: a Jewish and Zionist cabal governing Western political, financial, and moral life through child sacrifice, satanic ritual, and hidden power.

Around the same time, Iranian protesters were filmed burning an effigy of Baal, a Canaanite deity associated in certain Christian traditions with demonic spiritual forces, as part of protests connected to the military confrontation. The imagery was amplified across the influencer ecosystem as evidence of the spiritual dimension of the conflict: not a war between states but a war between God and the devil, with Israel and the United States cast on the demonic side.

This convergence — Sneako’s Moshiah video, Dugin’s Epstein essay, the Baal effigy, the red-heifer narrative — is not accidental. It reflects the eschatological communication strategy that Iran and Dugin have developed over years: the systematic deployment of apocalyptic imagery designed to reach audiences, particularly on the American Christian right, for whom the language of demonic conspiracy is native and for whom these images carry an emotional and spiritual weight that conventional geopolitical arguments cannot achieve.

¹⁰⁵Dugin essay, “Western Modernity as Antichrist: Epstein, Zionism, and Eschatology,” February 5, 2026. Published on Dugin’s platforms and amplified across the New Horizon network ecosystem. The Sabbatai Zvi / Jacob Frank trope is a recurring antisemitic claim asserting that Zionism is rooted in antinomian messianic cults; see Aleksandr Dugin, “Western Modernity as Antichrist: Epstein, Zionism, and Eschatology,” *Alexander Dugin*, February 5, 2026, <https://alexanderdugin.substack.com/p/western-modernity-as-antichrist-epstein>.

The New Influencers: Who Is Carrying the Message Now

Since October 7, the network documented in this report has absorbed and elevated a new generation of amplifiers. Some are figures whose relationships with the Iranian influence ecosystem are direct and documented. Others are influencers whose content aligns with Iranian narratives without any identifiable formal relationship, such as the GodivaGoddess account referenced in Chapter Four. All are consequential.

Jackson Hinkle is the one of the network's most important current amplifiers. Describing himself as a "MAGA communist," he has built a substantial following on X and Telegram by packaging explicit anti-Zionist conspiracy theories, including claims of a Zionist lobby controlling Congress, of Israel manipulating America into war, and of dual loyalty on the part of Jewish Americans, in the language of America First nationalism. His reach extends simultaneously to the MAGA right and to the anti-imperialist left, embodying the cross-spectrum arbitrage that is the network's core operational mechanism. Hinkle was among the most prominent amplifiers who picked up the fabricated Netanyahu death story from IRGC-friendly Telegram channels in March 2026 and carried it to millions of followers within the hour.

Sneako reaches young male audiences, particularly within the gaming and streaming communities, with content that packages antisemitic tropes in the vernacular of internet culture. His Moshiah video is one example. His broader content consistently frames Jewish people and institutions as alien, threatening, and eschatologically sinister. His reach among audiences under thirty is substantial.

GodivaGoddess is a multiplatform American influencer who began as a beauty and lifestyle account and underwent a strategic shift on October 7, redirecting her content toward Middle Eastern geopolitics with a consistent alignment with Iranian narratives. She stated publicly, before Khamenei's death in 2026, that she received "directives" from him, apparently as a badge of commitment rather than as a disclosure of coordination. There is no direct evidence linking her formally to the IRGC. But her content, which humanizes the Iranian-axis viewpoint, selectively frames information to align with Iranian interests, and monetizes her audience through merchandise and subscriptions, functions as a vector for Iranian state narratives regardless of whether the relationship is formal.¹⁰⁶

Alongside these newer figures, the academics of Muhammad Marandi's circle at the University of Tehran, including Marandi himself, Fouad Izadi, the former Yale scholar Helyeh Doutaghi (whose Yale Law School employment was terminated in March 2025, the school citing her refusal to cooperate with an investigation into alleged ties to the

¹⁰⁶GodivaGoddess: content pivot on October 7, alignment with Iranian narratives, reference to "directives" from Khamenei. Abbee Corb, Simon Wiesenthal Center Intelligence Report and Case Study on GodivaGoddess, internal document, 2023–2026.

sanctioned Samidoun network), and Setareh Sadeghi Mohammadi, have markedly increased their presence on English-language podcasts and alternative-media platforms since October 7, including Drop Site News and the Gray Zone.¹⁰⁷ Their activity suggests a coordinated pattern of participation in transnational media circuits. They are the academic face of Iran's wartime English-language information operation.

How Iranian Narratives Captured the American Right

The most politically significant development since October 7 has not been the radicalization of those who were already radicalized. It has been the migration of Iranian and Duginist narrative frameworks into mainstream American conservative media.

E. Michael Jones, who appeared at Talebzadeh's Hollywoodism conferences in the early 2010s, appeared on Candace Owens's show in July 2025 before an audience of millions. Jones has spent decades arguing for the inherent malignity of Jews and for Jewish responsibility for what he terms the corruption of Western civilization. A decade ago he was a conference attendee in Tehran. In 2025 he was a guest on one of the most-watched conservative media programs in America. The trajectory measures precisely how far the network's reach has extended.

Candace Owens herself has exhibited what the mapping analysis identified as the Reversal Indicator, a sudden shift from positions held for years toward alignment with network narratives. Her escalation from policy skepticism about U.S. military aid to Israel toward claims about Jewish media control and Holocaust minimization followed precisely the right-wing radicalization pathway documented in Chapter Four: incremental steps, each justifiable from the one before, arriving at a destination that would have been unthinkable from the starting point.

Narratives such as "Greater Israel," "Pax Judaica," and "the Epstein class" have migrated from Duginist intellectual circles, through the New Horizon network, and into Tucker Carlson's programming, Judge Andrew Napolitano's online show, and the broader ecosystem of right-wing alternative media. These narratives frame American foreign policy as fundamentally controlled by Jewish interests, a claim that would previously have been associated exclusively with explicit white-nationalist discourse and that is now presented as mainstream geopolitical realism.

This is not incidental to Iran's strategic objectives. A Republican coalition manipulated into division over Israel, with an isolationist populist wing hostile to U.S. support for

¹⁰⁷Marandi-circle academics: increased activity on English-language platforms after October 7. Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Cultural Diplomacy"; Kantz Feder, "Cultural Diplomacy in the Struggle against the United States"; Kantz Feder, "'New Horizons' in Iranian Anti-Americanism and Antisemitism." Figures include Seyed Mohammad Marandi, Fouad Izadi, Helyeh Doutaghi (whose Yale Law School employment was terminated in March 2025; the school cited her refusal to cooperate with an investigation into alleged ties to the sanctioned Samidoun network), and Setareh Sadeghi Mohammadi; platforms include Drop Site News and the Gray Zone.

Israel set against an establishment wing committed to it, produces precisely the domestic political conditions Iran seeks. It threatens U.S. alliances and weakens American willingness to sustain military and diplomatic pressure on Tehran. It creates openings for the “America First” arguments Dugin has been synthesizing for Western right-wing audiences for twenty years. And it generates the social polarization and institutional distrust that render societies less capable of a coherent response to external threats.

The divisions on the American right that appear to be the product of organic political evolution are, in significant part, the product of a sustained and deliberate investment in the intellectual and media infrastructure that produced them.

The Deadly Exchange Returns

Chapter Three documented how Iran institutionalized the Deadly Exchange accusation, the claim that Israel and American Jews bear direct responsibility for police brutality against Black Americans, through the 2014 and 2015 New Horizon conferences, and how that accusation achieved mainstream progressive legitimacy through the Jewish Voice for Peace campaign beginning in 2017.

Since October 7, the same network has adapted the Deadly Exchange narrative architecture to new domestic contexts. The most significant adaptation followed the January 2026 ICE shooting in Minnesota, which furnished a new domestic anchor for deploying Deadly Exchange-style claims, this time reframed around immigration enforcement rather than policing: the assertion that Israeli security services train ICE agents in the racist and militarized tactics they use against immigrant communities, rendering the American-Jewish relationship to Israel not merely a matter of foreign-policy sympathy but one of domestic complicity in racial violence against immigrants.

The adaptation required no new operation. The narrative architecture had already been normalized across heterogeneous ideological communities by a decade of cultivation. When the domestic anchor appeared, the trope re-emerged effortlessly, carried by the same influencers, through the same channels, to the same audiences, without apparent coordination.

This is what success looks like in influence operations. The operation no longer requires operation. The narrative has been rendered self-sustaining.

**“This is what success looks like in influence operations.
The operation no longer requires operation. The narrative
has been rendered self-sustaining.”**

Wartime Operations: The 2026 Escalation

The onset of the 2026 Iran-Israel-U.S. military confrontation accelerated every pattern documented in this report.

MuddyWater, the Iranian state-backed hacking group linked to the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, was found embedded in the networks of multiple U.S. companies, including banks, airports, and non-profits, with activity believed to have begun in early February and to have accelerated following U.S. and Israeli military strikes on Iran.¹⁰⁸ The embedding preceded the military conflict; Iran does not wait for hostilities to begin before positioning its cyber assets.

Iran's cognitive-warfare campaigns leveraged the imagery of General Qassem Soleimani and the martyrdom framework Dugin had articulated after Soleimani's 2020 assassination to frame the 2026 confrontation in terms of sacred resistance rather than military defeat. Even as Iran's navy was destroyed and its missile arsenal degraded by Operation Epic Fury, the information operation framed the outcome as a spiritual victory, casting it as the sacrifice of resistance against the demonic West for audiences who had been primed to receive precisely that framing.

The fabricated Netanyahu death story, with which this report's Prologue opens, is one illustration of how the wartime information operation functioned. It is not the most consequential. The more consequential operations were those that did not make the news at all: the sustained amplification of casualty figures stripped of context, the framing of American military strikes as attacks on civilians, and the activation of the Baal, Epstein, and demonic-cabal narratives to reach Christian audiences for whom the conflict could be cast as a war against spiritual evil. These operations ran continuously, on every platform, in every language, throughout the military confrontation.

The War Does Not End When the Missiles Stop

Operation Epic Fury attacked Iran's conventional military capacity. It did not touch the network this report has described.

“Operation Epic Fury...did not touch the network this report has described.”

The conference participants, the alternative-media ecosystem, the academic circles, the influencer networks, the Wikipedia editing operations, the sock-puppet accounts, the fake

¹⁰⁸MuddyWater embedding in U.S. corporate networks; activity from early February 2026. Ravie Lakshmanan, “Iran-Linked MuddyWater Hackers Target U.S. Networks With New Dindoor Backdoor,” *The Hacker News*, March 6, 2026, <https://thehackernews.com/2026/03/iran-linked-muddywater-hackers-target.html>. MuddyWater, also known as Seedworm, is linked to the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS).

news sites, the APT groups, and the eschatological framing strategy all remain intact. The IRGC's intelligence apparatus, which directed the cyber operations, remains operational. The Ministry of Intelligence and Security, which ran Handala and MuddyWater, remains operational. The Marandi circle at the University of Tehran continues to produce English-language content for Western alternative-media platforms. GodivaGoddess is still posting. Jackson Hinkle is still amplifying.

Operation Epic Fury attacked Iran's military capacity. It did not touch the information infrastructure that took thirty years to build.

What would it take to dismantle that infrastructure? What levers are available, and which of them have American policymakers, technology companies, and civil-society organizations failed to use? Those are the questions Chapter Six addresses.

What Must Change

Findings, Accountability, and the Path Forward

This report has documented a thirty-year operation: Iran's sustained psychological and information warfare campaign against the United States and its allies, with antisemitism as its operational connective tissue. It has traced the campaign from Farrakhan's 1996 visit to Tehran through the conference circuit, the digital infrastructure, the eschatological strategy, and the wartime escalation of 2026. It has named the actors, described the mechanisms, and shown the results.

This chapter offers no comfort. The campaign has been largely successful. The network that runs it remains intact. Military force has not touched it and cannot. The platforms that enable it have not been held accountable. The legal frameworks that could constrain it are underused. The public understanding that would make societies resilient to it is underdeveloped.

None of this, however, is irreversible. The findings, recommendations, and frameworks that follow are offered not as a comprehensive policy agenda, since this report is not a government document, but as a practical guide for the actors with the most leverage: Congress, the executive branch, technology companies, journalists, and civil-society organizations. Each possesses tools it is not fully using. This chapter identifies those tools and explains how to use them.

What This Report Proves: Five Findings

Finding One: Iran's influence infrastructure is structural, not digital. The most important finding of this report is also the least appreciated. Iran's influence operations in the United States rest on a foundation of personal relationships, institutional infrastructure, and ideological cultivation that predates social media by decades: the Hollywoodism and New Horizon conference networks, the Press TV ecosystem, and the academic circles surrounding the University of Tehran's English-language outreach program. These are not features of the internet age; they constitute an offline network that the internet amplifies. Disrupting the digital manifestations of this operation without addressing its offline foundations will not end it. When platforms ban accounts, other accounts appear; when domains are seized, others are registered. The human network that produces, distributes, and amplifies the content is not addressable through content moderation.

Finding Two: Antisemitism is the operation's load-bearing structure. Iran's information operations are not occasionally antisemitic. They are antisemitic by design, because antisemitism is the only narrative that allows Iran to reach white nationalists, Black nationalists, left anti-imperialists, Christian nationalists, and Muslim communities

simultaneously, using different framing for each while pursuing a single strategic objective. To treat Iran's antisemitism as incidental to its geopolitical operations is to miss the point entirely. It is the mechanism. Any counter-strategy that does not address antisemitism as a national-security vulnerability, rather than merely a civil-rights or social-prejudice concern, addresses a symptom rather than the disease.

“Iran’s information operations are antisemitic by design... antisemitism is the only narrative that allows Iran to reach white nationalists, Black nationalists, left anti-imperialists, Christian nationalists, and Muslim communities.”

Finding Three: Platform architecture is a structural enabler of state-sponsored information warfare. The algorithmic amplification systems, reactive content moderation, and Section 230 liability protection that characterize American social-media platforms are not passive features of the information environment. They are active enablers of the operations documented in this report. Iran's fake news sites, sock-puppet networks, and ISNAD-style AI persona campaigns all operated on American platforms for extended periods before being disrupted. The platforms possessed detection capabilities they did not deploy, and the legal framework gave them no incentive to deploy those capabilities proactively. That alignment of incentives must change.

Finding Four: The red-brown convergence is engineered, not organic. The ideological alignment between far-right and far-left actors on questions of Israel, Jewish power, and American foreign policy, the phenomenon political analysts have treated as an organic emergence of polarization, is in significant part the product of deliberate Iranian and Russian investment in real-world networking and ideological cultivation over more than twenty years. The New Horizon conferences did not merely observe this convergence; they produced it. Recognizing this changes the nature of the counter-strategy: it is not sufficient to address the ideas, because the infrastructure that generates and sustains the convergence must also be addressed.

Finding Five: Existing countermeasures are necessary but insufficient. The U.S. government's existing toolkit, comprising Treasury sanctions, DOJ domain seizures, platform bans, and criminal indictments of APT operators, has disrupted specific operations and exposed specific actors. It has not materially degraded Iran's overall influence capacity. The network is too redundant, too deeply embedded in legitimate civil society and academic discourse, and too well adapted to route around disruption to be defeated by node removal. A fundamentally different approach is required, one that addresses the structural conditions making the network possible rather than its individual manifestations.

Recommendations for Congress

Section 230 Is a National Security Problem

Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act was designed to allow the early internet to develop without crippling litigation risk, and it achieved that goal. It also produced, as a consequence its 1996 drafters could not have anticipated, the legal environment in which a sanctioned foreign government can run a sustained influence operation on American social-media platforms without those platforms bearing any legal consequence for hosting, amplifying, and profiting from that operation.

This report does not argue for the repeal of Section 230. Blanket repeal would create its own serious problems, among them the incentivizing of over-removal of speech by platforms seeking to minimize liability exposure. What this report argues for is a targeted national-security carve-out: a provision removing Section 230 immunity for content that can be attributed, through established intelligence and law-enforcement processes, to designated foreign adversaries or their proxies.

Several legislative proposals in 2025 and 2026 have moved in this direction, including provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act closing loopholes that allowed agents from countries of concern, among them Iran, China, Russia, and North Korea, to avoid disclosure requirements.¹⁰⁹ The TRUMP America AI Act of 2026 has proposed repealing Section 230 in its entirety and establishing a new federal products-liability framework for AI-generated content, the most sweeping platform-liability proposal to date.¹¹⁰ Legal strategies have increasingly focused on platform design rather than content in order to circumvent existing Section 230 immunity, seeking to hold companies liable

¹⁰⁹Tessa Capeloto, "Congressional Spotlight on FARA: Heightened Focus on U.S. Non-Profits and Foreign Influence and Other Noteworthy Developments," *Wiley*, February 24, 2026, <https://www.wiley.law/alert-congressional-spotlight-on-fara-heightened-focus-on-us-non-profits-and-foreign-influence-and-other-noteworthy-developments>.

¹¹⁰TRUMP AMERICA AI Act (2026): proposed Section 230 repeal and federal platform-liability standards. Paulo Carvão, "National Policy Framework Turns AI Preemption Into a 2026 Political Test," *Forbes*, April 2, 2026, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paulocarvao/2026/04/02/national-policy-framework-turns-ai-preemption-into-a-2026-political-test/>; Kate Ruane, "Section 230 at 30: We Need It Now More than Ever," Center for Democracy and Technology, February 3, 2026, <https://cdt.org/insights/section-230-at-30-we-need-it-now-more-than-ever/>; see also Kevin T. Frazier and Jennifer Huddleston, "The Latest AI Bill's 5 Biggest Flaws," *Cato at Liberty*, March 19, 2026, <https://www.cato.org/blog/latest-ai-bills-5-biggest-flaws>.

for how their algorithms amplify state-sponsored content rather than for the content itself.¹¹¹

The core principle this report recommends is straightforward: platforms that knowingly host and algorithmically amplify content from designated foreign terrorist organizations and their state sponsors should not be shielded from liability for the consequences. The designation process already exists. The attribution technology already exists. The legal mechanism of the carve-out already exists in other contexts. What is missing is the will to apply these tools to influence operations.

Recommendations for Technology Platforms

The Platforms Know More Than They Disclose

Social-media companies possess detection capabilities that far exceed what they deploy against state-sponsored influence operations. Coordinated inauthentic behavior, whether accounts created simultaneously, posting identical content from the same origin point, or using the same linguistic signatures, is detectable with tools these companies use commercially. The question is not capability. It is priority and disclosure.

This report recommends four specific requirements for social-media platforms operating in the United States.

Mandatory coordinated-threat disclosure. When a platform identifies and removes a coordinated influence operation linked to a designated foreign adversary, it should be required to disclose that removal to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within a defined timeframe, with sufficient technical detail to enable government and partner analysis. Voluntary disclosure, the current norm, is inadequate. Operations run for months before companies choose to act, and removal often happens quietly, without public transparency or government notification.

Algorithmic transparency for national-security content. Platforms should be required to disclose, to designated government agencies and authorized, qualified researchers, how their recommendation algorithms treat content from accounts subsequently identified as foreign state-sponsored operations. Understanding how Iran's sock-puppet networks achieved the amplification they did requires access to algorithmic data that platforms currently treat as proprietary.

Mandatory AI-generated-content labeling. AI-generated content, including the personas deployed in campaigns such as ISNAD, should be labeled as such when posted.

¹¹¹Legal shift toward platform-design liability to circumvent Section 230. Sara Collins, "Repealing Section 230 Won't Protect Kids Online," *Public Knowledge*, February 10, 2026, <https://publicknowledge.org/repealing-section-230-wont-protect-kids-online/>; Ruane, "Section 230 at 30."

Platforms possess the technical capability to implement this requirement. They have not done so consistently, and a legislative mandate is appropriate.

Public-private intelligence-sharing protocols. The government knows things about Iranian APT operations that it cannot share publicly without revealing sources and methods. Social media companies know things about inauthentic behavior patterns on their platforms that they do not share with the government. A formal public-private intelligence sharing protocol, modeled on existing financial sector threat intelligence arrangements, would allow each to benefit from what the other knows, producing faster and more comprehensive identification of coordinated influence operations.

Recommendations for the Executive Branch and Intelligence Community

Artificial Intelligence Is the Next Battlefield

The ISNAD campaign, documented in Chapter Four, demonstrated what AI-enabled influence operations look like at current capability levels: AI-generated personas with convincing photographs, biographical details, and posting histories, deployed at scale across multiple platforms. This is the current baseline, not the ceiling.

Generative AI has lowered the technical barriers for Iranian actors, enabling them to generate synthetic disinformation rapidly, at scales and speeds previously impossible. The same technology that allows a single operator to manage thousands of convincing fake accounts also enables the generation of personalized messaging: content tailored to individual user profiles, interests, and vulnerabilities, generated automatically and delivered through whichever channel reaches the target most effectively.

Following the 2026 Iran-Israel-U.S. military confrontation, Iran-aligned cyber units have operated with increased tactical autonomy, producing attack patterns that deviate from historical norms and are therefore harder to predict and detect.¹¹² Tehran has used AI-generated content to amplify perceptions of military destruction and to sow domestic panic under conditions of open conflict. It is the information equivalent of a missile barrage, designed to achieve psychological effect before facts can be verified.

The recommendation here is direct: the U.S. government must invest in AI-enabled counter-influence capabilities at the same pace at which adversaries are investing in AI-enabled influence capabilities. The current investment gap is significant. CISA, the intelligence community, and DARPA maintain relevant programs that require substantially greater resources, and public-private research partnerships focused

¹¹²Iran-aligned cyber units operating with increased tactical autonomy after the 2026 war. Unit 42, "Threat Brief: Escalation of Cyber Risk Related to Iran," Palo Alto Networks, March 2, 2026, updated March 26, 2026, <https://unit42.paloaltonetworks.com/iranian-cyberattacks-2026/>.

specifically on AI-generated-content detection are essential. The alternative is to continue fighting a modern information war with detection tools from 2018.

Recommendations for the Legal and Regulatory Community

The Foreign Agents Registration Act Should Be Enforced

The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) requires individuals acting as agents of foreign principals to disclose that relationship publicly. It is among the most powerful tools available for rendering Iran's American influence network visible, and it is chronically underused.

Many of the American participants in the New Horizon and Hollywoodism conferences documented in Chapter Three arguably triggered FARA registration requirements. They accepted travel sponsorship from Iranian state-linked organizations; they appeared on Iranian state media; and they produced content distributed by IRGC-linked outlets. The U.S. Treasury's own designation of the New Horizon Organization confirmed that these conferences served as platforms for IRGC intelligence recruitment. Participants who received material benefits from designated entities and acted as agents of Iranian state messaging should have registered under FARA. Many did not.

Recent legislative steps have sought to close loopholes that allowed agents of countries of concern to avoid registration by claiming commercial or domestic-interest exemptions.¹¹³ The Department of Justice's FARA Unit, while refocused on civil enforcement following the Attorney General's February 2025 memorandum, saw enforcement renewed through a September 2025 presidential directive targeting foreign-linked organizations, signaling that FARA's reach, though redirected, remains active.¹¹⁴ Several states have enacted their own FARA equivalents that lack the federal commercial exemptions, providing additional enforcement tools where federal jurisdiction is limited.

¹¹³As of late 2025, bipartisan legislation, such as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), has sought to close loopholes that allowed agents from countries of concern, including Iran, China, Russia, and North Korea, to avoid registration by claiming commercial or domestic-interest exemptions. See Stephen Cobb, John F. Korba, and Olivia S. Singelmann, "A New Year and a Renewed Focus on Foreign Influence Laws," Foley & Lardner LLP, February 10, 2026, <https://www.foley.com/insights/publications/2026/02/a-new-year-and-a-renewed-focus-on-foreign-influence-laws/>; PAID OFF Act of 2025, S. Amdt. 3707 to S. 2296, 119th Cong. (2025), <https://www.congress.gov/amendment/119th-congress/senate-amendment/3707/text>; Brandon L. Van Grack, Haydn Forrest, and Emilee Karr, "The State of FARA," *Lawfare*, January 28, 2026, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-state-of-fara>.

¹¹⁴DOJ FARA Unit: the February 2025 Bondi memorandum prioritizing criminal prosecution for traditional espionage, with civil enforcement continuing. Cobb, Korba, and Singelmann, "A New Year and a Renewed Focus on Foreign Influence Laws"; Matthew T. Sanderson, "FARA Back from the Dead: Trump Revives FARA Enforcement," *FARA.us*, September 25, 2025, <https://www.fara.us/trump-revives-fara-enforcement-2025-memo>.

The goal of FARA enforcement is not primarily criminal prosecution. It is transparency. When an American journalist, academic, or activist is required to disclose that they have accepted Iranian state sponsorship, that disclosure changes how their audience evaluates their content. The most powerful effect of FARA is not punitive but informational.

U.S. Sanctions Laws Should Be Enforced Against Prohibited Dealings with Designated Iranian Entities

The relationships documented in this report should also be examined through the lens of U.S. sanctions law. Under authorities rooted in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), U.S. persons are generally prohibited, absent an applicable exemption or authorization, from engaging in certain transactions with the Government of Iran, the IRGC, and other sanctioned or blocked Iranian entities. These prohibitions can extend beyond direct financial transfers to the provision of services and other forms of prohibited dealings.

Accordingly, Americans who accept financial support, sponsored travel, compensation, or other material benefits from sanctioned Iranian entities—or who knowingly provide services to them—should face appropriate scrutiny for potential sanctions violations. The distinction from FARA is important: FARA may require an individual to disclose that they are acting on behalf of a foreign principal; sanctions law may prohibit the underlying relationship or transaction itself. Individuals participating in Iranian state-sponsored influence networks should therefore be evaluated not only for potential failures to register under FARA, but also for whether their conduct violates applicable U.S. sanctions.

Recommendations for Journalists

This report was produced, in part, as a source document for journalists. The operations documented here, the conference circuit, the fake-news ecosystem, the Wikipedia manipulation, the influencer pipelines, the election-interference operations, are all stories that have been reported partially and episodically. This report attempts to show what they look like as a unified architecture, so that journalists who understand that architecture can cover individual incidents within it more accurately and more usefully.

Three practical tools from this report warrant emphasis for working reporters.

The 72-Hour Window is a real-time diagnostic for breaking events. When a geopolitical narrative appears fully formed within the first two hours of a breaking event, with a complete causal framework, named villains, and moral conclusions, that is a signal of coordinated preparation rather than organic analysis. The time to examine the provenance of such a narrative is within the seventy-two-hour window after it emerges, not after it has achieved mainstream pickup.

The Reversal Indicator is useful for covering influence on specific individuals. When a public figure suddenly reverses long-held positions to align with narratives promoted by Iranian or Russian state media, particularly when the reversal happens quickly and the new position is adopted with the same confidence as the old, the shift warrants scrutiny regarding what changed and why.

The Legitimacy Gradient is essential for covering alternative-media ecosystems. When conspiracy-level content cites the Gray Zone, which cites MintPress, which cites a UN report, the chain of citation creates the appearance of corroboration even as each link degrades the original source's accuracy, context, and caveats. Tracing that chain, and reporting on how the original source's meaning has been transformed as it traveled, is a distinct and valuable journalistic task that requires understanding the ecosystem as a whole.

Covering this ecosystem responsibly also requires care about amplification. Reporting on the influencer network documented in Chapter Four necessarily involves naming figures whose reach is enhanced by mainstream attention. The general principle is to report on the mechanism, not the message: explain how a figure such as Jackson Hinkle functions within the ecosystem, rather than repeating the content he amplifies. The former serves the public interest. The latter extends the operation.

Recommendations for Civil Society

Resilience Is a Civic Project

The recommendations above are addressed to governments, platforms, and journalists. They are necessary. They are not sufficient.

The most consequential battleground in Iran's information war is not X, or Wikipedia, or the U.S. Code. It is the American mind, and specifically the capacity of American citizens to receive information critically, to identify manipulation, and to maintain epistemic standards in an environment deliberately engineered to undermine them. That capacity is a civic asset, and like all civic assets it requires cultivation.

“The most consequential battleground in Iran's information war is not X, or Wikipedia, or the U.S. Code. It is the American mind.”

Media literacy is not a panacea. Sophisticated influence operations are specifically designed to defeat media-literacy training by mimicking its vocabulary, presenting conspiracy content as “independent analysis,” framing state propaganda as “what the mainstream media won't tell you,” and using the language of critical thinking to produce uncritical acceptance of state-sponsored narratives. The solution is not more media literacy in the abstract but specific, targeted inoculation: teaching audiences to recognize

The most effective inoculation strategy, supported by the growing literature on “prebunking,” is exposure to the technique before exposure to the content. When people understand how content laundering works before they encounter a specific instance of it, they prove significantly more resistant to it than those exposed to the content first and the explanation afterward. Civil-society organizations, educational institutions, and public libraries are the natural delivery mechanisms for this kind of targeted inoculation. They possess the community trust that government agencies and technology platforms lack, the local knowledge to make abstract operations concrete and relevant, and the independence to operate outside the political and legal constraints that make government counter-messaging difficult.

“The most effective inoculation strategy, supported by the growing literature on “prebunking,” is exposure to the technique before exposure to the content.”

Democratic societies are made more resilient against information operations not primarily by government action, though government action is necessary, but by informed citizens and institutions capable of explaining what is being done to them, why it is being done, and what it looks like from the inside.

This report is an attempt at that explanation. Understanding the machine is the beginning of defeating it.

* * *

“When a geopolitical narrative appears fully formed within the first two hours of a breaking event, with a complete causal framework, named villains, and moral conclusions, that is a signal of coordinated preparation rather than organic analysis.”

Key Actors: An Annotated Reference

Individuals and Organizations Named in This Report

This appendix provides brief identifications of the significant individuals and organizations named in the report. Entries are listed alphabetically: individuals by last name where known, organizations by their first significant word. Cross-references are given where an actor is more fully described under another entry. As the report states throughout, inclusion here is not an assertion that the individual or organization is a knowing agent of the Iranian state. The entries describe each actor's documented role within, or relationship to, the influence ecosystem the report examines.

A

Abdul-Rauf, Mahmoud (Chris Jackson). Former NBA player and activist. A documented Hollywoodism conference participant (2013) and a recurring presence on Russian and Iranian media platforms thereafter. Appeared on an Iranian Quranic television reality program on IRIB in February 2026.

Abu Ubaida. Nom de guerre of the Hamas military spokesman who delivered the one-hundred-day address (January 14, 2024) that referenced red heifers in justifying the October 7 attack. Deceased.

Ahmadzadeh, Habib. Iranian filmmaker and scriptwriter with a long career in the Basij, the IRGC-affiliated paramilitary militia; accompanied CODEPINK delegations to Iran in 2008.

Al-Asi, Imam Muhammad. Muslim intellectual and activist based in Washington, D.C.; associated with the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought; longtime speaker at pro-Iranian “resistance” conferences. *See also* Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought.

B

Baraka, Ajamu. Green Party vice-presidential candidate (2016) and co-founder of the Black Alliance for Peace; involved in the 2001 Durban preparatory process.

Barrett, Kevin. American author, journalist, and conspiracy theorist; former professor; editor at Veterans Today and host of Truth Jihad Radio. A regular New Horizon and Hollywoodism participant who also appeared at the Left Forum. Promotes 9/11 Trutherism and antisemitic conspiracy theories.

Basira Press / Ali Salaam. Independent media outlet founded by Ali Salaam (formerly Alex Fidel), a California libertarian convert to Islam. Publishes interviews with Iranian English-speaking figures in state-aligned media ecosystems; connected to Palestine conferences in Yemen attended by Jackson Hinkle and others.

Black Alliance for Peace. U.S.-based human-rights and anti-war organization founded by Ajamu Baraka in 2017; connected to Durban preparatory networks.

Blumenthal, Max. American journalist and founder of the Grayzone. *See* The Grayzone.

C

Clarity Press. Independent publisher in Atlanta, Georgia, founded in 1988; shares contributors, distribution channels, and amplification networks with MintPress News and Basira Press.

CODEPINK. American anti-war organization co-founded by Medea Benjamin in 2002; participated in Iranian-organized cultural delegations beginning in 2008. Appears throughout this report as a node in Iran’s cross-spectrum outreach to the American left.

Cognitive Design Production Center (CDPC). IRGC subordinate organization sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury in December 2024 for planning influence operations against the U.S. electorate since at least 2023.

Collins, Michael Piper (1960–2015). American author, radio host, and antisemitic conspiracy theorist; several books translated into Persian and Arabic. Introduced to President Ahmadinejad by Nader Talebzadeh in 2005; attended Iran’s 2006 Holocaust-denial conference.

D

Dialogue Works. YouTube channel run by the Iranian academic Nima Rostami Alkhorshid from Brazil; hosts figures documented throughout this report alongside credentialed left-wing academics and amplifies Duginist multipolarity discourse to English-speaking audiences.

Doutaghi, Helyeh. Former Yale scholar removed following an investigation into alleged ties to a U.S.-designated organization; associated with the Marandi circle at the University of Tehran; active on English-language alternative-media platforms since October 7, 2023.

Duke, David. White supremacist, Holocaust denier, and former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan; operated the website DavidDuke.com. Traveled the Islamic world promoting September 11 conspiracy theories from 2002 and attended Iran’s 2006 Holocaust-denial conference.

Dugin, Aleksandr. Russian political philosopher and neo-Eurasianist ideologue; designated on the U.S. Specially Designated Nationals list and under EU and UK sanctions; promoted extensively by Russian state media. Author of *The Fourth Political Theory* (Russian 2009; English 2012). Advocates a “beyond left and right, but against the center” strategy and regards Iran as a civilizational and spiritual ally. Supplied the intellectual scaffolding for Iran’s cross-spectrum antisemitic influence operations. A central figure throughout this report.

E

Emennet Pasargad / Aria Sepehr Ayandehsazan (ASA). Iranian cyber firm linked to the IRGC; responsible for the 2020 Proud Boys voter-intimidation email campaign, the theft of voter data from Alaska's online voter-registration system, and post-election intimidation of American election officials.

F

Farrakhan, Louis. Nation of Islam leader; made multiple official visits to Iran beginning in 1996; a longtime promoter of antisemitic and anti-American rhetoric and an early bridge between Black nationalist organizing and Iranian state actors.

Finkelstein, Norman. American academic and author. His work on Israeli policy is selectively amplified and radicalized as it travels through the influence ecosystem, providing academic inoculation against charges of antisemitism. Not an Iranian agent; characterized here as a legitimacy anchor whose work is weaponized by the network.

G

Gendron, Payton. Perpetrator of the May 2022 Buffalo, New York mass shooting that killed ten Black Americans. His manifesto embraced the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, cited MintPress News, and called for red-brown convergence. Referenced in this report to document the real-world consequences of the content ecosystem described.

Giraldi, Philip. Former CIA officer; executive director of the Council for the National Interest; contributor to the *Unz Review*. A *New Horizon* and *Hollywoodism* participant who promotes claims of Zionist control of American foreign policy and has made unfounded allegations about Israeli involvement in September 11.

GodivaGoddess. American multiplatform influencer who began as a beauty and lifestyle account and pivoted to Middle Eastern geopolitics after October 7, 2023; content consistently aligns with Iranian narratives. Has publicly stated that she received directives from Khamenei. No documented formal IRGC relationship.

The Grayzone / Max Blumenthal. American alternative-media outlet founded by Max Blumenthal; functions as a primary narrative-laundering node, repackaging Iranian, Syrian, and Russian state positions as independent investigative journalism.

H

Handala Hack. *See* Void Manticore / Handala Hack.

Hashemi, Marzieh. American-born convert to Islam from New Orleans; naturalized Iranian citizen. Moved to Iran in 2008 and joined Press TV; a close colleague of Nader Talebzadeh who hosted programs interviewing Western figures sympathetic to Iranian narratives and facilitated Cynthia McKinney's repeated appearances on Iranian state media.

Hinkle, Jackson. American social-media influencer; self-described “MAGA communist” with substantial reach on X and Telegram. Among the most prominent amplifiers of the fabricated Netanyahu death story (March 2026). A key bridge actor between the MAGA right and the anti-Zionist left.

I

Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT). UK-based Islamic research and activist center; promotes itself as an international hub for the global Islamic movement. Affiliated publication: *Crescent International*. Associated figure: Imam Muhammad al-Asi.

International Union of Virtual Media (IUVM). Iranian information ecosystem identified by the Digital Forensic Research Lab in 2019; distributed political content across hundreds of websites and social-media accounts posing as independent news outlets.

Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). Iran’s state-controlled broadcasting authority; operates Press TV and Hispan TV. Designated a Specially Designated National by the United States.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Branch of Iran’s armed forces responsible for foreign influence operations, proxy-militia networks, and intelligence activities. Its intelligence arm (IRGC-IO) reports directly to the Office of the Supreme Leader and is designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department.¹ A central institution throughout this report.

J

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). American Jewish organization identified in the influence-mapping analysis as lending Jewish credibility to positions that delegitimize Jewish self-determination and to the Deadly Exchange campaign. *Note: this report attributes no coordination with Iranian state actors to JVP; the characterization concerns its functional role within the influence ecosystem.*

Jones, E. Michael. Traditionalist Catholic writer and editor of *Culture Wars* magazine; a longtime promoter of antisemitic theology and a connective node between Duginist intellectual circles and Iranian-aligned media. Appeared at the Hollywoodism conferences (2011–2013) and on Candace Owens’s show in July 2025.

K

Kiswani, Nerdeen. Leader of Within Our Lifetime. *See* Within Our Lifetime / Nerdeen Kiswani.

¹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, “Designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,” fact sheet, April 8, 2019, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps/>.

L

LaRouche, Lyndon / LaRouche movement. Fringe American political network that migrated from the far left toward an authoritarian, conspiratorial politics while retaining its conspiratorial energy throughout. Cultivated close ties with Iranian state media after September 11 and shared an antisemitic conspiratorial worldview with Iran and the Nation of Islam.

Leon III, Wilmer. American political scientist and media commentator; contributor to RT and Press TV; participant in the 2015 New Horizon police-brutality conference.

M

Marandi, Seyed Mohammad. Iranian-American professor at the University of Tehran; Iran's most prominent English-language media representative; a regular on Western alternative-media podcasts and Drop Site News. Represents Iranian state positions in accessible, academic-style language.

Maupin, Caleb. American activist formerly with the World Workers' Party; contributor to RT. Participated in the 2014 New Horizon conference and a 2018 conference in Moscow alongside Dugin; advocates populist unity between far right and far left.

McKinney, Cynthia. Former U.S. congresswoman (Georgia) and Green Party presidential candidate; a regular Press TV interviewee beginning in 2011 who performed the Arba'in pilgrimage in Iran in 2017 alongside Dugin and led a "Dignity Delegation" to Libya (2011).

MintPress News. American online media platform founded in 2012 by Mnar Adley in Minneapolis. Presents as an independent progressive watchdog while functioning as a relay node for Iranian and Russian narratives; documented links to the Russian state-backed Maffick and Redfish operations. Cited in Payton Gendron's 2022 manifesto.

Musa, Abdul Alim. Founder and director of the Sabiqun organization and imam of Masjid Al-Islam, Washington, D.C.; founded the Islamic Institute of Counter-Zionist American Psychological Warfare. Has accused "Zionist-Americans" of engineering September 11 and argued that American policing of Black communities is modeled on Israeli tactics.

N

National Vanguard. White nationalist organization founded by Kevin Alfred Strom in 2005.

New Horizon International Institute for Independent Thinkers and Artists. Iran-based organization founded by Nader Talebzadeh; hosted international conferences from 2014 to 2019. Designated by OFAC under Executive Order 13224 on February 13, 2019, for serving as a platform for IRGC intelligence recruitment while propagating antisemitic and anti-American narratives.

Nio Thinker / Savannah Time / End Times Today. IRGC-affiliated (Storm-2035) fake-news sites identified by Microsoft in 2024, targeting left-leaning, conservative, and Christian eschatological audiences respectively; all plagiarized content from mainstream American outlets.

O

Olivier, Art. Libertarian politician and former vice-presidential candidate; 9/11 Truther and Hollywoodism participant who disclosed that conference organizers sponsored his trip.

Owens, Candace. American conservative media personality whose trajectory ran from policy skepticism about U.S. support for Israel toward claims about Jewish media control and Holocaust minimization. Hosted E. Michael Jones in July 2025.

P

Piskorski, Mateusz. Polish politician; president of the European Center for Geopolitical Analysis; longtime supporter of Dugin and the Kremlin; participant in the 2015 New Horizon conference.

Press TV. Iran's English-language satellite news network, launched in 2007 under IRIB; designated a Specially Designated National by the United States. The primary platform for Iranian state narratives directed at Western audiences.

Q

Qaddoumi, Khaled. Hamas's representative to Iran; participated in a 2014 New Horizon panel alongside CODEPINK founder Medea Benjamin.

Quaglia, Roberto. Italian writer and supporter of the multipolar world order; participant in the 2015 New Horizon conference.

S

Savin, Leonid. Russian political analyst and close associate of Aleksandr Dugin; editor-in-chief of Geopolitica.ru and a senior figure in the International Eurasian Movement. A regular New Horizon participant and organizer whose writing is frequently translated into Farsi.

Seba, Kemi. Pan-Africanist leader and activist; participant in the 2015 New Horizon police-brutality conference.

Shabazz, Malcolm. Grandson of Malcolm X; documented within the Iranian state-media orbit. Press TV falsely claimed he had been arrested by the FBI en route to a 2013 Hollywoodism conference, a claim rejected by his family.

Simon Wiesenthal Center. The authoring organization of this report; an international Jewish human-rights organization founded in 1977 and headquartered in Los Angeles.

Sneako. American internet personality who reaches large young male audiences; posted a video reframing the Jewish messianic concept of Moshiach as the Antichrist / Dajjal (January 5, 2026) and consistently frames Jewish people and institutions in eschatological and conspiratorial terms.

Strom, Kevin Alfred. White nationalist and founder of National Vanguard (2005); publicly praised Ahmadinejad's outreach to American far-right media following the 2006 Holocaust-denial conference.

T

Talebzadeh, Nader (1953–2022). Iranian filmmaker, journalist, and cultural strategist; Director General of Foreign Programs at IRIB and architect of Iran's cultural diplomacy toward Western audiences. Founder of the New Horizon conference series. Eulogized by Iranian media as "General Soft War." A central figure throughout this report.

Tech for Palestine. Non-profit project incubator and coalition of tech professionals founded by Paul Biggar in January 2024; identified in a U.S. congressional inquiry into Wikipedia manipulation.

TMJ News Network. Alternative-media network connected to MintPress News founder Mnar Adley; contributors include Setareh Sadeghi Mohammadi of the University of Tehran.

V

Void Manticore / Handala Hack (Red Sandstorm, Banished Kitten). Iranian cyber persona operated by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security; established December 2023. Responsible for cyberattacks against Israeli and American targets, including Stryker (March 2026). Four associated MOIS domains were seized by the U.S. Department of Justice in March 2026.

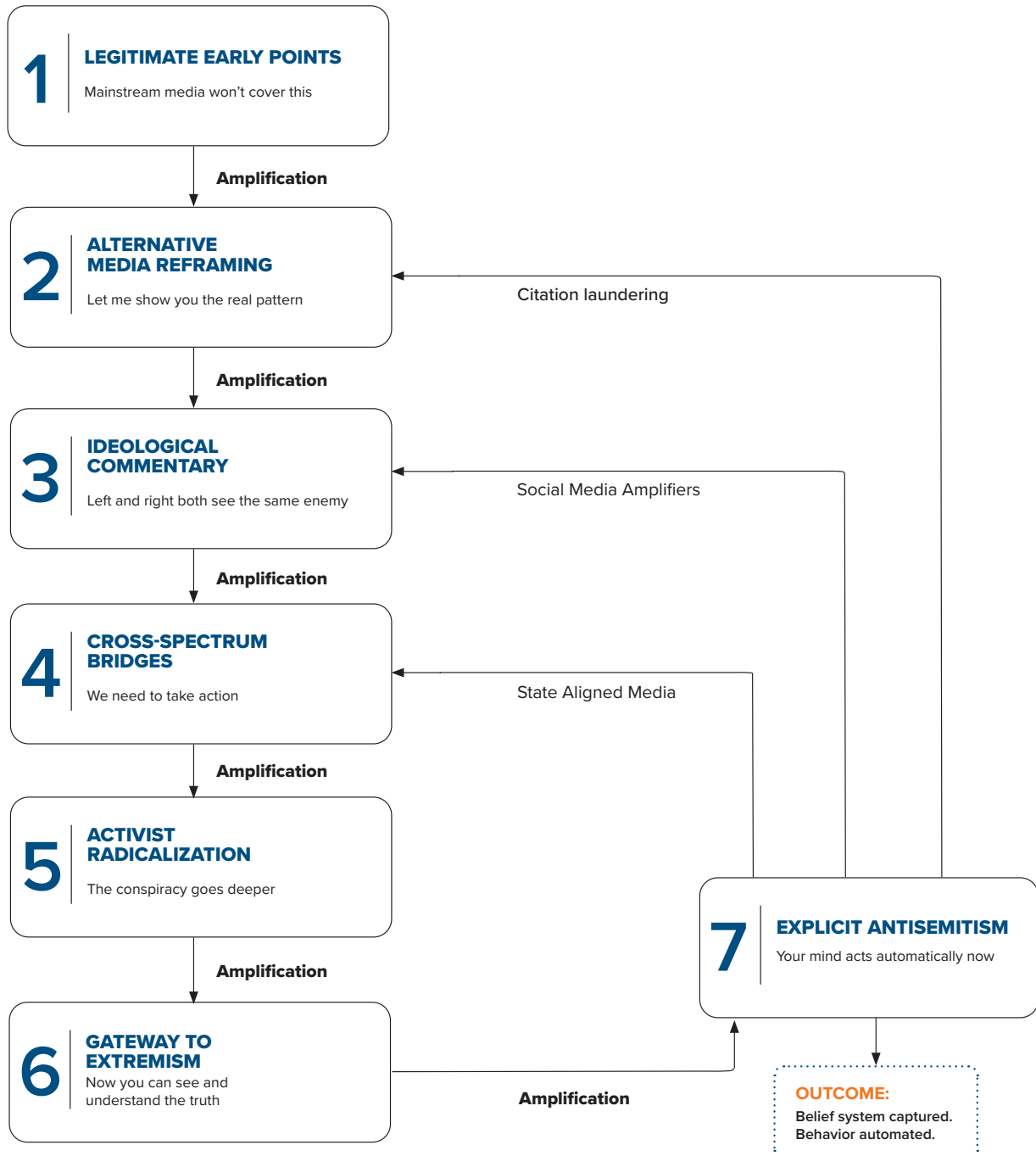
W

Weber, Mark. Founder of the Institute for Historical Review and one of America's leading promoters of Holocaust denial; participant in the Hollywoodism conferences.

Weir, Alison. American activist and writer; founder of If Americans Knew and president of the Council for the National Interest; participant in New Horizon and Hollywoodism conferences and the Left Forum.

Within Our Lifetime / Nerdeen Kiswani. New York-based Palestinian-solidarity organization and its leader; identified in the influence-mapping analysis as translating online radicalization into direct action, including protests targeting Jewish institutions and intimidation on university campuses.

THE 7-STAGE CONTENT AMPLIFICATION FRAMEWORK



THE GOAL:

Move people through a psychological journey, step-by-step, until independent thought is replaced with automated belief and action.

LEFT-WING FRAMING

SOURCE	STAGE	EXAMPLES	DESCRIPTION
Anti-Zionist Lobby Narratives	Left-wing Framing	• Israel as a settler-colonial project erasing Palestinian existence. • Zionism framed as white supremacist ideology. • Denial of Jewish indigeneity to the Middle East. • Portrayal of Jewish self-determination as inherently racist.	Reframing Jewish self-determination as oppressive ideology; appropriating social justice language to mask antisemitism.
Electronic Intifada	Left-wing Framing	• Decontextualized reporting on Israeli actions. • Implicit support for violence against Israelis. • Portrayal of Israeli self-defense as war crimes. • Denial of Jewish historical connection to Israel.	Pseudo-journalistic format providing a veneer of legitimacy; emotional language and imagery; selective reporting.
Laura Khafak	Left-wing Framing	• Conspiracy theories about Jewish/Zionist media control. • Pro-Israel voices portrayed as paid agents. • Delegitimization of Jewish historical trauma. • Implicit support for elimination of Israel.	Using progressive credentials to shield antisemitic content; presenting extremist views in moderate-sounding language.
Mondoweiss	Left-wing Framing	• Jews portrayed as white European colonizers. • Erasure of Middle Eastern Jewish history and expulsion. • Implicit support for violence against Israeli civilians. • Characterization of Jewish self-determination as racist.	Pseudo-academic analysis; progressive framing of regressive ideas; selective application of principles.

RIGHT-WING FRAMING

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
Add Zionist lobby narratives	Right-wing Framing	1. Conspiracy theories about Jewish control of governments 2. Claims of Jewish/Zionist media manipulation 3. Dual loyalty accusations against Jewish citizens 4. Portrayal of Jewish advocacy as secretive and malign	Transforming legitimate policy disagreements into conspiracy theories; using coded language to mask explicit antisemitism
Tucker Carlson	Right-wing Framing	1. Insinuations about Jewish financial control 2. Portrayal of Israel as manipulating US foreign policy 3. Subtle “globalist” dog whistles 4. Questioning Jewish American loyalty	Mainstream platform for laundered antisemitic tropes; plausible deniability through coded language
Judge Napolitano	Right-wing Framing	1. Legal-sounding justifications for denying Jewish rights 2. Claims of unconstitutional “special treatment” for Israel 3. Insinuations about undue Jewish influence in government 4. Selective application of international law	Using legal authority to legitimize biased positions; presenting opinion as legal fact

RIGHT-WING FRAMING

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
Jackson Hinkle	Right-wing Framing	1. Conspiracy theories about Zionist control of US policy 2. Portrayal of Israel as manipulating global conflicts 3. Questioning loyalty of Jewish Americans 4. Minimization of antisemitic violence	Social media amplification; provocative content designed for algorithmic spread; mixing legitimate criticism with antisemitic tropes
Candace Owens	Right-wing Framing	1. Holocaust minimization and inappropriate comparisons 2. Claims about Jewish control of media/finance 3. Portrayal of Jewish advocacy as manipulative 4. Insinuations about Jewish loyalty to Israel over America	Using minority status as shield against antisemitism accusations; mainstream platform for laundered antisemitic content
Repackage for right-wing audiences	Right-wing Framing	1. Antisemitism disguised as America First nationalism 2. Jewish 'globalist' conspiracy theories 3. Christian replacement theology justifying antisemitism 4. Economic antisemitism reframed as anti-elitism	Adapting antisemitic content to appeal to conservative values; using patriotic language to mask prejudice

FULL RADICALIZATION NODES, PART ONE

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
Campus organizing	Full Radicalization	1. Creation of hostile environments for Jewish students 2. Disruption of Jewish events unrelated to Israel 3. Intimidation of visibly Jewish students 4. Exclusion of Jewish students from campus activities	Coordinated campaigns targeting Jewish campus life; using academic freedom to shield antisemitic activism
Grayzone/Mint	Full Radicalization	1. Explicit conspiracy theories about Jewish/Zionist control 2. Denial/justification of antisemitic violence 3. Platforming of Holocaust deniers 4. Calls for elimination of Israel	Pseudo-journalistic format providing veneer of legitimacy to extremist content; cross-platform distribution strategies.
DSA factions	Full Radicalization	1. Requiring Jewish members to denounce Israel 2. Antisemitism disguised as anti-capitalism 3. Exclusion of Jewish concerns from progressive agenda 4. Tolerance of explicit antisemitism within ranks	Using progressive organizational structure to mainstream antisemitic positions; creating hostile environments for Jewish leftists
ZVP	Full Radicalization	1. Explicit calls for elimination of Israel 2. Justification of violence against Israeli civilians 3. Dehumanization of Jews and Israelis 4. Denial of Jewish historical connection to Israel	Creating appearance of diverse coalition while promoting singular antisemitic agenda; exploiting progressive language
Alex Jones	Full Radicalization	1. Global Jewish conspiracy theories 2. Claims of Zionist control of world governments 3. Antisemitic interpretations of world events 4. Coded references to Jewish financial control	High-emotion content designed for viral spread; mixing legitimate concerns with antisemitic conspiracy theories

FULL RADICALIZATION NODES, PART TWO

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
Hostile environments	Full Radicalization	1. Physical intimidation of Jewish individuals 2. Vandalism of Jewish institutions 3. Disruption of Jewish religious/cultural events 4. Public displays of antisemitic symbols/rhetoric	Creating atmosphere where antisemitism becomes normalized; making Jewish life increasingly difficult and dangerous
Brother Nathanael	Full Radicalization	1. Religious-based antisemitism 2. Claims of Jewish responsibility for societal ills 3. Calls for restrictions on Jewish rights 4. Theological justifications for antisemitism	Using religious authority and convert status to legitimize extreme antisemitism; exploiting religious imagery
E. Michael Jones	Full Radicalization	1. Religious antisemitism masked as theology 2. Portrayal of Jews as enemies of Christianity 3. Conspiracy theories about Jewish control of society 4. Calls for restrictions on Jewish participation in public life	Academic language masking traditional antisemitism; using Catholic identity to shield extremist views
David Icke	Full Radicalization	1. Reptilian conspiracy theories (coded antisemitism) 2. Claims of Jewish/Zionist world control 3. Holocaust denial/minimization 4. Portrayal of Jews as malevolent force in history	Mixing supernatural claims with traditional antisemitic tropes; creating plausible deniability through abstraction
Zionist world government	Full Radicalization	1. Claims of Jewish control of global finance 2. Conspiracy theories about Jewish manipulation of governments 3. Portrayal of Jews as disloyal to host nations 4. Modern versions of Protocols of the <i>Elders of Zion</i> narratives	Updating classical antisemitic conspiracy theories for modern audiences; using current events to reinforce ancient prejudices

THE NORMALIZATION PATHWAYS

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
Norman Finkelstein	Citation Laundering	1. Holocaust inversion (comparing Israelis to Nazis) 2. Claims of Jewish exploitation of Holocaust memory 3. Delegitimization of Israel's right to exist 4. Portraying Jewish self-determination as colonial project	Using Jewish identity as shield against antisemitism accusations; academic language to legitimize extreme positions
Max Blumenthal	Citation Laundering	1. Conspiracy theories about Israeli/Zionist control of US policy 2. Portrayal of Israel as fascist state 3. Denial/minimization of Hamas atrocities 4. Characterization of Zionism as inherently racist ideology	Repackaging extremist content in journalistic format; using progressive language to mask antisemitic tropes
Noam Chomsky	Citation Laundering	1. Moral equivalence between democratic Israel and terrorist organizations 2. Implicit denial of Jewish historical connection to Israel 3. Characterization of Jewish self-determination as colonial enterprise 4. Selective application of international norms to Israel	Using academic authority to legitimize delegitimization; complex intellectual frameworks that mask simpler antisemitic narratives

AMPLIFICATION

CATEGORY	STAGE	EXAMPLES	DESCRIPTION
Provide intellectual framework	Amplification	• Academic theories reframed to delegitimize Jewish statehood • Postcolonial theory applied selectively to deny Jewish indigeneity • Intersectionality manipulated to exclude Jewish concerns • Critical theory used to frame Zionism as inherently oppressive	Creating theoretical justifications for antisemitic positions; providing intellectual cover for more explicit hatred
Syrian Ecosystem	Amplification	• Israel/Mossad blamed for regional instability • Conspiracy theories about Israeli support for ISIS • Claims of Israeli territorial ambitions beyond recognized borders • Portrayal of Israel as primary cause of Syrian suffering	State-sponsored propaganda networks; coordinated messaging across multiple platforms; exploitation of regional tensions
Iranian Ecosystem	Amplification	• Holocaust denial and minimization • Jewish/Zionist global domination conspiracy theories. • Religious-based antisemitism (Jews as enemies of Islam) • Dehumanization of Israeli citizens	State media amplification; funding of proxy organizations; translation services to spread content globally

AMPLIFICATION

CATEGORY	STAGE	EXAMPLES	DESCRIPTION
Russian Ecosystem	Amplification	• Claims of Nazi influence in Israel • Jewish oligarch conspiracy theories • Israel portrayed as US imperial puppet • Fabricated atrocity stories	Coordinated state media campaigns; bot networks; strategic amplification of divisive content
Externalize delegitimization	Amplification	• Framing anti-Zionism as distinct from antisemitism • Using Jewish voices to legitimize extreme anti-Israel positions • Appropriating human rights language for delegitimization • Portraying Israel as uniquely evil among nations	Creating distance between antisemitic content and its sources; laundering extremist ideas through seemingly moderate channels
Funding coordination	Amplification	• Claims of undue Jewish financial influence • Conspiracy theories about Zionist funding control • Delegitimization of Jewish philanthropy • Portrayal of pro-Israel advocacy as financially motivated	Coordinating financial support for antisemitic content producers; creating appearance of grassroots movement or astroturfed campaigns

NARRATIVE AND CONTENT LAUNDERING

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
MCF – Doctors Without Borders	Selective Citation	1. Inflated casualty figures without context 2. Selective reporting of Israeli actions without Hamas context 3. Unverified claims of deliberate targeting of civilians 4. Mischaracterization of defensive actions as aggression	Presenting partial information from conflict zones while omitting crucial context; using emotional language to frame events.
ICRC	Selective Citation	1. Highlighting Israeli violations while minimizing Hamas violations 2. Decontextualized humanitarian statistics 3. Implicit comparisons to historical atrocities 4. Framing self-defense as disproportionate force	Selective reporting of international humanitarian law violations; using institutional credibility to legitimize one-sided narratives.
UN Human Rights	Selective Citation	1. Disproportionate focus on Israel vs. other global conflicts 2. Application of unique standards to Israeli actions 3. Uncritical acceptance of claims from partisan sources 4. Implicit delegitimization of Israel's right to self-defense	Leveraging institutional authority to present biased interpretations as objective assessments; using legal language to mask political bias.

NARRATIVE AND CONTENT LAUNDERING

NODE NAME	STAGE	SPECIFIC MESSAGE TYPES	MECHANISM
Oxfam	Selective Citation	1. Framing Gaza situation without Hamas governance context 2. Attributing all Palestinian suffering to Israel 3. Implicit denial of Israeli security concerns 4. Using loaded terms like “apartheid” without proper legal basis	Using humanitarian concerns as a vehicle for political messaging; simplifying complex geopolitical situations to villainize Israel.
Document coded casualties	Selective Citation	1. Presenting combatant deaths as civilian casualties 2. Uncritical acceptance of Hamas-provided statistics 3. Failure to acknowledge human shields tactics 4. Comparing raw numbers without proportionality context	Statistical manipulation; removing context from casualty figures; emotional framing of data points.
Reports with caveats	Citation Laundering	1. Original contextual caveats removed from reports 2. Uncertainty statements eliminated from original sources 3. Preliminary findings presented as confirmed facts 4. Conditional language transformed into definitive statements	Stripping away methodological limitations and uncertainties from original reports; presenting tentative findings as established facts.

A Note on Sources and Named Individuals

How This Report Treats Evidence and the People It Names

This note sets out two things: how the report uses its sources, and the care it takes in naming and characterizing individuals.

Sources

The report draws on publicly available material: U.S. government designations, indictments, and advisories; court filings and congressional records; the published technical research of major cybersecurity firms; peer-reviewed academic work; investigative journalism; and the public statements, writings, and appearances of the individuals named. Every factual assertion is documented in the footnotes, and the Selected Bibliography offers a curated guide to the most significant sources. Where a source's reliability is itself contested, that is noted at the relevant point.

The influence-network analysis underlying the Influence Map (Appendix B) was carried out by the editorial team using collaborative visual-mapping tools. Those tools accelerated the organization and visualization of the material; the underlying evidence, and the analytical conclusions drawn from it, are the team's own. Each node and connection in the map rests on a documented relationship, not on inference or ideological similarity alone.

A Note on Named Individuals

This report names more than sixty individuals in the context of documented influence operations. Its characterizations of those individuals rest exclusively on their documented public activities: their attendance at named conferences, their published statements, their appearances on named media platforms, and their organizational affiliations as established in government records or their own public disclosures.

The report distinguishes throughout between individuals who are knowing participants in Iranian state operations, those who are ideological fellow travelers, those whose work is weaponized by the network without their knowledge or consent, and those who are simply susceptible to narratives that Iranian actors have deliberately seeded. These distinctions are drawn carefully and are noted where they matter.

No individual is characterized as an Iranian agent or operative unless that characterization is supported by a government designation, a court filing, or the individual's own public statements. Individuals described more cautiously, as legitimacy anchors, bridge actors, or amplifiers, are so described because the evidence supports those characterizations and not stronger ones.

Timeline

Three Decades of Iranian Influence Operations, 1996–2026

This timeline draws together the principal events documented in the report, arranged chronologically. It is intended as a navigational aid: each entry corresponds to events described and sourced in the chapters and is not a substitute for them. Dates are given as precisely as the sources allow.

The Foundations, 1996–2008

- 1996** Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan makes the first of several official visits to Tehran, beginning the cultivation of Black nationalist networks that Iran would develop over the following decades.
- 2005** Nader Talebzadeh introduces the American conspiracy theorist Michael Collins Piper to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.
- 2006** Iran hosts an international Holocaust-denial conference in Tehran, drawing David Duke, Mark Weber, Michael Collins Piper, and a range of Western Holocaust deniers and far-right figures.
- 2007** Press TV, Iran’s English-language satellite news network, is launched under IRIB to carry Iranian state narratives to Western audiences.
- 2008** CODEPINK begins participating in Iranian-organized cultural delegations to Iran. Marzieh Hashemi, an American-born convert, moves to Iran and joins Press TV.

The Conference Circuit, 2010–2018

- 2010** Talebzadeh founds the Ammar Popular Film Festival, a platform for Iranian revolutionary cinema and its international sympathizers.
- 2011–2013** The Hollywoodism conferences are held annually in Tehran under the auspices of the Fajr Film Festival, assembling Holocaust deniers, Third Position activists, 9/11 Truthers, and Nation of Islam figures.
- 2014** Talebzadeh establishes the New Horizon International Institute and convenes the first New Horizon conference in Tehran, with panels on the Israel lobby, AIPAC, and the Gaza war.
- 2015** At a press conference launching a two-week program on American police brutality, Talebzadeh announces that Iran has invited “around 30 anti-Israel

- African Americans” to Tehran, articulating the Deadly Exchange strategy in his own words.
- 2017** Aleksandr Dugin performs the Arba’in pilgrimage in Iraq alongside Talebzadeh. Jewish Voice for Peace launches its Deadly Exchange campaign in the United States.
- 2018** The New Horizon conference convenes in Mashhad on the theme of Jerusalem; the 2018 JVP–RAIA report formalizes the Deadly Exchange campaign.

Sanctions and the Digital Turn, 2019–2022

- February 2019** The U.S. Treasury designates the New Horizon Organization under Executive Order 13224, identifying it as a platform for IRGC intelligence recruitment and forcing the conferences’ suspension. The Digital Forensic Research Lab identifies the IUVM fake-news ecosystem.
- September 2019** The final New Horizon conference is held in Beirut, where Dugin delivers his most developed eschatological arguments on the sidelines.
- 2020** During the U.S. election, IRGC-linked operatives run the spoofed Proud Boys voter-intimidation email campaign, steal Alaskan voter data, and promote an “Enemies of the People” website. The FBI seizes ninety-two Iranian-linked domains.
- January 2020** The assassination of IRGC general Qassem Soleimani furnishes Dugin and the New Horizon network with a new eschatological rallying point.
- May 2022** Payton Gendron murders ten Black Americans at a Tops supermarket in Buffalo; his manifesto cites MintPress News and calls for red-brown convergence.
- April 2022** Nader Talebzadeh dies at sixty-nine; Iranian media eulogize him as “General Soft War.”

Activation: October 7 and After, 2023–2025

- October 7, 2023** The Hamas-led attack on Israel kills some 1,200 people and serves as the activation event for Iran’s assembled influence infrastructure.
- October 20, 2023** Dugin publishes his “eschatological aspect in Palestine conflict is crucial” proclamation, framing the war in apocalyptic terms.
- December 2023** Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security establishes the Handala Hack persona (Void Manticore).
- January 14, 2024** Hamas spokesman Abu Ubaida’s one-hundred-day address references red heifers, making the eschatological framing of October 7 explicit.

2024 Three IRGC members are indicted for the hack-and-leak operation against the Trump presidential campaign. Microsoft documents the Storm-2035 fake-news network (Nio Thinker, Savannah Time, End Times Today) and the ISNAD AI-persona campaign.

December 2024 The U.S. Treasury sanctions the IRGC-subordinate Cognitive Design Production Center for planning influence operations against the U.S. electorate.

2025 U.S. congressional inquiries document the “Gang of 40” Wikipedia-manipulation network; E. Michael Jones appears on Candace Owens’s show in July.

Open Conflict, 2026

January 2026 An ICE shooting in Minnesota furnishes a new domestic anchor for redeploying Deadly Exchange–style claims around immigration enforcement. Iranian protests and a domestic uprising follow the outbreak of direct conflict.

February 2026 MuddyWater (MOIS) is found embedded in the networks of U.S. banks, airports, and non-profits. Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf appears on Iranian state television.

March 2026 A fabricated report of Benjamin Netanyahu’s death spreads from IRGC-friendly Telegram channels and is amplified within the hour. Handala conducts a destructive malware attack against Stryker; the U.S. Department of Justice seizes four MOIS-linked domains. Operation Epic Fury, the joint U.S.–Israeli campaign against Iran, degrades Iran’s conventional military capacity.

2026 Open conflict erupts between Iran and the United States. The influence infrastructure documented in this report remains intact and operational regardless of its outcome.

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