

The demonisation of conspiracy theorists

By George Washington, ZeroHedge, 25 Feb 2015

Democracy and free market capitalism were founded on conspiracy theories.

The Magna Carta, the Constitution and Declaration of Independence and other founding Western documents were based on conspiracy theories. Greek democracy and free market capitalism were also based on conspiracy theories. But those were the bad old days ... Things have now changed.

The CIA Coined the Term Conspiracy Theorist In 1967

That all changed in the 1960s. Specifically, in April 1967, the CIA wrote a dispatch which coined the term “conspiracy theories” ... and recommended methods for discrediting such theories. The dispatch was marked “psych” – short for “psychological operations” or disinformation – and “CS” for the CIA’s “Clandestine Services” unit.

The dispatch was produced in responses to a Freedom of Information Act request by the New York Times in 1976.

Summarizing the tactics which the CIA dispatch recommended:

- Claim that it would be impossible for so many people would keep quiet about such a big conspiracy
- Have people friendly to the CIA attack the claims, and point back to “official” reports
- Claim that eyewitness testimony is unreliable
- Claim that this is all old news, as “no significant new evidence has emerged”
- Ignore conspiracy claims unless discussion about them is already too active
- Claim that it’s irresponsible to speculate
- Accuse theorists of being wedded to and infatuated with their theories
- Accuse theorists of being politically motivated
- Accuse theorists of having financial interests in promoting conspiracy theories

CIA’s psychological warfare operations

In other words, the CIA’s clandestine services unit created the arguments for attacking conspiracy theories as unreliable in the 1960s as part of its psychological warfare operations.

But Aren’t Conspiracy Theories – In Fact – Nuts?

Forget Western history and CIA dispatches ... aren’t conspiracy theorists nutty?

In fact, conspiracies are so common that judges are trained to look at conspiracy allegations as just another legal claim to be disproven or proven based on the specific evidence.

Proving a claim of conspiracy is no different from proving any other legal claim, and the mere label “conspiracy” is taken no less seriously by judges.

It’s not only Madoff. The heads of Enron were found guilty of conspiracy, as was the head of Adelphia. Numerous lower-level government officials have been found guilty of conspiracy. See this, this, this, this and this.

Time Magazine's financial columnist Justin Fox writes: *Some financial market conspiracies are real ...Most good investigative reporters are conspiracy theorists, by the way.*

And what about the NSA and the tech companies that have cooperated with them?

But Our Leaders Wouldn't Do That

While people might admit that corporate executives and low-level government officials might have engaged in conspiracies – they may be strongly opposed to considering that the wealthiest or most powerful might possibly have done so.

But powerful insiders have long admitted to conspiracies. For example, Obama's Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Cass Sunstein, wrote: *Of course some conspiracy theories, under our definition, have turned out to be true. The Watergate hotel room used by Democratic National Committee was, in fact, bugged by Republican officials, operating at the behest of the White House. In the 1950s, the Central Intelligence Agency did, in fact, administer LSD and related drugs under Project MKULTRA, in an effort to investigate the possibility of "mind control." Operation Northwoods, a rumored plan by the Department of Defense to simulate acts of terrorism and to blame them on Cuba, really was proposed by high-level officials*

But Someone Would Have Spilled the Beans

A common defense to people trying sidetrack investigations into potential conspiracies is to say that "someone would have spilled the beans" if there were really a conspiracy.

But famed whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg explains: *It is a commonplace that "you can't keep secrets in Washington" or "in a democracy, no matter how sensitive the secret, you're likely to read it the next day in the New York Times." These truisms are flatly false. They are in fact cover stories, ways of flattering and misleading journalists and their readers, part of the process of keeping secrets well. Of course eventually many secrets do get out that wouldn't in a fully totalitarian society. But the fact is that the overwhelming majority of secrets do not leak to the American public. This is true even when the information withheld is well known to an enemy and when it is clearly essential to the functioning of the congressional war power and to any democratic control of foreign policy. **The reality unknown to the public and to most members of Congress and the press is that secrets that would be of the greatest import to many of them can be kept from them reliably for decades by the executive branch, even though they are known to thousands of insiders.***

Examples of 'conspiracies' kept secret

History proves Ellsberg right. For example:

- One hundred and thirty thousand (130,000) people from the U.S., UK and Canada worked on the Manhattan Project. But it was kept secret for years
- A BBC documentary shows that: *There was "a planned coup in the USA in 1933 by a group of right-wing American businessmen The coup was aimed at toppling President Franklin D Roosevelt with the help of half-a-million war veterans. The plotters, who were alleged to involve some of the most famous families in America, (owners of Heinz, Birds Eye, Goodtea, Maxwell Hse & George Bush's Grandfather,*

Prescott) believed that their country should adopt the policies of Hitler and Mussolini to beat the great depression". Moreover, "the tycoons told General Butler the American people would accept the new government because they controlled all the newspapers." Have you ever heard of this conspiracy before? It was certainly a very large one. And if the conspirators controlled the newspapers then, how much worse is it today with media consolidation?

- 7 out of the 8 giant, money center banks went bankrupt in the 1980's during the "Latin American Crisis", and the government's response was to cover up their insolvency. That's a cover up lasting *several decades*
- Banks have been involved in systematic criminal behavior, and have manipulated every single market
- Governments have been covering up nuclear meltdowns for fifty years to protect the nuclear industry. Governments have colluded to cover up the severity of numerous other environmental accidents. For many years, Texas officials intentionally under-reported the amount of radiation in drinking water to avoid having to report violations
- The government's spying on Americans began before 9/11 (confirmed here and here. And see this.) But the public didn't learn about it until many years later. Indeed, the the New York Times delayed the story so that it would not affect the outcome of the 2004 presidential election
- The decision to launch the Iraq war was made before 9/11. Indeed, former CIA director George Tenet said that the White House wanted to invade Iraq long before 9/11, and inserted "crap" in its justifications for invading Iraq. Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill – who sat on the National Security Council – also says that Bush planned the Iraq war before 9/11. And top British officials say that the U.S. discussed Iraq regime change one month after Bush took office. Dick Cheney apparently even made Iraqi's oil fields a national security priority before 9/11. And it has now been shown that a handful of people were responsible for willfully ignoring the evidence that Iraq lacked weapons of mass destruction. These facts have only been publicly disclosed recently. Indeed, Tom Brokaw said, "All wars are based on propaganda." A concerted effort to produce propaganda is a conspiracy.

Moreover, high-level government officials and insiders have *admitted* to dramatic conspiracies after the fact, including:

- Supporting terrorists to promote geopolitical goals
- Supporting false flag terror

The admissions did not occur until *many decades* after the events.

These examples show that it is possible to keep conspiracies secret for a long time, without anyone "spilling the beans".

In addition, to anyone who knows how covert military operations work, it is obvious that segmentation on a "need-to-know basis", along with deference to command hierarchy, means that a couple of top dogs can call the shots and most people helping *won't even know* the big picture at the time they are participating.

Moreover, those who think that co-conspirators will brag about their deeds forget that people in the military or intelligence or who have huge sums of money on the line can be very

disciplined. They are not likely to go to the bar and spill the beans like a down-on-their-luck, second-rate alcoholic robber might do.

Finally, people who carry out covert operations may do so for ideological reasons — believing that the “ends justify the means”. Never underestimate the conviction of an ideologue.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that some conspiracy claims are nutty and some are true. Each has to be judged on its own facts.

Humans have a tendency to try to explain random events through seeing patterns ... that’s how our brains are wired. Therefore, we have to test our theories of connection and causality against the cold, hard facts.

On the other hand, the old saying by Lord Acton is true: *Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely.* Those who operate without checks and balances – and without the disinfectant sunlight of public scrutiny and accountability – tend to act in their own best interests ... and the little guy gets hurt.

The early Greeks knew it, as did those who forced the king to sign the Magna Carta, the Founding Fathers and the father of modern economics. We should remember this important tradition of Western civilization.

Postscript: The ridicule of *all* conspiracy theories is really just an *attempt to diffuse criticism of the powerful.* The wealthy are not worse than other people ... but they are *not necessarily better* either. Powerful leaders may not be bad people ... or they *could be sociopaths.*

We must judge each by his or her actions, and not by preconceived stereotypes that they are all saints acting in our best interest or all scheming criminals.