

Burying the Truth

Acting on behalf of the behind-the-scenes ruling Establishment, President Bush has rigged the "Independent" 9-11 Commission to cover up prior knowledge of the attack.

"[The Federal Reserve Act] establishes the most gigantic trust on earth.... When the President signs this act the invisible government by the money power, proven to exist by the Money Trust investigation, will be legalized."

**Martin Luther King Jr.
MARXIST TOOL & RACE AGITATOR**

SOCIALIST WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING
The Plot To Reshape The World Through Control of Education
By Dean Clarence E. Manion

SECRET GOVERNMENT
THREE PERCENT MIS-RULE UNITED STATES

Obama retakes oath to quell conspiracy theories

Toxic to Democracy

CONSPIRACY THEORIES, DEMONIZATION, & SCAPEGOATING

American Citizens Want to Know...

IS OUR TOWN NEXT?

Why Are Strange Military Maneuvers Taking Place All Over America?

Circle of Intrigue Unmasks Hidden, Inner Circle of Illuminati

The Illuminati—A World Conspiracy Forged by the Super Rich?

From WTC to OKC to 9-11

The Persistent Question of Barack Obama's Citizenship



The "Military Industrial Complex" is no more —
How Zionist Banks and Media Control Washington

The term "Military-Industrial Complex" really has no relevance in the real masters of global power today. America has the most powerful military on Earth, and even though it lacks a

Obama's secret red dagger conspiracy coordinator was Gideon Sacks, the Jewish international news guru who advised a million others in 1970-1971. He had over \$5 million in CIA assets.

The North American Union Invasion



The Vince Foster Connection

THE STRANGE DEATH OF VINCENT FOSTER

WHO REALLY BOMBED THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

Obama bin Biden Play Down War on Terror

Jihadists Still an Obama Muslim-Outreach Problem

Terrorism's True Roots

The international terror network, including al-Qaeda, was created by Communists and their left-wing allies under the guise of "Islamic fundamentalism."

SIGNS OF THE ANTICHRIST?

PROTOCOLS

Zionist Plan For World Conquest

"... the Protocols ... have fitted the world situation up to this time. They fit it now."
—Henry Ford, Sr. 1921

Toxic to **Democracy**

CONSPIRACY THEORIES, DEMONIZATION, & SCAPEGOATING

A publication of Political Research Associates

UPDATED

by Chip Berlet

Political Research Associates is a progressive think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. We expose movements, institutions, and ideologies that undermine human rights. PRA seeks to advance progressive thinking and action by providing research-based information, analysis, and referrals.

For more information on this topic: www.publiceye.org/jump/toxic/

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Executive Summary

Even before Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States the Internet was seething with lurid conspiracy theories exposing his alleged subversion and treachery. Among the many false claims: Obama was not a proper citizen of the United States (and his election as President should thus be overturned); he was a secret, fundamentalist Muslim; he was a tool of the New World Order in a plot to merge the government of the United States into a North American Union with Mexico and Canada.

Hours following a flubbed inaugural oath of office, the Internet circulated claims that Obama was not really President of the United States because the wording of the oath of office had been scrambled by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts. A few days after the inauguration came a warning that Obama planned to impose martial law and collect all guns.

Many of these false claims recall those floated by right-wing conspiracy theorists in the armed citizens Militia Movement during the Clinton administration —allegations that percolated up through the media and were utilized by Republican political operatives to hobble the legislative agenda of the Democratic Party. Assertions that President Clinton assisted drug smugglers, ran a hit squad that killed his political enemies, and covered up the assassination of his aide Vincent Foster first circulated on right-wing alternative media, spread to right-wing information networks, and eventually appeared in mainstream media outlets.

A similar scenario could add to the already daunting challenges of the Obama administration. When Obama's "web-savvy" aides saw "conspiracy theories building up on the internet," they staged a repeat swearing in as "the fastest way to stop the speculation getting out of control." Such events illustrate the power and pervasiveness of conspiracism.

What Richard Hofstadter described as the "paranoid style" in U.S. right-wing movements derives

from belief in an apocalyptic struggle between "good" and "evil," in which demonized enemies are complicit in a vast insidious plot against the common good, and against which the conspiracist must heroically sound the alarm. As seen in the aforementioned examples, this type of conspiracism can move easily from the margins to the mainstream.

This study challenges the validity of conspiracy theory as a form of political analysis, and traces the roots and dynamics of conspiracism through United States history. Drawing on his extensive scholarly as well as popular writing on the topic, author Chip Berlet shows that the development of modern conspiracism is rooted in bigotry and that the conspiracist analytical model itself encourages demonization and scapegoating of blameless persons and groups. In so doing, conspiracism also serves to distract society and its would-be agents of change away from ongoing, structural causes of social and economic injustices. Examining various episodes spanning more than 200 years of U.S. history, *Toxic to Democracy* demonstrates how conspiracy theories have repeatedly garnered mass public followings. Throughout, the basic dynamics of conspiracism remained the same regardless of the ideological leanings of the conspiracists, or the (often interchangeable) identity of their targets.

The resurgence of conspiracy theories — on both the Right and the Left — since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and the tendency for antisemitic conspiracies to surge during times of financial crisis, makes the lessons of this study particularly urgent. What follows is a summary of key findings from *Toxic to Democracy: Conspiracies, Demonization & Scapegoating*:

THE CONSPIRACIST ANALYTICAL MODEL: TOOLS OF FEAR

The conspiracist narrative is built upon four key elements, which Berlet calls "tools of fear": 1) Dualism; 2) Scapegoating; 3) Demonization; and

4) Apocalyptic Aggression.

Dualism is an overarching theme or “metaframe” in which people see the world as divided into forces of good and evil. Scapegoating is a process by which a person or group of people are wrongfully stereotyped as sharing negative traits and are singled out for blame for causing societal problems, while the primary source of the problems is overlooked or absolved of blame. Demonization, a process through which people target individuals or groups as the embodiment of evil, facilitates scapegoating. Even the most sincere and well-intentioned conspiracy theorists contribute to dangerous social dynamics of demonization and scapegoating. Apocalypticism, also a metaframe, involves the expectation that dramatic events are about to unfold during which a confrontation between good and evil will change the world forever and reveal hidden truths. Apocalyptic Aggression occurs when scapegoats are targeted as enemies of the “common good,” and this can lead to discrimination and violent acts.

INTERCHANGEABLE TARGETS/BROAD APPEAL

The way in which the tools of fear are employed allows for scapegoat targets to change along with historic circumstances, even as the process by which these targets are vilified using the “Tools of Fear” remains the same.

A central motif of the 1950s Red Scare was that the enemy — communists, both at home and abroad — threatened the common good. Today Arabs and Muslims are portrayed in a similar demonizing way as an alien force conspiring to destroy Western culture from without and within. It is not that threats do not exist; it is that these threats are hyperbolized in a way that harms civil society and weakens homeland security.

The Christian Right, which in the 1960s mobilized to battle “Godless Communism,” now battles “Godless Secular Humanism” which they see as supporting sinful abortion and gay rights. Since these views are often wrapped around conspiracist theories claiming liberal sedition or satanic collaboration, the ability to resolve disputes through civic compromise is hobbled.

THE TERROR ATTACKS ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 MOVED CONSPIRACY THEORY TO CENTER STAGE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Immediately following the attacks, stories began to circulate about 4,000 Jews being warned to avoid the twin towers on 9/11. Reporters traced the contention back to a series of rumors and claims by unnamed sources that bounced around the Internet, becoming more elaborate with each retelling. Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, some on the Left circulated claims that government officials were “Guilty for 9-11.” This has turned into a “9/11 Truth Movement” where conspiracists debate whether then-President Bush and Vice President Cheney allowed the attacks to happen to gain political advantage, or actually planted explosives to collapse the World Trade Center and sent a missile into the Pentagon. Outlandish conspiracies fingering then-Vice President Dick Cheney and “the neoconservatives” have been injected into mainstream anti-Iraq War venues and documents. Sometimes these claims carry the baggage of anti-semitism.

CONSPIRACISM’S BIGOTED ROOTS

The roots of contemporary conspiracism can be traced back more than 200 years to the French Revolution. Conspiracists claimed the French Revolution was not due to long simmering public resentment due to poverty and despotism, but was orchestrated by the Illuminati, a secret society evolved from the ranks of Freemasonry, who were allegedly scheming to turn contented peasants into violent rebels.

In the early 1900s, the merger of Freemason and Jewish scapegoats took hold in the United States with the publication of the influential hoax, entitled the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The *Protocols* purports to be the minutes of secret meetings of a Jewish ruling clique conspiring to take over the world. It incorporates many of the core conspiracist themes outlined in the Freemason attacks, and overlays them with antisemitic allegations. A common conspiracist interpretation of the *Protocols* is that, peeling away the layers of the Freemason conspiracy, past the Illuminati, exposes a rotten Jewish core. Some contemporary conspiracy theorists directly mention the *Protocols* and claim they are an authentic document. This is easily found on Far Right websites,

especially those affiliated with Neonazis and Christian Identity. However, mentions of the *Protocols* cut across the political spectrum.

RIGHT-WING CONSPIRACISM

In the 1960s the John Birch Society (JBS) and other Patriot Movement groups peddled the anti-Freemason ideology from the 1790s, using it to explain the communist threat. Communists allegedly were just one guise of the Mason's Illuminati leadership. Later the Illuminati were variously said to control Wall Street, Hillary Clinton, and Dick Cheney. In terms of public discourse, when the JBS blamed the secret elites and plutocrats for the vast conspiracy, the organization was not covertly blaming the Jews. Instead a favorite theme of the JBS continues to be that the liberal globalists are planning a New World Order run by a totalitarian One World Government through the United Nations. Nonetheless, the JBS cites books and other works that perpetuate stereotypes about Jews, banking, and global power.

The right-wing group Populists American takes a step further toward antisemitism. For this group, the problem is not all Jews. Rather, its website explains that the real "enemy of all mankind" is the "Zionist Jews" who are "not to be confused with other Jews." The website then posts the text of the *Protocols* with a disclaimer typical of this genre.

Out on the fringes of conspiracism are organized White supremacist groups and neonazis who are mad about what they call ZOG: the Zionist Occupational Government (their name for the U.S. government in Washington, D.C.). The National Alliance, Aryan Nations, and Christian Defense League are White racist groups that cite the *Protocols*.

LEFT-WING CONSPIRACISM

Contemporary Leftist conspiracism gained a significant foothold as a response to blows suffered by social justice movements, starting with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, and increasing after the 1968 assassinations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Conspiracism percolated at the margins of the Political Left until the mid 1980s. In 1986 the liberal Christic Institute filed a lawsuit, *Avirgan v. Hull* (known in the popular press as the La Penca bombing case), which unwittingly helped pull at the seam of what would soon unravel into the Iran-Contra scandal.

The Christic Institute charges originally con-

cerned a series of allegations of CIA misconduct involving covert action and gunrunning in Central America to assist the overthrow of the socialist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Christic soon wrapped the case in conspiracy stories dating back to the Kennedy assassination and the Vietnam War — diverting attention from the illegal activities of the Reagan administration. The case was dismissed, but the conspiracist claims lived on.

TRACKING FROM RIGHT TO LEFT

Leftist conspiracy theories of the '60s and '70s established conspiracism as a form of discourse and analysis on the Political Left as well as some left-of-center countercultures, thereby facilitating the migration of (somewhat sanitized) right-wing conspiracy theories from Right to Left

In its signature *Avirgan v. Hull* lawsuit (mentioned above) the left-leaning Christic Institute incorporated the central, conspiracist claims of *The Secret Team*, a book by right-wing populist L. Fletcher Prouty. Christic's investigators maintained back channel communications with right-wing groups known to purvey antisemitic conspiracy theories. Christic inadvertently took conspiracy allegations rooted in the *Protocols*, sanitized the antisemitic references, and peddled the results to the Political Left and gullible liberal funders.

The 9/11 conspiracy theory alleging 4,000 Jews were warned of the attacks is a clear case of antisemitic conspiracism peddled by certain Political Right groups as a recruitment tool. Their ultimate goal is mobilizing people to oppose progressive social and economic justice campaigns by targeting vulnerable communities as scapegoats. The progressive version of the 9/11 conspiracy generally avoids blatant antisemitic references. Some on the Left, however, picked up phrases such as "international bankers," "globalist elites," "secret government," "international bankers," and "banksters," that historically have been used as coded references to alleged Jewish power. While their target was Bush and Cheney, the accusations and catchphrases employed were laden with antisemitic bigotry.

SEEMINGLY UNBIGOTED CONSPIRACISM ENCOURAGES SCAPEGOATING AND DEMONIZATION

While some theories reject overt bigotry, as in the main branch of the "9/11 Truth

Movement,” they fail to appreciate that the *analytical model* of conspiracy thinking normalizes the process of demonizing a scapegoated group. Once researchers embrace the conspiracist mindset in which a vast global conspiracy is effectively an analog of the allegations about conniving secret elites found in the *Protocols*, the step from a Secret Team to a Secret Jewish Team is a very small one. Even when conspiracist theories do not center on Jews, homosexuals, people of color, immigrants, or other scapegoated groups, they still create an environment where racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice, bigotry, and oppression can flourish.

GOVERNMENT CONSPIRACISM: COUNTERSUBVERSION

Conspiracy theories are not confined to the margins of the political spectrum. Conspiracist theories have been used by governments to preserve the *status quo* against those they characterized as subversive alien outsiders and their sympathizers. Countersubversive conspiracy theories can be utilized by governments to build mass support for the surveillance, disruption, and crushing of dissident social and political movements in the U.S., as was done during the McCarthy era and again with the backlash against the social justice movements of the 1960s and '70s. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, anti-communists both inside and outside government moved away from conspiracy theories about global communist subversion and embraced a new target—terrorists. These conspiracy-based fears are present in hardline U.S. foreign and domestic counterterrorism policies that undermine First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendment protections for dissidents and religious and ethnic minorities whose views span the political spectrum. This could have potentially far ranging implications for how the United States prosecutes the “war on terror” abroad. Anti-terrorism policies based in hyperbolic conspiracy theories reduce the effectiveness of homeland security.

THE (IL)LOGIC OF CONSPIRACISM

Conspiracism is neither a healthy expression of skepticism nor a valid form of criticism; rather it is a belief system that refuses to obey the rules of logic. These theories operate from a pre-existing premise of a conspiracy based upon careless collection of facts and flawed assumptions. What consti-

tutes “proof” for a conspiracist is often more accurately described as circumstance, rumor, and hearsay; and the allegations often use the tools of fear—dualism, demonization, scapegoating, and aggressively apocalyptic stories—which all too often are commanded by demagogues.

Thus conspiracism must be confronted as a flawed analytical model, rather than a legitimate mode of criticism of inequitable systems, structures, and institutions of power. Conspiracism is nearly always a distraction from the work of uprooting hierarchies of unfair power and privilege.

CONSPIRACISM IS PERILOUS TO IGNORE

Conspiracist theories are attractive in part because they start with a grain of truth embedded in pre-existing societal beliefs.

Conspiracy theorists are correct about one thing: the *status quo* is not acceptable. Conspiracists have accurately understood that there are inequalities of power and privilege in the world—and threats to the world itself—that need to be rectified. What conspiracy theorists lack is the desire or ability to follow the basic rules of logic and investigative research. Conspiracy theories spotlight lots of fascinating questions—but they seldom illuminate meaningful answers.

While conspiracists tell compelling stories, they frequently create dangerous conditions as these stories can draw from pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices. Cynical movement leaders then can hyperbolize false claims in a way that mobilizes dangerous forms of demonization and scapegoating. People who believe conspiracist allegations sometimes act on those irrational beliefs, and this has concrete consequences in the real world. Angry allegations can quickly turn into aggression and violence targeting scapegoated groups.

Conspiracist thinking and scapegoating on a mass scale are symptoms, not causes, of underlying societal tensions; and while conspiracism needs to be opposed, the resolution of the grievances themselves is necessary to restore a healthy society.

Whether conspiracist claims are circulated by angry populists or anxious government officials, the dynamics generated by conspiracy theories are toxic to democracy.

Toxic to Democracy

Conspiracy Theories, Demonization, & Scapegoating

Even before Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th President of the United States the Internet was seething with lurid conspiracy theories exposing his alleged subversion and treachery.

Among the many false claims: Obama was a secret Muslim; he was not a proper citizen of the United States and his election as President should be overturned; he was a tool of the New World Order in a plot to merge the government of the United States into a North American Union with Mexico and Canada.¹ Within hours of Obama's inauguration, the

Internet circulated claims that Obama was not really President of the United States because the wording of the oath of office had been scrambled by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.

A few days after the inauguration came a warning that Obama planned to impose martial law and collect all guns.² The first clues of the impending tyranny would involve changes in traffic laws and signage. Many of these false

claims recall those floated by right-wing conspiracy theorists in the armed citizens Militia Movement during the Clinton administration — allegations that percolated up through the media hierarchy and were utilized by Republican political operatives to hobble the legislative agenda of the Democratic Party.³

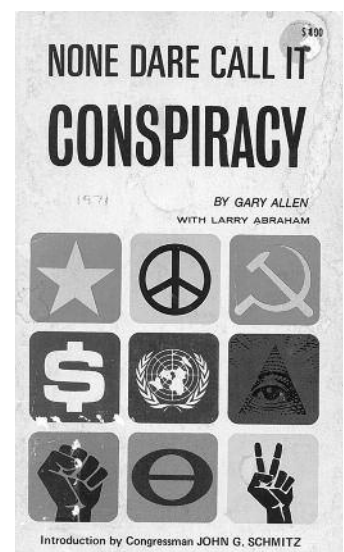
The conspiracy theory attacks on Clinton damaged far more than the Democratic Party. The entire government became bogged down. Legislation became stuck in Congressional committees and appointments to federal posts dwindled and positions remained unfilled, almost paralyzing some federal agencies and seriously hampering the federal court system.⁴

During the same period, the lurid (and false) claims of the Militia Movement suggesting Clinton had engineered the death of his associate Vince Foster or that he had engaged in a cover-up of drug-smuggling and child molestation created an atmosphere of suspicion and fueled a crisis of legitimacy for the entire government.⁵

While suspicion of government remains high, especially in the U.S. Political Right, it was the conspiracy theories that told of foreign troops massing along U.S. borders under the command of the United Nations that mobilized "patriots" across the country to join "Border Watch" organizations. To this day there are acts of intimidation and violence by paramilitary vigilantes along the southwestern border areas, and a growing xenophobia toward immigrants, especially people of color.⁶

A similar scenario to Clinton's could make the work of the Obama Administration more difficult. When Obama's "web-savvy" aides saw "conspiracy theories building up on the internet," they staged a repeat swearing in as "the fastest way to stop the speculation getting out of control."⁷ If past is prologue, it is inevitable that some activists on the Political Left will become mesmerized by the startling and convoluted explanations of the plot.

Even the most sincere and well-intentioned conspiracy theorists contribute to demonization and scapegoating—dynamics which are toxic to democracy.



The study begins by looking at the rise of conspiracy thinking in recent years, especially after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. It traces the bigoted roots and dangerous dynamics of conspiracy theory as a form of political analysis in the United States. The study follows periods in United States history when conspiracy theories gained a mass public following. It demonstrates how the basic dynamics behind conspiracy theories remain the same even though the named scapegoated targets are interchangeable at different moments in our history as a nation.

It is easy to dismiss conspiracy theories as marginal phenomena with little importance. This study argues otherwise, and suggests that progressives need to be critical of conspiracy theories no matter where they come from on the political spectrum. Even the most sincere and well-intentioned conspiracy theorists contribute to dangerous social dynamics of demonization and scapegoating—dynamics which are toxic to democracy.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES SURGE AFTER 9/11 ATTACKS

The terror attacks on September 11, 2001 moved conspiracy theory to center stage in the United States. Many readers will remember the early stories about 4,000 Jews being warned to avoid the twin towers on 9/11. Every aspect of this tale was false. Reporters traced it back to a series of rumors and claims by unnamed sources that bounced around the Internet getting more elaborate with each retelling. To take this story seriously, you would have to be willing to assume that if 4,000 random Jews were told of an impending terrorist attack, not one would step forward with a public warning. To believe this about any religious, racial, or ethnic group raises serious questions about lingering prejudice.

The allure of sensational conspiracy theories creates conspiracist celebrities across the political spectrum. While some reject overt bigotry, they fail to appreciate that the analytical model of conspiracy thinking creates a mode of thinking easily drawn into the process of demonizing a scapegoated group.

Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, some on the Left circulated claims that government officials were “Guilty for 9-11.”⁸ This has turned into a “9/11 Truth movement” where conspiracists debate if Bush and Cheney allowed the attacks to happen to gain political advantage, or actually planted explosives to collapse the World Trade Center and sent a missile into the

Pentagon.

One promotional blurb for the book, *America’s “War on Terrorism,”* proclaims that in Michel Chossudovsky’s 2002 best seller, the author blows away the smokescreen, put up by the mainstream media, that 9/11 was an attack on America by ‘Islamic terrorists.’ Through meticulous research, the author uncovers a military-intelligence ploy behind the September 11 attacks, and the cover-up and complicity of key members of the Bush Administration.”⁹

Despite the fact that conspiracist celebrity Michael C. Ruppert was excoriated by a number of liberal and left authors, his “From the Wilderness” website was immensely popular, and in the years after 9/11 he packed thousands of fans into auditoriums for rambling speeches.¹⁰

Ruppert’s *Crossing the Rubicon: The Decline of the American Empire at the End of the Age of Oil* was published by the progressive New Society Publishers in 2004.¹¹ It was one of the top sellers on the online Amazon bookstore, as were a number of other 9/11 conspiracy books by authors including Jim Marrs, former LaRouche analyst Webster Griffin Tarpley, and progressive theologian David Ray Griffin.¹² Again, a number of progressive commentators criticized this trend.¹³

Another troubling development since 9/11 is that activists and journalists increasingly accept several current and former LaRouche network analysts as experts on U.S. foreign and domestic policy despite continued conspiracist tendencies that range from problematic (in the case of F. William Engdahl) to severe (for Webster Griffith Tarpley and his allies).¹⁴

Conspiracists often incorporate their critics into the conspiracy theory, claiming detractors are part of an elaborate effort to cover up the truth. While editorial gatekeeping is a concept used in media studies, conspiracists created the phrase “Left Gatekeeper” after 9/11 to attack progressive journalists who avoided conspiracy theories, criticized conspiracist authors, and refused to print or air the numerous elaborate conspiracy theories about the terror attacks. Conspiracists claimed Left Gatekeepers were tools of the ruling elites, and perhaps controlled by the CIA.¹⁵

Within weeks of the 9/11 attacks, progressives claimed government officials were “Guilty for 9-11.” This has turned into a “9/11 Truth movement” where conspiracists debate whether Bush and Cheney allowed the attacks to happen to gain political advantage.

The United States invasion of Afghanistan, just a few months after the terror attacks of 9/11, followed later by the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and in 2009 by Israel's armed assault on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip added more dimensions to the conspiracist critique, and unleashed new waves of antisemitic conspiracy theories and instances where critics of Israeli policies and political Zionism crossed over the line into antisemitic stereotyping.

This growing antisemitism on the Political Left primarily was tied to the struggles in the Middle East, and this prompted a special issue on "Judeophobia" by the progressive *New Internationalist* magazine in October 2004.¹⁶ The problem of antisemitism seeping into the anti-globalization movement also gained attention within the Political Left.¹⁷ As corporate globalization critic Naomi Klein put it, the anti-globalization "movement isn't antisemitic, it just hasn't fully confronted the implications of diving into the Middle East conflict." She complained that "every time I log onto activist news sites like

Conspiracists created the phrase "Left Gatekeeper" after 9/11 to attack progressive journalists who avoided conspiracy theories, criticized conspiracist authors, and refused to print or air conspiracy theories about the terror attacks.

indymedia.org, which practice 'open publishing,' I'm confronted with a string of Jewish conspiracy theories about September 11 and excerpts from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."¹⁸

This same frustration has led pro-Palestinian activists to warn of conspiracy theories that promote antisemitism. Ali Abunimah & Hussein Ibish wrote an open letter raising "Serious Concerns About Israel Shamir," an author who wrote articles that contained "most odious characterizations of Jews as 'Christ killers,' the staple of classic European Christian antisemitism."¹⁹ Suleiman Al-Nkidan, writing in London's *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, complained in 2001 about the spread of conspiracy theories in the Arab world after 9/11, ending with "do any of you remember the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*? They too spoke



Michael C. Ruppert gained widespread attention for his claims posted on his "From the Wilderness" website.

of a Jewish conspiracy against the world, even though no one in his right mind in the world today can view them as the truth...."²⁰

Despite these sorts of warnings, antisemitic conspiracy theories gained traction in some U.S. antiwar circles. On July 4th 2007 in Philadelphia, a group of U.S. peace activists

held an Emergency Antiwar Convention. It was staged as a coalition-building event, and featured 9/11 conspiracy films, as well as presentations from conspiracy mongers including former LaRouchite activists Lewis du Pont Smith and Webster Griffin Tarpley. The convention issued a statement crafted by Tarpley:

In the spirit of our Declaration of Independence, join activist organizations throughout the country to collaborate and forge common strategies and actions. As our forefathers of this nation did, we too must face tyranny, this time from the collusion of government, big business, media, and religion.²¹

This may sound like a stirring populist call to arms, but let's focus on a troubling passage calling for "Government by the people, not by cliques of bankers and financiers."²² This is a phrase which sounds like it was borrowed from a Hitlerian diatribe against parasitic Jewish moneylenders. This type of rhetoric, which replicates the language of historic antisemites, helped discredit the antiwar movement in the eyes of the broader public, and caused enervating bitter divisions within the movement itself.

Tarpley is not a minor league conspiracy player; he helped shape core LaRouchite obsessions. In 1995, for example, when he was a LaRouche acolyte, Tarpley wrote about the alleged conspiracy in Venice "Between 1200 A.D. and about 1600 A.D."²³

An agent shared by Memmo with the Morosini family was one Giacomo Casanova, a homosexual who was backed up by a network of lesbians. Venetian oligarchs turned to homosexuality because of

their obsession with keeping the family fortune intact by guaranteeing that there would only be one heir to inherit it; by this time more than two-thirds of male nobles, and an even higher percentage of female nobles, never married. Here we have the roots of Henry Kissinger's modern homintern. Casanova's main task was to target the French King Louis XV through his sexual appetites."²⁴

Homintern/Comintern. In one paragraph Tarpley in a coded way scapegoats Jews, Communists, and homosexuals.²⁵ Note that this same linkage was central to the McCarthyist witch hunts in the 1950s—another borrowed idea. Tarpley is a featured author on the conspiracy-theory-peddling Jeff Rense website, along with more obvious antisemites such as Henry Makow.

Progressives who are concerned about prejudice need to find a constructive way to confront the use of conspiracy theories as an analytical lens, because of the tendency of conspiracy theories to be directed towards scapegoating a demonized enemy rather than a clear-eyed criticism of inequitable systems, structures, and institutions of power.

WHAT'S BEHIND CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

The core narrative of the conspiracy theories that perennially circulate in the United States is dedicated to the proposition that “the people” are held down by a secret conspiracy of wealthy secret elites manipulating a vast legion of corrupt politicians, mendacious journalists, propagandizing schoolteachers, nefarious bankers, and hidden subversive cadre.²⁶

This is not an expression of a healthy political skepticism about state power or legitimate calls for reform or radical challenges to government or corporate abuses. This is an irrational anxiety that has hardened into an ideological worldview. It pictures the world around us as governed by powerful long-standing covert conspiracies of evildoers who control politics, the economy, and all of history. Some ana-

lysts call this worldview **conspiracism**.

The term conspiracism, according to historian Frank P. Mintz, denotes a “belief in the primacy of conspiracies in the unfolding of history.”²⁷ Mintz explains:

Conspiracism serves the needs of diverse political and social groups in America and elsewhere. It identifies elites, blames them for economic and social catastrophes, and assumes that things will be better once popular action can remove them from positions of power. As such, conspiracy theories do not typify a particular epoch or ideology.²⁸

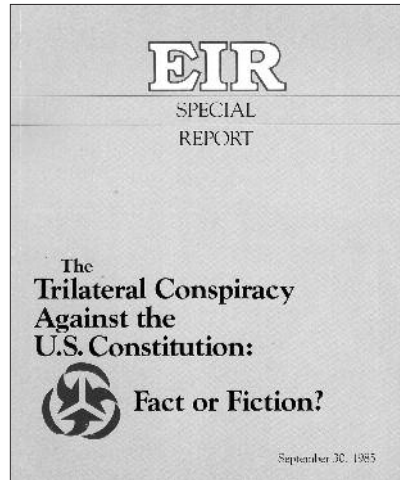
Clearly, there are real conspiracies throughout history—some yet unexposed. Conspiracies, however, “rarely move history” writes Bruce Cumings, “they make a difference at the margins from time to time, but with the unforeseen

consequences of a logic outside the control of their authors.”²⁹

Progressive critics of conspiracism do not deny the obvious reality of real criminal and political conspiracies but argue that conspiracism as a worldview is neither an accurate nor useful analytical model for power structure research. This will be discussed at greater length later in the study.

Conspiracism has flourished episodically throughout U.S. history and the results can be devastating. There have been destructive crusades against sin; waves of government repression justified by claims of subversive conspiracies; and campaigns to purge alien ideas and persons from our shores.³⁰ As author Robert Alan Goldberg explains:

For generations, Americans have entertained visions of vast conspiracies that target their religion, race, and nation. Salem witches, British ministers, Catholic priests, slaveholders, Wall Street bankers, Jews,



Conspiracism is not an expression of a healthy political skepticism about state power or legitimate calls for reform or radical challenges to government or corporate abuses.

Bolsheviks, and black militants, all in their turn and among many other suspects, have been cast in the plotters role.³¹

When conspiracism becomes a mass phenomenon, persons seeking to protect the nation from the alleged conspiracy of subversives create counter movements to halt the subversion. Historians dub them **countersubversives**.

Conspiracy theories can point upwards toward “elite parasites” or downward toward “lazy, sinful, or subversive parasites.” Forms of **anti-elite conspiracism** (or **anti-elite scapegoating**) target “groups seen as sinister elites abusing their power from above.” Forms of countersubversive scapegoating target “groups portrayed as subversives trying to overturn the established order from below or from within.”³² Sometimes these two forms are linked, resulting in the idea that the hard-working middle class is being squeezed from above and below.³³

When conspiracism becomes a mass phenomenon, persons seeking to protect the nation from the alleged conspiracy of subversives create counter movements to halt the subversion.

Up until the mid-1970s the explanation offered by academics was that the people who joined conspiracist and countersubversive movements had personality disorders and were marginal political paranoids on the extremist fringes.³⁴ Goldberg offers another perspective:

Rather than reducing public fears to the sum of individual disorders, I seek to consider conspiracy imaging in its historical, social, and political environment. My attention is less on the mental maladies... than on their rhetorical strategies, their business acumen, and the interplay within conspiracy-minded communities.³⁵

The late David Brion Davis, Sterling professor of history at Yale University, noted that movements to counter the “threat of conspiratorial subversion acquired new meaning in a nation born in revolution and based on the sovereignty of the people.” He notes that in the U.S., “crusades against subversion have

GUILTY FOR 9-11: BUSH, RUMSFELD, MYERS

Introduction & Section 1

by Illarion Bykov and Jared Israel

[Posted 14 November 2001]

[Updated 17 November 2001]

Dedicated to the firemen of New York.

never been the monopoly of a single social class or ideology, but have been readily appropriated by highly diverse groups.”³⁶

Goldberg agrees, writing that “Conspiracism thrives when power is exercised at a distance by seemingly selfish groups zealous in their authority. When the present continues to reveal the past, all are suscep-

tible to the prompting of conspiracy thinking, with class and gender lines offering no barriers.”³⁷

In some cases, conspiracists see the devil in the details, and adopt apocalyptic visions of a huge impending battle between good and evil. This can lead to negative outcomes ranging from religious or ethnic bigotry to campaigns of expulsion to genocide.

The term **apocalypticism** is a mouthful, but it is used here to denote a mindset or frame of reference common in conspiracist movements. Apocalyptic belief consists of several components:

1. The expectation that a confrontation is about to take place.
2. The confrontation will involve a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil.
3. During the course of the confrontation hidden truths will be unveiled.
4. At the end of the confrontation the society will be dramatically altered—for better or for worse.

Key to this concept of apocalypticism is the idea that time is running out, so an immediate response is required. Although apocalypticism was forged in religious belief systems, today it heats up many secular movements.

The specific allegations embedded in destructive conspiracy theories change based on time and place, but the basic elements remain the same:

- Dualistic Division: The world is divided into a good “Us” and a bad “Them.”
- Demonizing Rhetoric: Our opponents are evil and subversive...maybe subhuman.
- Targeting of Scapegoats: They are causing all our troubles—we are blameless.
- An Apocalyptic Timetable: Time is running out and we must act immediately to stave off a cataclysmic event.

Professor Brenda E. Brasher notes that in this apocalyptic model, “People are cast in their roles as either enemy or friend, and there is no such thing as middle ground.”³⁸ It is this constellation of mutually-reinforcing negative elements in conspiracism that makes it so dangerous to civil society. Conspiracism undermines democratic processes in the United States when apocalyptic mass movements blend conspiracy theories with dualism, demonization and the scapegoating of opponents. Conspiracism is toxic to democracy.

THE TOOLS OF FEAR

Understanding conspiracism’s role in bigoted and repressive social and political movements took on a new urgency after the role of these dynamics in Nazi Germany. Some academics and analysts went too far and argued that all dissident mass social movements posed a threat to democracy.³⁹ Others, however, began assembling a more useful set of analytical frameworks.⁴⁰ In the 1950s, for example, Gordon W. Allport looked at the components of prejudice with a detailed examination of the roles played by scapegoating and demonization. Allport’s work has held up very well.⁴¹ Along the way, sociologists, social psychologists, and other scholars have added layers of complexity and nuance to the dynamics outlined by Allport. A short review of these concepts will help make it clear why the dynamic of dualistic apocalyptic conspiracism is directly related to understanding how historic antisemitic conspiracy theories and their analogs still can function as an effective tool for mobilizing a social movement in a society.

When sociologists speak of a movement frame, they mean a specific perspective or point of view crafted by movement leaders to illustrate why their side of a power struggle is legitimate. To be effective, frames must be easily understood by movement members and the public, and resonate in some way with pre-existing social and cultural understandings of reality.⁴² A master frame is a broad perspective that a whole movement adopts to explain its collection of grievances and defend its general goals.⁴³ The term “meta-frame” describes a frame so pervasive in a culture that many different movements can use it despite their ideological differences.⁴⁴ Frames and ideologies interact,

but are separate phenomena.⁴⁵

In sociology, the term “narrative” refers to a story told to and repeated by members of a social movement. Narratives have a plot complete with protagonists and antagonists who are labeled as heroes or villains in the text or subtext. Thus, narratives instruct movement members about which ideas and actions they should see as valuable and praiseworthy, and which they should avoid and condemn. Narratives help bind recruits closer to the movement, but more importantly for a discussion of the *Protocols*, narratives can identify a common enemy.⁴⁶

The tools of fear are used by demagogues, and they can be studied analytically by breaking them down into components.

- Dualism
- Scapegoating
- Demonization
- Apocalyptic Aggression

These four elements help generate conspiracism as a narrative form of scapegoating.

Apocalyptic Aggression

Apocalypticism is a **meta-frame** that involves the sense of expectation that dramatic events are about to unfold during which good will confront evil in a confrontation that will change the world forever and reveal hidden truths.⁴⁷ Apocalyptic movements believe that time is running out. The term millennialism describes movements that are apocalyptic, and built around a theme involv-

ing a one thousand year span (or some other lengthy period).⁴⁸

Apocalypticism is not in itself dangerous. All social movements to some extent are apocalyptic, at least in the call for people to rise up and change society in some dramatic way. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used the type of apocalyptic language common in the Black evangelical church in the United States to call for racial justice through non-violent action, especially in his famous “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech in Memphis,

Movement frames are specific perspectives or point of views crafted by movement leaders to illustrate why their side of a power struggle is legitimate. To be effective, frames must be easily understood by the public, and resonate in some way with pre-existing social and cultural understandings of reality.



Tennessee, April 3, 1968, shortly before his assassination. Robert Jay Lifton observes, “historically the apocalyptic imagination has usually been nonviolent in nature,” but it can also generate horrific violence.⁴⁹ In this mode, it is a form of **Apocalyptic Aggression**.

Apocalyptic expectations of government tyranny fueled the tragic confrontations involving the Weaver Family at Ruby Ridge, Idaho and the Branch Davidian compound at Waco, Texas. The failure of government agencies to factor in the apocalyptic worldviews of movement participants at both locations contributed to the deadly outcomes. The bloody Christian Crusades to expel Muslims from the Holy Land at various times involved the invocation of apocalyptic predictions concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ Several authors have studied how Hitler’s Nazi movement involved

aggressive apocalyptic aspects which nurtured violent attacks on Jews and other enemies of the state.⁵¹

An apocalyptic leader may take on the mantle of a messiah, arriving in the nick of time to defend the ideal community from the sinister and malevolent conspiracy. The merger of conspiracism with apocalypticism often generates aggressive forms of dualism. Apocalyptic Aggression occurs when demonized scapegoats are targeted as enemies of the “common good,” a dynamic that can lead to discrimination and attacks.

Dualism is a **metaframe**, through which people see the world divided into the forces of good and evil. Manichaeism gave dualism a boost into Christianity. Historian Richard Hofstadter noted the “fundamentalist mind... is essentially Manichean.”⁵² While this is perhaps overly simplistic, Dualism exists in many societies including the United States, where it is especially prevalent among the subcultures of Christian evangelicalism and fundamentalism.

Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins use the phrase “exemplary dualism” to refer to the most

hyperbolic form of dualism whereby “contemporary sociopolitical or socioreligious forces are transmogrified into absolute contrast categories embodying moral, eschatological, and cosmic polarities upon

which hinge the millennial destiny of humankind.”⁵³ In other words, participants in apocalyptic social movements may develop a form of dualism that is vivid and highly polarized. This dualism is attached to a set of ideological beliefs in which immediate action is not only considered proper, but also fulfils a personal moral obligation, achieving the ultimate historic and prophetic destiny of the movement, and, in their minds, determining the fate of the entire world.

This dynamic is found in “totalist” religious and ideological movements “with highly dualistic worldviews” and “an absolutist apocalyptic outlook” where members cast a “projection of negativity and rejected elements of self onto ideologically designated scapegoats.”⁵⁴

Dualism can be magnified in revolutionary and underground political movements and in “high demand” totalitarian movements.⁵⁵

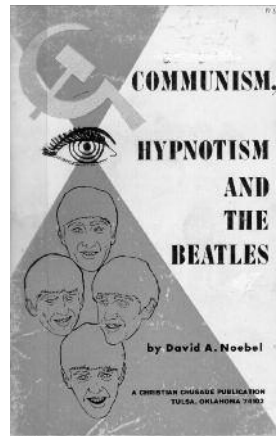
Scapegoating

Scapegoating is a **process** by which a person or group of people are wrongfully stereotyped as sharing negative traits and are singled out for blame for causing societal problems, while the primary source of the problem (if it is real rather than imaginary) is overlooked or absolved of blame.⁵⁶

Scapegoating can occur within personal networks such as families or small groups,⁵⁷ but it also can become a mass phenomenon that functions on a societal level. We can see societal scapegoating at work when a social or political movement wrongfully stereotypes a group of people as all sharing the same negative traits, and the targeted group of people are singled out and blamed for causing societal problems. It is easier to get people to scapegoat a group if it is first demonized.⁵⁸

Demonization

Demonization is a **process** through which people target individuals or groups as the embodiment of evil. Demonization turns individuals in scapegoated groups into an undifferentiated, faceless force threatening the idealized community.⁵⁹ The sequence moves from denigration to dehumanization to demon-



When a social or political movement wrongfully stereotypes a group of people as all sharing the same negative traits, and these people are singled out and blamed for causing societal problems, this absolves or misdirects attention away from the primary source of the problem.

nization; and each step generates an increasing level of hatred of the objectified and scapegoated “Other.”⁶⁰

One way to demonize a target group is to claim that the scapegoated group is plotting against the public good. This often involves demagogic appeals. With demagoguery, followers must see the movement leader as charismatic, or the performance is easily interpreted as buffoonery. Demagoguery facilitates this process. Demagoguery has been used historically not only by populists to denounce corrupt elites, but also by government officials to justify political repression—in both instances based on fears of conspiracies by real and imaginary subversive elements.⁶¹

Conspiracism

Conspiracism is a narrative. In the societal context, conspiracism is a particular narrative form of demagogic scapegoating that frames demonized enemies “as part of a vast insidious plot against the common good, while it valorizes the scapegoater as a hero for sounding the alarm.”⁶² Conspiracist thinking exists around the world, and in some circumstances can move easily from the margins to the mainstream, as has happened repeatedly in the United States.⁶³ Several scholars have argued that historic and contemporary conspiracism, especially the apocalyptic form, is a more widely shared worldview in the United States than in most other industrialized countries.⁶⁴

Conspiracism gains a mass following in times of social, cultural, economic, or political stress. The issues of immigration, demands for racial or gender equality, gay rights, power struggles between nations, wars—all can be viewed through a conspiracist lens. Contemporary conspiracism started as a narrative to defend the *status quo* in the late 1700s, but it spawned a flip side where the conspiracy is seen to be controlling the government. This was a central motif of the 1950s Red Scare when fears of



global communist subversion were a popular conspiracist script. A common storyline of militant anticommunists was that the Red Menace “conspiracy” involved a pincer movement with external threats of imminent attack coupled with internal subversion by covert operatives who appeared on the surface to be upstanding citizens.

Today, this bilateral right-wing storyline portrays Muslims and Arabs in the same way. External “Jihadists” are claimed to pose a constant threat of violence against the United States, while our neighbors who are Muslim or Arab are suspected of being internal covert operatives of a secret conspiracy aimed at toppling Western culture. It is not that threats do not exist; it is that these threats are hyperbolized in a way that harms civil society and weakens homeland security.

Sadly, as tensions in the Middle East have boiled over, an increasing number of Arabs and Muslims have grabbed onto antisemitic conspiracy theories to explain devastating struggles over land and power.

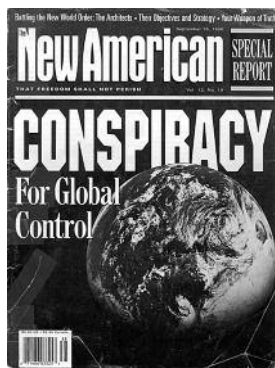
The Christian Right, which in the 1960s mobilized to battle “Godless Communism,” now battles “Godless Secular Humanism” which they see as supporting sinful abortion and gay rights. Since these views are often wrapped around conspiracy theories claiming liberal sedition or satanic collaboration, the ability to resolve disputes through civic compromise is hobbled.

UNPACKING THE CONCEPT OF CONSPIRACISM

Historian Frank Donner asserts that conspiracism is woven into the American experience:

The American obsession with subversive conspiracies of all kinds is deeply rooted in our history. Especially in times of stress, exaggerated febrile explanations of unwelcome reality come to the surface of American life and attract support. These recurrent countersubversive movements illuminate a striking contrast between our claims to superiority, indeed our mission as

Demagoguery has been used historically not only by populists to denounce corrupt elites, but also by government officials to justify political repression—in both instances based on fears of conspiracies by real and imaginary subversive elements.



a redeemer nation to bring a new world order, and the extraordinary fragility of our confidence in our institutions.⁶⁵

According to Donner, this “contrast has led some observers to conclude that we are, subconsciously, quite insecure about the value and permanence of our society. Donner suggests it is “American mobility” itself that creates this dynamic because it “detaches individuals from traditional sources of strength and identity—family, class, private associations—and leaves only economic status as a measure of worth.” The result is widespread feelings of both isolation and insecurity that “force a quest for selfhood in the national state, anxiety about imperiled heritage, and an aggression against those who reject or question it.”⁶⁶

Donner developed his theories about conspiracism while writing two books on government political repression in which he explored how repression was justified when public officials and right-wing pundits declared that subversive conspiracies existed and needed to be stopped.⁶⁷

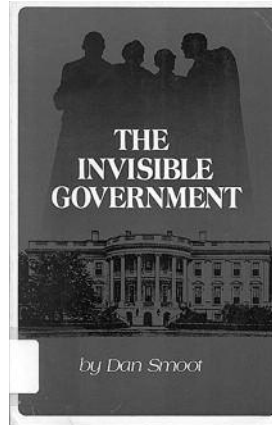
From Paranoid Style to Apocalyptic Frame

Since the 1960s, numerous scholars have explored the role of conspiracy theories in American life. Some of the best known early studies of conspiracy theories were penned by noted historian Richard Hofstadter whose essay on “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” established the leading analytical framework in the 1960s for studying conspiracism in public settings.⁶⁸

Hofstadter identified “the central preconception” of the **paranoid style** as a belief in the “existence of a vast, insidious, preternaturally effective international conspiratorial network designed to perpetrate acts of the most fiendish character.” According to Hofstadter, this was common in certain figures in the U.S. Political Right, and was accompanied with a “sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic” which “goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation.”⁶⁹

According to Hofstadter:

...the feeling of persecution is central, and it is indeed systematized in grandiose theories of conspiracy. But there is a vital difference between the paranoid spokesman in politics and the clinical paranoid: although they both tend to be overheated, oversuspicious, over-aggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression, the clinical paranoid sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in which he feels himself to be living as directed specifically *against him*; whereas the spokesman of the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture, a way of life whose fate affects not himself alone but millions of others.⁷⁰



We all are attracted to conspiracy theories and this may be, at least in part, hardwired.

Damian Thompson, a journalist and scholar of religion, suggests Hofstadter was right to articulate the “startling affinities between the paranoid style and apocalyptic belief,” especially the demonization of opponents and “the sense of time running out.” Thompson, however, argues Hofstadter should have made a more direct connection by considering “the possibility that the paranoia he identified actually derived from apocalyptic belief; that the people who spread scare stories about Catholics, Masons, Illuminati, and Communists” were extrapolating from widespread Protestant End Times beliefs. Furthermore, the persistence of End Times belief “in the United States rather than Europe surely explains why the paranoid style seems so quintessentially American,” concludes Thompson, who has written extensively on apocalyptic millennialism.⁷¹

The Attraction of Conspiracy Theories

We all are attracted to conspiracy theories and this may be, at least in part, hardwired. Forensic psychologist Evan Harrington points to research suggesting “our distant ancestors who were suspicious of others would have an advantage over those who were overly trusting.” In addition, as part of “our evolutionary heritage,” humans are “amazingly adept at seeing patterns in the events that happen around us.” But sometimes when we seek to “resolve ambiguity” we make errors, says Harrington.⁷²

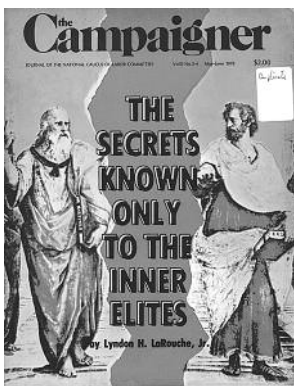
This is especially true when we see traumatic events. We look for an explanation that fits the huge

scale of the event, and this can breed conspiracy theories, especially when governments or large corporations engage in secrecy and cover-ups.

According to Professor Michael Barkun, conspiracism attracts people because conspiracy theorists “claim to explain what others can’t. They appear to make sense out of a world that is otherwise confusing.” There is an appealing simplicity in dividing the world sharply into good and bad and tracing “all evil back to a single source, the conspirators and their agents.” Barkun notes that “conspiracy theories are often presented as special, secret knowledge unknown or unappreciated by others.” For conspiracists, “the masses are a brainwashed herd, while the conspiracists in the know can congratulate themselves on penetrating the plotters’ deceptions,” observes Barkun.⁷³

Conspiracy theories are stories with a plot revealing who the good guys and bad guys are. As an overly-simplistic perceptual frame, conspiracism is rooted in the dualist view of a global battle between the forces of good and evil. This easily becomes a narrative form of scapegoating which lets real problems go unresolved by directing attention away from the real causes of structural problems. When conspiracists divide the world into polar opposites with little appreciation for complexity or nuance, the process of **categorization** is involved. Categorization is common among us humans, says psychologist Harrington. “That’s not to say that we have to see the world in terms of us-and-them, but it occurs quite frequently and at a young age.”

Why is trying to argue with conspiracy theorists so frustrating? “Once an individual makes a deep investment into a belief system,” says Harrington, “it can be very difficult to dissuade them. Experiments have shown that we all, to some extent, have a ‘disconfirmation bias’ in which we try to explain away information that doesn’t fit what we already believe.” This selective form of perception allows conspiracy theorists to latch onto eccentric crumb-sized claims while ignoring mountains of easily-documented evidence. Ultimately, sometimes we don’t have enough evidence to solve a puzzle completely, and



Harrington notes that some people “have a greater need for resolution of puzzles than others. Some people do appear to have a lesser tolerance for ambiguity than others.”⁷⁴ Lacking information, these folks want to connect the dots without finishing their homework.

Some Basic Rules of Conspiracism

A number of authors have noted patterns and trends in the various historic U.S. conspiracy theories, with the most noted being Hofstadter. While some scholars are critical of some of Hofstadter’s analytical conclusions, his discussion of the details of the conspiracist genre remains a pioneering and remarkably useful body of research.

George Johnson spent years researching a variety of groups in the United States that used a conspiratorial analysis, and arrived at a set of common beliefs:

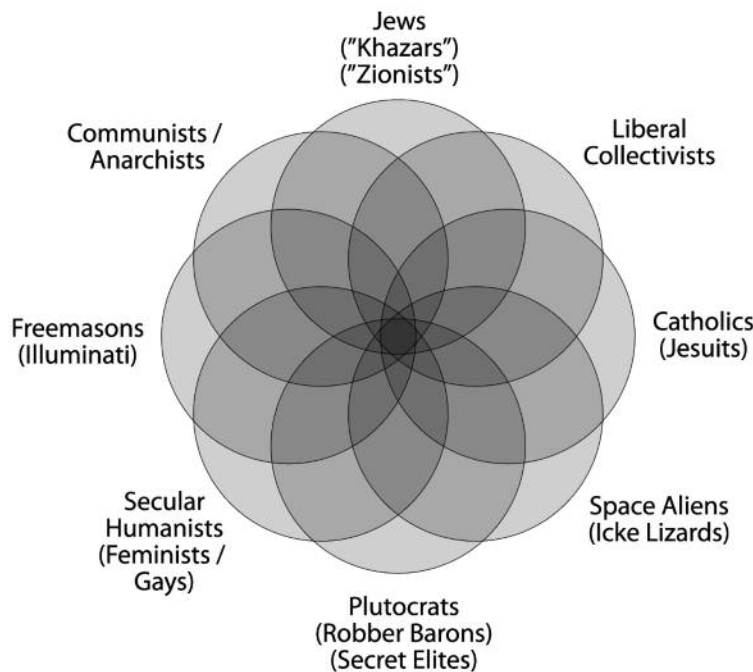
- The conspirators are internationalist in their sympathies...
- Seeming enemies are actually secret friends... through the lens of the conspiracy theorists, capitalists, and Communists work hand in hand...
- The takeover by the international godless government will be ignited by the collapse of the economic system...
- It’s all spelled out in the Bible. For those with a fundamentalist bent, the New World Order or One World Government is none other than the international kingdom of the Antichrist, described in the Book of Revelation. . .
- In a conspiracy theory, nothing is ever discarded.⁷⁵

Johnson goes on to observe that:

Right-wing mail order bookstores still sell the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” the anti-Semitic fantasy hatched in Russia a century ago. Another big seller is “Proofs of a Conspiracy,” a 1798 book reprinted by the John Birch Society, which fueled speculation that a Freemasonic group called the Order of the Illuminati plotted with the Jeffersonians to turn over the fledgling United States to followers of French Enlightenment philosophy—the 18th century equivalent of secular humanism.”⁷⁶

CHART NO. 1

The Protocols of Overlapping Conspiracism



Journalist Michael Kelly called this process of amalgamation and accretion “fusion paranoia,” while Barkun refers to an “improvisational style” used by conspiracy theorists to construct their narratives.⁷⁷ Conspiracy theories are not merely additive *mélanges*; they are less like a conspiracist *Pot-au-feu* and more like a meal selected from a *smörgåsbord* of conspiratorial snacks.

Chart One lists eight typical scapegoats targeted by conspiracy theorists. Some conspiracists are purists, blaming just Jews or Plutocrats for despoiling the ideal community. Others prefer to combine scapegoats on their plate so there is overlap. Jews, Freemasons, and communists are a popular combination. David Icke seems to favor Plutocrats, Space Aliens, and Jews. There are an infinite number of possible scapegoats, thus there are an infinite number of variations.

Many studies of scapegoating do not sufficiently examine the role of dualistic versions of apocalypticism in the production of an aggressive or violent response to alleged conspiracies of Jews, Muslims, or other scapegoats cast in the role of the “Other.”⁷⁸

THE ROOTS OF MODERN CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Any claim that there is a vast, long-standing, secret conspiracy involving Jews manipulating the government, media, and banks is antisemitic. Sometimes conspiracy theorists replace “Jews” with phrases such as “cliques of bankers and financiers” or “Bankster Rule,” (Webster Griffin Tarpley)⁷⁹ or the “financial oligarchy run by the ‘Crown’ which refers to the ‘City of London’” (Henry Makow)⁸⁰ or the “neo-Venetian circles of the Anglo-Dutch philosophically liberal circles of rentier-financier power” (Lyndon LaRouche).⁸¹ Whether or not it is intentional, these phrases are historically linked to conspiracy claims about the vast Jewish plot that gained fame through Hitler’s favorite hoax document, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

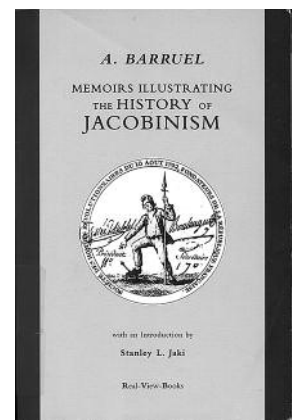
This is nothing new. In the 1800s August Bebel called antisemitic conspiracy theories the “socialism of fools.”⁸² In 1920, Lenin called the tendency toward opportunism and adventurism typical of many conspiracy theorists an “infantile disorder.”⁸³ Bebel, a social democrat, was trying to get German workers to pay attention to the structural inequalities of the economic system rather than scapegoating Jewish financiers and bankers. Lenin, a communist, was warning that sometimes people who claim to be on the cutting edge are actually dull blades ripping at the fabric of the movement.

Freemasons, Secret Cabals, and Jews

To understand why conspiracy theories are toxic to democracy, we have to go back over 200 years to one of the crucial moments of rebellions in favor of democratic principles.

The Illuminati & Freemason Conspiracy

The idea of a widespread Freemason conspiracy involving a group called the Illuminati was spread by books published in the late 1790s.⁸⁴



British author John Robison wrote the 1798 book *Proofs of a Conspiracy*.⁸⁵ Robison influenced a competing French author, ex-Jesuit Abbé Augustin de Barruel, whose first two volumes of his eventual four volume study, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, beat Robison's book to the printer.⁸⁶

Goldberg summarizes the basic themes of the books by Barruel and Robison:

Writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution, these monarchists had created a counterhistory in defense of the aristocracy. Winning the hearts and minds of present and future readers would assuage some

of the pain of recent defeat and mobilize defenses. The Revolution, they argued, was not rooted in poverty and despotism. Rather than a rising of the masses, it was the work of Adam Weishaupt's Illuminati, a secret society that plotted to destroy all civil and religious authority and abolish marriage, the family, and private property. It was the Illuminati who schemed to turn contented peasants "from Religion to Atheism, from decency to dissoluteness, from loyalty to rebellion."⁸⁷

Barruel wrote the conspirators "had sworn

AN EXAMPLE OF CONTEMPORARY ANTI-MASONIC CONSPIRACISM

David J. Smith

Church of God Evangelistic Association

America is about to come into great trouble. The elder President Bush stated **210** times in speeches that the aim of his coalition in fighting Iraq in the early 1990s was a **New World Order**. Has anyone noticed the current president's advisors — *the same as the elder Bush's*. All these men are members of a *subversive* organization called the Council on Foreign Relations. It was founded in 1919 and incorporated in 1921. All of the founders were high Freemasons and other secret societies working for world government....

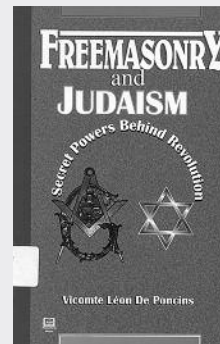
It has been reported that former President Clinton met with the power brokers of the world in a Bilderberger meeting before leaving office. He assured them that everything was *in place* for the **TAKEOVER**....

The Illuminati's plan, laid out by Adam Weishaupt in 1776, called for a **Novus Ordo Seclorum—New World Order**. They have never deviated from his basic outline - only added updates by Albert Pike, head of the *Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, V. I. Lenin, first ruthless dictator of Russian Communism, and Dimitry Manuilski of the Lenin School of Political Warfare in Moscow.

In these "secret societies" they have a secret god that they worship but do not want the remainder of the world to know they are religious. That god is *Lucifer or Satan the Devil*. People in the highest degrees of Freemasonry are handpicked to learn the secrets of world government with the coming worship of Lucifer. Where do we think they get their power?

Every president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, but including him, were members of one secret society or another that all receive their final instructions handed down by the *Illuminati*. Examples: Roosevelt {sic} was a 32nd degree Mason. Truman was a 33rd degree Mason. Eisenhower was another high Mason. John F. Kennedy was a member of the Massachusetts branch of the Council on Foreign Relations. In more modern times, George Herbert Walker Bush is a member of Skull & Bones [1948 inductee], Bohemian Grove, Council on Foreign Relations, and Trilateral Commission. Bill Clinton was a Rhodes Scholar. George W. Bush was a 1968 inductee into Skull & Bones, Bohemian Grove member.

Skull & Bones was a sister fraternity to the Thule Society to which Adolf Hitler belonged. The Thule Society was said to be able to trace its roots to the Bavarian *Illuminati*, which controls ALL secret societies. Their great secret is their goal of a **New World Order**.¹



Some Muslim conspiracists have picked up on the anti-Masonic conspiracy theories from the late 1700s and have updated them to allege that the Freemasons working with Jews are responsible for the problems in the Middle East.

¹. David J. Smith, "Editorial," *Newswatch Magazine* online, (September 28, 2002), http://www.newswatchmagazine.org/weekly_editor/9.28.01.htm and "Newswatch Magazine Newsletter," (July 1, 2002) <http://www.newswatchmagazine.org/moletter/july02.htm>, (accessed Oct. 21, 2002?).

hatred to the altar and the throne, had sworn to crush the God of the Christians, and utterly to extirpate the Kings of the Earth.”⁸⁸ For Barruel, the grand plot hinges on how Illuminati “adepts of revolutionary Equality and Liberty had buried themselves in the Lodges of Masonry,” where they supposedly caused the French revolution, and then ordered “all the adepts in their public prints to cry up the revolution and its principles.” Soon, every nation had its “apostle of Equality, Liberty, and Sovereignty of the People.”⁸⁹

Robison, a professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, argued that the Illuminati evolved out of Freemasonry, and called the Illuminati philosophy “Cosmopolitism.”⁹⁰ Robison further claimed that Weishaupt was not satisfied with delivering France to the revolutionary rabble, but had a plan to send agents across Europe to infiltrate Masonic lodges and topple governments in a way that presaged the Domino Theory.⁹¹ Robison issued dire warnings about Freemasons:

Their first and immediate aim is to get the possession of riches, power, and influence, without industry; and, to accomplish this, they want to abolish Christianity; and then dissolute manners and universal profligacy will procure them the adherents of all the wicked, and enable them to overturn all the civil governments of Europe; after which they will think of farther conquests, and extend their operations to the other quarters of the globe, till they have reduced mankind to the state of one indistinguishable chaotic mass.⁹²

Goldberg observes that Robison and Barruel:

...portray Weishaupt, his Illuminati society, the Freemasons, and other secret societies, as being part of a sinister vast global conspiracy. This myth starts with a grain (and only a grain) of truth. Adam Weishaupt was a professor of Canon Law at the University of Ingolstadt in Germany, and he actually formed a secretive society, the Order of the Illuminati, in 1776.

The Order of Illuminati, notes Goldberg, actually did preach “resistance to state authority and vowed to destroy ecclesiastical power.”⁹³ Furthermore, the rationalist ideas of the Enlightenment were, in part, brought into Masonic lodges by some members of the Illuminati where they played a role in a factional fight against occultist philosophy.⁹⁴ However, Weishaupt was banished in 1786 by the government, and the Illuminati suppressed.⁹⁵

The anti-Masonic books by Robison and Barruel both promote three conspiracist contentions still circulating today:

- The Enlightenment themes of equality and liberty undermine respect for private property and the natural social hierarchy;
- There is a secret conspiracy to destroy Christianity; and,
- People who encourage free thinking and international cooperation are disloyal cosmopolitans and subversive traitors who are out to destroy national sovereignty, promote moral anarchy, and establish political tyranny.



In fact, there is no vast, longstanding conspiracy by Freemasons or the Illuminati to rule the world, but anti-Masonic groups still circulate the Barruel and Robison books more than 200 years after they were published.

Shortly after his book appeared, Barruel was encouraged to mix his conspiracist theories about the Illuminati/Freemasons with spurious claims of powerful secret Jewish elites. This merger of Freemason and Jewish scapegoats had happened earlier in Europe. In the United States early conspiracy theories about Freemasons usually merged with attacks on Catholics.⁹⁶ In the late 1800s, some populists began to incorporate Jews into their conspiracy theories about the plutocrats and oligarchs.⁹⁷

The mixture of conspiracy theories about the Illuminati, the Freemasons, and the Jews became more widely significant in the U.S. in the early 1900s when the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was circulated, claiming that behind the Freemasons was a cabal of Jews.⁹⁸ As these conspiracy theories intertwined in the U.S., infinite variations fanned out to incorporate themes from others sources as well.

The Protocols and Conspiracist Antisemitism

Freemasonic conspiracy theories were easily merged with historic antisemitism and false allegations of a Jewish banking cabal to create one of the most famous hoax documents ever published: the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.⁹⁹ The *Protocols* are inspired by (and plagiarized from) earlier works that allege conspiracies; especially a satiric French work *Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu* by Maurice Joly published in 1865; and a German novel *Biarritz* by Hermann Goedsche published in 1868.¹⁰⁰

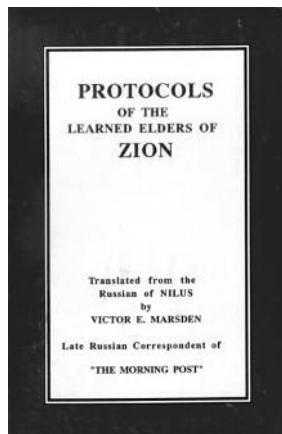
The public circulation of the *Protocols* grew out of propaganda intrigues of the secret police of Czarist Russia in the late nineteenth century.¹⁰¹ The main Russian print source for the *Protocols* first appeared as an appendix in *The Big in the Small, and Antichrist as a Near Political Possibility; Notes of an Orthodox Person* by Sergei A. Nilus, published in 1905 but republished to wider audiences in 1911, 1917, and 1918.¹⁰²

The text purports to be minutes of secret meetings of a Jewish ruling clique conspiring to take over the world (a claim that should be unnecessary to point out is a bigoted falsehood.). The *Protocols* incorporate many of the core conspiracist themes outlined in the Robison and Barruel attacks on the Freemasons and overlay them with antisemitic allegations about anti-Czarist movements in Russia. The *Protocols* reflect the same themes as other, more general critiques of Enlightenment liberalism by those supporting church/state oligarchies and other anti-democratic and theocratic forms of government. Equally dubious documents purporting to reveal similar secret conspiracies have circulated for centuries.¹⁰³

There are a number of different versions of the *Protocols*, with different numbered sections; their authors may have assembled the allegations from a base document that researchers have never found.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the various versions of the *Protocols* tend to have the same general set of allegations:

- Jews are behind a plan for global conquest,
- Jews work through Masonic lodges,
- Jews use liberalism to weaken church and state,
- Jews control the press,

- Jews work through radicals and revolutionaries,
- Jews manipulate the economy, especially through banking monopolies and the power of gold,
- Jews encourage issuing paper currency not tied to the gold standard,
- Jews promote financial speculation and use of credit,
- Jews replace traditional educational curriculum to discourage independent thinking,
- Jews encourage immorality among Christian youth,
- Jews use intellectuals to confuse people,
- Jews control “puppet” governments both through secret allies and by blackmailing elected officials,
- Jews weaken laws through liberal interpretations,
- Jews will suspend civil liberties during an emergency and then make the measures permanent.



tradition of promoting respect for religious pluralism and the separation of church and state. Since the late 18th century, according to R. William Weisberger, a historian of Masonry, the practice of Freemasonry included rituals which “embodied salient secular and ethical tenets of the Enlightenment,” and thus “helped to advance the cause of Jews in numerous ways.”¹⁰⁵

After the Russian revolution, Czarist loyalists emigrated to countries in Europe and to the U.S., bringing copies of the *Protocols* and claiming they were the plans used by the Judeo-Bolsheviks to seize power.¹⁰⁶ The *Protocols* became a core source of allegations by Hitler and his allies in the German Nazi movement of a Judeo-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy.

A common conspiracist interpretation of the Protocols is that if one peels away the layers of the Freemason conspiracy, past the Illuminati, one finds the rotten Jewish core.

In early 1920, a private English translation was printed in Britain, and that summer London's *Morning Post* published a series of "eighteen articles expounding the full myth of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, with of course due reference to the *Protocols*."¹⁰⁷ The newspaper's correspondent in Russia, Victor E. Marsden, produced the new English translation of the *Protocols* that is still in print and sold today.¹⁰⁸

The *Protocols* and Christian Apocalypticism

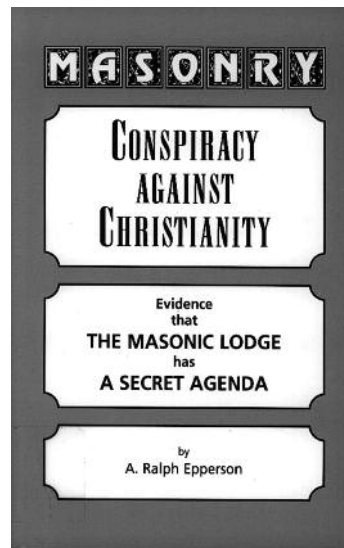
The vast majority of Christians who are aware of the *Protocols* denounce it. Sergei A. Nilus published the most popular version of the *Protocols*, however, to invoke Christian Biblical prophecy.¹⁰⁹ Nilus was addressing his text to Christians in the Russian Orthodox Church, and trying to incite mass hatred of Jews. To understand how this has reverberated down through history, we need to understand the basics about Christian apocalyptic beliefs.

The Protocols became a core source of allegations by Hitler and his allies in the German Nazi movement of a Judeo-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy.

Christian apocalypticism is based on many sources in the Bible, including the Old Testament books of Daniel and Ezekiel, and the New Testament Gospels of Matthew and Mark.¹¹⁰ The primary Biblical source, however, is the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament.¹¹¹

The Book of Revelation is read in an idiosyncratic way by some Christians, mostly fundamentalist evangelical Protestants in the United States. They see in Biblical prophecy a warning that just before the return of Jesus Christ in his "Second Coming," powerful political and religious figures will forge an alliance with the evil "Antichrist," and a false prophet, and seek to build a one world global government and establish a New World Order—after which Christians will be hunted down and the world run on behalf of Satan himself. This view is frequently interpreted and spread in the form of conspiracy theory narratives.

Christian Right leader Tim LaHaye, for example, claims it was Satan himself who engineered the "crafty election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president



for twelve years." This was part of a secret conspiracy to turn the "American constitution upside down," in order to "use our freedoms to promote pornography, homosexuality, immorality, and a host of evils characteristic of the last days," states LaHaye, in an open reference to the apocalyptic End Times prophesied in Revelation.¹¹² In another article, LaHaye wrote the "Anti-Christ philosophy already controls America and Europe."¹¹³

LaHaye asserts that: "All thinking people in America realize an anti-Christian, anti-moral, and anti-American philosophy permeates this country and the world."¹¹⁴ The subversive conspirators include godless secular humanists and others who secretly manipulate the news media, the entertainment industry, the universities, and even the court system. These evil forces have turned the "American constitution upside down," warns LaHaye.¹¹⁵ "I have no question the devil is behind what the apostle Paul called 'the wisdom (philosophy) of this world' and controls many of our courts and other areas of influence," LaHaye writes.¹¹⁶

According to LaHaye, the liberal, secular humanist, Antichrist conspiracy:

... dominates the public school system from kindergarten through graduate school. It controls the media from the daily print press to popular magazines (from porno to mainline), the six major TV networks, most of all cable TV; it dominates the entertainment industry, and it elects a predominance of liberals to both parties in our national government.

This alien philosophy does not come from the Bible, but is antithetical to it. In this country it flies under the banner of "liberalism," but in reality it is atheistic socialism at best and Marxism at worst.

We are the only nation that can halt the socialist Marxist enthronement of the UN as THE GLOBAL GOVERNMENT of the world, but it will require a conservative administration and Supreme Court com-

mitted to judicially interpreting our nation's laws that were originally based on moral Biblical principles.¹¹⁷

For a significant number of apocalyptic Christians, these conspiracist views are not only sincere religious beliefs, but a guide for concrete actions that help shape U.S. foreign and domestic policies and practices.¹¹⁸ Only a tiny and insignificant number of Christians actually peddle the *Protocols*, but the *Protocols* themselves derive from Christian apocalyptic belief, and the text continues to motivate conspiracist demagogues in both religious and secular settings.

Contemporary Use of the *Protocols*

The text of the *Protocols* is still circulated in the U.S. and in scores of countries around the world in numerous translations. It is cited as proof of Jewish perfidy and sinister machinations by Russian nationalists, Muslim militants, and U.S. conspiracists. Antisemites across the political spectrum repeatedly post it on the Internet.¹¹⁹

Some contemporary conspiracy theorists directly mention the *Protocols* and claim it as a true document. Direct mention of the *Protocols* on Ultra Right websites is to be expected, especially those websites affiliated with neonazis and the racist and antisemitic Christian Identity religious movement; yet mentions of the *Protocols* also appear across the political spectrum, as well as in New Age and UFO subcultures.¹²⁰

Others make an indirect reference to the *Protocols* in an antisemitic context, where the conspiracy theorist suggests that readers or listeners further explore the claims, sometimes with a link to an overtly antisemitic explanation of the *Protocols* that assumes its validity.

The appearance of the *Protocols* on the Political Left occurs mainly on Internet discussions through listservs, unmoderated websites such as Indymedia and its many affiliates, and comments posted to blogs. In many cases, this represents attempts by those on the Political Right to entice those on the Political Left to adopt antisemitic ideas. However, antisemitic conspiracism has become such a problem on the Political Left, that the international progressive magazine *New Internationalist* published a special issue on Judeophobia, including a refutation of the *Protocols*.¹²¹

Professor Michael Barkun points out that the

“current gambit of many” who cites the *Protocols* is “to claim that they ‘really’ come from” the minutes of some other secretive group, rather than the Jews. According to Barkun, “It’s hard to tell whether they actually believe this or are simply trying to sanitize a discredited text. I don’t see that it makes much difference, since they leave the actual, anti-Semitic text unchanged. The result is to give it credibility and circulation when it deserves neither.”¹²²

Many conspiracy theories replicate the structure and essential accusations found in the *Protocols* without directly mentioning the text or Jews by name. Stephen Bronner calls these types of claims “analogs” of the *Protocols*.¹²³ Some of these analogs are unintentional, others are intentional and thinly veiled, while still others are intentional yet much harder to discern.

Claims of a vast conspiracy by a named scapegoat other than the Jews with no conscious (or obvious) attempt to implicate Jews are the most common form of conspiracist allegation. Then there are antisemitic claims of a vast conspiracy by Jews that structurally replicate the *Protocols* without mentioning the hoax document. One way conspiracy theorists try to avoid being labeled antisemitic is to argue that there is a vast conspiracy by the “Rothschild family”

or the “Khazars” or some other entity used to suggest not all Jews are part of the conspiracy, or the conspirators are “not the real Jews.” Often purveyors of this line accompany their allegations with claims that they are not antisemitic.

Coded claims of a vast conspiracy by “Zionists” or other terms used as stand-in for “Jews” in a conspiracist context are more complicated to unravel. Not all criticisms of Zionism or Israeli government policies are antisemitic, but clearly some criticisms are attempts to hide the underlying antisemitic conspiracism about Jewish global power or skullduggery. Some in the intended audience, however, are likely to see certain phrases as a clear (if coded) reference to Jews.

Some authors seem blithely unaware when their criticism of U.S. policy in the Middle East and the U.S. relationship to Israel veers off into antisemitic stereotyping about the “Israel Lobby.” This happens

Antisemitic conspiracism has become such a problem on the Political Left, that in 2004 the international progressive magazine New Internationalist published a special issue on Judeophobia, including a refutation of the Protocols.

not only in the Political Left and Political Right, but also in the political center. An example of the latter was the article by two relatively conservative centrist scholars on “The Lobby” and U.S. foreign policy that created a furor in 2006.¹²⁴ The essay mentioned how important it was to avoid antisemitic stereotyping, especially given the history of the *Protocols*—and then replicated the structure of the *Protocols* in criticisms which implied there was a unified Jewish Lobby and incorporated other stereotypes about Jews and power.¹²⁵

Given the importance of the *Protocols* to the growth of antisemitic conspiracism, this section will identify those conspiracy theories with more direct references that either openly cite the *Protocols* or openly implicate a conspiracy of powerful Jews.

Neonazis

Out on the fringes of conspiracism are White racist groups and neonazis who are mad about ZOG: the Zionist Occupational Government—the modern incarnation of the *Protocols*. The National Alliance is a leading neonazi group that cites the *Protocols*. Its founder, the late William Pierce, stated:

Not all criticisms of Zionism or Israeli government policies are antisemitic, but clearly some criticisms are attempts to hide the underlying antisemitic conspiracism about Jewish global power or skullduggery.

But Jews seem to have a boom-or-bust mentality. They seem as unable to moderate their behavior as Bill Clinton is unable to keep his zipper up.... they have moved to tighten their grip on [Russia] by having one of their own installed as prime minister.... Amazing, isn't it? It's almost like something right out of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, this grasping, leering, insatiable greed of theirs.¹²⁶

Other mentions of the *Protocols* are on its website.¹²⁷ At various times the neonazi Christian Identity group Aryan Nations has cited the *Protocols*, and has even posted the entire text of the Marsden English-language translation of the Nilus version. A power struggle within Aryan Nations has resulted in two competing factions with websites in 2006, but

both at the time cite the *Protocols*.¹²⁸

The August Kreis III faction of Aryan Nations lists as “recommended reading, the ‘Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion’ from 1899, minutes of their last century meeting.”¹²⁹ At various times the website has carried the full text.¹³⁰

The Jonathan Williams faction of Aryan Nations explains:

The *Protocols* were (are) the secret minutes of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897....The *Protocols* detail a plan for Jewish domination over Gentiles by controlling money and using it to subvert Christian governments. Corrupt, Clinton-like politicians are hired to rule over Gentiles by the Jews. The ultimate

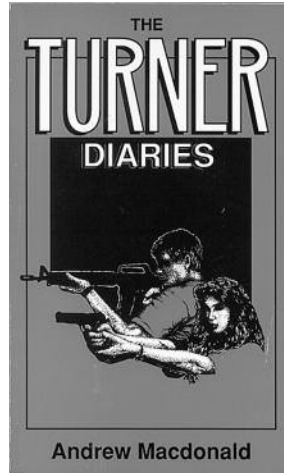
goal of such scheming is the establishment of a Jewish-controlled Marxist state. Some say that the *Protocols* are the blueprint for today's New World Order.¹³¹

This website also contains excerpts from the German Nazi publication, *Der Stürmer*, which mention the *Protocols*, including one 1933 article titled “Secret Plans against Germany Revealed,” which charges:

The non-Jew has no idea of the scope of this struggle. He does not know the Jewish people's secret goals, or the crimes they have committed over four millennia to reach those goals, or the enormous danger it faces if these goals are revealed before they can be realized. The secret goals of the Jewish people are laid out in the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” The *Stürmer* has written about them more than a hundred times. They contain the Jewish plan for world conquest.¹³²

Williams warns that Jews make it clear in “the pages of the *Protocols* about the need to possess Gold. Their sense of stability comes from their greed. Their exploitation of WHITE History, and their exploitation of the Negro for purposes of entertainment, shows their willingness to serve their Wicked Keeper at all costs.”¹³³

A number of online bookstores that cater to the



Ultra Right, neonazis, and conspiracists sell print copies of the Marsden translation of the *Protocols*.¹³⁴

Eclectic, New Age, UFO

On his eclectic “Three World Wars” website, Michael B. Haupt warns of the conspiracy of global elites, and highlights the educational value of the *Protocols*:

The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion is a document which **should be read by all**. No other single document provides us with such a clear understanding of why the world is gradually moving towards a One World Government, controlled by an irreproachable hidden hand. In the *Protocols*, we are given clear insights as to why so many incomprehensible political decisions are made in both local, national and international politics, which seem to continually work against the favor of the masses and in favor of the vested interests of the banking/industrial cartel the global power elite.¹³⁵

Haupt sees Republicans, Democrats—and most world leaders—as part of the plot, and links to another website where conspiracist antisemite Henry Makow proclaims of the *Protocols*, “the equation with anti Semitism [*sic*] is really a ploy to divert attention away from this master plan.”¹³⁶

On the aptly named Rumor Mill News website, the aspect of the analog is discernable even through its garbled rhetoric. According to the website’s publisher, Rayelan Allan, the conspiracy actually consists of two factions:

Faction One is the New World Order, made up of the International bankers, the 300 un-named families who also own our Federal Reserve Banking System. These families are descended ideologically AND biologically from the Rothschild funded Illuminati. Faction One also created the Corporations... Corporations were created by the King of England who was owned and controlled by the Rothschilds.

Faction Two is descended from the King of



This flag graphic portrays capitalism, communism, and Jews as a unified plot against White Christian American men.

Bavaria, the Knights Templars and the German Abwehr. Faction Two was created by men whose countries had been destroyed by the New World Order... In 1776, the King of Bavaria blew the whistle on the planned take-over of the monarchies of Europe

by the Illuminati/Rothschilds. As a result, the NWO, which expected to go ‘online’ in 1776, had to retreat to the shadows and build up their strength for their ‘next planned world-takeover.’¹³⁷

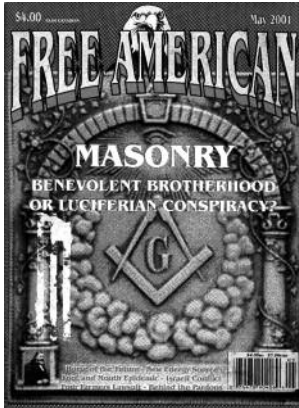
On this site, however, a number of discussions posted by readers directly cite the *Protocols*, including one posted by Makow (mentioned above).¹³⁸ Readers of the Rumor Mill News website debate whether the *Protocols* are a hoax in an online forum.¹³⁹

Conspiracists such as David Icke and the acolytes of the (presumably non-existent) cosmic voyager Commander Hatonn extend the conspiracy into outer space. Michael Barkun has examined Hatonn and the *Protocols*.¹⁴⁰ David Icke is worth mentioning for his ability to draw large crowds of New Age devotees to lectures on several continents.¹⁴¹ According to Icke, space alien lizard reptilians are behind the conspiracy. His website explains:

Since 1990 David Icke has been on an amazing journey of self and collective discovery to establish the real power behind apparently ‘random’ world events like 9/11 and the ‘war on terrorism’. Here he reveals that a network of interbreeding bloodlines manipulating through their web of interconnecting secret societies have been pursuing an agenda for thousands of years to impose a global centralised fascist state with total control and surveillance of the population.¹⁴²

Icke links this conspiracy to the Illuminati, certain factions of Jews and Freemasons, and the *Protocols*. According to Barkun:

Icke is certainly the most adroit synthesizer of these ideas. He also tries to position himself as “beyond left and right,” as though he was above “mere” politics. He also effects a sympathy for groups



he denigrates, claiming, for example, that most Jews and Masons are innocent dupes whom he wants to save from their conniving leaders. This strikes me as, to say the least, disingenuous, but it positions him to claim that he's a victim when, for example, he is charged with anti-semitism.¹⁴³

Generic Antisemitism

Generic antisemites leave their feet firmly planted on mother earth, but some also use the technique of claiming most Jews are dupes. The Populists American website explains the real “enemy of all mankind” is the “Zionist Jews” who are “Not to be confused with other Jews.”¹⁴⁴ The website posts the text of the *Protocols* with a disclaimer typical of this genre:

We cannot swear that these PROTOCOLS are the work of Zionist Jews, but as you read these bits and pieces, you can see that everything they say here has come to pass in one way or another. You can also see what they have planned for us in the future. Even if the Zionist did not write them they are following them to the letter.¹⁴⁵

The website also features the text of the classic antisemitic tract *How Jewry Turned England into a Plutocratic State*.¹⁴⁶

Eustace Mullins attempts a coded form of antisemitism in some of his work such as the *World Order: Our Secret Rulers*; while in other texts his antisemitism is vivid, as in *The Biological Jew* or *The Secret Holocaust*.¹⁴⁷ Mullin's *Secrets of the Federal Reserve* should set off warning bells about possible antisemitic conspiracism, but conspiracists who cite it are shocked when they are accused of using antisemitic material.¹⁴⁸ Some of the claims in Pat Robertson's *The New World Order: It Will Change the Way You Live* tracked back to classic antisemitic texts, including the work of Mullins on the Federal Reserve.¹⁴⁹

Like Mullins, John Coleman writes in two styles.¹⁵⁰ Coleman wrote pamphlets for the Ultra-Right antisemitic Christian Defense League, but also wrote the *Conspirators Hierarchy: The Story of the*

Committee of 300, which avoids naming Jews as the primary front of the conspiracy.¹⁵¹ America West published *Conspirators Hierarchy*, and it publishes material on UFOs, and some messages from Commander Hatonn. In *Conspirators Hierarchy*, Coleman has an elaborate flow chart that lists as co-conspirators Royal Families, Zionism, Communism, Fabianism, the CIA, Mossad, Freemasonry, the Rhodes/Milner Group, the United Nations, the One World Government Church, and “9 Unknown Men.”¹⁵²

American investigative journalist Dennis King notes that Coleman's work echoes the claims of the Lyndon LaRouche network, especially concerning the role of the British Tavistock Institute. King adds that Mullins has interacted cordially with the LaRouche network, and Mullins served as a contributing editor for Coleman's former periodical *World Economic Review*.¹⁵³

The LaRouche Network

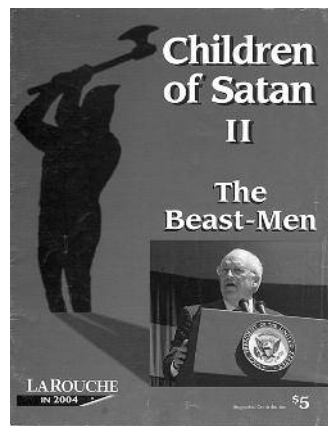
In 1978, perennial Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche stated there was “a hard kernel of truth” in the *Protocols*.¹⁵⁴ A book issued that same year by his publishing house cited the *Protocols*, stating “The Order of Zion was simply the Jewish division of the Most Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the London-centered chivalric order and secret society.” This allegedly linked into the assassination of Lincoln, the Rothschild family, the Freemasons, the B'nai B'rith, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Mafia.¹⁵⁵

While the LaRouche Network eventually backed away from these obvious and overt antisemitic references, it continued to peddle conspiracy theories that implicated not just the Rothschild family, but scores of other Jewish political, business, and religious leaders in a grand conspiracy that stretched back to Babylon.¹⁵⁶

Today, the LaRouche Network is one of the world's largest distributors of coded antisemitic conspiracist literature rooted in the false allegations of the *Protocols*. A recent series of book-

lets offers good examples of coded rhetoric. The series is titled “Children of Satan,” with individual titles: *The ‘Ignoble Liars’ Behind Bush's No-Exit War*, *The Beast-Men*, and *The Sexual Congress for Cultural Fascism*.¹⁵⁷

The series links Bush and Cheney to neoconservative political factions employing stereotypical lan-



guage to discuss the role of Jewish intellectuals and Jewish political advisers. The phrases “Children of Satan” and the “Beast-Men” echo the rhetoric of medieval blood libels and accusations that the Jews will be agents of Satan in the Christian End Times. According to the LaRouchites, some 400,000 copies of the first booklet were distributed.¹⁵⁸

RIGHT-WING POPULISM & CONSPIRACISM

Populist movements frequently adopt conspiracy theories of power, regardless of their ideological position on the political spectrum.

The U.S. Populist Party emerged in the late 1800s as an agrarian-based popular mass revolt. Historian Lawrence Goodwyn described this mass movement as “the flowering of the largest democratic mass movement in American history.”¹⁵⁹ This and other romanticized views see populist movements as inherently progressive and democratizing.¹⁶⁰ As Margaret Canovan observed in her book *Populism*, “like its rivals, Goodwyn’s interpretation has a political axe to grind.”¹⁶¹

Canovan defined two main branches of populism worldwide—agrarian and political—and mapped out seven disparate sub-categories.¹⁶²

Agrarian populism:

- Commodity farmer movements with radical economic agendas such as the People’s Party of the late 1800s in the United States.
- Subsistence peasant movements such as the East European Green Rising,
- Intellectuals who wistfully romanticize hard-working farmers and peasants and build radical agrarian movements like the Russian narodniki.

Political populism:

- Populist democracy, including calls for more political participation, including the use of the popular referendum.
- Politicians’ populism marked by non-ideological appeals for “the people” to build a unified coalition.
- Reactionary populism such as the White backlash harvested by George Wallace.
- Populist dictatorship such as that established by Peron in Argentina.

Populist democracy is championed by progressives from the LaFollettes of Wisconsin to Jesse Jackson. However, politicians’ populism, reactionary populism, and populist dictatorship are antidemocratic forms of right-wing populism. These were characterized in various combinations in the 1990s by Ross Perot, Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan, and David Duke...four straight White Christian men trying to ride the same horse.

Canovan notes that there are “a great many interconnections” among the seven forms of populism, and that “[m]any actual populist phenomena—perhaps most—belong in more than one category.” She adds, “given the contradictions” between some of the categories “none ever could satisfy all the conditions at once.”¹⁶³ Combinations can vary. Populism in the U.S. “combined farmers’ radicalism and populist democracy.”¹⁶⁴ There are only two universal elements, suggests Canovan, who writes that all forms of populism “involve some kind of exaltation of and appeal to ‘the people,’ and all are in one sense or another antielitist.”¹⁶⁵

In his book *The Populist Persuasion* Michael Kazin traces “two different but not exclusive strains of vision and protest” in the original U.S. Populist movement: the revivalist “pietistic impulse issuing from the Protestant Reformation;” and the “secular faith of the Enlightenment, the belief that ordinary people could think and act rationally, more rationally, in fact, than their ancestral overlords.”¹⁶⁶

Kazin argues that populism is “a persistent yet mutable style of political rhetoric with roots deep in the nineteenth century.”¹⁶⁷ His view compliments Canovan’s typology. These and other even-handed assessments of populism see that it can move to the Left or Right. It can be tolerant or intolerant. It can promote civil discourse and political participation or promote scapegoating, demagoguery, and conspiracism.¹⁶⁸ Populism can oppose the *status quo* and challenge elites to promote change, or support the *status quo* to defend “the people” against a perceived threat by elites or subversive outsiders.

The late 19th-century U.S. Populist movement had many praiseworthy features: it promoted forms of mass democratic participation; popularized anti-monopolism and trust-busting sentiments; put the brakes on the greediest corporate pillagers and the

Populist movements frequently adopt conspiracy theories of power, regardless of their ideological position on the political spectrum

concentration of economic power; demanded accountability of elected officials; formed cooperatives that promoted humane working relationships and economic justice; and set the stage for substantial reforms in the economic system.

Populism also drew themes from several historic currents with potentially negative consequences:¹⁶⁹

- **Producerism**—the idea that the real Americans are hard-working people who create goods and wealth while fighting against parasites at the top and bottom of society. There may be promotion of scapegoating and blurring of issues of class and economic justice—with a history of assuming proper citizenship is defined by White males;
- **Anti-elitism**—a suspicion of politicians, powerful people, the wealthy, and high culture. This sometimes leads to conspiracist allegations about control of the world by secret elites, especially the scapegoating of Jews as sinister and powerful manipulators of the economy or media;
- **Anti-intellectualism**—a distrust and dismissal

of professor-types. Rational debate can be undercut by discarding logic and factual evidence in favor of following the emotional appeals of demagogues;

- **Majoritarianism**—the notion that the will of the majority of people has absolute primacy in matters of governance, which leads to sacrificing rights for minorities, especially people of color;
- **Moralism**—Evangelical-style campaigns rooted in Protestant revivalism. These sometimes lead to authoritarian and theocratic attempts to impose orthodoxy, especially relating to gender.
- **Americanism**—a form of patriotic nationalism which often promotes ethnocentric, nativist, or xenophobic fears that immigrants bring alien ideas and customs which damage civil society.

The resurgent right-wing forms of populism borrow from these traditions. The danger of right-wing populist mass movements is that they have a potential to gravitate toward authoritarian, repressive, or reactionary demands as their anger increases, and demagogues encourage scapegoating and conspir-

acism.¹⁷⁰ Right-wing populism also served as a precursor movement for Fascism in Europe, and can play the same role for neo-fascist movement today.

Two versions of right-wing populism are current in both the U.S. and Europe: one centered around “get the government off my back” economic libertarianism, coupled with a rejection of mainstream political parties (more attractive to the upper middle class and small entrepreneurs); the other based on xenophobia and ethnocentric nationalism (more attractive to the lower middle class and wage workers).¹⁷¹ These different constituencies unite behind candidates that attack the current regime since both constituencies identify an intrusive government as the cause of their grievances. In the U.S., the populist vision of cross-class unity is related to the dominant U.S. ideology of classlessness, social mobility, and liberalism in general, but populism tends to break with political orthodoxy by circumventing normal channels and attacking established leadership groups, at least rhetorically.

Right-wing populist movements can cause serious damage to a society even if a

CHART NO. 2

The Producerist Narrative Used in Right-Wing Populism

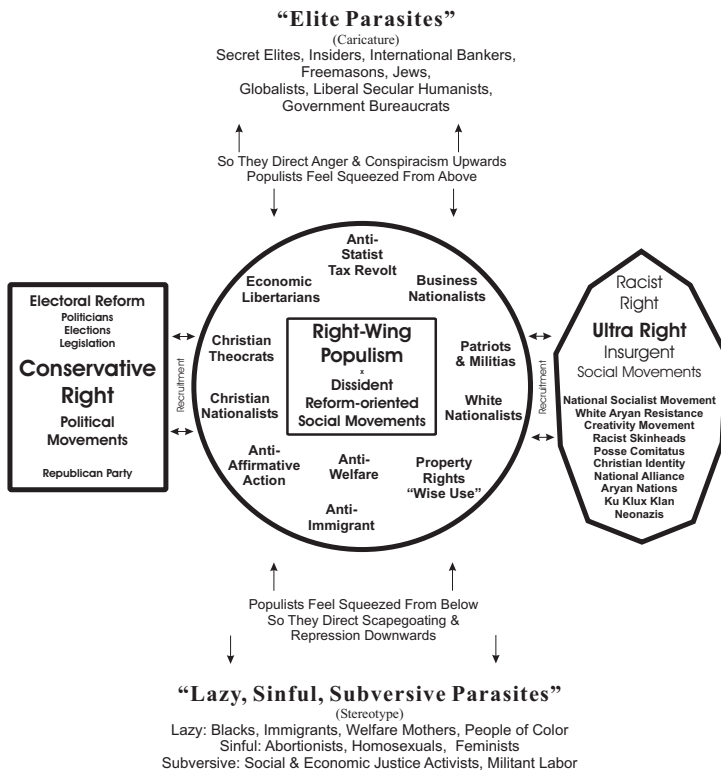


Chart adapted from Chip Berlet & Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort*.

Full chart & slides on where populism fits on the political scene: <http://www.publiceye.org/jump/populism.html>

significant fascist movement does not coalesce because they often popularize xenophobia, authoritarianism, scapegoating, and conspiracism. This can lure mainstream politicians to adopt these themes to attract voters, legitimize acts of discrimination—or even violence—and open the door for revolutionary right-wing movements, such as fascism, to recruit from the reformist populist movements by arguing that more drastic action is needed.

Canovan laid out the basic themes of this type of repressive right-wing populism:

... a charismatic leader, using the tactics of politicians' populism to go past the politicians and intellectual elite and appeal to the reactionary sentiments of the populace, often buttressing his claim to speak for the people by the use of referendums. When populism is attributed to right-wing figures—Hitler, de Gaulle, Codreanu, Father Coughlin—this is what the word conjures up.¹⁷²

At the same time, ostensibly left forms of populism can also involve demagoguery, as well as sympathies (or at least blind spots) regarding participation in trans-class anti-elite neofascist coalitions. Canovan explains that left revolutionary populism has at times involved the:

[R]omanticization of the people by intellectuals who turn against elitism and technological progress, who idealize the poor...assume that "the people" are united, reject ordinary politics in favor of spontaneous popular revolution, but are inclined to accept the claims of charismatic leaders that they represent the masses. This syndrome...can be found in some of the less elitist of the intellectuals who sympathized with fascism in its early stages.¹⁷³

Today we can see this phenomenon in Right/Left coalitions claiming to represent the voice of the American people against entrenched and corrupt elites. There is a strain of this in the conspiracist 9-11 Truth Movement, for example; and in the "Transpartisan Alliance" which in February 2009 held a conference in Denver, Colorado. At the event, former congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, the Green Party's candidate for President of the United

States in 2008, joined in a public forum dubbed "the Interim Transpartisan Sunshine Cabinet."

Along with Cynthia McKinney, other members of the Sunshine Cabinet included 2008 Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader (participating by video), monetary reform leader Ron Paul (by video), MoveOn.org co-founder Joan Blades, conservative activist Grover Norquist, of the Liberty Coalition co-founder Michael Ostrolenk (by video), Competitive Enterprise Institute President Fred Smith, human potential movement visionary Barbara Marx Hubbard, humorist Steve Bhaerman, and Committee for a Unified Independent Party director Jackie Salit.

Contact with McKinney for reporters was arranged through "her media director, John Judge," a leading conspiracy theorist regarding the Kennedy assassination. Ron Paul is a right-wing libertarian who has embraced assorted conspiracy theories. Grover Norquist is a leading right-wing, anti-tax, and anti-union strategist who has said he wanted to starve the federal government to the size where it "could be drowned in a bathtub." He once called all recipients of federal funds "cockroaches;" and wants to "crush labor unions as a political entity."¹⁷⁴ Jackie Salit is a long-time member of an ostensibly left-leaning therapy cult that in the past has urged left/right coalitions.¹⁷⁵ Another participant was 9-11 Truth activist Carol Brouillet who peddles right-wing conspiracy theories about money and the Federal Reserve System.¹⁷⁶

As we will see, conspiracism and calls for Left/Right coalitions against the alleged conspirators is nothing new.¹⁷⁷

Right-wing populist movements can cause serious damage to a society—even if a significant fascist movement does not coalesce—because they often popularize xenophobia, authoritarianism, scapegoating, and conspiracism. This can lure mainstream politicians to adopt these themes to attract voters and legitimize acts of discrimination—or even violence.

FROM MASONS TO MULTIPLE MUTATIONS

The *Protocols* are clearly derived in part from the earlier Freemason conspiracy theories, but between these two core genres there were populist conspiracy theories about the Plutocrats—primarily a left-wing construction. The Freemason and *Protocols* conspiracy theories begin as primarily right-wing attempts to defend the *status quo*. Daniel Pipes (a scholar of conspiracism but also founder of the right-wing group Campus Watch) suggests that the two main branches of contemporary conspiracism (Jews and Freemasons) have “parallel histories” and track back to “conspiracist traditions” that emerged during Christianity’s “Crusading era.” Pipes’ dates this to “1096 for the Jews, 1307 for secret societies” and notes the parallelism extends to “basic themes, mutual influences, shared beliefs, and overlapping culprits.”¹⁷⁸

Conspiracist narratives have existed in the United States since the late 1700s, emerging partially because of the particular social unrest of the times. A few Protestant clergy from the Federalist era warned of a world-wide Freemason/Illuminati plot that fed into support for the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1797. [See Appendix] An anti-Catholic movement in the mid- 1800s paralleled the existing anti-Masonic one, and even some abolitionists joined in believing that hidden tyrants sought to increase slavery in the Northern United States. By the end of the nineteenth century, conspiracies in the Gilded Age focused on evil financial cabals, a narrative that paved the way for antisemitic groups to be receptive to the *Protocols*.

In response to the Russian Revolution, prejudice against anarchists and Bolsheviks fueled the Palmer Raids beginning in 1919. Further red scares evolved into anti-FDR conspiracies led by the likes of Father Coughlin, an early shock jock radio commentator. Anti-communist furor continued through the 1950s, with some denouncing the Civil Rights movement as

a Communist plot. Assassination conspiracy theories flourished in the 1960s and ‘70s, while others saw evil intent in threats from such diverse sources as Wall Street, the United Nations, feminism, gay rights, secular humanism, and even rock ‘n roll.



Recent Conspiracist Trends

In the mid-1980s, a number of conspiracist claims clamored for public attention. Many conspiracy theories that did not mention the *Protocols* or Jews still replicated its basic antisemitic structure and claims. These are the “analogs” of the *Protocols* according to Bronner. The Ultra Right may use analog rhetoric about “Zionists” or the “Mossad” as an introductory recruitment device, but for the most

part neonazis are willing to openly cite the *Protocols* and engage in vicious Jew-bashing.

Conspiracy theories from other types of groups appear in four main demographic subsectors in the United States: right-wing patriots and populists, apocalyptic Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists, the Black community, and the Political Left.

This study rejects the idea that all people who promote conspiracy theories are antisemitic, anti-Catholic, anti-Muslim, racist, on the Political Right, on the Political Left, or secretly encouraging people to believe in the *Protocols*. Nor is it meant to imply these things in a sneaky way. The study is intended to demonstrate how far and wide scapegoating and demonization can spread—even when unintentional—and how this expansion has negative implications for a democratic society. The goals and political implications of conspiracism vary dramatically. However, conspiracism as a form of analysis is highly problematic and uniformly counterproductive regardless of the goals of its proponents.

Right-Wing Patriots and Populists

For many years the John Birch Society (JBS) and other Patriot Movement groups ran bookstores that sold republished editions of the anti-Freemason books by Robison and Barruel, which originally were published in the late 1790s. The JBS still lists the books online in an “Annotated Bibliography.”¹⁷⁹ The outlines of the Patriot view of the conspiracy can be traced with rare economy in the section headings of the bibliography: Order of the Illuminati; French

In the mid-1980s, a number of conspiracist claims clamored for public attention. Many conspiracy theories that did not mention the Protocols or Jews still replicated its basic antisemitic structure and claims.

Revolution and Napoleon; Survival and Continuity of the Illuminati; Communist Movement; Illuminist Spawn; Nazism's Illuminist Origins; World War I and the League of Nations; The Bolshevik Coup in Russia; New Deal and Soviet Infiltration of Executive Branch; Bringing on World War II; The United Nations and the New World Order; Domestic and Foreign Policy Elite; Maintenance and Expansion of Communist Power Since 1917; Communist Strategy for Conquest; U.S. Foreign Policy After 1945; Promoting Communism Everywhere; Glasnost and Perestroika: The KGB's Massive Deception Since 1989.

For the JBS, the problem remains a communist plot, but the communists are just one guise of the Illuminati, who over time were variously said to control Wall Street, Hillary Clinton, and Dick Cheney.

Some of the books listed in this JBS resource (especially the work of the prolific antisemite Elizabeth Dilling) perpetuate stereotypes about Jews, banking, and global power. In terms of public discourse, however, when the JBS blames the secret elites and plutocrats for the vast conspiracy, the organization is not intentionally blaming the Jews.¹⁸⁰ A favorite theme of the JBS is that the liberal globalists are planning a New World Order run by a totalitarian One World Government.

Other books that plow the same field include G. Edward Griffin's *The Creature From Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve*; and Jim Marrs' *Rule by Secrecy: The Hidden History That Connects the Trilateral Commission, the Freemasons, and the Great Pyramids*.¹⁸¹ Like others in this genre, Marrs claims he is neither Left nor Right, but, instead, stands for truth. Yet his antisemitism is more pronounced.

In Patriot Movement analysis, liberals, internationalists, big corporations, and the CIA all conspire together to subvert the proper isolationist and protectionist nationalism envisioned by the founding fathers. This was a subtext of the McCarthy Period, and a theme of the 1973 book by L. Fletcher Prouty, *The Secret Team: The CIA and Its Allies in Control of the U.S. and the World*.¹⁸²

In 1997 Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum produced a video titled, "Global Governance: The Quiet War



Books sold by the John Birch Society include several conspiracist classics.

Against American Independence," which spun the basic Patriot movement theory of the conspiracy. The video featured appearances by John Ashcroft, then U.S. Senator from Missouri who was appointed Attorney General of the United States by President George W. Bush; Jeane Kirkpatrick, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations; Jesse Helms, then Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Helen Chenoweth, then U.S. Representative, Idaho; and Patrick Buchanan, at the time a co-host of the syndicated "Crossfire" television program on CNN.

Apocalyptic Christian Evangelicals and Fundamentalists

The idea that liberal globalists are planning a New World Order run by a totalitarian One World Government on behalf of Satan is common among certain apocalyptic Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists. Between 1990 and 1997 scores of such books appeared on the shelves of Christian bookstores.¹⁸³

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins in the *Left Behind* fictional book series pursue the same End Times conspiracy theories. Over 70 million copies of the books have been sold.¹⁸⁴ Author and political commentator Gershom Gorenberg has castigated the authors, LaHaye and Jenkins, for the antisemitism threaded through their books. Gorenberg goes on:

When the John Birch Society blames secret elites and plutocrats for a vast conspiracy, the organization is not intentionally blaming the Jews.

Nor is contempt for Judaism the books' only disturbing message. They promote conspiracy theories; they demonize proponents of arms control, ecumenicalism, abortion rights and everyone else disliked by the Christian Right; and they justify assassination as a political tool. Their anti-Jewishness is exceeded by their anti-Catholicism. Most basically, they reject the very idea of open, democratic debate.¹⁸⁵

Apocalyptic Christian Zionists with conspiracist narratives have also produced books that reflect back

the themes of the *Left Behind* series in both fiction and nonfiction. For example, in 2003 Charles H. Dyer updated his 1991 book *The Rise of Babylon: Is Iraq at the Center of the Final Drama?* The same year Michael D. Evans published *Beyond Iraq: The Next Move (Ancient Prophecy and Modern Conspiracy Collide)*.¹⁸⁶

Christian Zionism is a loose movement of supporters of Israel primarily composed of Christians with a heightened sense of apocalyptic expectation and a belief that Israel plays a special role in the End Times. Therefore they tend to support aggressive military and domestic policies by the state of Israel. Some adopt Islamophobic views as well.¹⁸⁷

The Black Community

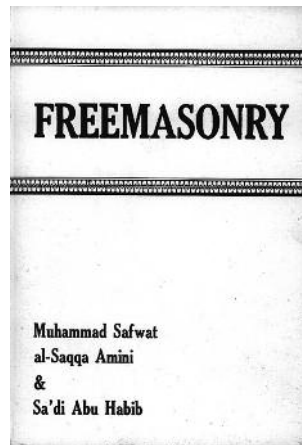
In the Black community, comedian and political activist Dick Gregory has been propounding assassination conspiracy theories for decades.¹⁸⁸ The prevalence of conspiracy theories in the Black community follows a unique route through folklore accounts that reflect a history of repressive racism, according to Patricia A. Turner, and as such, they function as “tools of resistance.”¹⁸⁹ Nonetheless, some Black conspiracy theorists pick up standard unproductive conspiracy theories from the collective *smörgåsbord*. For example, journalist and television commentator Tony Brown, in *Empower the People: Overthrow the Conspiracy That Is Stealing Your Money and Freedom*, cites to books on the

Freemason/Illuminati conspiracy; the Lyndon LaRouche network publication, *Dope, Inc.*; and books by Eustace Mullins, E.C. Knuth, and others who suggest powerful Jews are behind the conspiracy.¹⁹⁰

Some members of the Nation of Islam (NOI) adopt conspiracy theories, including the antisemitic variety.¹⁹¹ These sometimes come from Muslim tracts on the Jewish/Freemason conspiracy, or from the LaRouche Network. At the same time, LaRouche network speakers join NOI organizers for tours of traditionally Black college campuses with a program on

the vast conspiracy supposedly run by the Anti-Defamation League and Jewish/Zionist elites.¹⁹²

Conspiracy books are popular in many African-American bookstores and book carts. In *Al-Islam, Christianity, & Freemasonry*, Mustafa El-Amin cites a discussion of how the *Protocols* reveal the plan of subversives to infiltrate Freemasonry, but Jews are mentioned obliquely.¹⁹³ El-Amin, however, cites *Freemasonry* (a book originally published in Arabic by the Muslim World League), which directly links Jews, Zionism, and Freemasons.¹⁹⁴ El-Amin also cites the overtly antisemitic *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* by Nesta Webster.¹⁹⁵



Vicomte Léon De Poncins, in *Freemasonry and Judaism: Secret Powers Behind Revolution and Freemasonry and the Vatican: A Struggle for Recognition*, links Jews, Freemasonry, Satanism, the French Revolution, and the Bolshevik Revolution. De Poncins writes the *Protocols* are hard to authenticate, but says this is irrelevant because there is so much other evidence verifying the basic plot.¹⁹⁶

The Political Left

On the Political Left, fascination with conspiracy theories grew after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. Left-wing attorney Mark Lane harvested this in 1966 with *Rush to Judgment*, the first of several of his books claiming elaborate conspiracies.¹⁹⁷ Conspiracism on the Left increased again after the 1968 assassinations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

Conspiracism percolated at the margins of the Political Left through the mid-1980s.¹⁹⁸ This was especially true in the work of popular Left conspiracists such as Mae Brussel, David Emory, and John Judge. In 1986 the liberal Christic Institute filed a lawsuit, *Avirgan v. Hull*, which unwittingly helped pull at the seam of what would soon unravel into the Iran-Contra scandal.¹⁹⁹ Known in the popular press as the La Penca bombing case, the charges originally concerned a series of allegations of CIA misconduct involving covert action and gunrunning in Central America to assist the overthrow of the socialist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Christic’s leader, attorney Daniel Sheehan, soon wrapped the case in conspiracy theories that reached back to the Vietnam War.

The prevalence of conspiracy theories in the Black community follows a unique route through folklore accounts that reflect a history of repressive racism, according to Patricia A. Turner, and as such, they function as “tools of resistance.”

The La Penca case intersected with two other claims of government misconduct that took the flotsam and jetsam of miscellaneous facts and assembled them into a heroic sculpture of conspiracist allegation. One was the claim that the government, through the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA), had set up a series of concentration camps for dissidents under the rubric “Rex 84.”²⁰⁰ The other was the claim of an “October Surprise” involving an arms-for-hostages trade to influence the 1980 Presidential election in the United States—a claim that reheated in the atmosphere of Iran-Contra in the late 1980s.²⁰¹ All of these claims eventually unraveled, and a federal judge fined Christic over \$1 million for bringing a frivolous and unsubstantiated case to court. Nonetheless, these conspiracist claims became *causes célèbres* in a significant portion of the Political Left.²⁰²

When the U.S. government initiated the Gulf War in 1991, conspiracy theories swept the Political Left, especially on alternative radio stations and on computerized information networks (including the still novel Internet). Tracing the analogs of the *Protocols* in the Political Left from that point forward requires an analysis of how scapegoats common on the Political Right became scapegoats for a small yet vocal portion of the Political Left.

A New Coalition?

Over several decades, a loose coalition has emerged in which antisemitic conspiracy theories circulate and feed on each other. This amalgam of tendencies includes some progressives and others on the Political Left, some Black activists (especially Black nationalists), some opponents of corporate globalization, some opponents of U.S. policies in the Middle East, and some supporters of Palestinian rights. Some critics of this coalition have dubbed this phenomenon the “New Antisemitism,” but the multiple and conflicting definitions and uses of that term have rendered it almost useless. Nonetheless, the spread across political boundaries of a shared set of conspiracy theories rooted in or influenced by antisemitism is certainly real and needs to be further analyzed. The next section attempts to trace the development of this network of conspiracists.

DYNAMICS AND PROCESSES

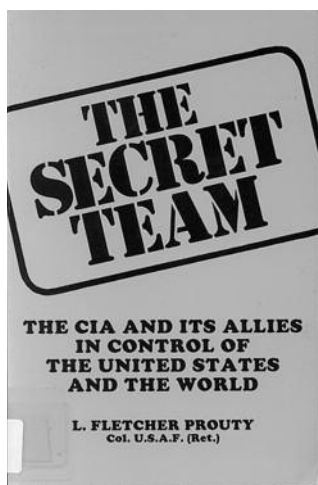
Crossing Political Boundaries?

Prior to the early 1990s, New World Order conspiracism was limited to two subcultures, primarily the militantly antigovernment right, and secondarily Christian fundamentalists concerned with end-time emergence of the Antichrist.

—Michael Barkun²⁰³

In the mid-1980s, Daniel Sheehan of the Christic Institute praised the work of right-wing populist L. Fletcher Prouty, and adopted not only the analysis, but also the title, of Prouty’s book, *Secret Team* as a slogan for the La Penca bombing case. Behind the scenes at the ostensibly left-wing Christic Institute, Sheehan and his investigators had secretly opened up a back channel to right-wing groups with a history of purveying antisemitic conspiracy theories.²⁰⁴ This included material passed into the case that originated with Willis Carto’s Liberty Lobby and its *Spotlight* newspaper, and material originating from the Lyndon LaRouche Network.²⁰⁵

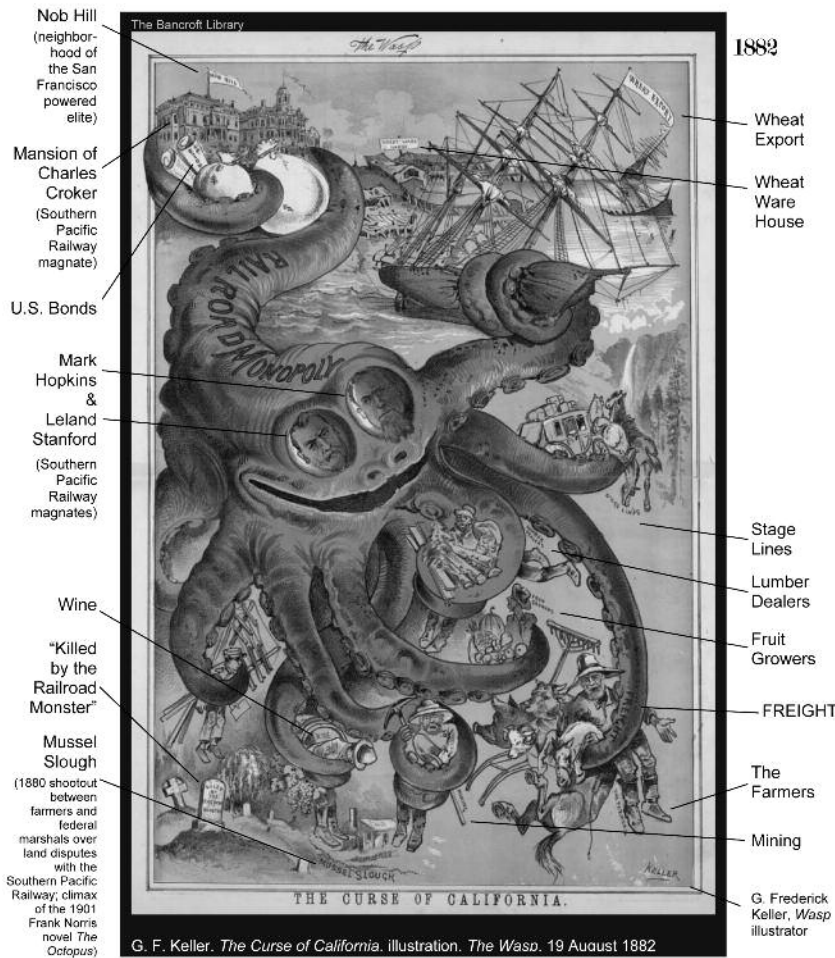
The Christic Institute’s La Penca case intersected with two other claims of government misconduct that took the flotsam and jetsam of miscellaneous facts and assembled them into a heroic sculpture of conspiracist allegation.



In the mid-1970s, the right-wing networks run by Carto wove references to “dual loyalists” and “Zionists” into anti-CIA conspiracy theories. In this case, the terms were clearly code phrases for “Jews,” an easy assessment to make since, at the time, Carto also controlled the Institute for Historical Review, which published Holocaust Denial literature. LaRouche publications also used rhetoric that placed powerful Jews in the center of a vast conspiracy, but employed a more coded form of antisemitic conspiracism than Carto’s publications.

What the Christic Institute inadvertently did was take conspiracy allegations rooted in the *Protocols*, sanitize the antisemitic references, and peddle the resulting analogs to the Political Left and gullible lib-

the image of the OCTOPUS: six cartoons, 1882-1909



Cartoon annotations from the online Resource Toolbox, *The Gilded and the Gritty: America, 1870-1912*, reproduced by permission from the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, NC. Image of Octopus courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

eral funders. There was no mention of the *Protocols*, or Jews, or Freemasons, just secret elites and secret teams. Prouty, however, was already moving toward a *Protocols*-style analysis. In 1990 Prouty echoed the allegations in the *Protocols* when he told the *Spotlight* newspaper that the enemy of the American people was the CIA along with “usury, the political parties, the media and our textbooks.”²⁰⁶ These reflect and popularize standard claims about alleged Jewish conspiracies, whether or not that was the conscious intent of Prouty.

Prouty’s topic at the opening session of the 1990 Liberty Lobby convention was “The Secret Team,” and the new Institute for Historical Review’s Noontide Press edition of Prouty’s book of that name was unveiled at that time. Following Prouty to the podium

was notorious antisemite Eustace Mullins, speaking on the topic “Secrets of the Federal Reserve.”²⁰⁷

Both Prouty and conspiracist Jim Marrs became celebrities when Oliver Stone featured their allegations in his 1991 film “JFK.” The film credits list Marrs as a script consultant. Stone told reporters that the character Mr. X in the film was based on Prouty, and as one critic puts it, “many of this mysterious figure’s words are almost verbatim from Prouty. However, some of Prouty’s political connections were not the sort that would find favor among politically-active Hollywood leftists...”²⁰⁸ Prouty surfed the publicity for “JFK” and produced another book: *JFK: the CIA, Vietnam, and the Plot to Assassinate John F. Kennedy*.²⁰⁹ During the same period, Mark Lane published another book on the Kennedy assassination, *Plausible Denial*, in which he contended, “I have never heard an anti-Semitic expression” from Carto.²¹⁰ Lane provided legal representation for Carto in a fractious lawsuit that shut down Carto’s Liberty Lobby and its *Spotlight* newspaper; and saw the Holocaust Denial network of the Institute for Historical Review, *Journal of Historical Review*, and Noontide Press (all controlled at one time by Carto) awarded to a new set of owners who had formerly been allies of Carto.²¹¹

There is no evidence that Sheehan is a closet antisemite. However, once someone such as Prouty has embraced the conspiracist mindset in which a vast global conspiracy is effectively an analog of the *Protocols*, the step from a Secret Team to a Secret Jewish Team is a very small one.

The Gulf War launched by George H. W. Bush in 1991 spurred another round of conspiracy theories on the Political Left, in which some activists increasingly portrayed the Secret Team in terms that at best showed insensitivity to historic antisemitism. The Lyndon LaRouche network sent organizers into progressive antiwar marches and events in at least 30 cities across the country.²¹² Some on the Left heralded key figures in the right-wing Patriot movement such as Bo Gritz for their alleged knowledge of CIA covert action and foreign policy machinations.²¹³

From podiums at antiwar events came rhetoric where criticism of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle

East began to move from careful criticism of Israeli policies and Zionist ideology into outlandish and bigoted claims about Jewish global power: the Mossad controlled the CIA; the “Israeli Lobby” made a puppet of Bush; “Zionists” dictated U.S. foreign policy and global affairs.²¹⁴ It is unclear how much of this was latent antisemitism among leftists and how much was picked up from the right-wing groups using the Gulf War to recruit from the Left, but this period opened up new vistas for Right-Left synergy, especially around antisemitic conspiracy theories.

One of the most famous conspiracists from this period was the late Danny Casolaro, who hunted for the people behind the “Octopus.”²¹⁵ Casolaro is a hero to conspiracists across the political spectrum.²¹⁶ Patriot Movement websites pay homage to his memory.²¹⁷

The image of the Octopus, with each arm the tentacle of the vast central conspiracy, has been a popular conspiracist graphic across the political spectrum for over a century. One website devoted to teaching history has a collection of eight octopus drawings from 1882 to 1909 to illustrate the feeling of many Americans in that period that they were losing control to large, faceless, centralized systems of power.²¹⁸ The right-wing Sons of Liberty kept Elizabeth Dilling’s book, *The Octopus*, in print for many years. Its subject was Jewish power.²¹⁹ When conspiracists use the image of an octopus or a snake to represent conspiracy, many appear ignorant of the historic use of these images to represent the crafty, seditious Jews.

Attempts by the Political Right to form alliances with the Political Left continued through the 1990s.²²⁰ The government inadvertently accelerated this process with a series of bungled raids on right-wing compounds, which resulted in many needless deaths, such as the 1992 confrontation at the Branch Davidian headquarters in Waco Texas, and the 1993 assault on the Weaver family cabin in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. These events in turn helped spark the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing by neonazi Timothy McVeigh and his allies.²²¹

What began as concerns over government repression soon erupted into a series of conspiracy theories claiming the U.S. government was about to impose martial law. These began in the right-wing

armed Militia Movement, but soon spread to some on the Political Left. Green activist and author Janet Biehl was critical of Alexander Cockburn from the progressive *Nation* magazine for his superficial whitewash of the militia movement as “amiable” and neither Left nor Right. She blasted leftist Jason McQuinn and left-libertarian Adam Parfrey for minimizing anti-semitism within the militia movement and denounced calling for alliances between the Left and Right, stating, “the Left has nothing to learn from paranoid racists, no matter how psychedelic their conspiracies may be.”²²²

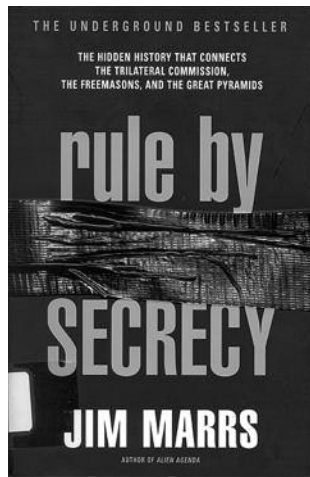
Conspiracy theories continued to spread through the Political Left. For example, in 2001, WBAI radio in New

York featured conspiracy writer Jim Marrs touting his book *Rule by Secrecy*. According to WBAI program host Bill Weinberg, Marrs’ sources:

...are the usual ones, all too familiar to followers of the far right and fascism....Topping the list, of course, is the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, the purported Jewish conspiracy masterplan which served as propaganda for the Czarist pogroms and then the Nazi Holocaust. While Marrs does concede that the *Protocols* are a hoax, he nonetheless vests much legitimacy in them....²²³

Weinberg cites text in *Rule by Secrecy* where Marrs writes:

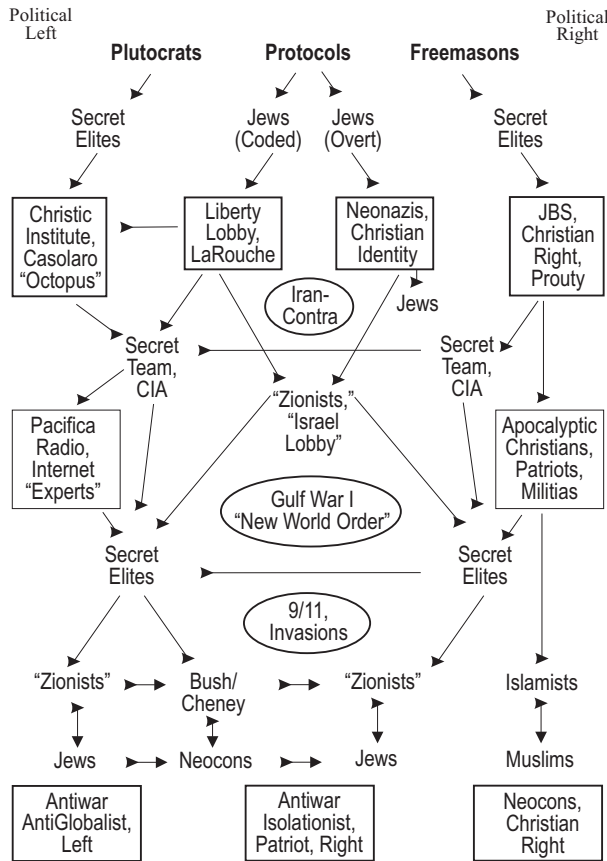
It is the possibility of ‘historical truth’ which has kept the *Protocols* in circulation since its inception. Today, modern conspiracy writers see it as a real program predating Nazism or Communism.... The *Protocols* may indeed reflect a deeper conspiracy beyond its intended use to encourage anti-Semitism, one hidden within the secret upper ranks of the Illuminati and Freemasonry.”²²⁴



What began as concerns over government repression at Waco and Ruby Ridge soon erupted into a series of conspiracy theories claiming the U.S. government was about to impose martial law. These began in the right-wing armed Militia Movement, but soon spread to some on the Political Left.

CHART NO. 3

**Cross-Movement Trajectory of Scapegoats
1984-2006**



According to Weinberg, "Again and again, Marrs attempts to legitimize the antisemitism of Henry Ford, the Krupps and even Hitler, portraying them as mere over-reaction to the arrogant power of 'international Jewish bankers.'"²²⁵

The Trajectory

How do we track the trajectory of conspiracy theories from Right to Left? Chart Three starts with the premise that there are three main threads of conspiracist scapegoating that trace back to the Freemasons, the Plutocrats, and the *Protocols*. Note that individuals and groups in a specific thematic category may not be directly connected. For example, Prouty apparently was not in the John Birch Society, even though his work was thematically similar.

In addition to the alliances and cross-fertilization forged through assassination research, three trigger events facilitated sharing of scapegoats and narratives from Right to Left: the Iran-Contra scandal, the first Gulf War and George H.W. Bush's use of the

term "New World Order" in a speech; and the terror attacks on 9/11 followed by the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

For many years after World War II and the Nazi genocide, there were attempts to isolate naked anti-semitism as outside the boundaries of acceptable political debate. Because of this, while still seeing Jews as the main scapegoat, some overt antisemites such as neonazis (and practitioners of the most overtly racist and antisemitic versions of the Christian Identity religion) would soften their rhetoric for the purposes of initial recruitment. This was certainly true with groups such as Willis Carto's Liberty Lobby and the LaRouche network, both of which became adept at hiding the underlying antisemitism of their conspiracy theories.

As stated before, not all criticisms of Zionism or the state of Israel are antisemitic, or linked to the conspiracism of the *Protocols*, but an increasing number of such criticisms do step over the line into bigoted conspiracist stereotyping of Jews. In the chart, the term "Zionism" in quotes refers to the use of the term as a form of coded antisemitism, whether or not the group or individual is aware of (or even denies) the antisemitism.

After 9/11, some in the Political Left began to criticize Bush and Cheney in ways that conflated the neoconservatives, Zionists, and Jews. This tendency also began to emerge in certain Hard Right political sectors and among some libertarians.

Apocalyptic Christians, on the other hand, found themselves in a strange alliance with neoconservatives, where scapegoating of Islam became commonplace.²²⁶ Christian conspiracism about the Middle East and Muslims has expanded into naked Islamophobia. Hal Lindsey, who helped ignite the fuse of apocalyptic expectation with *The Late Great Planet Earth*, has added fuel to the fire with *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad*.²²⁷ Secularized conspiracism in the countersubversive tradition is well represented by Paul Sperry's *Infiltration: How Muslim Spies and Subversives have Penetrated Washington*.²²⁸ Conspiracist interpretations of Islam and Muslims, however, should not be confused with the work of a number of scrupulous and careful authors across the political spectrum detailing the very real threats posed by certain forms of militant Islamic fundamentalism.

In addition to trigger events, suspicion itself can supply a shared frame. Barkun writes how the concept of "stigmatized knowledge," leads conspiracists

not only to suspect all official reports, documents, and public announcements, but also to more readily accept information from “alternative” sources, even when they come from the opposite sides of political and ideological boundaries.²²⁹

An example of this is conspiracist Dan Brandt, who chastises progressive researchers for avoiding right-wing information sources. Brandt writes that he does not “believe that right-wing globalist conspiracy theories in general, or LaRouche’s theories in particular, can be dismissed by claiming that they are disguised antisemitism—that is to say, code-word versions of the old international Jewish banking conspiracies.”²³⁰ Brandt also claimed he could find only “infrequent hints” of antisemitism in Carto’s *Spotlight* newspaper.²³¹

Crucible of Apocalyptic Demonization

Spreading conspiracy theories is one way to gain status in a social movement. Let’s dub the vocal conspiracist a “Gnostic Hero.” They are “Gnostic” because they claim access to special secret knowledge; and consider themselves “Heroes” because they are warning the world of the impending confrontation that will have Earth-shaking consequences. Their millenarian energy can be based on religious or secular ideas, or a combination of the two. Charts Four and Five illustrate how our Gnostic Hero enters the mode of apocalyptic time, and how he or she determines the response to the perceived threat.

We start with sociologist of religion Brenda E. Brasher’s concept that apocalypticism is a sociological frame. From the work of several scholars, we learn that “dualistic apocalypticism,” or the concern that a conflict between good and evil will culminate in a massive change for the country or the world, tells the story of a conspiracy in which there are scapegoated villains that are blamed for feared outcomes. These vary over time and have interchangeable components.

For example, in Chart Four, the Gnostic Hero could focus on one or more villains that are blamed for one or more of the feared outcomes.

Apocalypse scholar Stephen D. O’Leary makes a distinction between an apocalyptic story that tends to avoid specifying exactly when the “end of the world” event will take place and a narrative that tends to set a date or assume it is close at hand. When no date is seen as imminent, apocalyptic believers tend to have a more relaxed or “comedic” response to their beliefs. But when a date is set and it is seen as rapidly

CHART NO. 4

Conspiracist Buffet

Scapegoated Villains	Feared Outcomes
Jews	One World Government
Freemasons	New World Order
Plutocrats	End Times & Armageddon
Secret Elites	Globalist Corporate Rule
Rockefellers	Natural Disaster
Reds	Plagues / AIDS
United Nations	Nuclear Meltdown
Feminists	Technological Collapse
Abortionists	Marshall Law & Repression
Secret Team	Economic Collapse
Vatican	
Jesuits	
Muslims	
Trilateralists	
Bilderbergers	
Fascists	
People of Color	
Gays & Lesbians	
Space Aliens	
Agents of Satan	

approaching, it can generate a “tragic” apocalyptic narrative, in which believers see their role in the world dramatically changing. They may begin to make what they see as the proper preparations for the expected confrontation between good and evil—which can lead to scapegoating and demonization of targeted groups.²³²

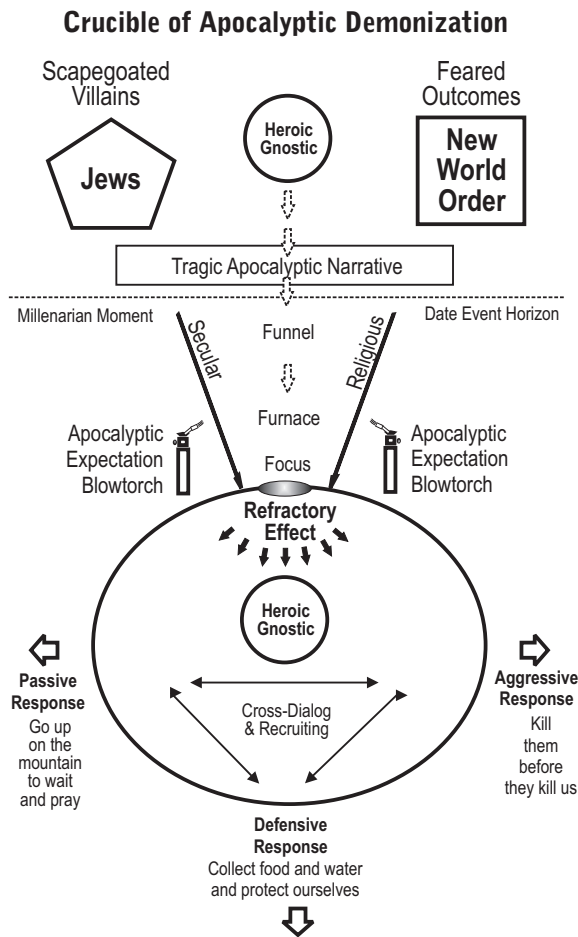
Professor Lee Quinby, author of two books on apocalypticism, worries about the “apocalyptic masculinity” found in some Christian Right groups, because they reject gender equality and scapegoat homosexuals and feminists “as a threat to the pure community.” Quinby calls this tendency “coercive purity.”²³³ Richard K. Fenn, a professor of Theology and Society at Princeton Theological Seminary, suggests that these popular “rituals of purification” in a society are closely associated with apocalyptic and millennial beliefs.²³⁴

We can follow the trajectory of our tragic “Gnostic Hero” in Chart Five.

Once in the funnel of apocalyptic time, the expectation of the Gnostic Hero is heated up, and their thoughts are focused through a lens that has a refractory effect so that when they enter the apocalyptic crucible, it is hard to predict where any one Gnostic Hero will end up in terms of a response.

The concept of “stigmatized knowledge” leads conspiracists not only to suspect all official reports, documents, and public announcements, but also to more readily accept information from “alternative” sources, even when those sources come from the opposite sides of political and ideological boundaries.

CHART NO. 5



The response can be passive, defensive, or aggressive, although these are not static positions, and as new information and events are analyzed these positions can shift. In addition, the degree of conspiracism, the level of scapegoating, (and where our Gnostic Hero ends up on the ideological political spectrum) are all fluid and unpredictable across a range of responses.

It is likely that increasing the level of demonization; suggesting the apocalypse is about to occur really, really soon; and raising the degree of threat posed by the "Other" in the conspiracist narrative will tend to produce a more aggressive response. If the Scapegoated Villain is portrayed as threatening the survival of the idealized good community, this can provide justification for launching a pre-emptive attack. It's either us or them; only a fool would wait for them to strike first. For example, picture the Gnostic Hero developing a theory about a conspiracy to bring an end to Western Civilization by allowing White women to reduce the favored race by having abortions. This is an actual narrative found in some organized White Supremacist groups.

If we use antisemitism as an example of this process, we see that the *Protocols* use an apocalyptic meta-frame [the Jews will be responsible for an authoritarian takeover of the world] and script a dualistic narrative [they are bad; we are good] in which Jews are scapegoated, demonized, accused of plotting a grand conspiracy against the common good; and thus there is justification for striking them before they have time to attack us. Similar narratives to the *Protocols* will swap around the Suspected Villains and Feared Outcomes, but the elements, process, and dynamics are the same.

GOVERNMENT COUNTERSUBVERSIVE CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Up until now, this study has focused on conspiracy theories used to criticize the government of the United States, portrayed as being in the grip of a sinister cabal. In this model, conspiracy theorists on the Left and Right claim that those in power are subverting the ideals and laws of the nation. As shown above, countersubversive conspiracy theories are a central feature of many populist movements on the Political Left and Political Right in the United States.²³⁵ Countersubversive conspiracy theories, however, can also be utilized by governments to build mass support for the surveillance, disruption, and crushing of dissident social and political movements in the US.²³⁶

Donner's Theory of Repressive Countersubversion

Frank Donner, the civil liberties attorney and historian, wrote two volumes on the institutionalized culture of repressive countersubversion by government agencies in the United States. Donner concluded that



that "Traditionally countersubversion is marked by a distinct pathology: conspiracy theory, moralism, nativism, and suppressiveness...."²³⁷ Donner argued that the unstated and actual primary goal of surveillance and political intelligence gathering by state agencies and their countersubversive allies is not

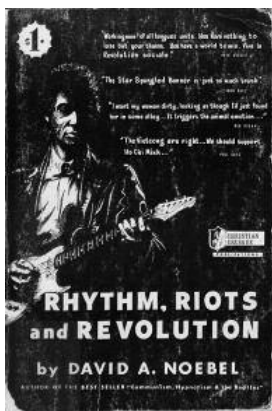
amassing evidence of illegal activity for criminal prosecutions, but punishing critics of the *status quo*, the government, or the state in order to undermine movements for social change.

A major tool used to justify the anti-democratic activities of the intelligence establishment is propaganda designed to create fear of a menace by an alien outsider. The need for a mythic “Other” to transfer blame is strongest during times of social and economic change when traditional institutions are under the greatest strain.²³⁸

Donner used the term “subversification” to describe the process by which dissidents are made outlaws. In order to justify the continued feeding of the intelligence empire, new movements would have to go through subversification to become scapegoats charged with undermining intelligence resources as a means for a violent overthrow. Despite lack of evidence, the charge will stick: “Is it not obvious that a cover-up was part of the conspiracy and that the absence of proof demonstrates its effectiveness?”²³⁹ There is also evidence that during these periods of repression, propaganda campaigns seeking to demonize dissident movements are adopted by the mainstream media and serve to insulate the repression from public discussion or criticism.²⁴⁰ A prime example of this was the feverish mainstream media coverage of the Palmer Raids in 1919-1920 during which lurid claims about anarchists and communists were headlined in the daily press.²⁴¹

Intelligence in the United States resolves the problem of how to protect the *status quo* while maintaining the forms of a liberal political democracy.²⁴² Intelligence institutions have shored up a kind of invincibility based upon two powerful constituencies: “a nativist, anti-radical political culture and an ideological anti-communism, identified with Congress and the executive branch respectively.”²⁴³

Central to rationalizing surveillance and disruption was the fear of revolutionary violence. Collectivism and statism are insufficiently appealing to provoke a mass response, “but the charge of violence...is the rock on which the intelligence church is built.”²⁴⁴ During the Cold War, violence of other left-



wing groups could be attributed to communists, and right-wing groups could be excluded from serious scrutiny because they were not part of a global revolutionary movement.²⁴⁵

Violent right-wing groups were seldom targets of widespread surveillance for political repression, instead they were selectively monitored for crime prevention.²⁴⁶ This double standard is apparent as social change movements of the Left could be smeared as agents and fellow travelers of the violent revolutionary global red menace, while activists of the Right could escape blame for the criminal excesses of a few reactionary and fascist zealots.²⁴⁷

Sinister Conspirators: from Communists to Terrorists

After the end of the Cold War, conservatives abandoned their conspiracy theories about global communist subversion and embraced a new target—terrorists. How did the identity of the subversive menace switch from communists to terrorists? According to Donner, the New Right “cannot function without an enemy, a hostile ‘they,’ a scapegoat.”²⁴⁸

Donner explains:

By the late sixties the fear that anti-communism might be played out as a political strategy had set in motion a drive to reinvigorate the myth of subversion with the emotions that are stirred by social and cultural change. The Nixon administration sought to channel the energy of anti-communism into a Kulturkampf against an enemy who combined in one sinister stereotype all of the then prevalent varieties of protest and dissent. The objective was to associate political nonconformity—especially opposition to the Vietnam War—with forms of behavior that touched the most exposed social nerves, and thus to encourage a grass-roots conservative consensus while at the same time strengthening and expanding countersubversive intelligence agencies.²⁴⁹

Countersubversive conspiracy theories can be utilized by governments to build mass support for the surveillance, disruption, and crushing of dissident social and political movements in the U.S.

In a prescient 1978 article, Donner reasoned that the threat of a communist menace was becoming

ineffective, and that terrorism was a favorable candidate to build public countersubversion.²⁵⁰ While Donner did not predict the specific end of the Cold War, he did foresee that in the future, countersubversive movements and intelligence agency claims would be needed to retain a countersubversive response to change movements.²⁵¹ As long as the culture of surveillance was institutionalized as a mode of governance, intelligence operations would serve to not only blunt protests against government foreign policy decisions, but also to “discredit the predictable movements of protest against the threat of war, nuclear weaponry, environmental contamination, and economic injustice.”²⁵² Extremely influential in the domestic countersubversion revival was a group of foreign policy and military defense hawks including some Cold War Democrats and “the Committee on the Present Danger”²⁵³ (CPD). CPD members were the core of what became the neoconservative movement’s foreign policy ideologues promoting aggressive militarism, redrafted in the texts of the neocon Project for a New American Century.

Contemporary counter-subversive conspiracy theories from powerful political factions in the United States center on the threat of terrorism posed by radical Islam.

The neoconservatives then became part of an anti-Islamic, pro-militarism Bush administration coalition including most of the Christian Right, Christian Zionists, supporters of the Likud Party line in Israel, nativist anti-immigrant xenophobes, anti-Islamic and anti-Arab bigots, and gung-ho military cheerleaders. “The potential for an alliance even more durable than in the fifties between nativism and this elitist sector has been strengthened by the emergence of a sense of the decline of America’s role as a world power,”²⁵⁴ wrote Donner more than 25 years ago.

Donner’s nightmare slowly became our reality. The new witch hunt is propelled through smears carried in right-wing print media, right-wing talk radio, right-wing Fox television “news,” attack websites, and blogs. Anti-immigrant nativism, with its fear of alien ideas, foreign tongues, false gods, and dark complexions can be found from the distressed alleys of urban decay to suburban gated communities to pastoral

rural townships to the carpeted enclaves of corporate suites and the ivory towers of academia.²⁵⁵

Neocon Islamophobic Conspiracy Theories

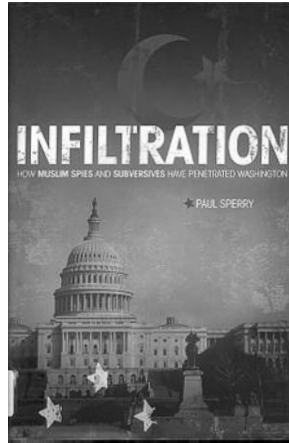
Contemporary countersubversive conspiracy theories from powerful political factions in the United States center on the threat of terrorism posed by radical Islam. The late Samuel P. Huntington, a mainstream conservative foreign policy scholar, warned of a “clash of civilizations,” using oblique language which muted the xenophobia, nativism, racism, and chauvinism threaded throughout his analysis.²⁵⁶ After the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, Huntington’s thesis became the underpinnings of anti-terrorism policies in the administration of George W. Bush.²⁵⁷

Huntington’s thesis received widespread criticism for its assumptions and stereotyping. For example, Communitarian sociologist Amitai Etzioni criticized Huntington as being a “systematic and articulate advocate of nationalism, militaristic regimes, and an earlier America in which there was one homogenous creed and little tolerance for pluralism.”²⁵⁸

Some analysts fearful of militant Islam pushed beyond what Huntington wrote while using his claims to claim support for what was more explicit Islamophobia. In this way, perhaps unwittingly, Huntington set the stage and broadened the audience for more bigoted and conspiratorial analysis that appeared in books by other authors such as Hal Lindsey and Paul Sperry, mentioned above.

Author Robert Spencer has made a successful career out of warning that subversive Islamic jihadists are engaged in a widespread seditious conspiracy to destroy the United States. Consider this biographical sketch circulated by Middle East Forum.

In his new book, *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam Is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs* (Regnery, 2008), Robert Spencer exposes the non-violent form of jihad that undermines America’s culture and Constitution. Director of Jihad Watch, Robert Spencer is the author of eight books about Islam, including two bestsellers, *The Truth about Muhammad* (Regnery, 2006) and *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*



(and the Crusades) (Regnery, 2005). He also writes for *Human Events* and *FrontPage Magazine*, has appeared on most major U.S. television and radio networks, and has directed seminars for the U.S. military and the FBI. Mr. Spencer addressed the Middle East Forum on January 14, 2009 in New York City.²⁵⁹

A major player spreading countersubversive fears of radical Islam is Sen. Joseph Lieberman. The Independent Democrat from Connecticut is closely affiliated with neoconservative-led advocacy efforts to push an expansive “war on terror” in the Middle East—a policy position popular among many in the Christian Right, especially the Christian Zionists.²⁶⁰ Lieberman has used his position as chair of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security to push hardline U.S. foreign and domestic counterterrorism policies that undermine First Amendment rights for dissidents across the political spectrum—and could have potentially far ranging implications for how the United States prosecutes the “war on terror” abroad. Anti-terrorism policies based in hyperbolic conspiracy theories reduce the effectiveness of homeland security.

Lieberman stage-managed one-sided presentations of witnesses at committee hearings in 2007 and 2008; the cast primarily consisted of hardline counterterrorism experts warning of new threats of Islamic attacks targeting the United States.²⁶¹ These hearings stoked the countersubversive flames of fear that there were widespread external and internal conspiracies of Muslim terrorists plotting against the United States. While terrorism from zealous Islamic militants does pose a real threat, the scope and nature of this threat is exaggerated by countersubversive conspiracy theorists.

On May 8, 2008, Lieberman’s Committee on Homeland Security publicly released a report, “Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorism Threat.”²⁶² As the title indicates, the committee is concerned with “how violent Islamist terrorist groups like Al Qaeda are using the Internet to enlist followers into the global violent Islamist terrorist movement and to increase support for the movement, ranging from ideological support, to fundraising, and ultimately to planning and executing terrorist attacks.”²⁶³

The committee is not alone in worrying about what it calls a “dangerous trend” in threats from both within and outside the United States. Its report cites

February testimony by Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell, who said at a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence:

Over the next year, attacks by ‘homegrown’ extremists inspired by militant Islamic ideology but without operational direction from Al Qaeda will remain a threat to the United States or against U.S. interests overseas. The spread of radical Salafi Internet sites that provide religious justification for attacks, increasingly aggressive and violent anti-Western rhetoric and actions by local groups, and the growing number of radical, self-generating cells in Western countries that identify with violent Salafi objectives, all suggest growth of a radical and violent segment among the West’s Muslim populations.... The Al Qaeda-propagated narrative of an ‘us versus them’ struggle serves both as a platform and a potential catalyst for radicalization of Muslims alienated from the mainstream U.S. population.²⁶⁴

Dubiously, the report claimed to have discovered how “to fully identify the best way to combat this threat” by outlining the “the process by which individuals or groups of individuals are radicalized to become violent Islamist extremists.” As evidence, the report cited New York City Police Department (NYPD) “research into homegrown terrorism cases in the United States and around the world” and testimony by Marc Sageman, Foreign Policy Research Institute fellow and NYPD “scholar in residence” on the subject of terrorism. The theories of the NYPD and Sageman, however, have been widely criticized as flawed and sloppy.²⁶⁵

The Lieberman report concluded that, “there is no cohesive and comprehensive outreach and communications strategy in place to confront this threat.”²⁶⁶

A broad array of critics immediately condemned the report, complaining that its analysis was danger-

Historian Samuel P. Huntington warned of a “clash of civilizations,” from a mainstream position, which muted the xenophobia, nativism, racism, and chauvinism threaded throughout his analysis. Huntington set the stage and broadened the audience for more bigoted and conspiratorial analysis that appeared in books by other authors such as Hal Lindsey and Paul Sperry.

ously thin, that it stereotyped Muslims, and that it threatened freedom of expression, civil liberties, and civil rights. Said the ACLU, “Though the need to prevent criminal acts of violence is unquestionable, targeting communities based on religious beliefs is unacceptable and unproductive. We will only end up stigmatizing the Islamic community and creating a nation of Islamophobes. We should not be legislating against thought and we should certainly not be regulating religious or unpopular thought.”²⁶⁷

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Muslim Advocates sent the committee a letter critical of the report, asking for a dialogue.²⁶⁸ “Given that only one of nineteen witnesses before the Committee represented the American-Muslim community,” the letter writers noted, “we also urge you to include representative American Muslims at future hearings on Islam or the American-Muslim community.” The letter argued that the report sabotaged its own goals: “Unfortunately, the Committee’s report undermines fundamental American values (as well as its own stated recommendations) by encouraging alienating suspicion of several million Americans on the basis of their faith....it thus exacerbates the current climate of fear, suspicion and hate mongering of Islam and American Muslims.”²⁶⁹

Lieberman’s staff insisted that there is no connection between the committee’s report and a bill that stalled in Congress, titled the “Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007,” even though the legislation and the hearings reinforced each other both thematically and temporally.²⁷⁰ One section of this proposed Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act drew special attention to online communications: “The Internet has aided in facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process in the United States by providing access to broad and constant streams of terrorist-related propaganda to United States citizens.”

The political maneuvering built around hyperbolic Islamophobia is driven in part by policy advice

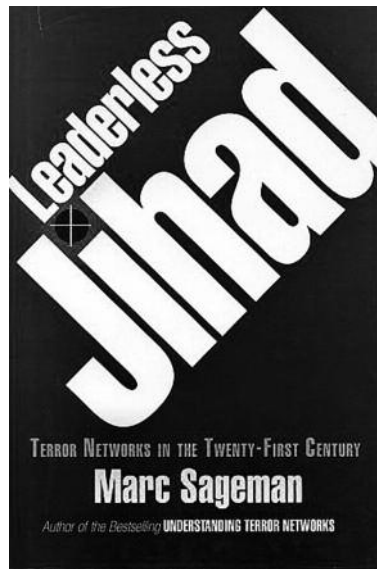
from four self-described experts on Islam and counterterrorism. Two of these experts, Daniel Pipes and Steven Emerson, have become polemicists who repeatedly drift into stereotyping of Islam, yet are regularly featured on network talk shows and are champions for the Political Right. The other two, Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman, became embroiled in a heated and very public dispute over whether future acts of domestic terrorism by Islamic militants, such as those carried out on 9/11, will be generated by the international Al Qaeda network (which Hoffman contends) or by homegrown terrorism, planned by Muslims living in the United States (which Sageman argues).

Hoffman negatively reviewed Sageman’s book, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, in the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs*, calling it a “brusque dismissal of much of the existing academic literature on terrorism in general and terrorist networks in particular” and assessing his argu-

ments on jihadists as “devoid of evidence,” among other complaints.²⁷¹ Sageman responded in the following issue, claiming that Hoffman was “ignoring all of [*Leaderless Jihad’s*] main points while making up others.”²⁷² The debate then spilled over into the *New York Times* and other publications, but the reporting centered on the battle of the personalities. It missed critical elements involving the underlying policy issues and how factual and analytical mistakes by both authors are being used to justify government political repression.

Sageman in his book claims that “leaderless social movements,” in order to survive, require: “a constant stream of new violent actions to hold the interest of potential newcomers to the movement, create the impression of visible progress toward a goal, and give potential recruits a vicarious experience before they take the initiative to engage in their own terrorist activities.”²⁷³

Not only was this idea lifted by Sageman from the work of policy analyst Simson L. Garfinkel, but it mistakenly attributed violence to a broad range of dissident social movements rather than the narrowly defined terrorist underground cell structure which Garfinkel analyzed. In Sageman’s erroneous analysis,



anyone joining a street-level affinity group or collective would be considered prone to violence and a potential terrorist.

The analysis by Sageman replicates the classic countersubversive conspiracy theories used during the Cold War to demonize liberals and socialists as “fellow travelers” on a slippery slope toward communism and armed revolution.²⁷⁴ The same conspiracy theories were later used to smear the Civil Rights Movement and the movement against the war in Vietnam.²⁷⁵

There are varying degrees of Islamophobic conspiracism, with authors such as Spencer and Perry the most conspiracist of the bunch, Pipes and Emerson slightly less so, then Huntington and Lieberman on the border of credibility. Sageman is primarily guilty of sloppy research and hyperbolic conclusions, while Hoffman is well within the bounds of legitimate scholarly analysis. Yet it would be a mistake not to see the synergistic relationship among analysts, journalists, and political leaders that feeds waves of Islamophobic attitudes and actions. The resulting milieu of conspiracist bigotry crystallized in the case of New York City educator Debbie Almontaser.

In 2007 Almontaser was removed as the principal of a new Arab language public school in New York City by NYC Department of Education bureaucrats and abandoned by a teachers’ union leader who picked politics over principles. The events unfolded in the context of a media frenzy, itself the result of a campaign “spearheaded by notable reactionaries such as Daniel Pipes and Alicia Colon, as well as newspapers in the Big Apple including the *New York Post* and *New York Sun*,” wrote Anthony DiMaggio, who has taught Middle East Politics and American Government at Illinois State University.²⁷⁶ Alicia Colon, a reactionary op-ed columnist in the *Sun*, played a starring role, with prompting from academic Daniel Pipes, on various websites.²⁷⁷

Colon set the stage in one of her columns: “So whose insane idea was it to have an Arabic public school in Brooklyn open this September? Are they out of their minds? Have they learned nothing from the Netherlands about the danger of pandering to multiculturalism?”²⁷⁸ Colon continued:



Debbie Almontaser

When I first heard of this proposed school, I thought it was a joke. But then I read Daniel Pipes’s column about this disguised ‘madrassa’ and discovered who the major principals were. Now I can’t dispel this feeling of disbelief and outrage. This proposal is utter madness, considering that five years after September 11, ground zero is still a hole in the ground and we’re bending over backwards to appease those sympathetic to individuals who would destroy us again. Smart, really smart.²⁷⁹

The word “madrassa” simply means “school” in Arabic.²⁸⁰ The elements of demonization and scapegoating are clearly present in this narrative, the subtext of which is a countersubversive conspiracy theory hyperbolizing the threat of terrorism from Muslims and Arabs.

Almontaser was accused of supporting terrorism when she explained that the word “intifada” in Arabic meant “uprising” or “shaking off” and that, therefore, an “intifada NYC”

t-shirt produced by Arab Women Active in Art and Media did not mean a call to violence. That group shares office space with an organization for which Almontaser serves as a board member. Almontaser suggested the t-shirts were more likely an “opportunity for girls to express that they are part of New York City society.”²⁸¹ This explanation was twisted by the *New York Post* into a xenophobic uproar in which Almontaser was cast in the role of supporting violence and terrorism in the Middle East, which she has never done and denies vigorously. This was a classic example of guilt by association.

In fact, Almontaser is a well-known expert on diversity and building bridges across communities and has worked with the Anti-Defamation League in anti-bias workshops.²⁸²

Here is Almontaser in her own words:

Since September 11, I have been involved in so many projects to safeguard my Arab, Muslim, and South Asian neighbors in Brooklyn. This all evolved from my membership in the Brooklyn Dialogue Project. It is a group of Jews, Palestinians, Muslims, Christians, and others who meet on a

monthly basis to talk about world issues and give each other a sense of hope and support. Immediately after September 11, some members of the dialogue called to check up on how my family and I were doing. Based on the concerns and issues I raised, I was invited by these members to go to their churches and synagogues and to speak on behalf of the Arab-American and Muslim communities in Brooklyn.²⁸³

Compare the tone and content of Almontaser's words to Colon's when she describes a sinister motive behind the name of the school, the Khalil Gibran International Academy (KGIA), where Almontaser was to be the founding principal.²⁸⁴

Colon's column was titled "Madrasa Plan Is Monstrosity."²⁸⁵ How did an Arab language school in New York City get to be labeled a "madrasa," a word which simply means "school" in Arabic? Because the usage is popular among Islamophobes to suggest that any Arab or Muslim school—in Pakistan or the United States—is a covert terrorist training academy.

Colon cited the online writings of Pipes, who Colon said prompted her concern with his column about the Khalil Gibran International Academy that stated: "I strongly oppose the KGIA and predict that its establishment will generate serious problems. I say this because Arabic-language instruction is inevitably laden with pan-Arabist and Islamist baggage....learning Arabic in and of itself promotes an Islamic outlook."²⁸⁶ This absurd claim by Pipes combines countersubversive conspiracy theory with xenophobia. The school's namesake, Khalil Gibran, author of *The Prophet*—which was not about Mohammed or Islam—was a Lebanese Christian.²⁸⁷

Pipes went on to falsely claim that Almontaser said, "Arabs or Muslims...are innocent of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001."²⁸⁸ Well-known investigative reporter Larry Cohler-Estes of *Jewish Week* tracked down the full quote and reported that Almontaser had actually told some students, "I don't recognize the people who committed the attacks as either Arabs or Muslims.... Those people who did it

have stolen my identity as an Arab and have stolen my religion."²⁸⁹

During countersubversive panics, facts are less important than frames that portray the demonized targets as a threat to public safety and "our way of life." Because of their xenophobic histrionics, Daniel Pipes and Steven Emerson were labeled as "Smearcasters" by the progressive media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR).²⁹⁰

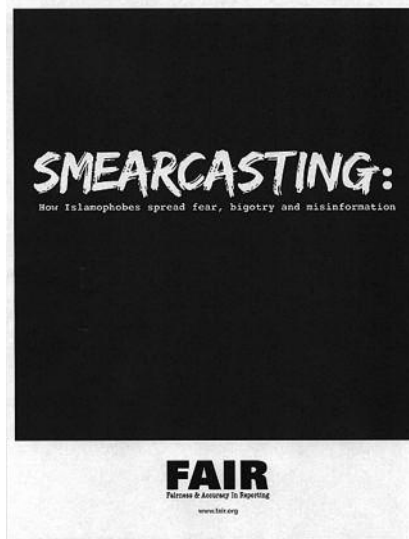
FAIR described the Smearcasters as those "Islamophobic activists and pundits who intentionally and regularly spread fear, bigotry and misinformation in the media." The full report explained in detail how "Islamophobes manipulate media in order to paint Muslims with a broad, hateful brush."²⁹¹

Twelve individuals were listed by FAIR as "serving various roles in the Islamophobic movement:"

Some write the books that serve as intellectual fodder,

others serve as promoters, others play the roles of provocateurs and rabble-rousers. Some ply their bigotry in the media's mainstream, others in the Internet's tributaries, while still others work talk radio's backwaters. Together with uncounted smaller players, they form a network that teaches Americans to see Islam in fearful terms and their Muslim neighbors as suspects.²⁹²

And the Islamophobic network reaches high places. Just as the "investigations" of the anti-Red Witch-Hunting Dies and McCarthy Committees were based in countersubversive conspiracy theories spread through right-wing media, so too is the work of the Lieberman Committee today. The target may have switched from communists to terrorists, but the role of the Congressional Committee in buttressing public media campaigns of fear-mongering about subversive conspiracies threatening the United States remains the same—even when that may not be the intended result.



THE DANGERS OF CONSPIRACISM

There are powerful forces that shape our reality. Conspiracies and secret plots *do* take place. Isn't it true that elite policy planning groups such as the Bilderberger banking conference, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Project for a New American Century conspire with governments and powerful elites?

Political, economic, and social power is frequently abused, observes psychologist Harrington. "There have been numerous examples recently of corporate leaders whose actions benefited themselves to the detriment of the company and stockholders. The Bush White House has been called the most secretive of any in history." So, says Harrington, "there may be some very good reasons to distrust authority figures."²⁹³

Respected left analyst Michael Parenti staked out a different view of the debate in a 1996 book, *Dirty Truths*, which contained a defense of conspiracism. In his chapter on "Conspiracy Phobia on the Left" Parenti accurately points out that frequently "the term 'conspiracy' is applied dismissively whenever one suggests that people who occupy positions of political and economic power are consciously dedicated to advancing their elite interests"²⁹⁴

According to Parenti:

...conspiracy and structure are not mutually exclusive dynamics. A structural analysis that a priori rules out conspiracy runs the risk of not looking at the whole picture. Conspiracies are a component of the national security political system, not deviations from it. Ruling elites use both conspiratorial covert actions and overtly legitimating procedures at home and abroad.²⁹⁵

In an interview at a Vancouver 9/11 conspiracy conference, Professor Peter Dale Scott criticized the form of political analysis of Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky as "structuralist," saying this analytical model is superficial compared to the "deep politics" unveiled by the more "fundamental" understanding developed through conspiracy theories.²⁹⁶ This turns political reality on its head. It is precisely those forms of analysis that explore the structural, institutional, and systemic aspects of power and oppression that provide substantial "deep analysis" that helps progressive activists make effective strategic and tactical

decisions. Progressives should object when elites and others who defend the status quo dismiss dissident complaints as "conspiracy theories," but that does not mean that progressives should therefore embrace conspiracism as an analytical model.

Professor G. William Domhoff explains the difference between how conspiracism and power structure research see the world:

I study visible institutions, take most of what elites say as statements of their values and intentions, and recognize that elites sometimes have to compromise, and sometimes lose. Conspiracists study alleged behind the scenes groups, think everything elites say is a trick, and claim that elites never lose....There is no falsifying a conspiracy theory. Its proponents always find a way to claim the elite really won, even though everyday people stop some things, or win some battles.²⁹⁷

Domhoff, known as the "dean" of Power Structure Research, argues against conspiracism because "there are powerful elites, but the individuals are interchangeable."

Author Holly Sklar agrees: "When I write about influential elite planning groups such as the Trilateral Commission, I don't portray them as omnipotent puppet masters manipulating politicians and policies in a vast conspiracy. When progressives grab onto conspiracy theories it undermines effective strategic analysis, planning, and action."²⁹⁸

Elsewhere, author Matthew Lyons and I have argued that conspiracism "differs in several ways from legitimate efforts to expose secret plots."²⁹⁹

First, the conspiracist worldview assigns tiny cabals of evildoers a superhuman power to control events; it regards such plots as the major motor of history. Conspiracism blames individualized and subjective forces for political, economic, and social problems rather than analyzing conflict in terms of systems, institutions, and structures of power.

It is precisely those forms of analysis that explore the structural, institutional, and systemic aspects of power and oppression that provide substantial "deep analysis" that help progressive activists make effective strategic and tactical decisions.

Second, conspiracism tends to frame social conflict in terms of a transcendent struggle between Good and Evil that reflects the influence of the apocalyptic paradigm.

Third, in its efforts to trace all wrongdoing to one vast plot, conspiracism plays fast and loose with the facts. While conspiracy theorists often start with a grain of truth and “document” their claims exhaustively, they make leaps of logic in analyzing evidence, such as seeing guilt by association or treating allegations as proven fact.³⁰⁰

Z Magazine’s Michael Albert complains that “[c]onspiracy theorizing mimics the personality/dates/times approach to history. It is a sports fan’s or voyeur’s view of complex circumstances.” Albert concedes that when “it’s done honestly,” con-

spiracy theories have their place in public discussions, “but it is not always the best approach,” in part because conspiracy theorists “can manipulate facts or present them accurately.” Sometimes it is hard to tell, and in any case, Albert argues that progressives “who have an institutional critique” should point out the “inadequacy of left conspiracy theory, showing that at best it does not go far enough to be useful for organizers” as a way of explaining power relationships in the society.

Albert advises progressives to “debunk and castigate rightist conspiracy theory, removing its aura of opposition and revealing its underlying racist and elitist allegiances.” As a working journalist, Albert is especially hard on progressive media that uncritically promote conspiracy theorists without carefully examining the content and ideology of the persons being highlighted, since they can easily “lend credence to right-wing garbage.” [See box]

Progressive thought “falters under the weight of apocalyptic and conspiratorial thinking,” argues Professor Quinby, because “disagreement and dissent are disallowed, democratic debate is precluded, and differences of opinion are penalized.”³⁰¹ Professor Domhoff agrees, “Conspiracism is a disaster for progressive people because it leads them into cynicism, convoluted thinking, and a tendency to feel it is hopeless” even as they denounce the alleged conspirators.³⁰²

According to Professor Robert Alan Goldberg, “Healthy skepticism of authority is essential to democracy. The key is to maintain logical consistency while demanding evidence in support of an argument.” Conspiracy theories do not obey the rules of logic, operating from faulty premises and preconceptions while denying other possible explanations of events, according to Goldberg.³⁰³

Is conspiracism a useful and necessary replacement for the reigning orthodox Marxist ideology that fell out of favor on the Political Left, even before the fall of the Soviet Union? A common perception is that the 1989 collapse of communism in Europe cast progressive social change activists adrift without an ideological rudder. This is not accurate. For decades there have been other analytical frameworks used by organizers who stepped away from traditional Marxism and, instead, crafted approaches based in humanism, ecology, liberation theology, anarchism, and the politics of race and gender. C. Wright Mills’ famous study *The Power Elite* was published in 1956.³⁰⁴ Power structure research emerged from the

CONSPIRACY NOT!

By Michael Albert
Z Magazine

...when progressive radio talk shows and left journals and magazines invite people to communicate with their public about world and national events, it is good to be sure the guest is coherent, has effective speaking or writing style, talks about the issues, identifies actors accurately, and knows about the relevant history.

But it isn’t enough. Fascists can fulfill these standards and still spout made-up statistics as if they were facts, disgusting allegations about social groups as if they were objective commentary, and nothing at all about real institutional relations, passing this whole mess off as a useful way to look at the world to understand and affect social events.

Left media, even strapped as it is, should take responsibility for its offerings. People expect that if commentators appear on our shows and in our publications they have a degree of integrity, honesty, and sensitivity. We should not lend credence to right-wing garbage, whether it is blatant or so well concealed as to be civil but malicious.

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student movement of the 1960s. Feminist theory, critical race theory, queer theory, and other models grew in the 1970s and 1980s.

Well-known activists who follow these traditions include democratic socialists Barbara Ehrenreich and Cornel West and left-libertarian egalitarians (anarcho-libertarian socialists), best represented by the work of Noam Chomsky. Today, academics such as G. William Domhoff, Sara Diamond, Adolph Reed, Jr., Abby Scher, and Jean Hardisty—as well as journalist-activists such as Holly Sklar, Roberto Lovato, and Amy Goodman—have refined the power structure research model inspired by Mills. What all of these perspectives share is an analysis of complex systems of power, rather than a fixation on individuals who may or may not be involved in conspiracies.

Sonali Kolhatkar hosts a radio news program in Los Angeles; her specialty is the war in Afghanistan. During public speaking events she is often heckled by vocal audience members who bring up “the 9/11 attacks as some sort of ‘inside job’ which implies [that] I should really be talking about the ‘much bigger story’ of the 9/11 attacks.” Kolhatkar objects when “serious journalism is mixed in with conspiracy theory” in a way that draws in “innocent listeners.” This is “hard to resist unless you are a complete skeptic and willing to do lots of homework” in order to sort out “their facts and dubious claims.”³⁰⁵

Closing the Door to Antisemitism

Many progressives, conservatives, New Agers—even UFO groups—have spoken out against antisemitic conspiracy theories circulating within their own communities. Professor Mark Fenster cautions that we should not fear populist activism or avoid finding simple ways to explain current political issues, “but don’t embrace them without understanding their downside risk. And always educate about the complex structures that affect what often appear to their victims as simple dynamics.” Fenster warns that if our “simple, populist narrative slips and becomes racist or antisemitic or exclusionary, then its power to affect positive social and economic change disappears.”³⁰⁶

Author Penny Rosenwasser, active with the Middle East Children’s Alliance, has fought for Palestinian rights and against antisemitism for over a decade. She says when we “blame U.S. foreign policy on Israel or some Jewish cabal,” it is divisive and “takes the heat off those who are the real decision makers. We need to aim our criticism at the proper targets. U.S. foreign policy is influenced more by cor-



Jeremiah Duggan was found dead shortly after confronting antisemitism at a LaRouchite conference in Germany

porate interests, the Christian Right, and the arms manufacturers than by the Israeli government.” Rosenwasser, also a board member of Jewish Voice for Peace, points out that it is U.S. foreign policy that needs to be challenged: “Blaming scapegoats diverts us from our work for human rights and justice.” She sees some people “blur the distinction between the Jewish people and the policies of the Israeli government.”³⁰⁷ That’s what happens with phrases like “the Jewish Lobby” where the work of Jews seeking justice for Palestinians and Israelis is simply erased.

Could the antisemitic language of conspiracists Tarpley and LaRouche be an innocent coincidence? It doesn’t matter. Pundits who claim such a vast knowledge of history and politics should know which phrases signal anti-Jewish themes and avoid them. Why, then, was Webster Tarpley allowed to share the stage with Peter Dale Scott at the Vancouver 9/11 conspiracy conference along with other conspiracy theorists? Does the comradeship of conspiracism eclipse the moral necessity of standing up against bigotry? Not for some who pursue 9/11 conspiracy research and who nonetheless decry the participation of anti-semites like Tarpley.³⁰⁸

The process of individualizing history through conspiracy theories sets the stage for antisemitism. On the Tarpley, LaRouche, and Jeff Rense websites, legitimate criticism of the role of U.S. “neoconservatives” and others in staging the war in Iraq is mixed with historic antisemitic stereotypes. The conspiracism dynamic periodically moves from the margins to the mainstream, dragging anti-semitism and other bigoted baggage along with it; for this reason it is important to pay attention to marginal figures such as LaRouche and Tarpley.

Many progressives, conservatives, New Agers—even UFO groups—have spoken out against antisemitic conspiracy theories circulating within their own communities. And an increasing number of activists suggest that conspiracism itself needs to be opposed, especially on the Political Left.

There is also a tragic personal dimension to anti-semitic conspiracism. Jeremiah Duggan was a young man from England studying in France when he learned of an international conference to oppose the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in March 2003.³⁰⁹ It turned out that the conference was held by the LaRouchite Schiller Institute in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Duggan learned about the *Protocols* as a child growing up in a Jewish family. He knew what he was hearing at the conference involved antisemitic conspiracy theories—he summarized in his notebook the arguments he heard coming from the podium: “Jewish leads to Fascism leads to Cheney.”³¹⁰ Duggan stood up at the LaRouche network conference and objected to the antisemitic conspiracy theories.

What happened next is unclear. The LaRouche network has a long history of intimidating people who disagree with them. A few hours later Duggan was dead, struck by cars as he was running away from the conference. A British coroner’s inquest ruled that there was insufficient evidence for suicide, and that Duggan was in a state of terror when he fled the conference and died.³¹¹ German authorities refuse to re-open the case.³¹²

Conclusions

Conspiracist theories are attractive in part because they start with a grain of truth embedded in pre-existing societal beliefs. Conspiracy books are top sellers on the online Amazon U.S. bookstore, including 9/11 conspiracy books by Jim Marrs, Webster G. Tarpley, Michael C. Ruppert, and theologian David Ray Griffin.

Conspiracy theorists are correct about one thing: the *status quo* is not acceptable. Conspiracists have accurately understood that there are inequalities of power and privilege in the world—and threats to the world itself—that need to be rectified. What conspiracy theorists lack is the desire or ability to follow the basic rules of logic and investigative research.

While conspiracists tell compelling stories, they frequently create dangerous conditions as these stories can draw from pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices. Cynical movement leaders then can hyperbolize false claims in a way that mobilizes overt forms of discrimination. People who believe conspiracist allegations sometimes act on those irrational beliefs, and this has concrete consequences in the real world. Angry allegations can quickly turn into aggression and violence targeting scapegoated groups. We know that some racial supremacist and fascist organizers use conspiracist theories that do not *appear* to have antisemitic themes as a (relatively) less-threatening entry point in making contact with potential recruits.

Even when conspiracist theories do not center on Jews, homosexuals, people of color, immigrants or other scapegoated groups, they still create an environment where racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice, bigotry, and oppression can flourish.

History demonstrates that conspiracism cuts across political, social, economic, and intellectual boundaries. We need to teach each generation about the dangers of dualism's apocalyptic aggression, demonization, scapegoating, and conspiracism. The

forgery of the *Protocols* needs to be a centerpiece of such a curriculum. We must never forget that tragic apocalypticism merged with aggressive dualism and demonization can create social movements that use conspiracist scapegoating to justify genocide as a final solution.

At times it all seems simply ludicrous. Brasher, a sociologist of religion, says “We tend to look at apocalyptic and conspiracist belief and laugh it off and push it aside. Yet in many ways it is pervasive. I came back to visit the United States after the attacks on 9/11 and was amazed to see apocalyptic rhetoric being spun out by elected officials and people on the right and left.”³¹³

Ironically, as dissident conspiracy theorists succeed in gaining a mass base for their claims, they create a public audience trained in accepting conspiracism as an analytical model. This audience is more easily swayed by government countersubversive campaigns that insist political repression targeting dissidents is justified to secure public safety. Conspiracists unwittingly lay the foundation for government repression.

Through the relentless pestering and aggressive bullying of their fans, high profile conspiracy theorists have elbowed away and stepped on—and over—progressive activists with different analytical models. By coupling sensationalist claims with blatant self-aggrandizing hucksterism, celebrity conspiracy theorists attract constituencies of sincere progressive and liberal activists who are drawn away from constructive political engagement into the shadow world of secret teams and sinister plots. And when the fantastic claims of the conspiracists collapse, all of us seeking progressive social change are further marginalized.

Conspiracy theorists are correct about one thing: the status quo is not acceptable. They have accurately understood that there are inequalities of power and privilege in the world—and threats to the world itself—that need to be rectified.

We do not need conspiracism to challenge social injustice. With conspiracism, progressive analysis of race, class, and gender are almost always shoved aside. Political and economic policies are framed as controlled by a handful of powerful and wealthy secret elites manipulating elections, foreign and domestic policy, and the media. This sets the stage for resuscitating historic antisemitic claims of Jewish plots.

When there is already plentiful public evidence of abuses of power, progressives should help potential supporters to see them more clearly, rather than endlessly searching the shadows in the hopes of

flushing out phantoms and claiming credit for fantastic revelations. Conspiracy theories spotlight lots of fascinating questions—but they seldom illuminate meaningful answers.

Conspiracist thinking and scapegoating on a mass scale are symptoms, not causes, of underlying societal tensions and while conspiracism needs to be opposed, the resolution of the grievances themselves is necessary to restore a healthy society. The spread of conspiracy theories across a society is perilous to ignore because conspiracist allegations can gener-

ate demonization and scapegoating; and these tools of fear are used by demagogues to mobilize a bigoted mass base.

Whether conspiracist claims are circulated by angry populists or anxious government officials, the dynamics generated by conspiracy theories are toxic to democracy.

The spread of conspiracy theories across a society is perilous to ignore because conspiracist allegations generate demonization and scapegoating, and these tools of fear are used by cynical demagogic leaders to mobilize a bigoted mass base.

Appendix

CONSPIRACIST NARRATIVES IN THE U.S. 1797-1984

To meet various political needs during certain historic epochs, conspiracists modify some of the allegations found in the *Protocols*. The targeted scapegoats change; the choice of language changes, but the basic plotline remains the same. We can track this pattern as a part of a continuum of conspiracy theories circulated within the United States.

The focus of this survey is periods when there were political or social movements in the United States that used the type of broad dualistic apocalyptic conspiracism found in the *Protocols*. Dates approximate periods when a specific scapegoat received a flurry of attention. The degree of antisemitism in any book cited in this section varies from non-existent, to undetectable, to coded, to overt—with various scholars disagreeing over how to characterize specific authors, and specific works. What unites these texts is their claim of a vast and longstanding subversive conspiracy involving political and economic elites, the media, and certain intellectuals, ideologues, and groups.



John G. Palfrey

1797–1800 Freemasons/Illuminati (Europe).³¹⁴ The paradigmatic sets of allegations that precede (yet match) those in the *Protocols* are published in Europe. The key books are the multi-volume Abbé Augustin Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, and John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy*.³¹⁵

1798–1802 Freemasons/Illuminati (U.S.). A few Protestant clergy in the United States picked up the conspiracy claims about the Freemasons and Illuminati, and melded them into the Federalist campaign supporting the Alien and Sedition Acts.³¹⁶ Reverend Jedediah Morse, for example, warned that “the world was in the grip of a secret revolutionary conspiracy.” Goldberg notes that a phrase used by Morse returned as an echo “during the Red Scare of the 1950s.”³¹⁷ Morse (anticipating McCarthy) told his parishioners, “I now have in my possession complete and indubitable proof...an official, authenticated list of the names, ages, places of nativity, [and] profes-

sions of the officers and members of a society of *Illuminati*.”³¹⁸

1820–1844 Anti-Masonry (Early Nativism).³¹⁹ When Capt. William Morgan wrote *Illustrations of Masonry*, later issued as *Freemasonry Exposed*, it is unlikely that he anticipated the wave of countersubversive hysteria it would produce after his suspicious death was linked to a never-substantiated Freemason plot.³²⁰ The subsequent Anti-Masonic movement swept the Northeast and Midwest.

1834–1860 Catholic Immigrants (Nativism–Know Nothings).³²¹ In 1834 sensational (and false) tales of orgiastic life behind the walls of Catholic convents and monasteries helped spread rumors that led to the torching by a Protestant mob of a convent near Boston.³²²

E. Hutchinson’s *Startling Facts for the Know Nothings* captures the flavor of the period with its lurid anti-Catholic rhetoric.³²³ E. G. White’s *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* links the Roman Catholic Church and most Protestant ministers to a Satanic End Times conspiracy.³²⁴

1830–1866 Slave Power Conspiracy.³²⁵ Some abolitionists during this period were convinced there was a conspiracy to spread slavery to the North and impose tyranny.³²⁶ An example is John G. Palfrey’s *Five Year’s Progress of the Slave Power*.³²⁷ (see image)

1873–1905 Plutocrats and Bankers (“The Octopus”).³²⁸ In this period author “Coin” Harvey wrote about the money conspiracy, which was also a theme used by Frank Norris in his novel *The Octopus: A Story of California*.³²⁹ The image of an octopus with its tentacles encircling the globe became a standard graphic used by conspiracy theorists ever since. Sarah E.V. Emery concocted the dense title *Seven Financial Conspiracies Which Have Enslaved the American People; or Gordon Clark’s Shylock: as Banker, Bondholder, Corruptionist, Conspirator*.³³⁰ Ignatius Donnelly, in *Caesar’s Column*, warned of a global conspiracy of Jewish elites.³³¹ Jewish bankers, espe-

cially the Rothschilds, became popular targets.³³² The “cabal” manipulating money was widely seen as composed of “English, Jewish, and Wall Street bankers.”³³³

1903–1920 Jews (*Protocols—Russia*). Various versions of the *Protocols* appear in Russia in 1903, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1911, 1912, and 1917.³³⁴ The titles vary.³³⁵

1919–1935 The International Jew (*Protocols—Britain & U.S.*). An English translation of the *Protocols* appears in Britain as early as 1919, and in 1920 London’s *Morning Post* publishes a series of “eighteen articles expounding the full myth of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, with due reference to the *Protocols*.”³³⁶ The newspaper’s correspondent in Russia, Victor E. Marsden, translates what becomes one of the most widely circulated versions of the text, still being reprinted.³³⁷ Nesta H. Webster pens a series of books that flesh out the claims in the *Protocols: The French Revolution*, (1919); *World Revolution: The Plot Against Civilization*, (1921); and *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, (1924).³³⁸ In 1920, Henry Ford’s *Dearborn Independent* publishes a series of articles built around the *Protocols*; these later are collected in *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem*, Vols. 1-4.³³⁹ In 1927 Adolf Hitler publishes *Mein Kampf*.³⁴⁰

1919–1925 Anarchists and Bolsheviks.³⁴¹ Attorney General A Mitchell Palmer writes an article, “The Case Against the ‘Reds,’” that captures the mood of this period:

Like a prairie-fire, the blaze of revolution was sweeping over every American institution of law and order a year ago. It was eating its way into the homes of the American workmen, its sharp tongues of revolutionary heat were licking the altars of the churches, leaping into the belfry of the school bell, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes, seeking to replace marriage vows with libertine laws, burning up the foundations of society.³⁴²

Beginning in late 1919, Palmer oversaw the roundup of thousands of predominantly Italian and

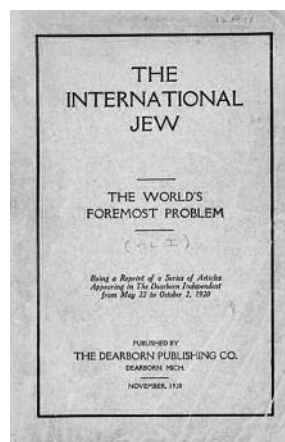
Russian immigrants who were deported as suspected anarchists and communists.³⁴³ Louis Post, who had served as a federal employee during the roundups, later wrote of the “Palmer Raids” that the deportations had been part of a national “delirium.”³⁴⁴ A typical conspiracist work in this period is Blair Coán, *The Red Web: 1921–1924*.³⁴⁵ This was an era when Protestant Christian fundamentalism generated the Scopes “Monkey” Trial; and the revitalized Ku Klux Klan mobilized more mainstream Protestants to battle subversive alien influences.³⁴⁶ These movements planted the seeds for the future conspiracy theories about the “alien” ideas of secular humanism in the Christian Right.

1932–1946 Bankers, Liberal Collectivists, Reds, and Jews. Among the many critics of the Roosevelt Administration are those conspiracists who scapegoated it as the puppet of secret liberal collectivists, or Reds, or Jews, or all three.³⁴⁷ For some, this is a continuation of a critique of the collectivist and elitist Federal Reserve System, merging elements of populism and conspiracism, but often avoiding rank antisemitism.³⁴⁸ Gertrude Coogan writes about this alleged banking conspiracy in the *Money Creators*.³⁴⁹ Elizabeth Dilling’s *The Red Network* and its update *The Roosevelt Red Record and its Background* are well-known publications from this genre.³⁵⁰ Later books such as *The Octopus* by Dilling (writing under a pseudonym) were more overtly antisemitic.³⁵¹ The anonymously written pamphlet *New Dealers in Office* is primarily a list of hundreds of names of Roosevelt Administration appointees and staff that to the author reveal “Jewish ancestry.”³⁵² Some thought it was all a “Zionist” plot.³⁵³

There is interplay between conspiracists in the United States and Britain during this period. One of the best known conspiracist antisemites of this era, the Rev. Denis Fahey in Dublin, became an important advisor to the “Radio Priest” Father Coughlin of Detroit.³⁵⁴ Together they sketched out a conspiracy theory linking the manipulation of money to Jews, Russia,

Godless communism, and ultimately to Roosevelt.³⁵⁵

Three publications of this period are of particular interest: *The Reign of the Elder; War, War, War*; and *Empire of “The City.”* The three publications trace a transitional arc that starts with the theme of money



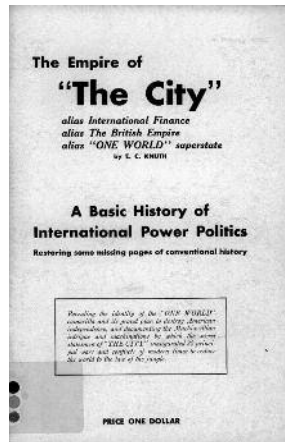
manipulation, jumps to war as a form of manipulated internationalist politics during World War Two, and then jumps back to the theme of money manipulation. This is one demonstration of how specific allegations can adapt to different historic moments and yet remain essentially the same in structure and retain the same scapegoat, in this case Jews.

The narrative behind these publications is rooted in the late 1800s, when several populist authors pursued the idea that British speculators manipulated the price of gold, which affected paper currency at the time.³⁵⁶ This easily slid into antisemitic interpretations.³⁵⁷

The pre-war *The Reign of the Elders (Gold, Gold, Gold)* is a short book by an anonymous author that starts with the *Protocols*, moves through the Rothschilds, and ends up with Roosevelt's "Jew Deal."³⁵⁸ The pseudonymous author "Cincinnatus" took the same basic arguments from *Gold, Gold, Gold* and wove them around the theme of Jews plotting *War, War, War*, to help an England controlled by Jews by staging World War Two.³⁵⁹ E.C. Knuth's *Empire of "The City": The Secret History of British Financial Power* was a post-war publication that took the same themes and returned it to the focus on financial manipulation by Jews.³⁶⁰

One result of this popular conspiracist narrative is the popularization of the idea that the Rothschild family and other wealthy Jews controls the British monarchy, the British financial center known as the "City of London," and through them, the U.S. government and economy. The Lyndon LaRouche network later adopts this claim, while removing the more obvious antisemitic references after being criticized for blatant antisemitism.³⁶¹

1940–1950 Reds and the End Times. Connecting the growing power of the Soviet Union with the satanic conspiracy in the apocalyptic End Times was the task of books such as *Russian Events in the Light of Bible Prophecy*, and *The Red Terror (Russia) and Bible Prophecy*. Carl McIntyre, in *Author of Liberty* extended this concept to claim that the totalitarian super state was the beast of Revelation, which was poised to gobble up the United States.³⁶²



1950–1960 Liberal Internationalists & Reds.³⁶³ The Red Scare period, which included McCarthyism, generated scores of conspiracist books such as William R. Kintner's *The Front Is Everywhere* in 1950 to J. Edgar Hoover's *Communist Target—Youth: Communist Infiltration and Agitation Tactics* in 1960.³⁶⁴ Christian conservatives joined in with titles such as *Communist America...Must it Be* by Billy James Hargis, and Fred Schwarz's *You Can Trust the Communists (to be Communists)*.³⁶⁵

The idea that liberal internationalists facilitate communist subversion is the theme of Ralph De Toledano's *Seeds of Treason: The True Story of the Chambers-Hiss Tragedy*, and John T. Flynn's *While You Slept: Our Tragedy in Asia and Who Made It*.³⁶⁶ This is personalized in *Rockefeller, "Internationalist": The Man Who Misrules the World* by Emanuel M. Josephson. Whole shelves of books follow this theme with expositions on the global conspiracy of Rockefeller-style elite planning and networking groups such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, Bohemian Grove, Yale's Skull and Bones Society, and the Bilderberger banking conference.³⁶⁷

There are a number of openly antisemitic conspiracy texts from this period, but coded forms appear to get wider public approval, especially in the post-Nazi era. John Beaty in *The Iron Curtain over America* blamed the conspiracy on the "Khazars."³⁶⁸ Eustace Mullins, in his book on the Federal Reserve, scapegoats the Rothschilds, while in other books his antisemitism is more obvious.³⁶⁹

1958–1968 Civil Rights Conspiracy. Some publications opposing the Civil Rights Movement identify it as part of a communist conspiracy.³⁷⁰ This is the case with Alan Stang's *It's Very Simple: The True Story of Civil Rights*, published by the imprint of the John Birch Society.³⁷¹ Others extend this to the Judeo-communist conspiracy.³⁷² In the 1958 pamphlet *Reds Promote Racial War*, Kenneth Goff scapegoats communists, Jews, Blacks, and liberals; declares that segregation is Biblical; and warns that the Reds want global government.³⁷³

1960–1970 Secret Kingmakers.³⁷⁴ Phyllis Schlafly wrote in *A Choice Not An Echo* that the Republican

Party had been taken over by a conspiracy of the “Secret Kingmakers.”³⁷⁵ Dan Smoot in *The Invisible Government* pursues a similar theme.³⁷⁶ John Stormer makes it clear that this is in service to global communism in *None Dare Call It Treason*.³⁷⁷

1963–1970 Assassination Conspiracy Theories. A series of political assassinations, starting with President John F. Kennedy in 1963, created a cottage industry of conspiracy peddlers across the political spectrum.³⁷⁸ Other theories emerged regarding the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. There are hundreds of conspiracist books about these assassinations, with Mark Lane’s *Rush to Judgment* among the earliest influential tomes.³⁷⁹

1960–1980 Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll. The titles of David A. Noebel’s books between 1965 and 1974 explain the thesis propounded by some sectors of the Christian Right during this period: *Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles; Rhythm, Riots and Revolution*; and *The Marxist Minstrels: A Handbook on Communist Subversion of Music*.³⁸⁰ Bob Larson, in *Hippies, Hindus and Rock and Roll*, also ties rock music to communism and its satanic influence.³⁸¹ Some of the books in this genre have a subtext of White supremacy in that they link the “savage, tribal, orgiastic beat,” of Rock & Roll to what is considered primitive and uncivilized African-American culture.³⁸²

1970–1990 Secret Elites. The 1970s saw the publication of numerous books still circulated among right-wing populist conspiracy theorists.³⁸³ W. Cleon Skousen, in *The Naked Capitalist*, wrote a treatise on Carroll Quigley’s *Tragedy and Hope*, which portrayed it as proof of the conspiracy of internationalist Anglophile liberal elites.³⁸⁴ *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* by Gary Allen with Larry Abraham, did, in fact, dare to call it a conspiracy, since they used the term in their title.³⁸⁵ Antony C. Sutton wrote a conspiracist trifecta with *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution*; *Wall Street and the Rise of Hitler*; and (with Patrick M. Wood) *Trilaterals Over Washington*.³⁸⁶ Martin Alfred Larson wrote about the elite money conspiracy in *The Federal Reserve and our Manipulated Dollar: With Comments on the Causes of Wars, Depressions, Inflation and Poverty*.³⁸⁷

Historian Mintz writes about the difficulty in establishing a clear line between conspiracist texts from this period, differentiating those that seem to avoid antisemitism, such as the work of Skousen,

and those that deny any antisemitic intent and yet seem obsessed with Jewish banking conspiracies, as in the case with the work of Gary Allen.³⁸⁸ Mintz sees a symbiosis between the conspiracy claims of the John Birch Society and the more obviously antisemitic Liberty Lobby that makes such distinctions more difficult.³⁸⁹

Other authors openly implicated the Jews in the conspiracy of secret elites, with a classic example being *Fourth Reich of the Rich*, by Des Griffin.³⁹⁰ Robert Singerman summarizes the theme of the Griffin book as alleging, “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are a Satan-inspired, Illuminist blueprint for the systematic destruction of civilization, all government and religion, and the establishment of a One-World totalitarian dictatorship.”³⁹¹

In the 1980s, Western Islands, the book-publishing imprint of the John Birch Society, issued more generic anti-elite studies that avoided obvious antisemitism, including Robert W. Lee’s *The United Nations Conspiracy* and James Perloff’s *The Shadows of Power: The Council on Foreign Relations and the American Decline*.³⁹²

An apocalyptic variation is Constance Cumbey’s *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism*.³⁹³

1975–Secular Humanism: Feminists and Homosexuals. The Christian Right preoccupation with secular humanism in the 1970s expands into a series of countermovements against abortion and gay rights.³⁹⁴

Secular humanism as a philosophy that was competing with Christianity was the thesis put forward by theologian Francis A. Schaeffer in the late 1970s, but it morphs into a conspiracy theory through Tim LaHaye in a series of non-fiction books including *The Battle for the Family* and *The Battle for the Mind*; the former is dedicated to Schaeffer.³⁹⁵

The anti-feminist conspiracism is carried to extremes in Texe Marrs, *Big Sister Is Watching You: Hillary Clinton and the White House Feminists Who Now Control America—And Tell the President What To Do*.³⁹⁶

Antigay conspiracy theories appear with books such as David A. Noebel’s *The Homosexual Revolution* in 1977, and the encyclopedic *The Homosexual Network* by Enrique T. Rueda in 1982.³⁹⁷ Rueda’s book is later reframed and re-edited into a shorter more popular format as *Gays, AIDS and You*, by Rueda with Michael Schwartz in 1987.³⁹⁸

1986–1990 Secret Team. Daniel Sheehan of the liberal Christic Institute popularizes the idea of a “Secret Team behind U.S. covert action.” This is discussed in more detail later in the report.

1990–New World Order. The John Birch Society was the major purveyor of the New World Order conspiracy theories in the 1990s, but there were other sources of this allegation.³⁹⁹ James J. Drummey, in *The Establishment’s Man*, took a secular approach when he warned that President George H.W. Bush was planning a one-world socialist dictatorship, which seemed to some a more defensible claim after the President announced his new foreign policy initiatives would build a “New World Order.”⁴⁰⁰ Cliff Kincaid penned the secular tome, *Global Bondage: The U.N. Plan to Rule the World*.⁴⁰¹

In the Patriot Movement and its splinter, the armed citizens militias, the fear was that the government would impose totalitarian tyranny.⁴⁰² Robert K. Spear wrote books for survivalists in these movements: *Surviving Global Slavery: Living Under the New World Order* and *Creating Covenant Communities*.⁴⁰³ Spear told an audience in Massachusetts that it didn’t matter if the survivalist reader came from a religious or secular perspective, the techniques he provided would be the same.⁴⁰⁴

Apocalyptic Christians in this period worried about the New World Order and regard the 1970 book *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey, with Carole C. Carlson as having launched the early manifestation of this millennialist genre.⁴⁰⁵ One of the most frenetic treatments of the End Times is found in Texe Marrs’ *Mystery Mark of the New Age: Satan’s Design for World Domination*.⁴⁰⁶ A more mainstream Christian text is *When the World Will Be As One: The Coming New World Order in the New Age* by Tal Brooke.⁴⁰⁷

An update to this report can be found on page 85.

Notes

- ¹ On the North American Union, see Chip Berlet, "The North American Union: Right-wing Populist Conspiracism Rebounds," *The Public Eye Magazine* (Spring 2008), http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v23n1/NA_Union.html (accessed January 15, 2009).
- ² Conveyed by a researcher who received the warning at a coffee shop while on his way to work.
- ³ "Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce," memo prepared in 1995 by the White House counsel's office, with attachments, obtained from the White House Press Office. First revealed by editorial writer Micah Morrison in *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 1997. See criticism of the memo in "Who's Shooting the Messenger Now?" *Media Watch*, March 1997.
- ⁴ Joe Conason and Gene Lyons. *The Hunting of the President: The Ten-Year Campaign to Destroy Bill and Hillary Clinton* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 369-373.
- ⁵ On the theory of delegitimization and social turmoil, see Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).
- ⁶ Juan F. Perea, *Immigrants Out! The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Dale T. Knobel, "America for the Americans": *The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York: Twayne, 1996); Devin Burghart, "Do It Yourself Border Cops," *The Public Eye Magazine*, 19 no.3 (Winter 2005); Roberto Lovato, "Far From Fringe: Minutemen Mobilizes Whites Left Behind by Globalization," *The Public Eye Magazine* (Winter 2005).
- ⁷ Ewen MacAskill, "Obama retakes oath to quell conspiracy theories," *The Guardian* (London), January 23, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jan/23/obama-presidential-oath> (accessed January 23, 2009).
- ⁸ Illarion Bykov and Jared Israel, "Guilty for 9-11: Bush, Rumsfeld, Myers," *The Emperor's New Clothes* blog (November 14, 2001), <http://www.tenc.net/indict/indict-1.htm> (accessed April 2, 2006).
- ⁹ Global Research, "America's "War On Terrorism,"" <http://www.globalresearch.ca/globaloutlook/truth911.html> (accessed April 2, 2006).
- ¹⁰ David Corn, "When 9/11 Conspiracy Theories Go Bad," *AlterNet* (March 1, 2002), <http://www.alternet.org/story/12536/>; Norman Solomon, memo to Philip Maldari (March 7, 2002), <http://www.publiceye.org/conspire/Post911/Solomon1.html>; Solomon, response to a statement written by Michael Ruppert (April 4, 2002), <http://www.publiceye.org/conspire/Post911/Solomon2.html>; David Corn, "The September 11 X-Files," *The Nation* online (May 30, 2002), <http://www.thenation.com/blogs/capitalgames?bid=3&pid=66> (all accessed April 2, 2006).
- ¹¹ Michael C. Ruppert, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Decline of the American Empire at the End of the Age of Oil* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2004).
- ¹² Jim Marrs, *Inside Job: Unmasking the 9/11 Conspiracies* (San Rafael: Origin Press, 2004); David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions About the Bush Administration and 9/11* (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2004); Webster Griffin Tarpley, *9/11 Synthetic Terror: Made in USA* (Joshua Tree: Progressive Press, 2005); David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions And Distortions* (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2005). See also: Chip Berlet, *The Public Eye Magazine*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 2004), pp. 18-21, a review of Griffin, *New Pearl Harbor* (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2004), an expanded version is online at http://www.publiceye.org/conspire/Post911/dubious_claims.html, and includes a response by Griffin (accessed April 2, 2006).
- ¹³ Stephen R. Shalom and Michael Albert, "Conspiracies or Institutions: 9-11 and Beyond," *Z-Net* (June 2, 2002), <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/18504>; Albert, "Conspiracy Theory," (both accessed January 15, 2009). See also Michael Albert, "Conspiracy?...Not!" *Z Magazine*, January 1992, pp. 17-19. Michael Albert "Conspiracy?...Not Again," *Z Magazine*, May 1992.
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Webster Griffin Tarpley and Anton Chaitkin, *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography* (Washington: Empire Publishing Co, 1992); William Engdahl, *A Century Of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order* (London: Pluto Press, 2004). Several former LaRouchites have abandoned conspiracy theories and established their credentials as serious and sensible analysts in a variety of fields.
- ¹⁵ Scott Loughrey, "Amy Goodman, Left Gatekeeper," *Media Criticism*, http://www.media-criticism.com/Amy_Goodman_03_2004.html (accessed January 15, 2009); 9-11 Review, "The Left Gatekeepers Phenomenon," <http://911review.com/denial/gatekeepers.html> (accessed January 15, 2009); See also, Bob Feldman, "Alternative Media Censorship: Sponsored by CIA's Ford Foundation?" <http://www.questionsquestions.net/gatekeepers.html> (accessed March 15, 2006); this is a multi-part and ever-expanding collection of essays. See also Charles Shaw, "Regulated Resistance: Pt. 2—The Gatekeepers of the So-Called Left," *Newtopia Magazine* (May 03, 2005), <http://www.newtopiamagazine.net/articles/40> (accessed March 15, 2006). The author is listed as among the Left Gatekeepers by conspiracists.
- ¹⁶ See Chip Berlet, "Zog Ate My Brains," *New Internationalist* (London), Issue 372 (October 2004), Special Issue on Judeophobia, pp. 20-21, <http://www.newint.org/features/2004/10/01/conspiracism/> (accessed January 20, 2009).
- ¹⁷ Naomi Klein, "Sharon's Best Weapon: The Left Must Confront Anti-Semitism Head-On," *In These Times* (May 27, 2002), <http://www.inthesetimes.com/issue/26/13/feature2.shtml> (accessed April 2, 2006). Earlier examples of warnings can be found in: Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), pp. 342-343; and Pressebüro Savanne, "Right-Left - A Dangerous Flirt," <http://www.savanne.ch/right-left.html> (accessed April 2, 2006).
- ¹⁸ Naomi Klein, "Sharon's Best Weapon."
- ¹⁹ Ali Abunimah and Hussein Ibish, "Serious Concerns about Israel Shamir," (April 16, 2001), <http://www.nigelparry.com/issues/shamir/originalletter.html> (accessed April 2, 2006).
- ²⁰ Hamad Abd Al-Aziz Al-Isa, "Terror in America (21): Saudi Columnists Condemn Conspiracy Theories and Anti-U.S. Sentiment in the Arab World" Special Dispatch Series, No. 294 (November 1, 2001), The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=S P29401> (accessed April 2, 2006) quoting Suleiman Al-Nkidan, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (October 25, 2001).
- ²¹ Webster Griffin Tarpley, "Act-Independent United Front Program," (July 4, 2007) <http://www.waronfreedom.org/tarpley/philly.html> (accessed January 15, 2009).
- ²² Ibid.

- ²³ Webster Tarpley, “How the Dead Souls of Venice Corrupted Science,” speech, ICLC Conference, September 1994, transcript online at, <http://www.abjpress.com/tarpv4.html>. ICLC is the International Caucus of Labor Committees, a LaRouchite front group.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Tarpley gets credit for composing a wordplay that demonstrates an erudite (albeit warped) synthesis of historic events. The Cominterm (for Communist International) was the official international body founded in 1919 that debated and composed guidelines and policy positions for various international communist movements. It was closely aligned with the Soviet Union. Especially under Stalin, the Cominterm was increasingly repressive and secretive. According to LaRouchite conspiracy theories, many of the most evil conspirators are homosexuals or their close allies, who operate through a coordinated secret international conspiracy—thus a “Hominterm.” In Venice, according to LaRouchite lore, Jewish merchants and bankers were part of the evil oligarchy. During the 1950s Red Scare, some right-wing conspiracists claimed that Jews and homosexuals played important roles in Soviet subversion of the United States.
- ²⁶ This section is drawn from several of my previous studies listed in the Acknowledgements.
- ²⁷ Frank P. Mintz, *The Liberty Lobby and the American Right: Race, Conspiracy, and Culture* (Westport: Greenwood, 1985), p. 4.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 199.
- ²⁹ Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950*, Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 767.
- ³⁰ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860–1925* (New York: Atheneum ([1955] 1972); Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” in Hofstadter (ed.), *The Paranoid Style in American Politics: and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf Inc, 1965); David Brion Davis (ed.), *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); Richard O. Curry and Thomas M. Brown (eds.), “Introduction,” *Conspiracy: The Fear of Subversion in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972); George Johnson, *Architects of Fear: Conspiracy Theories and Paranoia in American Politics* (Los Angeles: Tarcher/Houghton Mifflin, 1983); Mintz, *Liberty Lobby*; David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: The American Far Right from Nativism to the Militia Movement*, revised (New York: Vintage Books, [1988]1995); Joel Kovel, *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anticommunism and the Making of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Berlet & Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*; Robert Alan Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California, 2003).
- ³¹ Goldberg, *Enemies Within*, p. x.
- ³² Berlet & Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, p. 10.
- ³³ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: an American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 35; Berlet & Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, pp. 6-7, p. 353, note 7.
- ³⁴ Goldberg, *Enemies Within*, p. xi; Berlet & Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, pp. 13-15.
- ³⁵ Goldberg, *Enemies Within*, p. xii.
- ³⁶ Davis, *Fear of Conspiracy*, pp. xv–xvi.
- ³⁷ Goldberg, *Enemies Within*, p. 188.
- ³⁸ Brenda Brasher, interviewed by author for “Zog Ate My Brains,” *New Internationalist Magazine* (London), Issue 372 (October 2004), full interview at http://www.publiceye.org/antisemitism/nw_brasher.html (accessed January 20, 2009).
- ³⁹ Berlet & Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, pp. 14-15. For a full discussion, see Berlet & Lyons “One Key to Litigating Against Government Prosecution of Dissidents: Understanding the Underlying Assumptions,” *Police Misconduct and Civil Rights Law Report* (West Group), in two parts, Vol. 5, No. 13, January–February 1998, and Vol. 5, No. 14, March–April 1998, online in revised form at <http://www.publiceye.org/liberty/Repression-and-ideology.html> (accessed March 15, 2009).
- ⁴⁰ See, for example, Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Lise Noël, *Intolerance, A General Survey* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994); Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *The Anatomy of Prejudices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Rhys H. Williams, “Movement Dynamics and Social Change: Transforming Fundamentalism Ideology and Organization,” pp. 785-833 in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.) *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995); Bob Altemeyer, *The Authoritarian Specter* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Ann Burlein, *Lift High the Cross: Where White Supremacy and the Christian Right Converge* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002);
- ⁴¹ Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.
- ⁴² Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (1977), pp. 1212-1241; David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, “Frame Alignment Process, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 51 (August 1986), pp. 464-481.
- ⁴³ David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest,” in Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 133-155.
- ⁴⁴ Frames are discussed in: William A. Gamson and Charlotte Ryan, “Thinking about Elephants: Toward a Dialogue with George Lakoff” *The Public Eye Magazine*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2006), pp. 1, 13-16, http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v19n2/gamson_elephants.html (accessed April 5, 2006).
- ⁴⁵ Hank Johnston and Pamela E. Oliver, “What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research,” *Mobilization: An International Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 2000), pp. 37-54.
- ⁴⁶ Patricia Ewick and Susan S. Silbey, “Subversive Stories and Hegemonic Tales: Toward a Sociology of Narrative,” *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1995), pp. 197-226; Francesca Polletta, “Contending Stories: Narrative in Social Movements,” *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 21 (1998), pp. 419-446; Joseph Davis (ed.), *Stories of Change: Narrative and Social Movements* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- ⁴⁷ Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Charles B. Strozier, *Apocalypse: On the*

- Psychology of Fundamentalism in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist: The History of an American Obsession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Damian Thompson, *The End of Time: Faith and Fear in the Shadow of the Millennium* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, Hanover, 1998); Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). I first heard apocalypticism described as a type of frame by sociologist of religion Brenda E. Brasher at a conference. Together, we later developed the idea in: Brasher and Berlet, "Imagining Satan: Modern Christian Right Print Culture as an Apocalyptic Master Frame," paper presented at the Conference on Religion and the Culture of Print in America, at the Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America, University of Wisconsin (Madison, September 10–11, 2004).
- ⁴⁸ Here I disagree with Gentile's statement that apocalyptic political religions are not necessarily "millenarian." I think they are millenarian, but not necessarily millennialist. See Gentile, "Fascism, Totalitarianism, and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation," in Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism, and Political Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 32–81, quote from p. 62.
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White Supremacist Shootings Create A Deadly Legacy

June 19, 2009

In the five months following the inauguration of Barack Obama there were nine murders by men and women who intersected with ideologies of White Supremacy, xenophobia, and antisemitism.

Across America there is a rising crescendo of diverse voices clamoring for a public discussion of the connection between demonizing rhetoric by high profile pundits and politicians and the rash of violent attacks by individuals enmeshed in bigotry and conspiracy theories. The attacks demonstrate why it is a mistake to ignore bigoted conspiracy theories. Law enforcement needs to enforce laws against criminal behavior. Vicious bigoted speech, however, is often protected by the First Amendment. We do not need new laws or to encourage government agencies to further erode our civil liberties. We need to stand up as moral people and speak out against the spread of bigoted conspiracy theories. That's not a police problem, that's our problem as people responsible for defending a free society.

During the election campaign in 2008 it was clear some people on the political Right were becoming agitated about the potential for a Black man backed by liberals to become the next President of the United States.

Shortly before the election, police broke up an alleged plot by racist skinheads in Tennessee to kill Black people and then assassinate candidate Obama.

On election night Ali Kamara, a teenage Muslim and Black immigrant from Liberia who lives on Staten Island, New York, was brutally assaulted by attackers who shouted "Obama." That same night a church serving a predominantly Black congregation in Springfield, Massachusetts, was burned to the ground in an arson attack later determined to be a racist hate crime. In Maine residents discovered Black figures hanging from nooses tied to trees. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey crosses were burned in the yards of Obama supporters.

The acts of bigotry and violence continued. In December a man in Maine was shot to death by his



Resident of the Gage Park neighborhood confronts a White Supremacist organizer in the southwest Chicago area known as Marquette Park in the early 1980s.

wife who said he had become increasingly agitated about the election of Obama and had collected bomb-making materials in their home. Police found a filled-out application for joining a neonazi group.

Just a day after Obama's inauguration in January, a young White man is alleged to have killed two people of color in the Cape Verdean community in Brockton, Massachusetts. Reports indicate he had been browsing White Supremacist and neonazi websites and had come to believe that White people were facing genocide at the hands of non-Whites, Hispanics and Jews. After police detained him, he told them he had also planned to kill as many Jews as he could find that night. The dead included Selma Goncalves, who had tried to stop the alleged rape of her sister by the gunman. The other death was a father of eight, Arlindo

Goncalves (not related), shot dead in the street simply because of skin color.

There were other incidents of violence and threats against Obama linked to White Supremacists in North Carolina and Florida. On April 4, 2009, a Pittsburgh man was charged with killing three police officers, Eric Kelly, Stephen Mayhle, and Paul Sciullo III. According to news reports, the gunman had expressed White Supremacist and antisemitic views, and worried that there was a conspiracy afoot for government agents to seize all guns.

Then, in the space of two weeks, there were three more deadly incidents.

May 30, Arizona. Police allege that a gang of racist vigilante “border patrol” activists staged an armed invasion of the home of a Mexican family, killing the father, Raul Flores, the nine-year-old daughter, Brisenia, and seriously wounding the mother. According to the charges brought against a trio linked to the Minute-man American Defense (MAD), the plan was to kill all the residents of the house, and then steal the narcotics and money the vigilantes expected to find there. The funds were to be used to support increased border vigilante actions. In a “Patriot Hearts Network” web radio interview a few weeks earlier, one of the trio had denounced the illegal crossing of the border by Mexi-

cans and warned, “We’re going to be walking into some times of revolution....”

May 31, Kansas. A man involved in the right-wing Sovereign Citizen movement and the militant wing of the anti-abortion movement walked up to Dr. George Tiller, standing at the entrance to his church, and shot him dead. Tiller, considered a hero by many in the reproductive justice movement, was a symbol of evil to many in the anti-abortion movement. The Sovereign Citizen movement is rooted in a White Supremacist interpretation of U.S. Constitutional law, and frequently overlaps with antisemitic conspiracy theories. Several right-wing pundits on TV and radio had repeatedly condemned Tiller by name.

June 10, Washington, DC. A gunman walked toward the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum firing a rifle, and killing a Black security guard, Stephen Tyrone Johns. The man charged in the armed assault has a long history of virulent writings outlining his White Supremacist and antisemitic views.

The victims are named in this update. The perpetrators are evidence of a larger pattern of racist scapegoating and conspiracist thinking that is toxic to democracy. Their names are not as important as the need for a public discussion of these deadly dynamics.

About the Author

Chip Berlet is senior analyst at Political Research Associates in the Boston area. For over 30 years he has written about civil liberties, social justice, right-wing groups, prejudice, systems of oppression, and scapegoating. Berlet is co-author of *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (Guilford, 2000) and editor of *Eyes Right! Challenging the Right Wing Backlash* (South End Press, 1995), both of which received a Gustavus Myers Center Award for outstanding scholarship on human rights and bigotry in North America. He has written chapters in several scholarly books, written and reviewed articles for peer review sociology journals, and prepared entries in encyclopedias on millennialism, fundamentalism, conspiracy theories, criminal justice, and religion and war. Berlet's byline has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Sun–Times*, *Des Moines Register*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Amnesty Now*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, *Tikkun*, *Greenpeace Magazine*, and *In These Times*.

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