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Old Nazi and New Conspiracy Fantasies

Conspiracy theories or better yet, conspiracy fantasies – as these are in fact, *not theories* – have been around for a long time. Worse, the advent of the Internet including the so-called social media, which in reality are corporate media run by huge online business corporations, has significantly cranked up the spreading of conspiracy fantasies. Today, everyone can “publish” and with this, more and more conspiracy fantasies appear and they gather speed. The Internet provides a rather fruitful ground for conspiracy fantasies.

Whether Internet has fueled conspiracy fantasies or not, virtually all conspiracy fantasies have a few common parameters that practically all of them share. Perhaps one of the most important signifier of conspiracy fantasies is the fact that those who create and believe in conspiracy fantasies are convinced that nothing happens by chance – not in society, not in politics, not in the economy, and not in history.

Secondly, conspiracy fantasies connect things that are not connected. The fact that something can happen “out of the blue” is impossible to comprehend for the advocates of conspiracy fantasies, and even more so for those who invent, sell, and broadcast conspiracy fantasies.

Thirdly, conspiracy fantasies thrive on the hallucination that *nothing is quite what it seems* – whether at first sight, or even after a second look. Fourthly, creator of conspiracy fantasies are also convinced that everything that occurs is the result of some secret machinations. And, finally, behind many things lurk a destructive, and above all, secret groups of plotters and schemers.

These conspirators, secret organizations, and institutions (preferably government institutions) are manipulating everything from behind the scenes. Secretly, they pull the

strings behind almost everything. On the whole, UNESCO and the European Union suggest that virtually all conspiracy fantasies have six commonalities.

Virtually all of these are found on conspiracy fantasies placed on the Internet. At the dawn of the Internet, Mike Godwin has proposed something that became Godwin's Law. This law says, that the longer an Internet discussion goes on, the more likely it is to mention Hitler, at which point it usually, though not always, comes to an end.

Until today, Adolf Hitler remains the most immoral figure in human culture. Unchallenged, Hitler remains a fixed reference point by which the world defines evil. In discussions, it marks the situation where almost all arguments end – online or otherwise. Within theories about conspiracy fantasies, there are different types of conspiracy fantasies:

Systemic conspiracy fantasies:

In systemic conspiracy fantasies, a single conspiratorial entity – a group, a single conspirator, an institution, and an organization, etc. – carries out a wide variety of activities with the aim of taking control of a large number of people, a society, a nation, a country, a region, and, potentially, even the entire world. Systemic conspiracy fantasies are often devised over a considerable time period.

They can be spread over a very wide geographical area – even the entire globe. Such systemic conspiracy fantasies are circulated and, for the lack of a better word “immortalized” by near universal organizations like the Illuminati, the Freemasons, a religious (e.g. Islamist), or even a racially defined group such as the Jews and the infamous hallucination of a world Jewish plot. These conspiracy fantasies exist independent from a specific event.

Event conspiracy fantasies:

The second group of conspiracy fantasies are event conspiracy fantasies. In event conspiracy fantasies, a secretly organized group is behind a single event such as, for example, the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy, the murder of Princess Diana, Hitler's escape to Argentina, the faked moon landing, the Coronavirus pandemic, etc. Conspiracy fantasies try to convince people that in a relatively short period of time – in some cases, plotted over just a few weeks or months or even a couple of years – those behind the event have masterminded a specific event.

In both types of conspiracy fantasies – systemic and event – conspiracy fantasists imagine there is a hidden hand behind historical figure (Hitler, JFK, Diana, etc.) and a current event (the Coronavirus pandemic, 5G). Common to both conspiracy fantasies is the

hallucination that those things that are known to people have to be rejected. The things we know are framed as the so-called “official” version of an event. In other words, the generally accepted version of a process, an event, and series of events is believed to be false – always.

This sets up the very important “friend-vs.-foe” thinking. All those who do not share the conspiracy fantasy are seen as the enemy. They are corrupted by official media, the state, science, etc. In turn, much of this renders the conspiracy fantasists almost unassailable. Enemy thinking provides an assurance to conspiracy theorists and those who share such conspiracy fantasies – and they alone! – are privy to the real truth. Almost automatically, it is assumed that all outsiders are liars. They are manipulated by an elite.

Yet, a conspiracy fantasy isn’t the same as ‘fake news’, the simple distortion and manipulation of the truth, and the naïve positing of alternative facts. Conspiracy fantasies reach way beyond all that.

A genuine conspiracy fantasy must posit a group of people plotting in secret to undertake an illicit action. The near perfect example of this are the anti-Semitic and infamous Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The protocols are often seen as the most important text of anti-Semitism.

They helped create a xenophobic and racist atmosphere leading to the genocide of the European Jews. Despite what we know about the Holocaust and the fact that the protocols are a fake, they remain the best-known and – to the present day – the most effective conspiracy theory with an immense influence – ranging from Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler to today.

Of course, the protocols are presented as a revelation of truths that has been hidden from the vast majority of people, including scientists, scholars, governments, and politicians. To be a part of a small group of people who knows “the truth” boosts the self-esteem of many believers of conspiracy fantasies. This makes them sharing conspiracy fantasies with many others highly likely. And, this even more so once they have become aware of “the secrets” behind how the world works. This alone explains why conspiracy fantasies are distributed to millions.

Most, if not all, conspiracy fantasy believers have been convinced that they have grasped what lies beyond the much-hated “official” knowledge. They also think they know that millions have been deceived. Now they possess some kind of a secret knowledge which millions do not have. It aids the feeling of having access to an exclusive club – the exclusive club of those who know. This is rather simple but it is also very effective.

The same goes for the protocols. Those who read them are part of an exclusive minority even though we know that the protocols are a fake. The protocols were actually put together in 1902 somewhere in southern Russia – perhaps the Ukraine. The very same Russian anti-Semitism also found violent expression with the counter-revolutionary Black Hundreds death squads roaming the country in the wake of the failed 1905 Revolution while murdering Jews.

Not unconnected to anti-Semitic conspiracy fantasies outlined in the protocols, antisemitic violence re-emerged after the 1917 Revolution when White counter-revolutionaries fought against the Bolsheviks. White officers like Pyotr Nikolayevich Shabelsky-Borkand and Fyodor Viktorovich Vinberg were fanatical anti-Semites. When fleeing the Red Army, they had copies of the protocols in their luggage bringing them to Germany.

The anti-Semitic master conspiracy of the protocols proofed good business in Germany. The protocols were reprinted no less than five times before the end of 1920 selling a whopping 120,000 copies within just a few months. By 1933, the protocols had gone through thirty-three editions.

Unsurprisingly, anti-Semitism became a central part of Germany's far-right Nazi ideology. All of this had an immediate, very real, and direct impact on Nazi ideology. Hitler declared – to the roaring ovation of Nazi officials gathered in the Reichstag, if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevizing of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!

Like many before Adolf Hitler – including super-anti-Semite, Richard Wagner – Hitler too, claimed that the Jews were working in secret when conjuring up the hallucination of a hidden Jewish plot set to take over the world. To make such conspiracy fantasies work, a group of secret conspirators has to be present as a tightly knit group, e.g. the wealthy Jewish banker, the pharmaceutical global elite headed by Bill Gates, etc.

Secondly, such a secret operation has to be presented as being jealously guarded by evil plotters. Yet, Hitler had uncovered the Jewish world plot.

Of course, what helps is presenting such allegations in rather vague terms. In this rests much of the power of those who accuse others of secret plotting. All the while their master document – the Protocols – were a rather open text. It was sold by the truckloads.

Common to many conspiracy fantasies – in particular, Hitler's Nazi conspiracy fantasies – is the fact that they were and are designed – at times consciously and at times rather unconsciously – to create **fear**. The Politics of Fear remains one of the key bread and

butter issues of standard conspiracy fantasies – the fear of Jews, the fear of vaccination, etc.

Fear can be linked to suspicion. Creating suspicion often works through a rather unspecified suggestion of some sort of unseen and unknown evil forces working behind the scenes. Not to worry! The Führer has uncovered the hidden hand. Of course, conspiracy fantasists – just as Hitler – will see a secret plot in nearly anything.

Long before Hitler, German anti-Semitism expressed this in Heinrich von Treitschke's hallucination of *Die Juden sind unser Unglück* – The Jews are our misfortune! Wagner saw the Jew in music, Heidegger the *Verjudung* or Jewification of universities, etc.

What renders such conspiracy fantasies virtually unassailable is the fact that they are essentially self-sealing. Conspiracy fantasies provide a closed-up ideology with those inside and those outside. This means that any criticism leveled against a conspiracy fantasy always comes from an outsider. Criticism and facts are framed as being set against those on the inside.

This works even when a particular conspiracy fantasy has been exposed as a fantasy, that it is based on a plagiarized document, that it has already falsified ideas, etc. Criticism is nearly always met with a near universal response: those who criticize a conspiracy theory are outsiders who have been manipulated.

Under the Coronavirus pandemic, for example, those who are not part of the anti-vaxxer conspiracy targeting vaccinations and governments are accused of being part of the establishment. Then as today, conspiracy fantasies provide a self-sealing space in which critical thinking is slaughtered on the altar of one of conspiracy fantasy's main ingredient: them-vs.-us.

For Hitler – as for today's anti-vaxxers conspiracies – there was (and continues to be) a rather widespread refusal to recognize reality. Today, this refusal has become Donald Trump and Kellyanne Conway's alternative facts. The staunch avoidance of the truth and facts aids the seeking of psychological comfort inside the sealed-off system of the conspiracy fantasies.

This has proven to be one of the most significant factors. It has been handed down from generation to generation of conspiracy fantasists. Today, we know that this phenomena is called cognitive dissonance. Facts that are inconstant with the conspiracy fantasy are excluded in favor of the emotional safe haven of an ideology. Hitler's hallucination of a Jewish World Plot was utter nonsense. Anti-vaxxers' fear of vaccination has been disproven.

As with so many conspiracy fantasies – from Hitler's fixation of a non-existing Jewish World Plot to anti-vaxxers's phantasm of the non-existing danger of vaccination – the truth does not matter much. Conspiracy fantasies seemingly follow the old saying, *never let the facts get into the way of a good story* and indeed, many conspiracy fantasies sell a semi-plausible, if not convincing, story.

Even if almost all of these conspiracy fantasies are demonstrably untrue, conspiracy fantasies like the Jews are behind everything, vaccination will kill you, etc., express an essential element of constructing conspiracy theories. In the end, conspiracy fantasies aren't susceptible to empirical verification at all. In other words, ideologically-driven propagandists do indulge in unsubstantiated and unproven fantasies.

Largely, many of these unproven fantasies seek to explain two things. Quite often, conspiracy theories tend to cluster around (a) violent events – for example, the assassination of JFK, the Space Shuttle explosion in 1986, and perhaps the even more disturbing conspiracy fantasies about the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012; (b) unexpected political events like the Coronavirus pandemic.

For many conspiracy fantasists, the reality that these could be the product of sheer chance, bad luck, an accident, and the outcome of a deranged mind of a single unstable individual, seems too simple to be possible, if not plausible. It follows one of conspiracy fantasies' core delusion: nothing happens by chance.

Often this occurs not unconnected to two more elements of conspiracy fantasies. Many conspiracy fantasies are the outcome of a paranoid imagination. Secondly, there is an assumption of benefit. In the case of the Reichstag fire a month after Hitler was moved into power, for example, the conspiracy fantasist's belief is that since it benefitted the Nazis, the Nazis must have started the fire themselves.

Even more interesting, in The Hitler Conspiracies, the eminent Nazi-expert Richard Evans argues that the Reichstag fire helped the Nazis. He writes about the immediate aftermath of the fire,

The next morning, the Cabinet, still with its majority of non-Nazi conservatives ... draw up an emergency decree that abrogated civil liberties across Germany. It was of major assistance to the Nazis...it was the first of the two fundamental documents on which the dictatorship of the Third Reich rested.

The Enabling Act, passed by the Reichstag under massive Nazi intimidation and in the absence of the Communist deputies on 23 March 1933 ... by the summer of 1933 all

opposition had been crushed. Nearly 200,000 Communists, Social Democrats and other opponents of the Nazis had passed through the brutal regime of the concentration camps. In other words, German conservatives not only made Hitler as Reich-Chancellor (January 1933), German conservatives also enabled Hitler to install a Nazi dictatorship (February-March 1933). To obscure their role in German Nazism, German conservatives like to propagate the myth of Hitler's Machtergreifung – often translated as “seizure of power”. Yet, in reality, it was no seizure at all. Hitler did not seize power. Instead, Hitler was put in power by German conservatives who, at first at least, seem to have also benefitted from “**their**” installation of a Nazi dictatorship.

The “who benefits” argument dates back to Cicero's cui bono: who stands to gain? This sort of thinking – particularly when reality, facts, and investigations do not support a conspiracy theory – is almost always a feature of most, if not all conspiracy theories. Today, this means the Big Pharma stands to gain from the Coronavirus pandemic, so they must be behind the Coronavirus pandemic – utter nonsense.

Finally, conspiracy fantasies frequently cite “some”, i.e. semi-supportive but genuine sources. Once acknowledged, these real sources are accorded some illusive weight – irrelevant and non-relevant. After that, some are discarded while others are reframed so that they can be used in the construction of a conspiracy fantasy.

In other cases of conspiracy fantasy construction, they join the dots between authentic pieces to create a semi-plausible picture that isn't in fact, the least plausible. To back all of this up, conspiracy fantasists tend to reference each other thus creating the false impression that plenty of literature and sources support the traumatic narrative of their conspiracy fantasy.

Conspiracy fantasists also like to do this because they regard serious evidence as official (i.e. bad, corrupted, manipulated, etc.). This enables the creators of conspiracy fantasies – so they hope – to ignore the work an “official” investigation, evidence-based reports, etc. have done on the topic at hand.

Much of this is packaged in an emotional language. This is done to try to arouse interest in their conspiracy fantasies often involving famous people – Hitler, JFK, Princess Diana, etc. and famous events like the Coronavirus pandemic. After all, what counts is a conspiracy fantasy's entertainment value and when furthering the cause of right-wing extremism, even better.

More often than not, conspiracy fantasies are cloaked in an emotional language while selling the idea that they – the conspiracy fantasists – alone, know the truth, they alone

have penetrated the veil of official knowledge. While it may make for good entertainment, not one single concrete finding is presented in almost all conspiracy fantasies.

In short, conspiracy fantasies live from constantly over-interpreting minor facts and from producing unwarranted conclusions. What is created are pure speculations presented as facts – alternative facts that is.

In its milder variant, conspiracy fantasies tend to pollute our common body of knowledge. Conspiracy fantasists tend to exploit and patronize the poorly educated further intensifying their ignorance. Secondly, conspiracy fantasists encourage people to disbelieve solid reports done by investigative journalists, government investigations, works of sound scholarship while dragging down the reputations of legitimate sources and facts.

In its worse variants, conspiracy fantasies can kill people by, for example, drinking detergents or using Ivermectin to cure Covid-19, by not getting vaccinated, etc. In its even worse case, conspiracy fantasies do kill people. Conspiracy fantasies have assisted attacks on minorities worldwide.

Still worse, right-wing anti-Semitic conspiracy fantasies played a major role in Hitler's false belief that *The Jews are our misfortune!* And, must therefore be eradicated.

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