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THE CONSPIRACY FALLACY

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Winners often attribute their success to personal merit and achievement. Conspiracy theorists blame others for their failures. Without these others, conspiracists believe their preferred outcome would be inevitable. Nonsense.

Conspiracies suffer from a logical flaw. The idea that all outcomes are defined by a logical plan and set of inevitable consequences. They avoid the accidental occurrence or even the laziness of the agents. Conspiracists shun responsibility.

Success suffers under the strain of laziness. Rather than conspiracies, the inability of individuals to achieve their goals, however small, is the defining feature of politics today. Ministers no longer have the time to read, analyse, and personally evaluate documents. They delegate such minutiae to assistants often too young or inexperienced to pass judgement on crucial problems.

Conspiracists also rely on loud minorities rather than silent majorities.



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Majorities often reflect ideas which can effectively be translated into action (if inaction does not dominate). That is a form of success. Minorities are often fighting for battles which are difficult to promote or win. It is among minorities that conspiracies may become most vocal. Conspiracists will blame others for their failures reducing their own inactivity as a form of passiveness and one of persecution.

Most people are unaware of the existence of other opinions. They are not actively persecuting someone different: they are pursuing their daily tasks. Neglect, laziness, and delegation provide the raw material for conspiracists who will build a castle of cards ex nihilo. All this is due to a quick and superficial review of details. Ministers with effective power have no time to check over the endless documents they receive. However, their ability and place in history is defined by their capacity to select, prioritize, and put into action.

Conspiracy theories are useful for two reasons. They are good mental exercises based on basic facts elaborated by distorted and sometimes dystopian logic. A sort of political crossword puzzle. They also focus the attention on a problem or a subject which instinctively concerns a wide public. While the logical elaboration of a conspiracy may be absurd, the starting point is based on a matter which concerns the public. The conspiracy theorist needs a familiar hook to capture the attention of the unsuspecting listener before meandering into logical absurdities.

The other side of the coin is that conspiracy theories are quickly dismissed by an intellectual elite which functions as a closed mutual admiration society. Those who believe conspiracies feel excluded from such clubs. While conspiracy theorists develop absurd consequences, their starting points reflect widespread concerns. The exclusive clubs dismiss these well-known issues.

What is the solution? To read the front pages of the most widely distributed newspapers in the original language. There lie the facts which everyone is familiar with, and which are starting points of conspiracy theories. Their logical, and yet conspiratorial, elaboration reveal the method by which ideas are developed. These two elements may reveal more about a society than sophisticated doctorates awarded by closed mutual admiration societies.