



Freemasonry to QAnon

57 Wikipedia Articles on Conspiracy Theories

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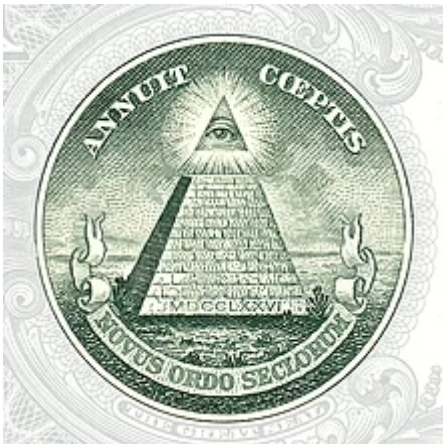
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List of conspiracy theories

This is a **list of conspiracy theories** that are notable. Many conspiracy theories relate to clandestine government plans and elaborate murder plots. Conspiracy theories usually deny consensus or cannot be proven using the historical or scientific method and are not to be confused with research concerning verified conspiracies such as Germany's pretense for invading Poland in World War II.

In principle, conspiracy theories are not always false by default and their validity depends on evidence just as in any theory. However, they are often discredited *a priori* due to the cumbersome and improbable nature of many of them.

Psychologists attribute finding a conspiracy where there is none to a form of cognitive bias called illusory pattern perception.^{[3][4]}



The Eye of Providence, or the all-seeing eye of God, seen here on the US\$1 bill, has been taken by some to be evidence of a conspiracy involving the founders of the United States and the Illuminati.^{[1]:58[2]:47–49}

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Aviation

Numerous conspiracy theories pertain to air travel and aircraft. Incidents such as the 1955 bombing of the Kashmir Princess, the 1985 Arrow Air Flight 1285 crash, the 1986 Mozambican Tupolev Tu-134 crash, the 1987 Helderberg Disaster, the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 and the 1994 Mull of Kintyre helicopter crash as well as various aircraft technologies and alleged sightings, have all spawned theories of foul play which deviate from official verdicts.^[5]

Black helicopters

This conspiracy theory emerged in the US in the 1960s. The John Birch Society originally promoted^[6] it, asserting that a United Nations force would soon arrive in black helicopters to bring the US under UN control. The theory re-emerged in the 1990s during the presidency of Bill Clinton, and has been promoted by talk show host Glenn Beck.^{[7][8]} A similar theory concerning so-called "phantom helicopters" appeared in the UK in the 1970s.^[9]

Chemtrails

Also known as SLAP (Secret Large-scale Atmospheric Program), this theory alleges that water condensation trails ("contrails") from aircraft consist of chemical or biological agents, or contain a supposedly toxic mix of aluminum, strontium and barium,^[10] under secret government policies. An estimated 17% of people globally believe the theory to be true or partly true. In 2016, the Carnegie Institution for Science published the first-ever peer-reviewed study of the chemtrail theory; 76 out of 77 participating atmospheric chemists and geochemists stated that they had seen no evidence to support the chemtrail theory, or stated that chemtrail theorists rely on poor sampling.^{[11][12]}



A high-flying jet's engines leaving a condensation trail (contrail)

Korean Air Lines Flight 007

The destruction of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 by Soviet jets in 1983 has long drawn the interest of conspiracy theorists. The theories range from allegations of a planned espionage mission, to a US government cover-up, to the consumption of the passengers' remains by giant crabs.^[13]

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370

The disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in southeast Asia in March 2014 has prompted many theories. One theory suggests that this plane was hidden away and reintroduced as Flight MH17 later the same year in order to be shot down over Ukraine for political purposes. Prolific American conspiracy theorist James H. Fetzer has placed responsibility for the disappearance with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.^[14] Historian Norman Davies has promoted the conspiracy theory that hackers remotely took over a Boeing Honeywell Uninterruptible Autopilot, supposedly installed on board, remotely piloting the aircraft to Antarctica.^{[15][16]}

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17

Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down over Ukraine in July 2014. This event has spawned numerous alternative theories. These variously include allegations that it was secretly Flight MH370, that the plane was actually shot down by the Ukrainian Air Force to frame Russia, that it was part of a conspiracy to conceal the "truth" about HIV (seven disease specialists were on board), or that the Illuminati or Israel was responsible.^{[14][17]}

Business and industry

Deepwater Horizon

Multiple conspiracy theories pertain to a fatal oil-rig industrial accident in 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico, alleging sabotage by those seeking to promote environmentalism, or a strike by North Korean or Russian submarines. Elements of such theories have been suggested or promoted by US radio host Rush Limbaugh.^{[18][19]}



New Coke was manufactured between 1985 and 2002.

New Coke

A theory claims that The Coca-Cola Company intentionally changed to an inferior formula with New Coke, with the intent either of driving up demand for the original product or permitting the reintroduction of the original with a new formula using cheaper ingredients.^[20] Coca-Cola president Donald Keough rebutted this charge: "The truth is, we're not that dumb, and we're not that smart."^[21]

Deaths and disappearances

Conspiracy theories frequently emerge following the deaths of prominent leaders and public figures. In ancient times, widespread conspiracy theories were circulated pertaining to the death of the Roman emperor Nero, who committed suicide in 68 AD.^[22] Some of these theories claimed that Nero had actually faked his death and was secretly still alive, but in hiding, plotting to return and reestablish his reign.^[22] In most of these stories, he was said to have fled to the East, where he was still loved and admired.^[22] Other theories held that Nero really was dead, but that he would return from the dead to retake his throne.^[22] Many early Christians believed in these conspiracy theories and feared Nero's return because Nero had viciously persecuted them.^[22] The Book of Revelation alludes to the conspiracy theories surrounding Nero's alleged return in its description of the slaughtered head returned to life.^[22]

In modern times, multiple conspiracy theories concerning the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 have emerged.^[23] Vincent Bugliosi estimated that over 1,000 books had been written about the Kennedy assassination,^[24] at least ninety percent of which are works supporting the view that there was a conspiracy.^[24] As a result of this, the Kennedy assassination has been described as "the mother of all conspiracies".^{[25][26]} The countless individuals and organizations that have been accused of involvement in the Kennedy assassination include the CIA, the Mafia, sitting Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro, the KGB, or even some combination thereof.^{[27][24]} It is also frequently asserted that the United States federal government intentionally covered up crucial information in the aftermath of the assassination to prevent the conspiracy from being discovered.^[27]



John F. Kennedy in the presidential limousine shortly before his assassination

The deaths of prominent figures of all types attract conspiracy theorists, including, for example, the deaths of Abraham Lincoln,^[28] Martin Luther King, Jr.,^[29] Eric V of Denmark, Dmitry Ivanovich, Sheikh Rahman, Yitzhak Rabin,^[30] Zachary Taylor,^[31] George S. Patton,^{[32][33]} Diana, Princess of Wales,^[34] Dag Hammarskjöld,^[35] Kurt Cobain, Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe, Tupac Shakur,^[36] Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,^[37] John Lennon, Jimi Hendrix, Notorious B.I.G.,^[38] Pope John Paul 1, Jill Dando, Olaf Palme,^[39] member of Linkin Park Chester Bennington,^[40] Paul Walker, biological warfare authority David Kelly,^[41] and Bollywood star Sushant Singh Rajput.^[42]

Also in existence are claims that deaths were covered up. Such theories include the "Paul is dead" claim alleging that Paul McCartney died in a car accident in 1966 and was replaced by a look-alike Scottish orphan named William Shears Cambell who also went by Billy Shears, and that The Beatles left clues in their songs, most noticeably "Revolution 9", "Strawberry Fields Forever", "Glass Onion", and "I Am the Walrus", as well on the covers of *Abbey Road*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and *Magical Mystery Tour*.^{[43][44]} Another is the conspiracy theory, widely circulated in Nigeria, which alleges that Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari died in 2017 and was replaced by a look-alike Sudanese impostor.^{[45][46]} Many fans of punk-pop star Avril Lavigne claim that she died at the height of her fame and was replaced by a look-alike named Melissa.^[47] The Melania Trump replacement theory proposes the same of the former US First Lady.^{[48][49]}

Inverted theories concerning deaths are also known, prominent among which are claims that Elvis Presley's death was faked^[50] and that Adolf Hitler survived the Second World War and fled to the Americas, to Antarctica, or to the Moon.^[51] Theories that Hitler had survived are known to have been deliberately promoted by the government of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin as part of a disinformation campaign.^{[52][53][54]}

The disappearance, and often presumed death, of an individual may also become a cause for conspiracy theorists. Theories of a cover-up surrounding the 1974 disappearance of Lord Lucan following the murder of his family's nanny include, for example, allegations of a suicide plot whereby his body was fed to tigers at Howletts Zoo.^{[55][56][57]} Numerous conspiracy theories have also attended the 2007 disappearance of English girl Madeleine McCann.^[58]

The murder of Democratic National Committee employee Seth Rich spawned several right-wing conspiracy theories, including the claim that Rich had been involved with the leaked DNC emails in 2016, which runs contrary to US intelligence's conclusion that the leaked DNC emails were part of Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections.^{[59][60][61]} Law enforcement^{[59][60]} as well as fact-

checking websites like [PolitiFact.com](#),^{[60][62]} [Snopes.com](#),^[63] and [FactCheck.org](#) stated that these theories were false and unfounded.^[59] [The New York Times](#),^[64] [Los Angeles Times](#),^[65] and [The Washington Post](#) called the fabrications fake news and falsehoods.^[66]

Economics and society

New World Order

The **New World Order theory** states that a group of international elites controls governments, industry, and media organizations, with the goal of establishing global hegemony. They are alleged to be implicated in most of the major wars of the last two centuries, to carry out secretly staged events, and to deliberately manipulate economies. Organizations alleged to be part of the plot include the [Federal Reserve System](#), the [Council on Foreign Relations](#), [Trilateral Commission](#), the [Bilderberg Group](#), the [European Union](#), the [United Nations](#), the [World Bank](#), the [International Monetary Fund](#), [Bohemian Grove](#),^[67] [Le Cercle](#)^[68] and Yale University society [Skull and Bones](#).



[Adam Weishaupt](#),
founder of the
[Bavarian Illuminati](#)

The Discordian hoax has resulted in one of the world's foremost conspiracy theories, which claims that the "Illuminati" are secretly promoting the posited New World Order. Theorists believe that a wide range of musicians, including [Beyoncé](#) and [Whitney Houston](#), have been associated with the "group".^[69] Prominent theorists include [Mark Dice](#) and [David Icke](#).^[70]

Denver Airport

Some theorists believe that [Denver International Airport](#) stands above an underground city which serves as a headquarters of the New World Order. Theorists cite the airport's unusually large size, its distance from Denver city center, [Masonic](#) and alleged Satanic symbols, as well as a set of murals which include depictions of war and death.^[71]

George Soros

Hungarian-American investor [George Soros](#) has been the subject of conspiracy theories since the 1990s. Soros has used his wealth to promote many political, social, educational and scientific causes, disbursing grants totaling an estimated \$11 billion up to 2016. However, theories tend to assert that Soros is in control of a large portion of the world's wealth and governments, and that he secretly funds a large range of persons and organizations for nefarious purposes, such as [Antifa](#), which the conspiracy theorists claim is a single far-left militant group. Such ideas have been promoted by [Viktor Orban](#), [Donald Trump](#),^[72] [Rudy Giuliani](#),^[73] [Joseph diGenova](#),^[74] [Bill O'Reilly](#), [Roy Moore](#), [Alex Jones](#), [Paul Gosar](#), and [Ben Garrison](#). Soros conspiracy theories are sometimes linked to [antisemitic conspiracy theories](#).^[75]

Freemasonry

Conspiracy theories concerning the [Freemasons](#) have proliferated since the 18th century. Theorists have alleged that [Freemasons](#) control large parts of the economies or judiciaries of a number of countries, and have alleged Masonic involvement in events surrounding the sinking of the [Titanic](#) and the crimes of

Jack the Ripper.^{[76][77]} Notable among theorists has been American inventor Samuel Morse, who in 1835 published a book of his own conspiracy theories.^[78] Freemason conspiracy theories have also been linked to certain antisemitic conspiracy theories.

Üst akıl

Conspiracy theories in Turkey started to dominate public discourse during the late reign of the Justice and Development Party and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.^[79] In 2014, Erdoğan coined the term *üst akıl* ("mastermind") to denote the alleged command and control institution, somewhat ambiguously placed with the government of the United States, in a comprehensive conspiracy to weaken or even dismember Turkey, by orchestrating every political actor and action perceived hostile by Turkey.^{[80][81][79]} Erdoğan as well as the Daily Sabah newspaper have on multiple occasions alleged that very different non-state actors—like the Salafi jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the libertarian socialist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and supporters of Fethullah Gülen—were attacking Turkey at the same time in a well-coordinated campaign.^[82]

One instance of promoting the "mastermind" conspiracy theory occurred in February 2017, when then-Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek claimed that earthquakes in the western province of Çanakkale could have been organized by dark external powers aiming to destroy Turkey's economy with an "artificial earthquake" near Istanbul.^[83] In another example, in November 2017, the Islamist newspaper Yeni Akit claimed that the fashion trend of "ripped denim" jeans was in fact a means of communication, via specific forms of rips and holes, between agents of foreign states and their collaborators in Turkey.^[84]

Espionage

Israel animal spying

Conspiracy theories exist alleging that Israel uses animals to conduct espionage or to attack people. These are often associated with conspiracy theories about Zionism. Matters of interest to theorists include a series of shark attacks in Egypt in 2010, Hezbollah's accusations of the use of "spying" eagles,^[85] and the 2011 capture of a griffon vulture carrying an Israeli-labeled satellite tracking device.^[86]

Harold Wilson

Numerous persons, including former MI5 officer Peter Wright and Soviet defector Anatoliy Golitsyn, have alleged that former British Prime Minister Harold Wilson was secretly a KGB spy. Historian Christopher Andrew has lamented that a number of people have been "seduced by Golitsyn's fantasies".^{[87][88][89]}

Malala Yousafzai

Conspiracy theories concerning Malala Yousafzai are widespread in Pakistan, elements of which originate from a 2013 satirical piece in Dawn. These theories variously allege that she is a Western spy, or that her attempted murder by the Taliban in 2012 was a secret operation to further discredit the Taliban, and was organized by her father and the CIA and carried out by actor Robert de Niro disguised as an Uzbek homeopath.^{[90][91][92][93]}

Ethnicity, race and religion

Antisemitism

Since at least the Middle Ages, antisemitism has featured elements of conspiracy theory. In medieval Europe it was widely believed that Jews poisoned wells, had been responsible for the death of Jesus, and ritually consumed the blood of Christians. The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of notions that Jews and/or Freemasons were plotting to establish control over the world, a similar conspiracy theory relates to cultural Marxism. Forged evidence has been presented to spread the notion that Jews were responsible for the propagation of Communism, or the hoax *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903), which outlines a supposed plot by Jews to control the world.^[94] Such antisemitic conspiracy theories became central to the worldview of Adolf Hitler. Antisemitic theories persist today in notions concerning banking,^[95] Hollywood, the news media and a purported Zionist Occupation Government.^{[96][97][98]} These theories have a tyrannical worldview in common.^[99]



First edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

Holocaust denial is also considered an antisemitic conspiracy theory because of its position that the Holocaust is a hoax designed to advance the interests of Jews and justify the creation of the State of Israel.^{[100][101]} Holocaust deniers include former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad,^[102] the convicted chemist Germar Rudolf^[103] and the discredited author David Irving.^[104]

Anti-Armenianism

Conspiracy theories that allege that the Armenians wield secret political power are prevalent in Azerbaijan.^[105] and have been promoted by the government,^[106] including President Ilham Aliyev.^{[107][108][109]}

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has claimed that the Russian media is run by Armenians.^[110] American writer and disbarred lawyer Samuel Weems^[111] has claimed that the Armenian genocide was a hoax designed to defraud Christian nations of billions of dollars, and that the Armenian Church instigates terrorist attacks.^[112] Filmmaker Davud Imanov has accused the Armenians of plotting against Azerbaijan and has claimed that the Karabakh movement was a plot by the CIA to destroy the Soviet Union.^[113]

Anti-Bahá'ism

Iran's Bahá'í Faith minority has been the target of conspiracy theories alleging involvement with hostile powers. Iranian government officials and others have claimed that Bahá'ís have been agents variously of Russian imperialism, British colonialism, American expansionism and Zionism.^[114] An apocryphal and historically-inaccurate book published in Iran, entitled *The Memoirs of Count Dolgoruki*, details a theory that the Bahá'ís intend to destroy Islam. Such anti-Bahá'í accusations have been dismissed as having no factual foundation.^{[115][116][117]}

Anti-Catholicism

Since the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, anti-Catholic conspiracy theories have taken many forms, including the 17th-century Popish Plot allegations,^[118] claims by persons such as William Blackstone that Catholics posed a secret threat to Britain, and numerous writings by authors such as Samuel Morse, Rebecca Reed, Avro Manhattan, Jack Chick and Alberto Rivera. Theorists often claim that the Pope is the Antichrist, accuse Catholics of suppressing evidence incompatible with Church teachings, and describe Catholics as being involved with secret evil rituals, crimes, and other plots.

In 1853, the Scottish minister Alexander Hislop published his anti-Catholic pamphlet *The Two Babylons*,^[119] in which he claims that the Catholic Church is secretly a continuation of the pagan religion of ancient Babylon, the product of a millennia-old conspiracy founded by the Biblical king Nimrod and the Assyrian queen Semiramis.^[119] It also claims that modern Catholic holidays, including Christmas and Easter, are actually pagan festivals established by Semiramis and that the customs associated with them are pagan rituals. Modern scholars have unanimously rejected the book's arguments as erroneous and based on a flawed understanding of Babylonian religion,^[119] but variations of them are still accepted among some groups of evangelical Protestants.^[119] Jehovah's Witnesses periodical *The Watchtower* frequently published excerpts from it until the 1980s.^[120] The book's thesis has also featured prominently in the conspiracy theories of racist groups, such as The Covenant, The Sword, and the Arm of the Lord.^[121]



THE PAPAL OCTOPUS.

Romanism is a Monster, with arms of Satanic power and strength, reaching to the very ends of the earth, the arm of superstition crushing the American child, that of subversion crushing the American Flag, that of bigotry crushing the American Public School, that of ignorance crushing the credulous dope, that of corruption crushing the law of the land, that of greed grasping public moneys, that of tyranny destroying freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, all over the world—per doloan olem terrarum.

Anti-Catholic cartoon depicting Catholicism as an octopus, from H. E. Fowler and Jeremiah J. Crowley's *The Pope* (1913)

Fears of a Catholic takeover of the US have been especially persistent,^{[122][123]} prompted by phenomena such as Catholic immigration in the 19th century^[124] and Ku Klux Klan propaganda.^{[125][126]} Such fears have attached to Catholic political candidates such as Al Smith^[127] and John F. Kennedy.^{[128][129][130]}

Pope John Paul I died in September 1978, only a month after his election to the papacy. The timing of his death and the Vatican's alleged difficulties with ceremonial and legal death procedures has fostered several conspiracy theories.

The elderly Pope Benedict XVI's resignation in February 2013, for given reasons of a "lack of strength of mind and body",^[131] prompted theories in Italian publications such as *La Repubblica* and *Panorama* that he resigned in order to avoid an alleged scandal involving an underground gay Catholic network.^{[132][133]}

Antichrist

Apocalyptic prophecies, particularly Christian claims about the End Times, have inspired a range of conspiracy theories. Many of these cite the Antichrist, a leader who will supposedly create an oppressive world empire. Countless figures have been called Antichrist, including Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, Russian emperor Peter the Great, Saladin, Pope John XXII, Benito Mussolini, Barack Obama, French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, and German Führer Adolf Hitler.^{[134][135][136][137]}

Bible and Jesus

Bible conspiracy theories posit that significant parts of the New Testament are false, or have been omitted. Various groups both real (such as the Vatican) and fake (such as the Priory of Sion) are said to suppress relevant information concerning, for example, the dating of the Shroud of Turin.^[138]

Much of this line of conspiracy theory has been stimulated by a debunked book titled *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (1982), which claimed that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were lovers and that their offspring and descendants were secretly hidden in Europe following the death of Jesus, from whom the then-living French draughtsman Pierre Plantard claimed descent. Interest in this hoax saw a resurgence following the publication of Dan Brown's 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code*.^[139]

Islam

"War against Islam" is a conspiracy theory in Islamist discourse which describes an alleged plot to either harm or annihilate the social system within Islam. The perpetrators of this conspiracy are alleged to be non-Muslims and "false Muslims", allegedly in collusion with political actors in the Western world. While this theory is often referred to in relation to modern social problems and changes, the Crusades are often presented as its starting point.^[140]

Anti-Islamic

Since the September 11 Attacks, many anti-Islamic conspiracy theories have emerged, concerning a variety of topics. Love Jihad, also called Romeo Jihad, refers to a conspiracy theory concerning Muslim males who are said to target non-Muslim girls for conversion to Islam by feigning love.^{[141][142][143][144]} The "Eurabia" theory alleges a massive Muslim plot to islamize Europe (and often the rest of the western world) through mass immigration and high birth rates.^[145] In addition, before and during his presidency, Barack Obama was accused by opponents of secretly being a Muslim.

Racism

White genocide conspiracy theory is a white nationalist notion that immigration, integration, low fertility rates and abortion are being promoted in predominantly white countries in order to turn white people into a minority or cause their extinction.^{[146][147][148][149][150][151]} A 2017 study in France by IFOP, for example, found that 48% of participants believed that political and media elites are conspiring to replace white people with immigrants.^[152]

In the United States, black genocide conspiracy theory^{[153][154]} holds the view that African Americans are the victims of genocide instituted by white Americans. Lynchings and racial discrimination were formally described as genocide by the Civil Rights Congress in 1951. Malcolm X also talked about "black genocide" in the early 1960s.^[155] Public funding of the Pill was also described as "black genocide" at the first Black Power Conference, in 1967.^{[156][157]} In 1970, after abortion was more widely legalized, some black militants depicted abortion as being part of the conspiracy.^[158]

Some Rastafari maintain the view that a white racist patriarchy ("Babylon") controls the world in order to oppress black people.^[159] They believe that Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia did not die in 1975, instead believing that the allegedly racist media propagated false reports of his death in order to quash the Rastafari movement.^[160]

"The Plan" is an alleged plot by white power brokers in Washington, D.C., to "take back" the city's local government from African Americans, who were a majority of the city's population from the late 1950s to the early 2010s and remain its largest ethnic group.^{[161][162]} The theory asserts that the decline of low-income black residents and their replacement by wealthier whites from outside of the city is intentional through the calculated use of gentrification and urban renewal.^[163] Most city residents, regardless of race, consider The Plan to be false, but some believe it has quiet but considerable support among black residents and influences local elections.^[164]

Extraterrestrials and UFOs

Among the foremost concerns of conspiracy theorists are questions of alien life; for example, allegations of government cover-ups of the supposed Roswell UFO incident or activity at Area 51.^[165] Also disseminated are theories concerning so-called 'men in black', who allegedly silence witnesses.

Multiple reports of dead cattle found with absent body parts and seemingly drained of blood have emerged worldwide since at least the 1960s. This phenomenon has spawned theories variously concerning aliens and secret government or military experiments.^[166] Prominent among such theorists is Linda Moulton Howe, author of *Alien Harvest* (1989).^{[167][168]}

Many conspiracy theories have drawn inspiration from the writings of ancient astronaut proponent Zecharia Sitchin,^[169] who declared that the Anunnaki from Sumerian mythology were actually a race of extraterrestrial beings who came to Earth around 500,000 years ago in order to mine gold.^{[169][170][171]} In his 1994 book *Humanity's Extraterrestrial Origins: ET Influences on Humankind's Biological and Cultural Evolution*, Arthur Horn proposed that the Anunnaki were a race of blood-drinking, shape-shifting alien reptiles.^[169] This theory was adapted and elaborated on by British conspiracy theorist David Icke,^[169] who maintains that the Bush family, Margaret Thatcher, Bob Hope, and the British Royal Family, among others, are or were such creatures, or have been under their control.^[172] Icke's critics have suggested that 'reptilians' may be seen as an antisemitic code word, a charge he has denied.^[50]



Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia



English conspiracy theorist David Icke

Government, politics and conflict

In the modern era, political conspiracy theories are often spread using fake news on social media. A 2017 study of fake news published by the Shorenstein Center found that "misinformation is currently predominantly a pathology of the right".^[173]

Political conspiracy theories may take generalized and wide-ranging forms concerning wars and international bodies, but may also be seen at a localized level, such as the conspiracy theory pertaining to the 118th Battalion, a British regiment stationed in Kitchener, Ontario, during World War I, which is believed by some in Kitchener to still be present and controlling local politics.^[174]

Illuminati

Conspiracy theories concerning the Illuminati, a short-lived 18th-century Enlightenment-era secret society, appear to have originated in the late 19th century, when some conservatives in Europe came to believe that the group had been responsible for the French Revolution of 1789–1799.^[175] Hoaxes about the Illuminati were later spread in the 1960s by a group of American practical jokers known as the Discordians, who, for example, wrote a series of fake letters about the Illuminati to Playboy.^[176]

False flag operations

False flag operations are covert operations designed to appear as if they are being carried out by other entities. Some allegations of false flag operations have been verified or have been subjects of legitimate historical dispute (such as the 1933 Reichstag arson attack).^[177] Discussions of unsubstantiated allegations of such operations feature strongly in conspiracy theory discourse.

Other allegations of similar operations have attached to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Oklahoma City bombing, the 2004 Madrid train bombings,^[178] and the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident.^[179]

The rise of ISIS gave rise to conspiracy theories that it had been created by the US, CIA, Mossad, or Hillary Clinton.^{[180][181]} The same happened after the rise of Boko Haram.^{[182][183]}



The World Trade Center towers prior to 9/11

9/11

The multiple attacks made on the US by terrorists using hijacked aircraft on 11 September 2001 have proved attractive to conspiracy theorists. Theories may include reference to missile or hologram technology. By far, the most common theory is that the attacks were in fact controlled demolitions,^{[184][185]} a theory which has been rejected by the engineering profession^[186] and the 9/11 Commission.

Sandy Hook

A 2012 fatal mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, prompted numerous conspiracy theories, among which is the claim that it was a manufactured event with the aim of promoting gun control. Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke has theorized that Zionists were responsible.^[187] Theorists such as Alex Jones have suggested that the event was staged with actors.^{[188][189]} Harassment of the bereaved families by conspiracy theorists has resulted in actions for defamation. Rush Limbaugh also stated that the event happened because the Mayan Calendar phenomenon made shooter Adam Lanza do it.^[190]

Clintons

The Clinton Body Count refers to a conspiracy theory, parts of which have been advanced by Newsmax publisher Christopher Ruddy among others, that asserts that former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton have assassinated fifty or more of their associates.^{[191][192][193]} Such accusations have been around at least since the 1990s, when a pseudo-documentary film called *The Clinton Chronicles*, produced by Larry Nichols and promoted by Rev. Jerry Falwell, accused Bill Clinton of multiple crimes including murder.^{[194][195]}

Jeffrey Epstein death conspiracy theories

The death of Jeffrey Epstein, an American financier billionaire and convicted sex offender with ties to Donald Trump, Bill Clinton and other members of the elite, has become the subject of conspiracy theories.^{[196][197]}

FEMA

The United States' Federal Emergency Management Agency is the subject of many theories, including the allegation that the organization has been engaged in the building of concentration camps on US soil, in advance of the imposition of martial law and genocide.^[198]

African National Congress

Members of South Africa's African National Congress party have long propagated conspiracy theories, frequently concerning the CIA and alleged white supremacists. In 2014, Deputy Minister of Defence Kebby Maphatsoe joined others in accusing without evidence Public Protector Thuli Madonsela of being a US agent working to create a puppet government in South Africa.^{[199][200][201]}

Barack Obama

Former US President Barack Obama has been the subject of numerous conspiracy theories. His presidency was the subject of a 2009 film, *The Obama Deception*, by Alex Jones, which alleged that Obama's administration was a puppet government for a wealthy elite. Another theory which came to prominence in 2009 (known as "birtherism") denies the legitimacy of Obama's presidency by claiming that he was not born in the US.^[202] This theory has persisted despite the evidence of his Hawaiian birth certificate and of contemporaneous birth announcements in two Hawaiian newspapers in 1961.^[203] Notable promoters of the theory are dentist-lawyer Orly Taitz^[6] and former President Donald Trump, who has since publicly acknowledged its falsity but is said to continue to advocate for it privately.^{[204][205][206]} Other theories claim that Obama, a Protestant Christian, is secretly a Muslim.

A pair of fatal attacks on US government facilities in Benghazi, Libya, by Islamist terrorists in 2012 has spawned numerous conspiracy theories, including allegations that Obama's administration arranged the attack for political reasons, and Senator Rand Paul's repeated assertion that the government's response to the incident was designed to distract from a secret CIA operation.^{[207][208][209]}

Cultural Marxism



Bill and Hillary Clinton, main people involved in this conspiracy



Donald Trump has been a proponent of the conspiracy theory that Barack Obama was not born in the United States.

The intellectual group known as the Frankfurt School which emerged in the 1930s has increasingly been the subject of conspiracy theories which have alleged the promotion of communism in capitalist societies. The term "Cultural Marxism" has been notably employed by conservative American movements such as the Tea Party,^{[210][211]} and by Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik.^[212]

Deep state

While the term is occasionally used as a neutral term to denote a nation's bureaucracy,^[213] the conspiratorial notion of a "deep state" is a concept originating principally in Middle Eastern and North African politics with some basis in truth, and has been known in the US since the 1960s. It has been revived under the Trump presidency.^{[214][215]} "Deep state" in the latter sense refers to an unidentified "powerful elite" who act in co-ordinated manipulation of a nation's politics and government. Proponents of such theories have included Canadian author Peter Dale Scott, who has promoted the idea in the US since at least the 1990s, as well as Breitbart News, Infowars and former US President Donald Trump.^[216] A 2017 poll by ABC News and The Washington Post indicated that 48% of Americans believe in the existence of a conspiratorial "deep state" in the US.^{[217][218]}

Sutherland Springs

The 2017 Sutherland Springs church shooting has also been the subject of multiple conspiracy theories. The shooter has been linked to multiple conspiracies, such as identifying him as a Democrat, Hillary Clinton supporter, Bernie Sanders supporter, "alt-left" supporter, Antifa member, or radical Muslim;^{[219][220]} or claiming that he carried an Antifa flag and told churchgoers: "This is a communist revolution".^[221] Some reports also falsely claimed that he targeted the church because they were white conservatives.^[222]

Trump and Ukraine

Beginning in 2017, a sprawling conspiracy theory emerged from 4chan and was spread via right-wing message boards and websites, then via Breitbart and Fox News to then-President Donald Trump and his allies. The conspiracy theory holds both that Ukraine (rather than Russia) had interfered in the 2016 United States elections, and that then-Vice President Joe Biden had intervened to protect a company in which his son Hunter was involved. The New Yorker found that reporting of the conspiracy in the right wing media was initiated by Peter Schweizer, a former Breitbart News contributor and president of The Government Accountability Institute, "a self-styled corruption watchdog group chaired and funded by conservative mega-donor Rebekah Mercer"^[223] and founded by Steve Bannon.^[224]

Biden-Ukraine conspiracy theory

Refers to a series of allegations alleging that former vice president Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden coordinated efforts against anti-corruption investigations in Ukraine into the Ukrainian gas company Burisma.^[225]

"Stolen election" conspiracy theory

The stolen election conspiracy theory falsely claims that the 2020 United States presidential election was "stolen" from Donald Trump, who lost that election to Joe Biden. It serves to justify attempts to overturn the 2020 United States presidential election, including the 2021 storming of the United States Capitol. A particular variant of it is the "Soros stole the election" conspiracy theory that claims that George Soros stole the election from Trump.^[226]

Medicine

Alternative therapy suppression

A 2013 study approved by the University of Chicago suggested that almost half of Americans believe at least one medical conspiracy theory, with 37% believing that the Food and Drug Administration deliberately suppresses 'natural' cures due to influence from the pharmaceutical industry.^[227] A prominent proponent of comparable conspiracy theories has been convicted fraudster Kevin Trudeau.^[228]

Artificial diseases

Scientists have found evidence that HIV was transferred from monkeys to humans in the 1930s. Evidence exists, however, that the KGB deliberately disseminated a notion in the 1980s that it was invented by the CIA.^[229] This idea, and similar ideas concerning Ebola, have since been promoted by persons such as actor Steven Seagal,^{[230][231][232]} Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and former South Africa President Thabo Mbeki.^{[229][233][234]}

In January 2020, BBC News published an article about SARS-CoV-2 misinformation, citing two 24 January articles in The Washington Times that said the virus was part of a Chinese biological weapons program, based at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).^[235]

Similar conspiracy theories allege that pharmaceutical companies assist in the creation of conditions and diseases including ADHD, HSV and HPV.

COVID-19 pandemic

A number of conspiracy theories have been promoted about the origin and purported motive behind the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its spread. Some claimed that the virus was engineered,^{[236][237][238]} that it escaped or was stolen from a research laboratory,^{[239][240][241][242]} that it may have been a Chinese or United States bioweapon,^{[243][244][245]} a Jewish plot including to force mass vaccinations or sterilizations,^{[246][247][248]} spread as part of a Muslim conspiracy,^{[249][250]} a population control scheme,^{[235][251]} or related to 5G mobile phone networks.^{[252][253]}

Fluoridation

Water fluoridation is the controlled addition of fluoride to a public water supply to reduce tooth decay.^[254] Although many dental-health organizations support such fluoridation, the practice is opposed by conspiracy theorists.^[255] Allegations may include claims that it has been a way to dispose of industrial

waste,^{[256][257]} or that it exists to obscure a failure to provide dental care to the poor.^[255] A further theory promoted by the John Birch Society in the 1960s described fluoridation as a communist plot to weaken the American population.^[258]

Vaccination

It is claimed that the pharmaceutical industry has mounted a cover-up of a causal link between vaccines and autism. The conspiracy theory developed after the publication in Britain in 1998 of a fraudulent paper by discredited former doctor Andrew Wakefield.^[259] The resulting anti-vaccine movement has been promoted by a number of prominent persons including Rob Schneider,^[260] Jim Carrey^[261] and former US President Donald Trump,^{[262][263]} and has led to increased rates of infection and death from diseases such as measles in many countries, including the US, Italy, Germany, Romania and the UK.^{[264][265][266][267]}



Ripper explains to Mandrake that he discovered the Communist plot to pollute Americans' "precious bodily fluids", a reference to the John Birch Society's anti-fluoridation conspiracy theories (Dr. Strangelove, 1964).

Vaccine conspiracy theories have been widespread in Nigeria since at least 2003, as well as in Pakistan. Such theories may feature claims that vaccines are part of a secret anti-Islam plot, and have been linked to fatal mass shootings and bombings at vaccine clinics in both countries.^{[268][269][270]}

Science and technology

Global warming

A global warming conspiracy theory typically alleges that the science behind global warming has been invented or distorted for ideological or financial reasons.^[12] Many have promoted such theories, including former US President Donald Trump,^{[271][272]} US Senator James Inhofe,^[273] British journalist Christopher Booker,^[273] and Viscount Christopher Monckton.^[274]



Aerial view of the HAARP site, Alaska

Weather and earthquake control projects

Numerous theories pertain to real or alleged weather-controlling projects. Theories include the debunked assertion that HAARP, a radio-technology research program funded by the US government, is a secret weather-controlling system. Some theorists have blamed 2005's Hurricane Katrina on HAARP.^[275] HAARP has also been suggested to have somehow caused earthquakes, such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami or the 2013 Saravan earthquake.^[276] Some HAARP-related claims refer to mind-control technology.^[277]

Also of interest to conspiracy theorists are cloud-seeding technologies. These include a debunked allegation^[278] that the British military's Project Cumulus caused the fatal 1952 Lynmouth Flood in Devon, England,^[279] and claims concerning a secret project said to have caused the 2010 Pakistan

floods.^[280]

MKUltra

Genuine American research in the 1950s and 1960s into chemical interrogation and mind-control techniques were followed by many conspiracy theories (like Project Monarch), especially following CIA Director Richard Helm's 1973 order to destroy all files related to the project. These theories include the allegation that the mass fatality at Jonestown in 1978 was connected to an MKUltra experiment.^[281]

Flat Earth

Flat Earth theory first emerged in 19th-century England, despite the Earth's spherical nature having been known since at least the time of Pythagoras. It has in recent years been promoted by American software consultant Mark Sargent through the use of YouTube videos.^[282] Flat-earther conspiracy theorists hold that planet Earth is not a sphere, and that evidence has been faked or suppressed to hide the fact that it is instead a disc, or a single infinite plane. The conspiracy often implicates NASA. Other claims include that GPS devices are rigged to make aircraft pilots wrongly believe they are flying around a globe.^{[283][284]}



Logo of the Flat Earth Society, 2013

RFID chips



An RFID tag, exposed by the damage to this Oyster card

Radio frequency identification chips (RFID), such as are implanted into pets as a means of tracking, have drawn the interest of conspiracy theorists who posit that this technology is secretly widely implanted in humans. Former Whitby, England town councilor Simon Parkes has promoted this theory, which may be related to conspiracy theories concerning vaccination, electronic banking and the Antichrist.^{[285][286]}

Technology suppression

Numerous theories pertain to the alleged suppression of certain technologies and energies. Such theories may focus on the Vril Society Conspiracy, allegations of the suppression of the electric car by fossil-fuel companies (as detailed in the 2006 documentary *Who Killed the Electric Car?*), and the Phoebus cartel, set up in 1924, which has been accused of suppressing longer-lasting light bulbs.^[287] Other long-standing allegations include the suppression of perpetual motion and cold fusion technology by government agencies, special interest groups, or fraudulent inventors.^[288]

Promoters of alternative energy theories have included Thomas Henry Moray,^[289] Eugene Mallove, and convicted American fraudster Stanley Meyer.^[290]

Weaponry

Conspiracy theorists often attend to new military technologies, both real and imagined. Subjects of theories include: the alleged Philadelphia Experiment, a supposed attempt to turn a US Navy warship invisible;^[291] the alleged Montauk Project, a supposed government program to learn about mind control

and time travel; and the so-called "tsunami bomb", which is alleged to have caused the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.^[292]

Other theories include Peter Vogel's debunked claim that an accidental explosion of conventional munitions at Port Chicago was in fact a nuclear detonation,^[293] and a theory promoted by the Venezuelan state-run TV station ViVe that the 2010 Haiti earthquake was caused by a secret US "earthquake weapon".^[294]

Targeted Individuals

Conspiracy theorists claim that government agents are utilizing directed energy weapons and electronic surveillance to harass members of the population. Theorists often cite research into psychotronic weapons, the Cuban Health Attacks, and the Microwave Auditory Effect as proof of their theory. There are over 10,000 people who identify as Targeted Individuals.^[295]

The "Targeted Individual" phenomenon has been featured on episodes of *Conspiracy Theory with Jesse Ventura*^[296] and History Channel's *In Search Of...*^[297]

False history

Some theories claim that the dates of historical events have been deliberately distorted. These include the phantom time hypothesis of German conspiracy theorist Heribert Illig, who in 1991 published an allegation that 297 years had been added to the calendar by establishment figures such as Pope Sylvester II in order to position themselves at the millennium.^[298]



Pope Sylvester II (from 999 to 1003)

A comparable theory, known as the New Chronology, is most closely associated with Russian theorist Anatoly Fomenko. Fomenko holds that history is many centuries shorter than is widely believed and that numerous historical documents have been fabricated, and legitimate documents destroyed, for political ends. Adherents of such ideas have included chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov.^[299]

Outer space

Scientific space programs are of particular interest to conspiracy theorists. The most prolific theories allege that the US Moon landings were staged by NASA in a film studio, with some alleging the involvement of director Stanley Kubrick.^[300] The Soviet space program has also attracted theories that the government concealed evidence of failed flights. A more recent theory, emergent following the activities of hacker Gary McKinnon,^[301] suggests that a secret program of crewed space fleets exists, supposedly acting under the United Nations.^[302]

Conspiracy theorists have long posited a plot by organizations such as NASA to conceal the existence of a large planet in the Solar System known as Nibiru or Planet X which, is alleged to pass close enough to the Earth to destroy it. Predictions for the date of destruction have included 2003, 2012 and 2017. The theory began to develop following the publication of *The 12th Planet* (1976), by Russian-American author Zecharia Sitchin, was given its full form by Nancy Lieder, and has since been promoted by American conspiracy theorist and End Times theorist David Meade.^[303] The notion received renewed attention during the period prior to the solar eclipse of 21 August 2017.^{[304][305]} Other conspiracy theorists in 2017 also predicted Nibiru would appear, including Terral Croft and YouTube pastor Paul Begley.^{[306][307]}

Sports

Boxing

Boxing has featured in conspiracy theories, such as the claims that the second Ali-Liston fight^[308] and the first Bradley-Pacquiao fight were fixed.^[309]

Shergar

The theft and disappearance of the Irish-bred racehorse Shergar in 1983 has prompted many conspiracy theorists to speculate about involvement by the Mafia, the IRA and Colonel Gaddafi.^[310]

Rigged selection processes

The "frozen envelope theory" suggests that the National Basketball Association rigged its 1985 draft lottery so that Patrick Ewing would join the New York Knicks. Theorists claim that a lottery envelope was chilled so that it could be identified by touch.^[311] A similar "hot balls theory", promoted by Scottish football manager David Moyes, suggests that certain balls used in draws for UEFA competitions have been warmed to achieve specific outcomes.^[312]

1984 Firecracker 400

The 1984 Firecracker 400 at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona, Florida, was the first NASCAR race to be attended by a sitting US president, Ronald Reagan, and was driver Richard Petty's 200th and final career victory. Rival driver Cale Yarborough's premature retirement to the pit road has prompted conspiracy theorists to allege that organizers fixed the race in order to receive good publicity for the event.^[313]

Ronaldo and the 1998 World Cup Final

On the day of the 1998 World Cup Final, Brazilian striker Ronaldo suffered a convulsive fit.^[314] Ronaldo was initially removed from the starting lineup 72 minutes before the match, with the teamsheet released to a stunned world media, before he was reinstated by the Brazil coach shortly before kick off.^{[315][316]} Ronaldo "sleepwalked" through the final, with France winning the game.^[316] The nature of the incident set off a trail of questions and allegations which persisted for years, with Alex Bellos writing in *The Guardian*, "When Ronaldo's health scare was revealed after the match, the situation's unique circumstances lent itself to fabulous conspiracy theories. Here was the world's most famous sportsman, about to take part in the most important match of his career, when he suddenly, inexplicably, fell ill. Was it stress, epilepsy, or had he been drugged?"^[317] Questions also circulated into who made Ronaldo play the game. The Brazil coach insisted he had the final say, but much speculation focused on sportswear company Nike, Brazil's multimillion-dollar sponsor—whom many Brazilians thought had too much control—putting pressure on the striker to play against medical advice.^[317]

New England Patriots

The New England Patriots have also been involved in numerous conspiracy theories.^[318] During their AFC Championship 24–20 victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars, several conspiracy theories spread stating that the referees helped the Patriots advance to Super Bowl LII.^[319] However, sports analyst Stephen A. Smith stated the Jaguars were not robbed, but that they had no one to blame but themselves for the loss.^[320] There were also conspiracy theories regarding the Super Bowl LI matchup between the Patriots and the Atlanta Falcons stating that the game was rigged^[321] while others said the Falcons made questionable play-calls at the end of the game that resulted in them blowing a 28–3 lead.^[322]



NRG Stadium before Super Bowl LI

See also

- Conspiracy theories in the Arab world
- Conspiracy theories in Turkey

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Masonic conspiracy theories

Masonic conspiracy theories are conspiracy theories involving Freemasonry; hundreds of such conspiracy theories have been described since the late 18th century.^[1] Usually, these theories fall into three distinct categories: political (usually involving allegations of control of government, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom), religious (usually involving allegations of anti-Christian or Satanic beliefs or practices), and cultural (usually involving popular entertainment). Many conspiracy theories have connected the Freemasons (and the Knights Templar) with worship of the devil,^{[2][3][4][5][6]} these ideas are based on different interpretations of the doctrines of those organizations.^[7]

Of the claims that Freemasonry exerts control over politics, perhaps the best-known example is the New World Order theory, but there are others. These mainly involve aspects and agencies of the United States government, but actual events outside the US (such as the Propaganda Due scandal in Italy) are often used to lend credence to claims.

Another set of theories has to do with Freemasonry and Religion, particularly that Freemasonry deals with "the occult".^[8] These theories have their beginnings in the Taxil hoax.^{[9][10]} In addition to these, there are various theories that focus on the embedding of symbols in otherwise ordinary items, such as street patterns, national seals, corporate logos, etc.

There are Masonic conspiracy theories dealing with every aspect of society. The majority of these theories are based on one or more of the following assumptions:

- That Freemasonry is its own religion, requires belief in a unique *Masonic god*, and that belief in this *Masonic god* is contrary to the teachings of various mainstream religions (although usually noted in terms of being specifically contrary to *Christian* belief)^[11]
- That the 33rd degree of the Scottish Rite is more than an honorary degree, coupled with the belief that most Freemasons are unaware of hidden or secretive ruling bodies within their organization that govern them, conduct occult ritual, or control various positions of governmental power^[12]
- That there is a centralized worldwide body that controls all Masonic Grand Lodges, and thus, all of Freemasonry worldwide acts in a unified manner.

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Notable conspiracy theories involving Freemasonry include:

Political

- That the British judiciary is heavily infiltrated with Masons, who give fellow Masons "the benefit of the doubt" in court, subverting the legal system.^{[13][14]}
- That Freemasonry overlaps with, or is controlled by, the Illuminati, especially in the higher degrees; Illuminati Freemasons secretly control many major aspects of society and government and are working to establish the New World Order.^{[15][16][17][18][19][20]} Some conspiracy theories involving the Freemasons and the Illuminati also include the Knights Templar and Jews as part of the supposed plan for universal control of society. This type of conspiracy theory was described as early as 1792 by multiple authors, beginning in France and Scotland.^[1]
- That Freemasonry is a Jewish front for world domination or is at least controlled by Jews for this goal. An example of this is the anti-Semitic literary forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Adolf Hitler believed that Freemasonry was a tool of Jewish influence,^[21] and outlawed Freemasonry and persecuted Freemasons partially for this reason.^[22] The covenant of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas claims that Freemasonry is a "secret society" founded as part of a Zionist plot to control the world.^[23] Hilaire Belloc thought Jews had "inaugurated" freemasonry "as a bridge between themselves and their hosts".^[24]
- That Freemasons are behind income taxes in the US. One convicted tax protester has charged that law enforcement officials who surrounded his property in a standoff over his refusal to surrender after his conviction were part of a "Zionist, Illuminati, Free Mason [*sic*] movement".^[25] The *New Hampshire Union Leader* also reported that "the Browns believe the IRS and the federal income tax are part of a deliberate plot perpetrated by Freemasons to control the American people and eventually the world."^[26]
- That the BOULE (Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity) is and has been a cornerstone of Prince Hall Masonry's political influence with Masonic congressmen guiding the group including Bro. Louis Stokes,^[27] Bro. John Conyers, Bro. Charles Rangel, Bro. August Hawkins, Bro. John Lewis, Bro. Ralph Metcalfe, Bro. Kweisi Mfume and Bro. Elijah Cummings served as chair of the caucus.^{[28][29]} not to mention member Bro. Jesse Jackson.
- That Freemasons have strong links with a more selective secret and semi-secret societies such as the Bohemian Grove meeting,^{[30][31]} the Skull and Bones society,^[20] and Rhodes Scholars.^[32]
- That groups such as the Ku Klux Klan^[33] and the Orange Order^[34] are intimately tied to Freemasonry.

Religious

There are a number of claims, predominantly made by conservative Protestants,^[35] that Freemasons at higher degrees deceive those at lower degrees, and gradually reveal a separate, occult religion:

- That Freemasons worship Lucifer or Satan,^[7] often attributed to quotes by Albert Pike.^{[2][3][4][5]}
- That Freemasons worship Baal, Baphomet, Dajjal, or Rahu.^[36]
- That Freemasonry is occult in nature and worships their own particular god, such as GAOTU the "Great Architect of the Universe", Gnosis, or Jahbulon, an amalgam of the gods YHWH, Baal, and Osiris.^{[37][38][39][40][41]}

Alleged occult influences on popular culture

- That Freemasons intertwine various symbols and numerology into modern culture, such as corporate logos.^[42]
- That the United States was founded by Freemasons who have interwoven Masonic symbols into American society, particularly in national seals, streets in Washington, D.C., architecture, and the dollar bill (indeed several Founding Fathers such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and James Monroe were Freemasons).^{[43][44][45][46]}

Other

- That Freemasons faked the Apollo moon landings.^[47]
- That Freemasons (at NASA) deceive the public to hide the Earth being flat.^{[48][49]}
- That the September 11 attacks were astrological in nature, as part of a hidden war between Masonry (as descendants of the Knights Templar) and Islam.^[50]
- That humanoid reptiles are behind secret societies like the Freemasons and the Illuminati.^[51]
- That some prominent murders involved Freemasons, including the cases of Jack the Ripper,^[52] Roberto Calvi,^[53] and John F. Kennedy.^{[3][54]}
- That the Masons are intimately connected to the Illuminati.^{[17][55]}

Masonic conspiracy theories in mass culture

- *The Prague Cemetery*, a novel by Umberto Eco
- *The Lost Symbol*, a novel by Dan Brown

See also

- Anti-Masonry
- Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory

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New World Order (conspiracy theory)

The **New World Order** (**NWO**) is a conspiracy theory which hypothesizes a secretly emerging totalitarian world government.^{[3][4][5][6][7]}

The common theme in conspiracy theories about a New World Order is that a secretive power elite with a globalist agenda is conspiring to eventually rule the world through an authoritarian one world government—which will replace sovereign nation-states—and an all-encompassing propaganda whose ideology hails the establishment of the New World Order as the culmination of history's progress. Many influential historical and contemporary figures have therefore been alleged to be part of a cabal that operates through many front organizations to orchestrate significant political and financial events, ranging from causing systemic crises to pushing through controversial policies, at both national and international levels, as steps in an ongoing plot to achieve world domination.^{[3][4][5][6][7]}

Before the early 1990s, New World Order conspiracism was limited to two American countercultures, primarily the militantly anti-government right and secondarily that part of fundamentalist Christianity concerned with the end-time emergence of the Antichrist.^[8] Skeptics, such as Michael Barkun and Chip Berlet, observed that right-wing populist conspiracy theories about a New World Order had not only been embraced by many seekers of stigmatized knowledge but had seeped into popular culture, thereby inaugurating a period during the late 20th and early 21st centuries in the United States where people are actively preparing for apocalyptic millenarian scenarios.^{[4][6]} Those political scientists are concerned that mass hysteria over New World Order conspiracy theories could eventually have devastating effects on American political life, ranging from escalating lone-wolf terrorism to the rise to power of authoritarian ultranationalist demagogues.^{[4][6][9]}



The reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States (1776).

The Latin phrase "*novus ordo seclorum*", appearing on the reverse side of the Great Seal since 1782 and on the back of the U.S. one-dollar bill since 1935, translates to "New Order of the Ages"^[1] and alludes to the beginning of an era where the United States of America is an independent nation-state; conspiracy theorists claim this is an allusion to the "New World Order".^[2]

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History of the term

General usage (Pre-Cold War)

During the 20th century, political figures such as Woodrow Wilson and Winston Churchill used the term "new world order" to refer to a new period of history characterized by a dramatic change in world political thought and in the global balance of power after World War I and World War II.^[10] The interwar and post-World War II period were seen as opportunities to implement idealistic proposals for global governance by collective efforts to address worldwide problems that go beyond the capacity of individual nation-states to resolve, while nevertheless respecting the right of nations to self-determination. Such collective initiatives manifested in the formation of intergovernmental organizations such as the League of Nations in 1920, the United Nations (UN) in 1945, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, along with international regimes such as the Bretton Woods system and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), implemented to maintain a cooperative balance of power and facilitate reconciliation between nations to prevent the prospect of another global conflict. These cosmopolitan efforts to instill liberal internationalism were regularly criticized and opposed by American paleoconservative business nationalists from the 1930s on.^[11]

Progressives welcomed international organizations and regimes such as the United Nations in the aftermath of the two World Wars, but argued that these initiatives suffered from a democratic deficit and were therefore inadequate not only to prevent another world war but to foster global justice, as the UN

was chartered to be a free association of sovereign nation-states rather than a transition to democratic world government. Thus, cosmopolitan activists around the globe, perceiving the IGOs as too ineffectual for global change, formed a world federalist movement.^[12]

British writer and futurist H. G. Wells went further than progressives in the 1940s, by appropriating and redefining the term "new world order" as a synonym for the establishment of a technocratic world state and of a planned economy, garnering popularity in state socialist circles.^{[13][14]}

Usage as reference to a conspiracy (Cold War era)

During the Second Red Scare, both secular and Christian right American agitators, largely influenced by the work of Canadian conspiracy theorist William Guy Carr, increasingly embraced and spread dubious fears of Freemasons, Illuminati and Jews as the alleged driving forces behind an "international communist conspiracy". The threat of "Godless communism", in the form of an atheistic, bureaucratic collectivist world government, demonized as the "Red Menace", became the focus of apocalyptic millenarian conspiracism. The Red Scare came to shape one of the core ideas of the political right in the United States, which is that liberals and progressives, with their welfare-state policies and international cooperation programs such as foreign aid, supposedly contribute to a gradual process of global collectivism that will inevitably lead to nations being replaced with a communistic/collectivist one-world government.^[15] James Warburg, appearing before the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 1950, famously stated: "We shall have world government, whether or not we like it. The question is only whether world government will be achieved by consent or by conquest."^[16]

Right-wing populist advocacy groups with a paleoconservative world-view, such as the John Birch Society, disseminated a multitude of conspiracy theories in the 1960s claiming that the governments of both the United States and the Soviet Union were controlled by a cabal of corporate internationalists, "greedy" bankers and corrupt politicians who were intent on using the UN as the vehicle to create a "One World Government". This anti-globalist conspiracism fueled the campaign for U.S. withdrawal from the UN. American writer Mary M. Davison, in her 1966 booklet *The Profound Revolution*, traced the alleged New World Order conspiracy to the establishment of the U.S. Federal Reserve in 1913 by international bankers, whom she claimed later formed the Council on Foreign Relations in 1921 as a shadow government. At the time the booklet was published, many readers would have interpreted "international bankers" as a reference to a postulated "international Jewish banking conspiracy" masterminded by the Rothschild family.^[15]

Arguing that the term "New World Order" is used by a secretive global elite dedicated to the eradication of the sovereignty of the world's nations, American writer Gary Allen—in his books *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* (1971), *Rockefeller: Campaigning for the New World Order* (1974), and *Say "No!" to the New World Order* (1987)—articulated the anti-globalist theme of contemporary right-wing conspiracism in the U.S. After the fall of communism in the early 1990s, the *de facto* subject of New World Order conspiracism shifted from crypto-communists, perceived to be plotting to establish an atheistic world communist government, to globalists, perceived to be plotting to generally implement a collectivist, unified world government ultimately controlled by an untouchable oligarchy of international bankers, corrupt politicians, and corporatists, or alternatively, the United Nations itself. The shift in perception was inspired by growing opposition to corporate internationalism on the American right in the 1990s.^[15]

In his speech, *Toward a New World Order*, delivered on 11 September 1990 during a joint session of the US Congress, President George H. W. Bush described his objectives for post-Cold War global governance in cooperation with post-Soviet states. He stated:

Until now, the world we've known has been a world divided—a world of barbed wire and concrete block, conflict and cold war. Now, we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order. In the words of Winston Churchill, a "world order" in which "the principles of justice and fair play ... protect the weak against the strong ..." A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations.^[17]

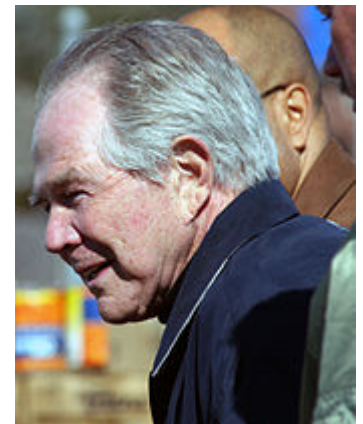
The New York Times observed that progressives were denouncing this new world order as a rationalization of American imperial ambitions in the Middle East at the time, while conservatives rejected any new security arrangements altogether and fulminated about any possibility of a UN revival.^[18] Chip Berlet, an American investigative reporter specializing in the study of right-wing movements in the U.S., wrote that the Christian and secular far-right were especially terrified by Bush's speech. Fundamentalist Christian groups interpreted Bush's words as signaling the End Times, while more secular theorists approached it from an anti-communist and anti-collectivist standpoint and feared for a hegemony over all countries by the United Nations.^[4]

Post–Cold War usage

American televangelist Pat Robertson, with his 1991 best-selling book *The New World Order*, became the most prominent Christian disseminator of conspiracy theories about recent American history. He describes a scenario where Wall Street, the Federal Reserve System, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderberg Group and the Trilateral Commission control the flow of events from behind the scenes, constantly nudging people covertly in the direction of world government for the Antichrist.^[6]

It was observed that, throughout the 1990s, the galvanizing language used by conspiracy theorists such as Linda Thompson, Mark Koernke and Robert K. Spear led to militancy and the rise of the American militia movement.^[19] The militia movement's anti-government ideology was (and is) spread through speeches at rallies and meetings, books and videotapes sold at gun shows, shortwave and satellite radio, fax networks and computer bulletin boards.^[15] It has been argued that it was overnight AM radio shows and propagandistic viral content on the internet that most effectively contributed to more extremist responses to the perceived threat of the New World Order. This led to the substantial growth of New World Order conspiracism, with it retroactively finding its way into the previously apolitical literature of numerous Kennedy assassinologists, ufologists, lost land theorists and—partially inspired by fears surrounding the "Satanic panic"—occultists. From the mid-1990s onward, the amorphous appeal of those subcultures transmitted New World Order conspiracism to a larger audience of seekers of stigmatized knowledge, with the common characteristic of disillusionment of political efficacy.^[6]

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, Hollywood conspiracy-thriller television shows and films also played a role in introducing a general audience to various fringe and esoteric theories related to New World Order conspiracism—which by that point had developed to include black helicopters, FEMA "concentration camps", etc.—theories which for decades previously were confined to largely right-wing subcultures. The 1993–2002 television series *The X-Files*, the 1997 film *Conspiracy Theory* and the 1998 film *The X-Files: Fight the Future* are often cited as notable examples.^[6]



American televangelist Pat Robertson wrote the 1991 best-selling book *The New World Order*

Following the start of the 21st century, and specifically during the late-2000s financial crisis, many politicians and pundits, such as Gordon Brown^[20] and Henry Kissinger,^[21] used the term "new world order" in their advocacy for a comprehensive reform of the global financial system and their calls for a "New Bretton Woods" taking into account emerging markets such as China and India. These public declarations reinvigorated New World Order conspiracism, culminating in talk-show host Sean Hannity stating on his Fox News program *Hannity* that the "conspiracy theorists were right".^[22] Progressive media-watchdog groups have repeatedly criticized Fox News in general, and its now-defunct opinion show *Glenn Beck* in particular, for not only disseminating New World Order conspiracy theories to mainstream audiences, but possibly agitating so-called "lone wolf" extremism, particularly from the radical right.^{[23][24]}

In 2009, American film directors Luke Meyer and Andrew Neel released *New World Order*, a critically acclaimed documentary film which explores the world of conspiracy theorists—such as American radio host Alex Jones—who vigorously oppose what they perceive as an emerging New World Order.^[25] The growing dissemination and popularity of conspiracy theories has also created an alliance between right-wing agitators and hip hop music's left-wing rappers (such as KRS-One, Professor Griff of Public Enemy and Immortal Technique), illustrating how anti-elitist conspiracism can create unlikely political allies in efforts to oppose a political system.^[26]

Conspiracy theories

There are numerous systemic conspiracy theories through which the concept of a New World Order is viewed. The following is a list of the major ones in roughly chronological order:^[27]

End time

Since the 19th century, many apocalyptic millennial Christian eschatologists, starting with John Nelson Darby, have predicted a globalist conspiracy to impose a tyrannical New World Order governing structure as the fulfillment of prophecies about the "end time" in the Bible, specifically in the Book of Ezekiel, the Book of Daniel, the Olivet discourse found in the Synoptic Gospels, 2 Esdras 11:32 and Revelation 13:7.^[28] They claim that people who have made a deal with the Devil to gain wealth and power have become pawns in a supernatural chess game to move humanity into accepting a utopian world government that rests on the spiritual foundations of a syncretic-messianic world religion, which will later reveal itself to be a dystopian world empire that imposes the imperial cult of an "Unholy Trinity" of Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. In many contemporary Christian conspiracy theories, the False Prophet will be either the last pope of the Catholic Church (groomed and installed by an Alta Vendita or Jesuit conspiracy), a guru from the New Age movement, or even the leader of an elite fundamentalist Christian organization like the Fellowship, while the Antichrist will be either the President of the European Union, the Caliph of a pan-Islamic state, or even the Secretary-General of the United Nations.^{[6][28]}



John Nelson Darby

Some of the most vocal critics of end-time conspiracy theories come from within Christianity.^[15] In 1993, historian Bruce Barron wrote a stern rebuke of apocalyptic Christian conspiracism in the *Christian Research Journal*, when reviewing Robertson's 1991 book *The New World Order*.^[29] Another critique can be found in historian Gregory S. Camp's 1997 book *Selling Fear: Conspiracy Theories and End-*

Times Paranoia.^[3] Religious studies scholar Richard T. Hughes argues that "New World Order" rhetoric libels the Christian faith, since the "New World Order" as defined by Christian conspiracy theorists has no basis in the Bible whatsoever. Furthermore, he argues that not only is this idea unbiblical, it is positively anti-biblical and fundamentally anti-Christian, because by misinterpreting key passages in the Book of Revelation, it turns a comforting message about the coming kingdom of God into one of fear, panic and despair in the face of an allegedly approaching one-world government.^[28] Progressive Christians, such as preacher-theologian Peter J. Gomes, caution Christian fundamentalists that a "spirit of fear" can distort scripture and history through dangerously combining biblical literalism, apocalyptic timetables, demonization and oppressive prejudices,^{[30][31]} while Camp warns of the "very real danger that Christians could pick up some extra spiritual baggage" by credulously embracing conspiracy theories.^[3] They therefore call on Christians who indulge in conspiracism to repent.^{[32][33]}

Freemasonry

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest secular fraternal organizations and arose during late 16th–early 17th century Britain. Over the years a number of allegations and conspiracy theories have been directed towards Freemasonry, including the allegation that Freemasons have a hidden political agenda and are conspiring to bring about a New World Order, a world government organized according to Masonic principles or governed only by Freemasons.^[15]

The esoteric nature of Masonic symbolism and rites led to Freemasons first being accused of secretly practicing Satanism in the late 18th century.^[15] The original allegation of a conspiracy within Freemasonry to subvert religions and governments in order to take over the world traces back to Scottish author John Robison, whose reactionary conspiracy theories crossed the Atlantic and influenced outbreaks of Protestant anti-Masonry in the United States during the 19th century.^[15] In the 1890s, French writer Léo Taxil wrote a series of pamphlets and books denouncing Freemasonry and charging their lodges with worshipping Lucifer as the Supreme Being and Great Architect of the Universe. Despite the fact that Taxil admitted that his claims were all a hoax, they were and still are believed and repeated by numerous conspiracy theorists and had a huge influence on subsequent anti-Masonic claims about Freemasonry.^[34]

Some conspiracy theorists eventually speculated that some Founding Fathers of the United States, such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, were having Masonic sacred geometric designs interwoven into American society, particularly in the Great Seal of the United States, the United States one-dollar bill, the architecture of National Mall landmarks and the streets and highways of Washington, D.C., as part of a master plan to create the first "Masonic government" as a model for the coming New World Order.^[6]

Freemasons rebut these claims of a Masonic conspiracy. Freemasonry, which promotes rationalism, places no power in occult symbols themselves, and it is not a part of its principles to view the drawing of symbols, no matter how large, as an act of consolidating or controlling power.^[35] Furthermore, there is no published information establishing the Masonic membership of the men responsible for the design of the Great Seal.^{[35][36]} While conspiracy theorists assert that there are elements of Masonic influence on the Great Seal of the United States and that these elements were intentionally or unintentionally used because the creators were familiar with the symbols,^[37] in fact, the all-seeing Eye of Providence and the unfinished pyramid were symbols used as much outside



A Masonic Lodge room

Masonic lodges as within them in the late 18th century, therefore the designers were drawing from common esoteric symbols.^[38] The Latin phrase "*novus ordo seclorum*", appearing on the reverse side of the Great Seal since 1782 and on the back of the one-dollar bill since 1935, translates to "New Order of the Ages",^[1] and alludes to the beginning of an era where the United States of America is an independent nation-state; it is often mistranslated by conspiracy theorists as "New World Order".^[2]

Although the European continental branch of Freemasonry has organizations that allow political discussion within their Masonic Lodges, Masonic researcher Trevor W. McKeown argues that the accusations ignore several facts. Firstly, the many Grand Lodges are independent and sovereign, meaning they act on their own and do not have a common agenda. The points of belief of the various lodges often differ. Secondly, famous individual Freemasons have always held views that span the political spectrum and show no particular pattern or preference. As such, the term "Masonic government" is erroneous; there is no consensus among Freemasons about what an ideal government would look like.^[39]

Illuminati

The Order of the Illuminati was an Enlightenment-age secret society founded by university professor Adam Weishaupt on 1 May 1776, in Upper Bavaria, Germany. The movement consisted of advocates of freethought, secularism, liberalism, republicanism, and gender equality, recruited from the German Masonic Lodges, who sought to teach rationalism through mystery schools. In 1785, the order was infiltrated, broken up and suppressed by the government agents of Charles Theodore, Elector of Bavaria, in his preemptive campaign to neutralize the threat of secret societies ever becoming hotbeds of conspiracies to overthrow the Bavarian monarchy and its state religion, Roman Catholicism.^[40] There is no evidence that the Bavarian Illuminati survived its suppression in 1785.^[41]



Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Illuminati, an 18th-century Bavarian liberal and secular secret society

In the late 18th century, reactionary conspiracy theorists, such as Scottish physicist John Robison and French Jesuit priest Augustin Barruel, began speculating that the Illuminati had survived their suppression and become the masterminds behind the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. The Illuminati were accused of being subversives who were attempting to secretly orchestrate a revolutionary wave in Europe and the rest of the world in order to spread the most radical ideas and movements of the Enlightenment—anti-clericalism, anti-monarchism, and anti-patriarchalism—and to create a world noocracy and cult of reason. During the 19th century, fear of an Illuminati conspiracy was a real concern of the European ruling classes, and their oppressive reactions to this unfounded fear provoked in 1848 the very revolutions they sought to prevent.^[41]

During the interwar period of the 20th century, fascist propagandists, such as British revisionist historian Nesta Helen Webster and American socialite Edith Starr Miller, not only popularized the myth of an Illuminati conspiracy but claimed that it was a subversive secret society which served the Jewish elites that supposedly propped up both finance capitalism and Soviet communism in order to divide and rule the world. American evangelist Gerald Burton Winrod and other conspiracy theorists within the fundamentalist Christian movement in the United States—which emerged in the 1910s as a backlash against the principles of Enlightenment secular humanism, modernism, and liberalism—became the main channel of dissemination of Illuminati conspiracy theories in the U.S.. Right-wing populists, such as members of the John Birch Society, subsequently began speculating that some collegiate fraternities

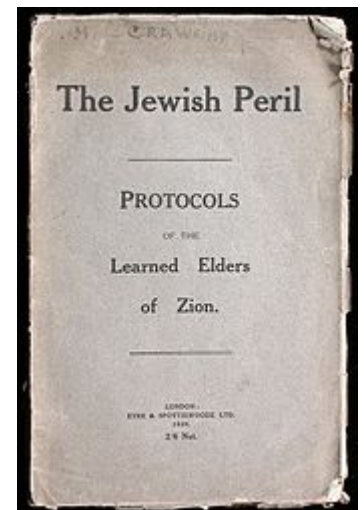
(Skull and Bones), gentlemen's clubs (Bohemian Club), and think tanks (Council on Foreign Relations, Trilateral Commission) of the American upper class are front organizations of the Illuminati, which they accuse of plotting to create a New World Order through a one-world government.^[6]

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is an antisemitic canard, originally published in Russian in 1903, alleging a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy to achieve world domination. The text purports to be the minutes of the secret meetings of a cabal of Jewish masterminds, which has co-opted Freemasonry and is plotting to rule the world on behalf of all Jews because they believe themselves to be the chosen people of God.^[42] *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-Tsarist movements in Russia. *The Protocols* reflect themes similar to more general critiques of Enlightenment liberalism by conservative aristocrats who support monarchies and state religions. The interpretation intended by the publication of *The Protocols* is that if one peels away the layers of the Masonic conspiracy, past the Illuminati, one finds the rotten Jewish core.^[15]

Numerous polemicists, such as Irish journalist Philip Graves in a 1921 article in *The Times*, and British academic Norman Cohn in his 1967 book *Warrant for Genocide*, have proven *The Protocols* to be both a hoax and a clear case of plagiarism. There is general agreement that Russian-French writer and political activist Matvei Golovinski fabricated the text for Okhrana, the secret police of the Russian Empire, as a work of counter-revolutionary propaganda prior to the 1905 Russian Revolution, by plagiarizing, almost word for word in some passages, from *The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*, a 19th-century satire against Napoleon III of France written by French political satirist and Legitimist militant Maurice Joly.^[43]

Responsible for feeding many antisemitic and anti-Masonic mass hysterias of the 20th century, *The Protocols* has been influential in the development of some conspiracy theories, including some New World Order theories, and appears repeatedly in certain contemporary conspiracy literature.^[6] For example, the authors of the 1982 controversial book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* concluded that *The Protocols* was the most persuasive piece of evidence for the existence and activities of the Priory of Sion. They speculated that this secret society was working behind the scenes to establish a theocratic "United States of Europe". Politically and religiously unified through the imperial cult of a Merovingian Great Monarch—supposedly descended from a Jesus bloodline—who occupies both the throne of Europe and the Holy See, this "Holy European Empire" would become the hyperpower of the 21st century.^[44] Although the Priory of Sion itself has been exhaustively debunked by journalists and scholars as a hoax,^[45] some apocalyptic millenarian Christian eschatologists who believe *The Protocols* is authentic became convinced that the Priory of Sion was a fulfillment of prophecies found in the Book of Revelation and further proof of an anti-Christian conspiracy of epic proportions signaling the imminence of a New World Order.^[46]



Cover of a 1920 copy of *The Jewish Peril*

Skeptics argue that the current gambit of contemporary conspiracy theorists who use *The Protocols* is to claim that they "really" come from some group other than the Jews, such as fallen angels or alien invaders. Although it is hard to determine whether the conspiracy-minded actually believe this or are

simply trying to sanitize a discredited text, skeptics argue that it does not make much difference, since they leave the actual, antisemitic text unchanged. The result is to give *The Protocols* credibility and circulation.^[8]

Round Table

During the second half of Britain's "imperial century" between 1815 and 1914, English-born South African businessman, mining magnate and politician Cecil Rhodes advocated the British Empire reannexing the United States of America and reforming itself into an "Imperial Federation" to bring about a hyperpower and lasting world peace. In his first will, written in 1877 at the age of 23, he expressed his wish to fund a secret society (known as the Society of the Elect) that would advance this goal:

To and for the establishment, promotion and development of a Secret Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be for the extension of British rule throughout the world, the perfecting of a system of emigration from the United Kingdom, and of colonisation by British subjects of all lands where the means of livelihood are attainable by energy, labour and enterprise, and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the Valley of the Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America, the Islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan, the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire, the inauguration of a system of Colonial representation in the Imperial Parliament which may tend to weld together the disjointed members of the Empire and, finally, the foundation of so great a Power as to render wars impossible, and promote the best interests of humanity.^[47]

In 1890, thirteen years after "his now famous will," Rhodes elaborated on the same idea: establishment of "England everywhere," which would "ultimately lead to the cessation of all wars, and one language throughout the world." "The only thing feasible to carry out this idea is a secret society gradually absorbing the wealth of the world ["and human minds of the higher order"] to be devoted to such an object."^[48]

Rhodes also concentrated on the Rhodes Scholarship, which had British statesman Alfred Milner as one of its trustees. Established in 1902, the original goal of the trust fund was to foster peace among the great powers by creating a sense of fraternity and a shared world view among future British, American, and German leaders by having enabled them to study for free at the University of Oxford.^[47]

Milner and British official Lionel George Curtis were the architects of the Round Table movement, a network of organizations promoting closer union between Britain and its self-governing colonies. To this end, Curtis founded the Royal Institute of International Affairs in June 1919 and, with his 1938 book *The Commonwealth of God*, began advocating for the creation of an imperial federation that eventually reannexes the U.S., which would be presented to Protestant churches as being the work of the Christian God to elicit their support.^[49] The Commonwealth of Nations was created in 1949 but it would only be a free association of independent states rather than the powerful imperial federation imagined by Rhodes, Milner and Curtis.



Magnate and colonist Cecil Rhodes advocated a secret society which would make Britain control the Earth

The Council on Foreign Relations began in 1917 with a group of New York academics who were asked by President Woodrow Wilson to offer options for the foreign policy of the United States in the interwar period. Originally envisioned as a group of American and British scholars and diplomats, some of whom belonging to the Round Table movement, it was a subsequent group of 108 New York financiers, manufacturers and international lawyers organized in June 1918 by Nobel Peace Prize recipient and U.S. secretary of state Elihu Root, that became the Council on Foreign Relations on 29 July 1921. The first of the council's projects was a quarterly journal launched in September 1922, called *Foreign Affairs*.^[50] The Trilateral Commission was founded in July 1973, at the initiative of American banker David Rockefeller, who was chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations at that time. It is a private organization established to foster closer cooperation among the United States, Europe and Japan. The Trilateral Commission is widely seen as a counterpart to the Council on Foreign Relations.

In the 1960s, right-wing populist individuals and groups with a paleoconservative worldview, such as members of the John Birch Society, were the first to combine and spread a business nationalist critique of corporate internationalists networked through think tanks such as the Council on Foreign Relations with a grand conspiracy theory casting them as front organizations for the Round Table of the "Anglo-American Establishment", which are financed by an "international banking cabal" that has supposedly been plotting from the late 19th century on to impose an oligarchic new world order through a global financial system. Anti-globalist conspiracy theorists therefore fear that international bankers are planning to eventually subvert the independence of the U.S. by subordinating national sovereignty to a strengthened Bank for International Settlements.^[51]

The research findings of historian Carroll Quigley, author of the 1966 book *Tragedy and Hope*, are taken by both conspiracy theorists of the American Old Right (W. Cleon Skousen) and New Left (Carl Oglesby) to substantiate this view, even though Quigley argued that the Establishment is not involved in a plot to implement a one-world government but rather British and American benevolent imperialism driven by the mutual interests of economic elites in the United Kingdom and the United States. Quigley also argued that, although the Round Table still exists today, its position in influencing the policies of world leaders has been much reduced from its heyday during World War I and slowly waned after the end of World War II and the Suez Crisis. Today the Round Table is largely a ginger group, designed to consider and gradually influence the policies of the Commonwealth of Nations, but faces strong opposition. Furthermore, in American society after 1965, the problem, according to Quigley, was that no elite was in charge and acting responsibly.^[51]

Larry McDonald, the second president of the John Birch Society and a conservative Democratic member of the United States House of Representatives who represented the 7th congressional district of Georgia, wrote a foreword for Allen's 1976 book *The Rockefeller File*, wherein he claimed that the Rockefellers and their allies were driven by a desire to create a one-world government that combined "super-capitalism" with communism and would be fully under their control. He saw a conspiracy plot that was "international in scope, generations old in planning, and incredibly evil in intent."^[52]

In his 2002 autobiography *Memoirs*, David Rockefeller wrote:

For more than a century ideological extremists at either end of the political spectrum have seized upon well-publicized incidents ... to attack the Rockefeller family for the inordinate influence they claim we wield over American political and economic institutions. Some even believe we are part of a secret cabal working against the best interests of the United States, characterizing my family and me as 'internationalists' and of conspiring with others around the world to build a more integrated global political and economic structure—one world, if you will. If that's the charge, I stand guilty, and I am proud of it.^[53]

Barkun argues that this statement is partly facetious (the claim of "conspiracy" and "treason") and partly serious—the desire to encourage trilateral cooperation among the U.S., Europe, and Japan, for example—an ideal that used to be a hallmark of the internationalist wing of the Republican Party (known as "Rockefeller Republicans" in honor of Nelson Rockefeller) when there was an internationalist wing. The statement, however, is taken at face value and widely cited by conspiracy theorists as proof that the Council on Foreign Relations uses its role as the brain trust of American presidents, senators and representatives to manipulate them into supporting a New World Order in the form of a one-world government.

In a 13 November 2007 interview with Canadian journalist Benjamin Fulford, Rockefeller countered that he felt no need for a world government and wished for the governments of the world to work together and collaborate. He also stated that it seemed neither likely nor desirable to have only one elected government rule the whole world. He criticized accusations of him being "ruler of the world" as nonsensical.^[54]

Some American social critics, such as Laurence H. Shoup, argue that the Council on Foreign Relations is an "imperial brain trust" which has, for decades, played a central behind-the-scenes role in shaping U.S. foreign policy choices for the post-World War II international order and the Cold War by determining what options show up on the agenda and what options do not even make it to the table;^[55] others, such as G. William Domhoff, argue that it is in fact a mere policy discussion forum^[56] which provides the business input to U.S. foreign policy planning. Domhoff argues that "[i]t has nearly 3,000 members, far too many for secret plans to be kept within the group. All the council does is sponsor discussion groups, debates and speakers. As far as being secretive, it issues annual reports and allows access to its historical archives." However, all these critics agree that "[h]istorical studies of the CFR show that it has a very different role in the overall power structure than what is claimed by conspiracy theorists."^[56]

The Open Conspiracy

In his 1928 book *The Open Conspiracy* British writer and futurist H. G. Wells promoted cosmopolitanism and offered blueprints for a world revolution and world brain to establish a technocratic world state and planned economy.^[57] Wells warned, however, in his 1940 book *The New World Order* that:

... when the struggle seems to be drifting definitely towards a world social democracy, there may still be very great delays and disappointments before it becomes an efficient and beneficent world system. Countless people ... will hate the new world order, be rendered unhappy by the frustration of their passions and ambitions through its advent and will die protesting against it. When we attempt to evaluate its promise, we have to bear in mind the distress of a generation or so of malcontents, many of them quite gallant and graceful-looking people.^[13]



H. G. Wells wrote the books *The Open Conspiracy* and *The New World Order*

Wells's books were influential in giving a second meaning to the term "new world order", which would only be used by state socialist supporters and anti-communist opponents for generations to come. However, despite the popularity and notoriety of his ideas, Wells failed to exert a deeper and more lasting influence because he was unable to concentrate his energies on a direct appeal to intelligentsias who would, ultimately, have to coordinate the Wellsian new world order.^[58]

New Age

British neo-Theosophical occultist Alice Bailey, one of the founders of the so-called New Age movement, prophesied in 1940 the eventual victory of the Allies of World War II over the Axis powers (which occurred in 1945) and the establishment by the Allies of a political and religious New World Order. She saw a federal world government as the culmination of Wells' Open Conspiracy but favorably argued that it would be synarchist because it was guided by the Masters of the Ancient Wisdom, intent on preparing humanity for the mystical second coming of Christ, and the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. According to Bailey, a group of ascended masters called the Great White Brotherhood works on the "inner planes" to oversee the transition to the New World Order but, for now, the members of this Spiritual Hierarchy are only known to a few occult scientists, with whom they communicate telepathically, but as the need for their personal involvement in the plan increases, there will be an "Externalization of the Hierarchy" and everyone will know of their presence on Earth.^[59]

Bailey's writings, along with American writer Marilyn Ferguson's 1980 book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, contributed to conspiracy theorists of the Christian right viewing the New Age movement as the "false religion" that would supersede Christianity in a New World Order.^[60] Skeptics argue that the term "New Age movement" is a misnomer, generally used by conspiracy theorists as a catch-all rubric for any new religious movement that is not fundamentalist Christian. By this logic, anything that is not Christian is by definition actively and willfully anti-Christian.^[61]



New Age author Alice Bailey's writings have been condemned by Christian right conspiracy theorists

Paradoxically, since the first decade of the 21st century, New World Order conspiracism is increasingly being embraced and propagandized by New Age occultists, who are people bored by rationalism and drawn to stigmatized knowledge—such as alternative medicine, astrology, quantum mysticism, spiritualism, and theosophy.^[6] Thus, New Age conspiracy theorists, such as the makers of documentary films like *Esoteric Agenda*, claim that globalists who plot on behalf of the New World Order are simply misusing occultism for Machiavellian ends, such as adopting 21 December 2012 as the exact date for the establishment of the New World Order for the purpose of taking advantage of the growing 2012 phenomenon, which has its origins in the fringe Mayanist theories of New Age writers José Argüelles, Terence McKenna, and Daniel Pinchbeck.

Skeptics argue that the connection of conspiracy theorists and occultists follows from their common fallacious premises. First, any widely accepted belief must necessarily be false. Second, stigmatized knowledge—what the Establishment spurns—must be true. The result is a large, self-referential network in which, for example, some UFO religionists promote anti-Jewish phobias while some antisemites practice Peruvian shamanism.^[6]

Fourth Reich

Conspiracy theorists often use the term "Fourth Reich" simply as a pejorative synonym for the "New World Order" to imply that its state ideology and government will be similar to Germany's Third Reich.

Conspiracy theorists, such as American writer Jim Marrs, claim that some ex-Nazis, who survived the fall of the Greater German Reich, along with sympathizers in the United States and elsewhere, given haven by organizations like ODESSA and Die Spinne, have been working behind the scenes since the end of World War II to enact at least some principles of Nazism (e.g., militarism, imperialism, widespread spying on citizens, corporatism, the use of propaganda to manufacture a national consensus) into

culture, government, and business worldwide, but primarily in the U.S. They cite the influence of ex-Nazi scientists brought in under Operation Paperclip to help advance aerospace manufacturing in the U.S. with technological principles from Nazi UFOs, and the acquisition and creation of conglomerates by ex-Nazis and their sympathizers after the war, in both Europe and the U.S.^[62]

This neo-Nazi conspiracy is said to be animated by an "Iron Dream" in which the American Empire, having thwarted the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy and overthrown its Zionist Occupation Government, gradually establishes a Fourth Reich formerly known as the "Western Imperium"—a pan-Aryan world empire modeled after Adolf Hitler's New Order—which reverses the "decline of the West" and ushers a golden age of white supremacy.^[63]

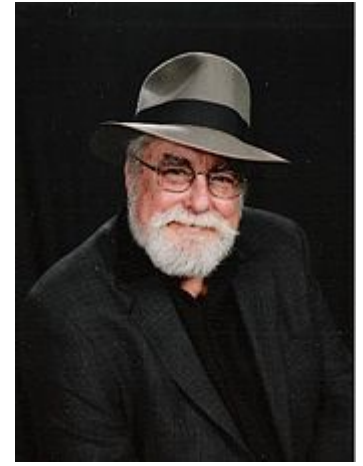
Skeptics argue that conspiracy theorists grossly overestimate the influence of ex-Nazis and neo-Nazis on American society, and point out that political repression at home and imperialism abroad have a long history in the United States that predates the 20th century. Some political scientists, such as Sheldon Wolin, have expressed concern that the twin forces of democratic deficit and superpower status have paved the way in the U.S. for the emergence of an inverted totalitarianism which contradicts many principles of Nazism.^[64]

Alien invasion

Since the late 1970s, extraterrestrials from other habitable planets or parallel dimensions (such as "Greys") and intraterrestrials from Hollow Earth (such as "Reptilians") have been included in the New World Order conspiracy, in more or less dominant roles, as in the theories put forward by American writers Stan Deyo and Milton William Cooper, and British writer David Icke.^{[6][65][66]}

The common theme in these conspiracy theories is that aliens have been among us for decades, centuries or millennia, but a government cover-up enforced by "Men in Black" has shielded the public from knowledge of a secret alien invasion. Motivated by speciesism and imperialism, these aliens have been and are secretly manipulating developments and changes in human society in order to more efficiently control and exploit human beings. In some theories, alien infiltrators have shapeshifted into human form and move freely throughout human society, even to the point of taking control of command positions in governmental, corporate, and religious institutions, and are now in the final stages of their plan to take over the world.^[66] A mythical covert government agency of the United States code-named Majestic 12 is often imagined being the shadow government which collaborates with the alien occupation and permits alien abductions, in exchange for assistance in the development and testing of military "flying saucers" at Area 51, in order for United States armed forces to achieve full-spectrum dominance.^[6]

Skeptics, who adhere to the psychosocial hypothesis for unidentified flying objects, argue that the convergence of New World Order conspiracy theory and UFO conspiracy theory is a product of not only the era's widespread mistrust of governments and the popularity of the extraterrestrial hypothesis for



American writer Jim Marrs claimed that former Nazis and their sympathizers have been continuing Nazi policies worldwide, especially in the United States



British writer David Icke claims that shapeshifting aliens called Reptilians control the Earth

UFOs but of the far right and ufologists actually joining forces. Barkun notes that the only positive side to this development is that, if conspirators plotting to rule the world are believed to be aliens, traditional human scapegoats (Freemasons, Illuminati, Jews, etc.) are downgraded or exonerated.^[6]

Brave New World

Antiscience and neo-Luddite conspiracy theorists emphasize technology forecasting in their New World Order conspiracy theories. They speculate that the global power elite is reactionary modernists pursuing a transhumanist agenda to develop and use human enhancement technologies in order to become a "posthuman ruling caste", while change accelerates toward a technological singularity—a theorized future point of discontinuity when events will accelerate at such a pace that normal unenhanced humans will be unable to predict or even understand the rapid changes occurring in the world around them. Conspiracy theorists fear the outcome will either be the emergence of a *Brave New World*-like dystopia—a "Brave New World Order"—or the extinction of the human species.^[67]



One World !

Democratic transhumanists, such as American sociologist James Hughes, counter that many influential members of the United States Establishment are bioconservatives strongly opposed to human enhancement, as demonstrated by President Bush's Council on Bioethics's proposed international treaty prohibiting human cloning and germline engineering. Furthermore, he argues that conspiracy theorists underestimate how fringe the transhumanist movement really is.^[68]

Postulated implementations

Just as there are several overlapping or conflicting theories among conspiracists about the nature of the New World Order, so are there several beliefs about how its architects and planners will implement it:

Gradualism

Conspiracy theorists generally speculate that the New World Order is being implemented gradually, citing the formation of the U.S. Federal Reserve System in 1913; the League of Nations in 1919; the International Monetary Fund in 1944; the United Nations in 1945; the World Bank in 1945; the World Health Organization in 1948; the European Union and the euro currency in 1993; the World Trade Organization in 1998; the African Union in 2002; and the Union of South American Nations in 2008 as major milestones.^[6]

An increasingly popular conspiracy theory among American right-wing populists is that the hypothetical North American Union and the amero currency, proposed by the Council on Foreign Relations and its counterparts in Mexico and Canada, will be the next milestone in the implementation of the New World Order. The theory holds that a group of shadowy and mostly nameless international elites are planning to replace the federal government of the United States with a transnational government. Therefore, conspiracy theorists believe the borders between Mexico, Canada and the United States are in the process of being erased, covertly, by a group of globalists whose ultimate goal is to replace national governments in Washington, D.C., Ottawa and Mexico City with a European-style political union and a bloated E.U.-style bureaucracy.^[69]

Skeptics argue that the North American Union exists only as a proposal contained in one of a thousand academic and policy papers published each year that advocate all manner of idealistic but ultimately unrealistic approaches to social, economic and political problems. Most of these are passed around in their own circles and eventually filed away and forgotten by junior staffers in congressional offices. Some of these papers, however, become touchstones for the conspiracy-minded and form the basis of all kinds of unfounded xenophobic fears especially during times of economic anxiety.^[69]

For example, in March 2009, as a result of the late-2000s financial crisis, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation pressed for urgent consideration of a new international reserve currency and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development proposed greatly expanding the I.M.F.'s special drawing rights. Conspiracy theorists fear these proposals are a call for the U.S. to adopt a single global currency for a New World Order.^{[70][71]}

Judging that both national governments and global institutions have proven ineffective in addressing worldwide problems that go beyond the capacity of individual nation-states to solve, some political scientists critical of New World Order conspiracism, such as Mark C. Partridge, argue that regionalism will be the major force in the coming decades, pockets of power around regional centers: Western Europe around Brussels, the Western Hemisphere around Washington, D.C., East Asia around Beijing, and Eastern Europe around Moscow. As such, the E.U., the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and the G-20 will likely become more influential as time progresses. The question then is not whether global governance is gradually emerging, but rather how will these regional powers interact with one another.^[72]

Coup d'état

American right-wing populist conspiracy theorists, especially those who joined the militia movement in the United States, speculate that the New World Order will be implemented through a dramatic coup d'état by a "secret team", using black helicopters, in the U.S. and other nation-states to bring about a totalitarian world government controlled by the United Nations and enforced by troops of foreign U.N. peacekeepers. Following the Rex 84 and Operation Garden Plot plans, this military coup would involve the suspension of the Constitution, the imposition of martial law, and the appointment of military commanders to head state and local governments and to detain dissidents.^[73]



The American militia movement claim that a coup d'état will be launched by a "Secret Team" in black helicopters

These conspiracy theorists, who are all strong believers in a right to keep and bear arms, are extremely fearful that the passing of any gun control legislation will be later followed by the abolishment of personal gun ownership and a campaign of gun confiscation, and that the refugee camps of emergency management agencies such as FEMA will be used for the internment of suspected subversives, making little effort to distinguish true threats to the New World Order from pacifist dissidents.^[24]

Before 2000, some survivalists wrongly believed this process would be set in motion by the predicted Y2K problem causing societal collapse.^[74] Since many left-wing and right-wing conspiracy theorists believe that the 11 September attacks were a false flag operation carried out by the United States intelligence community, as part of a strategy of tension to justify political repression at home and preemptive war abroad, they have become convinced that a more catastrophic terrorist incident will be responsible for triggering Executive Directive 51 in order to complete the transition to a police state.^[75]

Skeptics argue that unfounded fears about an imminent or eventual gun ban, military coup, internment, or U.N. invasion and occupation are rooted in the siege mentality of the American militia movement but also an apocalyptic millenarianism which provides a basic narrative within the political right in the U.S., claiming that the idealized society (i.e., constitutional republic, Jeffersonian democracy, "Christian nation", "white nation") is thwarted by subversive conspiracies of liberal secular humanists who want "Big Government" and globalists who plot on behalf of the New World Order.^[15]

Mass surveillance

Conspiracy theorists concerned with surveillance abuse believe that the New World Order is being implemented by the cult of intelligence at the core of the surveillance-industrial complex through mass surveillance and the use of Social Security numbers, the bar-coding of retail goods with Universal Product Code markings, and, most recently, RFID tagging by microchip implants.^[6]

Claiming that corporations and government are planning to track every move of consumers and citizens with RFID as the latest step toward a 1984-like surveillance state, consumer privacy advocates, such as Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre,^[76] have become Christian conspiracy theorists who believe spychips must be resisted because they argue that modern database and communications technologies, coupled with point of sale data-capture equipment and sophisticated ID and authentication systems, now make it possible to require a biometrically associated number or mark to make purchases. They fear that the ability to implement such a system closely resembles the Number of the Beast prophesied in the Book of Revelation.^[6]

In January 2002, the Information Awareness Office (IAO) was established by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to bring together several DARPA projects focused on applying information technology to counter asymmetric threats to national security. Following public criticism that the development and deployment of these technologies could potentially lead to a mass surveillance system, the IAO was defunded by the United States Congress in 2003.^[77] The second source of controversy involved IAO's original logo, which depicted the "all-seeing" Eye of Providence atop of a pyramid looking down over the globe, accompanied by the Latin phrase *scientia est potentia* (knowledge is power). Although DARPA eventually removed the logo from its website, it left a lasting impression on privacy advocates.^[78] It also inflamed conspiracy theorists,^[79] who misinterpret the "eye and pyramid" as the Masonic symbol of the Illuminati,^{[36][80]} an 18th-century secret society they speculate continues to exist and is plotting on behalf of a New World Order.^{[40][41]}

American historian Richard Landes, who specializes in the history of apocalypticism and was co-founder and director of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University, argues that new and emerging technologies often trigger alarmism among millenarians and even the introduction of Gutenberg's printing press in 1436 caused waves of apocalyptic thinking. The Year 2000 problem, bar codes and Social Security numbers all triggered end-time warnings which either proved to be false or simply were no longer taken seriously once the public became accustomed to these technological changes.^[81] Civil libertarians argue that the privatization of surveillance and the rise of the surveillance-industrial complex in the United States does raise legitimate concerns about the erosion of privacy.^[82] However, skeptics of mass surveillance conspiracism caution that such concerns should be disentangled from secular paranoia about Big Brother or religious hysteria about the Antichrist.^[6]

Occultism

Conspiracy theorists of the Christian right, starting with British revisionist historian Nesta Helen Webster, believe there is an ancient occult conspiracy—started by the first mystagogues of Gnosticism and perpetuated by their alleged esoteric successors, such as the Kabbalists, Cathars, Knights Templar, Hermeticists, Rosicrucians, Freemasons, and, ultimately, the Illuminati—which seeks to subvert the Judeo-Christian foundations of the Western world and implement the New World Order through a one-world religion that prepares the masses to embrace the imperial cult of the Antichrist.^[6] More broadly, they speculate that globalists who plot on behalf of a New World Order are directed by occult agencies of some sort: unknown superiors, spiritual hierarchies, demons, fallen angels or Lucifer. They believe that these conspirators use the power of occult sciences (numerology), symbols (Eye of Providence), rituals (Masonic degrees), monuments (National Mall landmarks), buildings (Manitoba Legislative Building^[83]) and facilities (Denver International Airport) to advance their plot to rule the world.^{[6][84]}

For example, in June 1979, an unknown benefactor under the pseudonym "R. C. Christian" had a huge granite megalith built in the U.S. state of Georgia, which acts like a compass, calendar, and clock. A message comprising ten guides is inscribed on the occult structure in many languages to serve as instructions for survivors of a doomsday event to establish a more enlightened and sustainable civilization than the one which was destroyed. The "Georgia Guidestones" have subsequently become a spiritual and political Rorschach test onto which any number of ideas can be imposed. Some New Agers and neo-pagans revere it as a ley-line power nexus while a few conspiracy theorists are convinced that they are engraved with the New World Order's anti-Christian "Ten Commandments." Should the Guidestones survive for centuries as their creators intended, many more meanings could arise, equally unrelated to the designer's original intention.^[85]

Skeptics argue that the demonization of Western esotericism by conspiracy theorists is rooted in religious intolerance but also in the same moral panics that have fueled witch trials in the Early Modern period, and satanic ritual abuse allegations in the United States.^[6]

Population control

Conspiracy theorists believe that the New World Order will also be implemented through the use of human population control in order to more easily monitor and control the movement of individuals.^[6] The means range from stopping the growth of human societies through reproductive health and family planning programs, which promote abstinence, contraception and abortion, or intentionally reducing the bulk of the world population through genocides by mongering unnecessary wars, through plagues by engineering emergent viruses and tainting vaccines, and through environmental disasters by controlling the weather (HAARP, chemtrails), etc. Conspiracy theorists argue that globalists plotting on behalf of a New World Order are neo-Malthusians who engage in overpopulation and climate change alarmism in order to create public support for coercive population control and ultimately world government. United Nations Agenda 21 is condemned as "reconcentrating" people into urban areas and depopulating rural ones, even generating a dystopian novel by Glenn Beck where single-family homes are a distant memory.

Skeptics argue that fears of population control can be traced back to the traumatic legacy of the eugenics movement's "war against the weak" in the United States during the first decades of the 20th century but also the Second Red Scare in the U.S. during the late 1940s and 1950s, and to a lesser extent in the 1960s, when activists on the far right of American politics routinely opposed public health programs, notably water fluoridation, mass vaccination and mental health services, by asserting they were all part of a far-reaching plot to impose a socialist or communist regime.^[86] Their views were influenced by opposition to a number of major social and political changes that had happened in recent years: the growth of internationalism, particularly the United Nations and its programs; the introduction of social welfare provisions, particularly the various programs established by the New Deal; and government efforts to

reduce inequalities in the social structure of the U.S.^[87] Opposition towards mass vaccinations in particular got significant attention in the late 2010s, so much so the World Health Organization listed vaccine hesitancy as one of the top ten global health threats of 2019. By this time, people that refused or refused to allow their children to be vaccinated were known colloquially as "anti-vaxxers", though citing the New World Order conspiracy theory or resistance to a perceived population control agenda as a reason to refuse vaccination were few and far between.^{[88][89]}

Mind control

Social critics accuse governments, corporations, and the mass media of being involved in the manufacturing of a national consensus and, paradoxically, a culture of fear due to the potential for increased social control that a mistrustful and mutually fearing population might offer to those in power. The worst fear of some conspiracy theorists, however, is that the New World Order will be implemented through the use of mind control—a broad range of tactics able to subvert an individual's control of his or her own thinking, behavior, emotions, or decisions. These tactics are said to include everything from Manchurian candidate-style brainwashing of sleeper agents (Project MKULTRA, "Project Monarch") to engineering psychological operations (water fluoridation, subliminal advertising, "Silent Sound Spread Spectrum", MEDUSA) and parapsychological operations (Stargate Project) to influence the masses.^[90] The concept of wearing a tin foil hat for protection from such threats has become a popular stereotype and term of derision; the phrase serves as a byword for paranoia and is associated with conspiracy theorists.

Skeptics argue that the paranoia behind a conspiracy theorist's obsession with mind control, population control, occultism, surveillance abuse, Big Business, Big Government, and globalization arises from a combination of two factors, when he or she: 1) holds strong individualist values and 2) lacks power. The first attribute refers to people who care deeply about an individual's right to make their own choices and direct their own lives without interference or obligations to a larger system (like the government), but combine this with a sense of powerlessness in one's own life, and one gets what some psychologists call "agency panic," intense anxiety about an apparent loss of autonomy to outside forces or regulators. When fervent individualists feel that they cannot exercise their independence, they experience a crisis and assume that larger forces are to blame for usurping this freedom.^{[91][92]}

Alleged conspirators

According to Domhoff, many people seem to believe that the United States is ruled from behind the scenes by a conspiratorial elite with secret desires, i.e., by a small secretive group that wants to change the government system or put the country under the control of a world government. In the past, the conspirators were usually said to be crypto-communists who were intent upon bringing the United States under a common world government with the Soviet Union, but the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 undercut that theory. Domhoff notes that most conspiracy theorists changed their focus to the United Nations as the likely controlling force in a New World Order, an idea which is undermined by the powerlessness of the U.N. and the unwillingness of even moderates within the American Establishment to give it anything but a limited role.^[56]

Although skeptical of New World Order conspiracism, political scientist David Rothkopf argues, in the 2008 book *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*, that the world population of 6 billion people is governed by an elite of 6,000 individuals. Until the late 20th century, governments of the great powers provided most of the superclass, accompanied by a few heads of international movements (i.e., the Pope of the Catholic Church) and entrepreneurs (Rothschilds, Rockefellers). According to Rothkopf, in the early 21st century, economic clout—fueled by the explosive

expansion of international trade, travel and communication—rules; the nation-state's power has diminished shrinking politicians to minority power broker status; leaders in international business, finance and the defense industry not only dominate the superclass, but they also move freely into high positions in their nations' governments and back to private life largely beyond the notice of elected legislatures (including the U.S. Congress), which remain abysmally ignorant of affairs beyond their borders. He asserts that the superclass' disproportionate influence over national policy is constructive but always self-interested and that across the world, few object to corruption and oppressive governments provided they can do business in these countries.^[93]

Viewing the history of the world as the history of warfare between secret societies, conspiracy theorists go further than Rothkopf, and other scholars who have studied the global power elite, by claiming that established upper-class families with "old money" who founded and finance the Bilderberg Group, Bohemian Club, Club of Rome, Council on Foreign Relations, Rhodes Trust, Skull and Bones, Trilateral Commission, and similar think tanks and private clubs, are illuminated conspirators plotting to impose a totalitarian New World Order—the implementation of an authoritarian world government controlled by the United Nations and a global central bank, which maintains political power through the financialization of the economy, regulation and restriction of speech through the concentration of media ownership, mass surveillance, widespread use of state terrorism, and an all-encompassing propaganda that creates a cult of personality around a puppet world leader and ideologizes world government as the culmination of history's progress.^[6]

Marxists, who are skeptical of right-wing populist conspiracy theories, also accuse the global power elite of not having the best interests of all at heart, and many intergovernmental organizations of suffering from a democratic deficit, but they argue that the superclass are plutocrats only interested in brazenly imposing a neoliberal or neoconservative new world order—the implementation of global capitalism through economic and military coercion to protect the interests of transnational corporations—which systematically undermines the possibility of a socialist one-world government.^[94] Arguing that the world is in the middle of a transition from the American Empire to the rule of a global ruling class that has emerged from within the American Empire, they point out that right-wing populist conspiracy theorists, blinded by their anti-communism, fail to see is that what they demonize as the "New World Order" is, ironically, the highest stage of the very capitalist economic system they defend.^[94]

Criticism

Skeptics of New World Order conspiracy theories accuse its proponents of indulging in the furtive fallacy, a belief that significant facts of history are necessarily sinister; conspiracism, a world view that centrally places conspiracy theories in the unfolding of history, rather than social and economic forces; and fusion paranoia, a promiscuous absorption of fears from any source whatsoever.^[6]

Domhoff, a research professor in psychology and sociology who studies theories of power, wrote in 2005 an essay entitled *There Are No Conspiracies*. He says that for this theory to be true it required several "wealthy and highly educated people" to do things that don't "fit with what we know about power structures". Claims that this will happen go back decades and have always been proved wrong.

Partridge, a contributing editor to the global affairs magazine *Diplomatic Courier*, wrote a 2008 article entitled *One World Government: Conspiracy Theory or Inevitable Future?* He says that if anything nationalism, which is the opposite of a global government, is rising. He also says that attempts at creating global governments or global agreements "have been categorical failures" and where "supranational governance exist they are noted for their bureaucracy and inefficiency."

Although some cultural critics see superconspiracy theories about a New World Order as "postmodern metanarratives" that may be politically empowering, a way of giving ordinary people a narrative structure with which to question what they see around them,^[95] skeptics argue that conspiracism leads people into cynicism, convoluted thinking, and a tendency to feel it is hopeless even as they denounce the alleged conspirators.^[96]

Alexander Zaitchik from the Southern Poverty Law Center wrote a report titled "'Patriot' Paranoia: A Look at the Top Ten Conspiracy Theories", in which he personally condemns such conspiracies as an effort of the radical right to undermine society.^[97]

Concerned that the improvisational millennialism of most conspiracy theories about a New World Order might motivate lone wolves to engage in leaderless resistance leading to domestic terrorist incidents like the Oklahoma City bombing,^[98] Barkun writes that "the danger lies less in such beliefs themselves ... than in the behavior they might stimulate or justify" and warns "should they believe that the prophesied evil day had in fact arrived, their behavior would become far more difficult to predict."

Warning of the threat to American democracy posed by right-wing populist movements led by demagogues who mobilize support for mob rule or even a fascist revolution by exploiting the fear of conspiracies, Berlet writes that "Right-wing populist movements can cause serious damage to a society 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 populist movements, such as fascism, to recruit from the reformist populist movements."

Hughes, a professor of religion, warns that no religious idea has greater potential for shaping global politics in profoundly negative ways than "the new world order". He writes in a February 2011 article entitled *Revelation, Revolutions, and the Tyrannical New World Order* that "the crucial piece of this puzzle is the identity of the Antichrist, the tyrannical figure who both leads and inspires the new world order". This has in turn been the Soviet Union and the Arab world. He says that inspires believers to "welcome war with the Islamic world" and opens the door to nuclear holocaust."

Criticisms of New World Order conspiracy theorists also come from within their own community. Despite believing themselves to be "freedom fighters", many right-wing populist conspiracy theorists hold views that are incompatible with their professed libertarianism, such as dominionism, white supremacism, and even eliminationism.^{[15][99]} This paradox has led Icke, who argues that Christian Patriots are the only Americans who understand the truth about the New World Order (which he believes is controlled by a race of reptilians known as the "Babylonian Brotherhood"), to reportedly tell a Christian Patriot group, "I don't know which I dislike more, the world controlled by the Brotherhood or the one you want to replace it with."

See also

- Anti-globalization movement
- Criticisms of globalization
- Zionist Occupation Government conspiracy theory

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External links

- World Government summit (<https://worldgovernmentsummit.org/>) Official Website
-  Quotations related to New World Order at Wikiquote

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Jewish deicide

Jewish deicide was a theological position that had been formalised in early Christianity that the Jewish people were collectively and forever responsible for the death of Jesus,^{[1][2]} a charge that was made as early as Justin Martyr and Melito of Sardis.^[3] This anti-Judaic accusation, that the Jews were Christ-killers, fed into Christian antisemitism.^[4] The slur proliferated and was used to incite mobs into hostility and even all forms of violence against Jews, including pogroms, massacres of Jews during the Crusades, expulsion of the Jewish population from England, France, Spain, Portugal and other places, and tortures of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions and genocide of the Holocaust.^[5]

In the catechism produced by the Council of Trent in the mid-16th century, the Catholic Church taught that the collectivity of sinful humanity was responsible for the death of Jesus, not only the Jews.^[6]

In the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic Church under Pope Paul VI issued the declaration *Nostra aetate* that repudiated the previous doctrine of collective Jewish guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus.^[1] It declared that the accusation could not be made "against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today". Nevertheless, a number of Christian groups, including within the Catholic Church, reject the Second Vatican Council declaration and continue to espouse anti-Jewish views, including the charge of Jewish deicide.

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Matthew 27:24–25

Justification of the charge of Jewish deicide has been sought in Matthew 27:24–25:

So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

The verse which reads: "And all the people answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'" is also referred to as the blood curse. In an essay regarding antisemitism, biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine argues that this passage has caused more Jewish suffering throughout history than any other passage in the New Testament.^[7]

Many also point to the Gospel of John as evidence of Christian charges of deicide. As Samuel Sandmel writes, "John is widely regarded as either the most anti-Semitic or at least the most overtly anti-Semitic of the gospels."^[8] Support for this claim comes in several places throughout John, such as in John 5:16–18:

So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. In his defense Jesus said to them, "My father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Some scholars describe this passage as irrefutably referencing and implicating the Jews in deicide, although many, such as scholar Robert Kysar, also argue that part of the severity of this charge comes more from those who read and understand the text than the text itself. For instance, John renders the character of the *Ioudaioi*, the Jew, as a clear antagonist and Christ-killer, although the notion that the Jew is meant to in fact represent all Jews is often disputed.^[9] While the New Testament is often more subtle or leveled in accusations of deicide, many scholars hold that these works cannot be held in isolation, and must be considered in the context of their interpretation by later Christian communities.^[10]

Historicity of Matthew 27:24–25

According to the gospel accounts, Jewish authorities in Roman Judea charged Jesus with blasphemy and sought his execution, but lacked the authority to have Jesus put to death (John 18:31), so they brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of the province, who authorized Jesus' execution (John 19:16).^[11] The Jesus Seminar's *Scholars Version* translation note for John 18:31 adds: "*it's illegal for us: The accuracy of this claim is doubtful.*" It is noted, for example, that Jewish authorities were responsible for the stoning of Saint Stephen in Acts 7:54 and of James the Just in Antiquities of the Jews^[12] without the consent of the governor. Josephus however, notes that the execution of James happened while the newly appointed governor Lucceius Albinus "was but upon the road" to assume his office. Also Acts relates that the stoning happened in a lynching-like manner, in the course of Stephen's public criticism of Jews who refused to believe in Jesus.

It has also been suggested that the Gospel accounts may have downplayed the role of the Romans in Jesus' death during a time when Christianity was struggling to gain acceptance among the then pagan or polytheist Roman world.^[13] Matthew 27:24–25, quoted above, has no counterpart in the other Gospels and some scholars see it as probably related to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D.^[14] Ulrich

Luz describes it as "redactional fiction" invented by the author of the Gospel of Matthew.^[15] Some writers, viewing it as part of Matthew's anti-Jewish polemic, see in it the seeds of later Christian antisemitism.^[16]

In his 2011 book, Pope Benedict XVI, besides repudiating placing blame on the Jewish people, interprets the passage found in the Gospel of Matthew which has the crowd saying "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children" as not referring to the whole Jewish people.^{[17][18]}

Historicity of Barabbas

Some biblical scholars including Benjamin Urrutia and Hyam Maccoby go a step further by not only doubting the historicity of the blood curse statement in Matthew but also the existence of Barabbas.^[19] This theory is based on the fact that Barabbas's full name was given in early writings as Jesus Barabbas,^[20] meaning literally Jesus, son of the father. The theory is that this name originally referred to Jesus himself, and that when the crowd asked Pilate to release "Jesus, son of the father" they were referring to Jesus himself, as suggested also by Peter Cresswell.^{[21][22]} The theory suggests that further details around Barabbas are historical fiction based on a misunderstanding. The theory is disputed by other scholars.^[23]



Pilate Washes His Hands
by James Tissot – Brooklyn Museum

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians also contains accusations of Jewish deicide:

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men. (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15)

According to Jeremy Cohen:

Even before the Gospels appeared, the apostle Paul (or, more probably, one of his disciples) portrayed the Jews as Christ's killers ... But though the New Testament clearly looks to the Jews as responsible for the death of Jesus, Paul and the evangelists did not yet condemn all Jews, by the very fact of their Jewishness, as murderers of the son of God and his messiah. That condemnation, however, was soon to come.^[24]

2nd century

The identification of the death of Jesus as the killing of God is first explicit in "God is murdered"^[25] as early as 167 AD, in a tract bearing the title *Peri Pascha* that may have been designed to bolster a minor Christian sect's presence in Sardis, where Jews had a thriving community with excellent relations with Greeks, and which is attributed to a Quartodeciman, Melito of Sardis,^[26] a statement is made that appears to have transformed the charge that Jews had killed their own Messiah into the charge that the Jews had killed God himself.

He who hung the earth in place is hanged; he who fixed the heavens has been fixed; he who fastened the universe has been fastened to a tree; the Sovereign has been insulted; the God has been murdered; the King of Israel has been put to death by an Israelite right hand. (lines 95–96)

If so, the author would be the first writer in the Lukan-Pauline tradition to raise unambiguously the accusation of deicide against Jews.^{[27][28]} This text blames the Jews for allowing King Herod and Caiaphas to execute Jesus, despite their calling as God's people (i.e., both were Jewish). It says "you did not know, O Israel, that this one was the firstborn of God". The author does not attribute particular blame to Pontius Pilate, but only mentions that Pilate washed his hands of guilt.^[29]

4th century

John Chrysostom made the charge of deicide the cornerstone of his theology.^[30] He was the first to use the term *deicide*^[31] and the first Christian preacher to apply the word *deicide* to the Jewish nation.^{[32][33]} He held that for this putative 'deicide', there was no expiation, pardon or indulgence possible.^[34] The first occurrence of the Latin word *deicida* occurs in a Latin sermon by Peter Chrysologus.^{[35][36]} In the Latin version he wrote: *Iudaeos [invidia] ... fecit esse deicidas*, i.e., "[Envy] made the Jews deicides".^[37]

The accuracy of the Gospel accounts' portrayal of Jewish complicity in Jesus' death has been vigorously debated in recent decades, with views ranging from a denial of responsibility to extensive culpability. According to the Jesuit scholar Daniel Harrington, the consensus of Jewish and Christian scholars is that there is some Jewish responsibility, regarding not the Jewish people, but regarding only the probable involvement of the high priests in Jerusalem at the time and their allies.^[2] Many scholars read the story of the passion as an attempt to take the blame off Pilate and place it on the Jews, one which might have been at the time politically motivated. It is thought possible that Pilate ordered the crucifixion to avoid a riot, for example.^[38] Some scholars hold that the synoptic account is compatible with traditions in the Babylonian Talmud.^[39] The writings of Moses Maimonides (a medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher) mentioned the hanging of a certain Jesus (identified in the sources as Yashu'a) on the eve of Passover. Maimonides considered Jesus as a Jewish renegade in revolt against Judaism; religion commanded the death of Jesus and his students; and Christianity was a religion attached to his name in a later period.^[40] In a passage widely censored in pre-modern editions for fear of the way it might feed into very real anti-Semitic attitudes, Maimonides wrote of "Jesus of Nazareth, who imagined that he was the Messiah, and was put to death by the court"^[41] (that is, "by a *beth din*"^[42]).

Liturgy

Eastern Christianity

The Holy Friday liturgy of the Orthodox Church, as well as the Byzantine Rite Catholic churches, uses the expression "impious and transgressing people",^[43] but the strongest expressions are in the Holy Thursday liturgy, which includes the same chant, after the eleventh Gospel reading, but also speaks of "the murderers of God, the lawless nation of the Jews",^[44] and, referring to "the assembly of the Jews", prays: "But give them, Lord, their reward, because they devised vain things against Thee."^[45]

Western Christianity

A liturgy with a similar pattern but with no specific mention of the Jews is found in the Improperia of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church. In the Anglican Church, the first Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* did not contain this formula, but it appears in later versions, such as the 1989 Anglican *Prayer Book* of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, as *The Solemn Adoration of Christ Crucified* or *The Reproaches*.^[46] Although not part of Christian dogma, many Christians, including members of the clergy, preached that the Jewish people were collectively guilty for Jesus' death.^[1]

Repudiation

In the aftermath of World War II, Jules Isaac, a French-Jewish historian and Holocaust survivor, played a seminal role in documenting the anti-Semitic traditions which existed in the Catholic Church's thinking, instruction and liturgy. The move to draw up a formal document of repudiation gained momentum after Isaac obtained a private audience with Pope John XXIII in 1960.^[47] In the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic Church under Pope Paul VI issued the declaration *Nostra aetate* ("In Our Time"), which among other things repudiated belief in the collective Jewish guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus.^[1] *Nostra aetate* stated that, even though some Jewish authorities and those who followed them called for Jesus' death, the blame for what happened cannot be laid at the door of all Jews living at that time, nor can the Jews in our time be held guilty. It made no explicit mention of Matthew 27:24–25, but only of John 19:6.

On November 16, 1998, the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted a resolution which was prepared by its Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations. The resolution urged that any Lutheran church which was presenting a Passion play should adhere to its *Guidelines for Lutheran-Jewish Relations*, stating that "the New Testament ... must not be used as a justification for hostility towards present-day Jews", and it also stated that "blame for the death of Jesus should not be attributed to Judaism or the Jewish people."^{[48][49]}

Pope Benedict XVI also repudiated the Jewish deicide charge in his 2011 book *Jesus of Nazareth*, in which he interpreted the translation of "ochlos" in Matthew to mean the "crowd", rather than the Jewish people.^{[17][50]}

See also

- Antisemitism and the New Testament
- Antisemitism in Christianity
- Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*
- Romany crucifixion legend
- Faithful Word Baptist Church
- Westboro Baptist Church

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Blood libel

Blood libel or **ritual murder libel** (also **blood accusation**)^{[1][2]} is an antisemitic canard^{[3][4][5]} which falsely accuses Jews of murdering Christian children (or other gentiles) in order to use their blood in the performance of religious rituals.^{[1][2][6]} Historically, echoing very old myths of secret cultic practices in many prehistoric societies, the claim as it is leveled against Jews was rarely attested to in antiquity but it was frequently attached to early communities of Christians in the Roman Empire, reemerging as a Christian accusation against Jews in the medieval period.^{[7][8]} This libel—alongside those of well poisoning and host desecration—became a major theme of the persecution of Jews in Europe from that period to the present day.^[4]

Blood libels typically claim that Jews require human blood for the baking of matzos, an unleavened flatbread which they eat during Passover, although this element of the accusation was allegedly absent in the earliest blood libels in which then-contemporary Jews were accused of reenacting the crucifixion. The accusations often assert that the blood of the children of Christians is especially coveted, and, historically, blood libel claims have been made in order to account for the otherwise unexplained deaths of children. In some cases, the alleged victims of human sacrifice have become venerated as Christian martyrs. Three of these – William of Norwich, Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln, and Simon of Trent – became objects of local cults and veneration; and although he was never canonized, the veneration of Simon was added to the General Roman Calendar. One child who was allegedly murdered by Jews, Gabriel of Białystok, was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church.

In Jewish lore, blood libels served as the impetus for the writing of the Golem of Prague by Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel in the 16th century.^[9] According to Walter Laqueur:

Altogether, there have been about 150 recorded cases of blood libel (not to mention thousands of rumors) that resulted in the arrest and killing of Jews throughout history, most of them in the Middle Ages. In almost every case, Jews were murdered, sometimes by a mob, sometimes following torture and a trial.^[10]

The term 'blood libel' has also been used in reference to any unpleasant or damaging false accusation, and as a result, it has acquired a broader metaphoric meaning. However, this wider usage of the term remains controversial, because Jewish groups object to it.^{[11][12][13]}



Statue of Simon of Trent, an Italian child whose disappearance and death was blamed on the leaders of the city's Jewish community

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Jewish biblical teachings against murder, sacrifice, and consumption of blood

It has been one of history's cruel ironies that the blood libel — accusations against Jews using the blood of murdered gentile children for the making of wine and matzot — became the false pretext for numerous pogroms. And due to the danger, those who live in a place where blood libels occur are halachically exempted from using red wine, lest it be seized as "evidence" against them.

— Pesach: What We Eat and Why We Eat It, Project Genesis^[14]

The supposed torture and human sacrifice alleged in the blood libels run contrary to the teachings of Judaism. According to the Bible, God commanded Abraham in the Binding of Isaac to sacrifice his son, but he ultimately provided a ram as a substitute. The Ten Commandments in the Torah forbid murder. In addition, the use of blood (human or otherwise) in cooking is prohibited by the kosher dietary laws (kashrut). Blood from slaughtered animals may not be consumed, and it must be drained out of the animal and covered with earth.^[15] According to the Book of Leviticus, blood from sacrificed animals may only be placed on the altar of the Great Temple in Jerusalem (which no longer existed at the time of the Christian blood libels). Furthermore, the consumption of human flesh would violate kashrut.^[16]

Also stated in Leviticus is that "it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood,"^[17] and "you must not eat any blood whatever, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements."^[18]

While animal sacrifice was part of the practice of ancient Judaism, the Tanakh (Old Testament) and Jewish teachings portray human sacrifice as one of the evils that separated the pagans of Canaan from the Hebrews.^[19] Jews were prohibited from engaging in these rituals and they were also punished for doing so.^[20] In fact, ritual cleanliness for priests even prohibited them from being in the same room with a human corpse.^[21]

History

The earliest versions of the accusation involved Jews crucifying Christian children on Easter/Passover because of a prophecy. There is no reference to the use of blood in unleavened matzo bread, which evolves later as a major motivation for the crime.^[22]

Possible precursors

The earliest known example of a blood libel is from a certain Democritus (not the philosopher) only mentioned by the Suda,^[23] who alleged that "every seven years the Jews captured a stranger, brought him to the temple in Jerusalem, and sacrificed him, cutting his flesh into bits."^[24] The Graeco-Egyptian author Apion claimed that Jews sacrificed Greek victims in their temple. This accusation is known from Josephus' rebuttal of it in *Against Apion*. Apion states that when Antiochus Epiphanes entered the temple in Jerusalem, he discovered a Greek captive who told him that he was being fattened for sacrifice. Every year, Apion claimed, the Jews would sacrifice a Greek and consume his flesh, at the same time swearing eternal hatred towards the Greeks.^[25] Apion's claim probably repeats ideas already in circulation because similar claims are made by Posidonius and Apollonius Molon in the 1st century BCE.^[26] Another example concerns the murder of a Christian boy by a group of Jewish youths. Socrates Scholasticus (fl. 5th century) reported that some Jews in a drunken frolic bound a Christian child on a cross in mockery of the death of Christ and scourged him until he died.^[27]

Professor Israel Jacob Yuval of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem published an article in 1993 which argues that the blood libel may have originated in the 12th century from Christian views of Jewish behavior during the First Crusade. Some Jews committed suicide and killed their own children rather than be subjected to forced conversions. Yuval investigated Christian reports of these events and stated that they were greatly distorted, with claims that, if Jews could kill their own children, they could also kill the children of Christians. Yuval rejects the blood libel story as a fantasy of some Christians which could not contain any element of truth in it due to the precarious nature of the Jewish minority's existence in Christian Europe.^{[28][29]}

Origins in England

In England in 1144, the Jews of Norwich were falsely accused of ritual murder after a boy, William of Norwich, was found dead with stab wounds in the woods. William's hagiographer, Thomas of Monmouth, falsely claimed that every year there is an international council of Jews at which they choose the country in which a child will be killed during Easter, because of a Jewish prophecy that states that the killing of a Christian child each year will ensure that the Jews will be restored to the Holy Land. In 1144, England was chosen, and the leaders of the Jewish community delegated the Jews of Norwich to perform the killing. They then abducted and crucified William.^[30] The legend was turned into a cult, with William acquiring the status of a martyr and pilgrims bringing offerings to the local church.^[31]

This was followed by similar accusations in Gloucester (1168), Bury St Edmunds (1181) and Bristol (1183). In 1189, the Jewish deputation attending the coronation of Richard the Lionheart was attacked by the crowd. Massacres of Jews at London and York soon followed. In 1190 on 16 March 150 Jews were attacked in York and then massacred when they took refuge in the royal castle, where Clifford's Tower now stands, with some committing suicide rather than being taken by the mob.^[32] The remains of 17 bodies thrown in a well in Norwich between the 12th and 13th century (five that were shown by DNA testing to likely be members of a single Jewish family) were very possibly killed as part of one of these pogroms.^[33]

After the death of Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln, there were trials and executions of Jews.^[34] The case is mentioned by Matthew Paris and Chaucer, and thus has become well-known. Its notoriety sprang from the intervention of the Crown, the first time an accusation of ritual killing had been given royal credibility.

The eight-year-old Hugh disappeared at Lincoln on 31 July 1255. His body was probably discovered on 29 August, in a well. A Jew named Copin or Koppin confessed to involvement. He confessed to John of Lexington, a servant of the crown, and relative of the Bishop of Lincoln. The church stood to gain from the establishment of a martyr's cult. Copin's confession was probably in return for the promise that his life should be spared. He is said to have confessed that the boy had been crucified by the Jews, who had assembled at Lincoln for that purpose. King Henry III, who had reached Lincoln at the beginning of October, had Copin executed and 91 of the Jews of Lincoln seized and sent up to London, where 18 of them were executed. The rest were pardoned at the intercession of the Franciscans or Dominicans.^[35] Within a few decades, Jews would be expelled from all of England in 1290 and not allowed to return until 1657.



The crucifixion of William of Norwich depicted on a rood screen in Holy Trinity church, Loddon, Norfolk

Continental Europe

Much like the blood libel of England, the history of blood libel in continental Europe consists of unsubstantiated claims made about the corpses of Christian children. There were frequently associated supernatural events speculated about these discoveries and corpses, events which were often attributed by contemporaries to miracles. Also, just as in England, these accusations in continental Europe typically resulted in the execution of numerous Jews — sometimes even all, or close to all, the Jews in one town. These accusations and their effects also, in some cases, led to royal interference on behalf of the Jews.

Thomas of Monmouth's story of the annual Jewish meeting to decide which local community would kill a Christian child also quickly spread to the continent. An early version appears in *Bonum Universale de Apibus* ii. 29, § 23, by Thomas of Cantimpré (a monastery near Cambrai). Thomas wrote, in around 1260, "It is quite certain that the Jews of every province annually decide by lot which congregation or city is to send Christian blood to the other congregations." Thomas of Cantimpré also believed that since the time when the Jews called out to Pontius Pilate, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25 (<https://www.biblica.com/bible/?osis=niv:Matthew%2027:25>)), they have been afflicted with hemorrhages, a condition equated with male menstruation:^[36]



Simon of Trent blood libel.
Illustration in Hartmann Schedel's *Weltchronik*, 1493

A very learned Jew, who in our day has been converted to the (Christian) faith, informs us that one enjoying the reputation of a prophet among them, toward the close of his life, made the following prediction: 'Be assured that relief from this secret ailment, to which you are exposed, can only be obtained through Christian blood ("*solo sanguine Christiano*").' This

suggestion was followed by the ever-blind and impious Jews, who instituted the custom of annually shedding Christian blood in every province, in order that they might recover from their malady.

Thomas added that the Jews had misunderstood the words of their prophet, who by his expression "*solo sanguine Christiano*" had meant not the blood of any Christian, but that of Jesus – the only true remedy for all physical and spiritual suffering. Thomas did not mention the name of the "very learned" proselyte, but it may have been Nicholas Donin of La Rochelle, who, in 1240, had a disputation on the Talmud with Yechiel of Paris, and who in 1242 caused the burning of numerous Talmudic manuscripts in Paris. It is known that Thomas was personally acquainted with Nicholas. Nicholas Donin and another Jewish convert, Theobald of Cambridge, are greatly credited with the adoption and the belief of the blood libel myth in Europe.^[37]

The first known case outside England was in Blois, France, in 1171. This was the site of a blood libel accusation against the town's entire Jewish community that led to around 31–33 Jews (with 17 women making up this total^[38]^[39]^[40] being burned to death.^[41]^[42] on 29 May of that year, or the 20th of Sivan of 4931.^[39] The blood libel revolved around R. Isaac, a Jew whom a Christian servant reported had deposited a murdered Christian in the Loire.^[43] The child's body was never found. The count had about 40 adult Blois Jews arrested and they were eventually to be burned. The surviving members of the Blois Jewish community, as well as surviving holy texts, were ransomed. As a result of this case, the Jews garnered new promises from the king. The burned bodies of the sentenced Jews were supposedly maintained unblemished through the burning, a claim which is a well-known miracle, martyr myth for both Jews and Christians.^[43] There is significant primary source material from this case including a letter revealing moves for Jewish protection with King Louis VII.^[44] Responding to the mass execution, the 20th of Sivan was declared a fast day by Rabbenu Tam.^[38] In this case in Blois, there was not yet the myth proclaimed that Jews needed the blood of Christians.^[38]

In 1235, after the dead bodies of five boys were found on Christmas day in Fulda, the inhabitants of the town claimed the Jews had killed them to consume their blood, and burned 34 Jews to death with the help of Crusaders assembled at the time. Even though emperor Frederick II cleared the Jews of any wrongdoing after an investigation, blood libel accusations persisted in Germany.^[45]^[46] At Pforzheim, Baden, in 1267, a woman supposedly sold a girl to Jews who, according to the myth, then cut her open and dumped her in the Enz River, where boatmen found her. She apparently cried for vengeance, and then died. The body apparently bled as the Jews were brought to it. The woman and the Jews apparently confessed and were subsequently killed.^[47] That a judicial execution was summarily committed in consequence of the accusation is evident from the manner in which the Nuremberg "Memorbuch" and the synagogal poems refer to the incident.^[48]

In 1270, at Weissenburg, of Alsace,^[49] a supposed miracle alone decided the charge against the Jews. A child's body had shown up in the Lauter River. Supposedly, Jews cut into the child to acquire his blood and the child apparently continued bleeding for five days.^[49]

At Oberwesel, near Easter of 1287,^[50] supposed miracles again constituted the only evidence against the Jews. The corpse of the 16-year-old Werner of Oberwesel (also referred to as "Good Werner") apparently landed at Bacharach and the body supposedly caused miracles, particularly medicinal miracles.^[51] Also,



Painting of Werner of Oberwesel as a martyr

there was apparently light coming from the body.^[52] Reportedly, the child was hung upside down, forced to throw up the host and was cut open.^[51] In consequence, the Jews of Oberwesel and many other adjacent localities were severely persecuted during the years 1286-89. The Jews of Oberwesel were particularly targeted because there were no Jews remaining in Bacharach following a 1283 pogrom. Additionally, there were pogroms following this case as well at and around Oberwesel.^[53] Rudolph of Habsburg, to whom the Jews had appealed for protection, in order to manage the miracle story, had the archbishop of Mainz declare great wrong had been done to the Jew. This apparent declaration was very limited in effectiveness.^[53]

A statement was made, in the *Chronicle* of Konrad Justinger of 1423, that at Bern in 1293^[54] or 1294 the Jews tortured and murdered a boy called Rudolph (sometimes also referred to as Rudolph, Ruff, or Ruof). The body was reportedly found by the house of Jöly, a Jew. The Jewish community was then implicated. The penalties imposed upon the Jews included torture, execution, expulsion, and steep financial fines. Justinger argued Jews were out to harm Christianity.^[54] The historical impossibility of this widely credited story was demonstrated by Jakob Stämmli, pastor of Bern, in 1888.^[55]

There have been several explanations put forth as to why these blood libel accusations were made and perpetuated. For example, it has been argued Thomas of Monmouth's account and other similar false accusations, as well as their perpetuation, largely had to do with the economic and political interests of leaders who did, in fact, perpetuate these myths.^[56] Additionally, it was largely believed in Europe that Jews used Christian blood for medicinal and other purposes.^[57] Despite the unsubstantiated, mythical nature of these claims, as well as their sources, they evidently materially impacted the communities in which they occurred including both the Jewish and non-Jewish populations.

Renaissance and Baroque

Simon of Trent, aged two, disappeared in 1475, and his father alleged that he had been kidnapped and murdered by the local Jewish community. Fifteen local Jews were sentenced to death and burned. Simon was regarded locally as a saint, although he was never canonised by the church of Rome. He was removed from the Roman Martyrology in 1965 by Pope Paul VI.

Christopher of Toledo, also known as Christopher of La Guardia or "the Holy Child of La Guardia", was a four-year-old Christian boy supposedly murdered in 1490 by two Jews and three conversos (converts to Christianity). In total, eight men were executed. It is now believed^[58] that this case was constructed by the Spanish Inquisition to facilitate the expulsion of Jews from Spain.

In a case at Tyrnau (Nagyszombat, today Trnava, Slovakia), the absurdity, even the impossibility, of the statements forced by torture from women and children shows that the accused preferred death as a means of escape from the torture, and admitted everything that was asked of them. They even said that Jewish men menstruated, and that the latter therefore practiced the drinking of Christian blood as a remedy.^[59]

At Bösing (Bazin, today Pezinok, Slovakia), it was charged that a nine-year-old boy had been bled to death, suffering cruel torture; thirty Jews confessed to the crime and were publicly burned. The true facts of the case were disclosed later when the child was found alive in Vienna. He had been taken there by the accuser, Count Wolf of Bazin, as a means of ridding himself of his Jewish creditors at Bazin.^{[60][61]}



From an 18th-century etching from Brückenturm. Above: The murdered body of Simon of Trent. Below: The "Judensau"

In Rinn, near Innsbruck, a boy named Andreas Oxner (also known as Anderl von Rinn) was said to have been bought by Jewish merchants and cruelly murdered by them in a forest near the city, his blood being carefully collected in vessels. The accusation of drawing off the blood (without murder) was not made until the beginning of the 17th century when the cult was founded. The older inscription in the church of Rinn, dating from 1575, is distorted by fabulous embellishments – for example, that the money paid for the boy to his godfather turned into leaves, and that a lily blossomed upon his grave. The cult continued until officially prohibited in 1994, by the Bishop of Innsbruck.^[62]



Fresco in St Paul's Church in Sandomierz, Poland, depicting blood libel

On 17 January 1670 Raphael Levy, a member of the Jewish community of Metz, was executed on charges of the ritual murder of a peasant child who had gone missing in the woods outside the village of Glatigny on 25 September 1669, the eve of Rosh Hashanah.^[63]

19th century

One of the child-saints in the Russian Orthodox Church is the six-year-old boy Gavriil Belostoksky from the village Zverki. According to the legend supported by the church, the boy was kidnapped from his home during the holiday of Passover while his parents were away. Shutko, who was a Jew from Białystok, was accused of bringing the boy to Białystok, piercing him with sharp objects and draining his blood for nine days, then bringing the body back to Zverki and dumping it at a local field. A cult developed, and the boy was canonized in 1820. His relics are still the object of pilgrimage. On All Saints Day, 27 July 1997, the Belarusian state TV showed a film alleging the story is true.^[64] The revival of the cult in Belarus was cited as a dangerous expression of antisemitism in international reports on human rights and religious freedoms^{[65][66][67][68][69]} which were passed to the UNHCR.^[70]

- 1823–35 Velizh blood libel: After a Christian child was found murdered outside of this small Russian town in 1823, accusations by a drunk prostitute led to the imprisonment of many local Jews. Some were not released until 1835.^[71]
- 1840 Damascus affair: In February, at Damascus, a Catholic monk named Father Thomas and his servant disappeared. The accusation of ritual murder was brought against members of the Jewish community of Damascus.
- 1840 Rhodes blood libel: The Jews of Rhodes, under the Ottoman Empire, were accused of murdering a Greek Christian boy. The libel was supported by the local governor and the European consuls posted to Rhodes. Several Jews were arrested and tortured, and the entire Jewish quarter was blockaded for twelve days. An investigation carried out by the central Ottoman government found the Jews to be innocent.
- In 1844 David Paul Drach, the son of the Head Rabbi of Paris and a convert to Christianity, wrote in his book *De L'harmonie Entre L'Eglise et la Synagogue*, that a Catholic priest in Damascus had been ritually killed and the murder covered up by powerful Jews in Europe; referring to the 1840 Damascus affair [See above]
- In March 1879, ten Jewish men from a mountain village were brought to Kutaisi, Georgia to stand trial for the alleged kidnapping and murder of a Christian girl. The case attracted a great deal of attention in Russia (of which Georgia was then a part): "While periodicals as diverse in tendency as *Herald of Europe* and *Saint Petersburg Notices* expressed their amazement that medieval prejudice should have found a place in the modern judiciary of a civilized state, *New Times* hinted darkly of strange Jewish sects with unknown practices."^[72] The trial ended in acquittal, and the orientalist Daniel Chwolson published a refutation of the blood libel.

- **1882 Tiszaeszlár blood libel:** The Jews of the village of Tiszaeszlár, Hungary were accused of the ritual murder of a fourteen-year-old Christian girl, Eszter Solymosi. The case was one of the main causes of the rise of antisemitism in the country. The accused persons were eventually acquitted.
- In 1899 Hilsner Affair: Leopold Hilsner, a Czech Jewish vagabond, was accused of murdering a nineteen-year-old Christian woman, Anežka Hružová, with a slash to the throat. Despite the absurdity of the charge and the relatively progressive nature of society in Austria-Hungary, Hilsner was convicted and sentenced to death. He was later convicted of an additional unsolved murder, also involving a Christian woman. In 1901, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Tomáš Masaryk, a prominent Austro-Czech philosophy professor and future president of Czechoslovakia, spearheaded Hilsner's defense. He was later blamed by Czech media because of this. In March 1918, Hilsner was pardoned by Austrian emperor Charles I. He was never exonerated, and the true guilty parties were never found.

20th century and beyond

- The 1903 Kishinev pogrom, an anti-Jewish revolt, started when an anti-Semitic newspaper wrote that a Christian Russian boy, Mikhail Rybachenko, was found murdered in the town of Dubossary, alleging that the Jews killed him in order to use the blood in preparation of matzo. Around 49 Jews were killed and hundreds were wounded, with over 700 houses being looted and destroyed.
- In the 1910 Shiraz blood libel, the Jews of Shiraz, Iran, were falsely accused of murdering a Muslim girl. The entire Jewish quarter was pillaged; the pogrom left 12 Jews dead and about 50 injured.^[73]
- In Kyiv, a Jewish factory manager, Menahem Mendel Beilis, was accused of murdering Andrei Yushchinsky, a Christian child, and using his blood to make matzos. He was acquitted by an all-Christian jury after a sensational trial in 1913.^[74]
- In 1928, the Jews of Massena, New York were falsely accused of kidnapping and killing a Christian girl in the Massena blood libel.
- Jews were frequently accused of the ritual murder of Christians for their blood in *Der Stürmer*, an antisemitic newspaper which was published in Nazi Germany. The infamous May 1934 issue of the paper was later banned by the Nazi authorities, because it went so far as to compare alleged Jewish ritual murder with the Christian rite of communion.^[75]
- In 1938 the British fascist politician and veterinarian Arnold Leese published an antisemitic booklet in defense of the Blood Libel which he titled *My Irrelevant Defence: Meditations inside Gaol and Out on Jewish Ritual Murder*.
- The 1944–1946 Anti-Jewish violence in Poland, which according to some estimates killed as many as 1000–2000 Jews (237 documented cases),^[76] involved, among other elements, accusations of blood libel, especially in the case of the 1946 Kielce pogrom.
- King Faisal of Saudi Arabia (r. 1964–1975) made accusations against Parisian Jews that took the form of a blood libel.^[77]
- *The Matzah Of Zion* was written by the Syrian Defense Minister, Mustafa Tlass in 1986. The book concentrates on two issues: renewed ritual murder accusations against the Jews in the Damascus affair of 1840, and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.^[78] The book was cited at a United Nations conference in 1991 by a Syrian delegate. On 21 October 2002, the London-based Arabic paper *Al-Hayat* reported that the book *The Matzah of Zion* was undergoing its eighth reprinting and it was also being translated into English, French and Italian. Egyptian filmmaker Munir Radhi has announced plans to adapt the book into a film.^[79]



Antisemitic flier in Kyiv, 1915:
"Christians, take care of your children!!! It will be Jewish Passover on 17 March."

- In 2003, a private Syrian film company created a 29-part television series *Ash-Shatat* ("The Diaspora"). This series originally aired in Lebanon in late 2003 and it was subsequently broadcast by *Al-Manar*, a satellite television network owned by Hezbollah. This TV series, based on the antisemitic forgery *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, shows the Jewish people engaging in a conspiracy to rule the world, and it also presents Jews as people who murder the children of Christians, drain their blood and use it to bake matzah.
- In early January 2005, some 20 members of the Russian State Duma publicly made a blood libel accusation against the Jewish people. They approached the Prosecutor General's Office and demanded that Russia "ban all Jewish organizations." They accused all Jewish groups of being extremist, "anti-Christian and inhumane, and even accused them of practices that include ritual murders." Alluding to previous antisemitic Russian court decrees that accused the Jews of ritual murder, they wrote that "Many facts of such religious extremism were proven in courts." The accusation included traditional antisemitic canards, such as the claim that "the whole democratic world today is under the financial and political control of international Jewry. And we do not want our Russia to be among such unfree countries". This demand was published as an open letter to the prosecutor general, in *Rus Pravoslavnaya* (Русь православная, "Orthodox Russia"), a national-conservative newspaper. This group consisted of members of the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democrats, the Communist faction, and the nationalist Motherland party, with some 500 supporters. The mentioned document is known as "The Letter of Five Hundred" ("Письмо пятисот").^{[80][81]} Their supporters included editors of nationalist newspapers as well as journalists. By the end of the month, this group was strongly criticized, and it retracted its demand in response.
- At the end of April 2005, five boys, ages 9 to 12, in Krasnoyarsk (Russia) disappeared. In May 2005, their burnt bodies were found in the city sewage. The crime was not disclosed, and in August 2007 the investigation was extended until 18 November 2007.^[82] Some Russian nationalist groups claimed that the children were murdered by a Jewish sect with a ritual purpose.^{[83][84]} Nationalist M. Nazarov, one of the authors of "The Letter of Five Hundred" alleges "the existence of a 'Hasidic sect', whose members kill children before Passover to collect their blood", using the Beilis case mentioned above as evidence. M. Nazarov also alleges that "the ritual murder requires throwing the body away rather than its concealing". "The Union of the Russian People" demanded officials thoroughly investigate the Jews, not stopping at the search in synagogues, Matzah bakeries and their offices.^[85]
- During a speech in 2007, Raed Salah, the leader of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, referred to Jews in Europe having in the past used children's blood to bake holy bread. "We have never allowed ourselves to knead [the dough for] the bread that breaks the fast in the holy month of Ramadan with children's blood", he said. "Whoever wants a more thorough explanation, let him ask what used to happen to some children in Europe, whose blood was mixed in with the dough of the [Jewish] holy bread."^[86]
- In the 2000s, a Polish team of anthropologists and sociologists investigated the currency of the blood libel myth in Sandomierz where a painting depicting the blood libel adorns the Cathedral and Orthodox faithful in villages near Bialystok, and they discovered that these beliefs persist among some Catholic and Orthodox Christians.^{[87][88][89]}
- In an address that aired on *Al-Aqsa TV*, a Hamas run TV station in Gaza, on 31 March 2010, Salah Eldeen Sultan (Arabic: صلاح الدين سلطان), founder of the American Center for Islamic Research in Columbus, Ohio, the Islamic American University in Southfield, Michigan, and the Sultan Publishing Co.^[90] and described in 2005 as "one of America's most noted Muslim scholars", alleged that Jews kidnap Christians and others in order to slaughter them and use their blood for making matzos. Sultan, who is currently a lecturer on Muslim jurisprudence at Cairo University stated that: "The



Painting of blood libel in Sandomierz Cathedral

Zionists kidnap several non-Muslims [*sic*] – Christians and others... this happened in a Jewish neighborhood in Damascus. They killed the French doctor, Toma, who used to treat the Jews and others for free, in order to spread Christianity. Even though he was their friend and they benefited from him the most, they took him on one of these holidays and slaughtered him, along with the nurse. Then they kneaded the matzos with the blood of Dr. Toma and his nurse. They do this every year. The world must know these facts about the Zionist entity and its terrible corrupt creed. The world should know this." (Translation by the Middle East Media Research Institute)^{[91][92][93][94][95]}

- During an interview which aired on Rotana Khalijiya TV on 13 August 2012, Saudi Cleric Salman Al-Odeh stated (as translated by MEMRI) that "It is well known that the Jews celebrate several holidays, one of which is the Passover, or the Matzos Holiday. I read once about a doctor who was working in a laboratory. This doctor lived with a Jewish family. One day, they said to him: 'We want blood. Get us some human blood.' He was confused. He didn't know what this was all about. Of course, he couldn't betray his work ethics in such a way, but he began inquiring, and he found that they were making matzos with human blood." Al-Odeh also stated that "[Jews] eat it, believing that this brings them close to their false god, Yahweh" and that "They would lure a child in order to sacrifice him in the religious rite that they perform during that holiday."^{[96][97]}
- In April 2013, the Palestinian non-profit organization MIFTAH, founded by Hanan Ashrawi apologized for publishing an article which criticized US President Barack Obama for holding a Passover Seder in the White House by saying "Does Obama, in fact, know the relationship, for example, between 'Passover' and 'Christian blood'...?! Or 'Passover' and 'Jewish blood rituals?!' Much of the chatter and gossip about historical Jewish blood rituals in Europe is real and not fake as they claim; the Jews used the blood of Christians in the Jewish Passover." MIFTAH's apology expressed its "sincerest regret."^[98]
- In an interview which aired on Al-Hafez TV on 12 May 2013, Khaled Al-Zafrani of the Egyptian Justice and Progress Party, stated (as translated by MEMRI): "It's well known that during the Passover, they [the Jews] make matzos called the 'Blood of Zion.' They take a Christian child, slit his throat and slaughter him. Then they take his blood and make their [matzos]. This is a very important rite for the Jews, which they never forgo... They slice it and fight over who gets to eat Christian blood." In the same interview, Al-Zafrani stated that "The French kings and the Russian czars discovered this in the Jewish quarters. All the massacring of Jews that occurred in those countries were because they discovered that the Jews had kidnapped and slaughtered children, in order to make the Passover matzos."^{[99][100][101]}
- In an interview which aired on the Al-Quds TV channel on 28 July 2014 (as translated by MEMRI), Osama Hamdan, the top representative of Hamas in Lebanon, stated that "we all remember how the Jews used to slaughter Christians, in order to mix their blood in their holy matzos. This is not a figment of imagination or something taken from a film. It is a fact, acknowledged by their own books and by historical evidence."^[102] In a subsequent interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, Hamdan defended his comments, stating that he "has Jewish friends".^[103]
- In a sermon broadcast on the official Jordanian TV channel on 22 August 2014, Sheik Bassam Ammouh, a former Minister of Administrative Development who was appointed to Jordan's House of Senate ("Majlis al-Aayan") in 2011, stated (as translated by MEMRI): "In [the Gaza Strip] we are dealing with the enemies of Allah, who believe that the matzos that they bake on their holidays must be kneaded with blood. When the Jews were in the diaspora, they would murder children in England, in Europe, and in America. They would slaughter them and use their blood to make their matzos... They believe that they are God's chosen people. They believe that the killing of any human being is a form of worship and a means to draw near their god."^[104]
- In March 2020, Italian painter Giovanni Gasparro unveiled a painting of the martyrdom of Simon of Trent, titled "*Martirio di San Simonino da Trento (Simone Unverdorben), per omicidio rituale ebraico*" (The Martyrdom of St. Simon of Trento in accordance with Jewish ritual murder)". The painting was condemned by the Italian Jewish community and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, among others.^{[105][106]}

Views of the Catholic Church

The attitude of the Catholic Church towards these accusations and the cults venerating children supposedly killed by Jews has varied over time. The Papacy generally opposed them, although it had problems in enforcing its opposition.

In 1911, the *Dictionnaire apologétique de la foi catholique*, an important French Catholic encyclopedia, published an analysis of the blood libel accusations.^[107] This may be taken as being broadly representative of educated Catholic opinion in continental Europe at that time. The article noted that the popes had generally refrained from endorsing the blood libel, and it concluded that the accusations were unproven in a general sense, but it left open the possibility that some Jews had committed ritual murders of Christians. Other contemporary Catholic sources (notably the Jesuit periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*) promoted the blood libel as truth.^[108]

Today, the accusations are almost entirely discredited in Catholic circles, and the cults associated with them have fallen into disfavour. For example, Simon of Trent's local status as a saint was removed in 1965.

Papal pronouncements

- Pope Innocent IV took action against the blood libel: "5 July 1247 Mandate to the prelates of Germany and France to annul all measures adopted against the Jews on account of the ritual murder libel, and to prevent the accusation of Arabs on similar charges" (The Apostolic See and the Jews, Documents: 492–1404; Simonsohn, Shlomo, pp. 188–189, 193–195, 208). In 1247, he wrote also that "Certain of the clergy, and princes, nobles and great lords of your cities and dioceses have falsely devised certain godless plans against the Jews, unjustly depriving them by force of their property, and appropriating it themselves;... they falsely charge them with dividing up among themselves on the Passover the heart of a murdered boy...In their malice, they ascribe every murder, wherever it chance to occur, to the Jews. And on the ground of these and other fabrications, they are filled with rage against them, rob them of their possessions without any formal accusation, without confession, and without legal trial and conviction, contrary to the privileges granted to them by the Apostolic See... Since it is our pleasure that they shall not be disturbed,... we ordain that ye behave towards them in a friendly and kind manner. Whenever any unjust attacks upon them come under your notice, redress their injuries, and do not suffer them to be visited in the future by similar tribulations."^[109]
- Pope Gregory X (1271–1276) issued a letter which criticized the practice of blood libels and forbade arrests and persecution of Jews based on a blood libel, ... *unless which we do not believe they be caught in the commission of the crime.*^[110]
- Pope Paul III, in a bull of 12 May 1540, made clear his displeasure at having learned, through the complaints of the Jews of Hungary, Bohemia, and Poland, that their enemies, looking for a pretext to lay their hands on the Jews' property, were falsely attributing terrible crimes to them, in particular that of killing children and drinking their blood.
- Pope Pius V in the bull *Hebraeorum gens sola* (26 February 1569), by which he expelled Jews from all the cities of the Papal States except Rome and Ancona,^[111] made multiple accusations of wrongdoing against the Jews, including usury, theft, receiving stolen goods, pimping, divination, and magic. He did not mention the blood libel.
- Pope Benedict XIV wrote the bull *Beatus Andreas* (22 February 1755) in response to an application for the formal canonization of the 15th-century Andreas Oxner, a folk saint alleged to have been murdered by Jews "out of hatred for the Christian faith". Benedict did not dispute the factual claim that Jews murdered Christian children, and in anticipating that further cases on this basis would be

brought appears to have accepted it as accurate, but decreed that in such cases beatification or canonization would be inappropriate.^[112]

Blood libels in Muslim lands

In late 1553 or 1554, Suleiman the Magnificent, the reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, issued a firman (royal decree) which formally denounced blood libels against the Jews.^[113] In 1840, following the Western outrage arising from the Damascus affair, British politician and leader of the British Jewish community, Sir Moses Montefiore, backed by other influential westerners including Britain's Lord Palmerston and Damascus consul Charles Henry Churchill,^[114] the French lawyer Adolphe Crémieux, Austrian consul Giovanni Gasparo Merlato, Danish missionary John Nicolayson,^[114] and Solomon Munk, persuaded Sultan Abdulmecid I in Constantinople, to issue a firman on 6 November 1840 intended to halt the spread of blood libel accusations in the Ottoman Empire. The edict declared that blood libel accusations were a slander against Jews and they would be prohibited throughout the Ottoman Empire, and read in part:

"... and for the love we bear to our subjects, we cannot permit the Jewish nation, whose innocence for the crime alleged against them is evident, to be worried and tormented as a consequence of accusations which have not the least foundation in truth..."

In the remainder of the 19th century and into the 20th century, there were many instances of the blood libel in Ottoman lands.^[115] However the libel almost always came from the Christian community, sometimes with the connivance of Greek or French diplomats.^[115] The Jews could usually count on the goodwill of the Ottoman authorities and increasingly on the support of British, Prussian and Austrian representatives.^[115]

In the 1910 Shiraz blood libel, the Jews of Shiraz, Iran, were falsely accused of murdering a Muslim girl. The entire Jewish quarter was pillaged, with the pogrom leaving 12 Jews dead and about 50 injured.

In 1983, Mustafa Tlass, the Syrian Minister of Defense, wrote and published *The Matzah of Zion*, which is a treatment of the Damascus affair of 1840 that repeats the ancient "blood libel", that Jews use the blood of murdered non-Jews in religious rituals such as baking Matza bread.^[116] In this book, he argues that the true religious beliefs of Jews are "black hatred against all humans and religions", and no Arab country should ever sign a peace treaty with Israel.^[117] Tlass re-printed the book several times and stands by its conclusions. Following the book's publication, Tlass told *Der Spiegel*, that this accusation against Jews was valid and he also claimed that his book is "an historical study ... based on documents from France, Vienna and the American University in Beirut."^{[117][118]}

In 2003, the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* published a series of articles by Osama El-Baz, a senior advisor to the then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Among other things, Osama El-Baz explained the origins of the blood libel against the Jews. He said that Arabs and Muslims have never been antisemitic, as a group, but he accepted the fact that a few Arab writers and media figures attack Jews "on the basis of the racist fallacies and myths that originated in Europe". He urged people not to succumb to "myths" such as the blood libel.^[119]

Nevertheless, on many occasions in modern times, blood libel stories have appeared in the state-sponsored media of a number of Arab and Muslim nations, as well as on their television shows and websites, and books which allege instances of Jewish blood libels are not uncommon there.^[120] The blood libel was featured in a scene in the Syrian TV series *Ash-Shatat*, shown in 2003.^{[121][122]}

In 2007, Lebanese poet Marwan Chamoun, in an interview aired on Télé Liban, referred to the "...slaughter of the priest Tomaso de Camangiano ... in 1840... in the presence of two rabbis in the heart of Damascus, in the home of a close friend of this priest, Daud Al-Harari, the head of the Jewish community of Damascus. After he was slaughtered, his blood was collected, and the two rabbis took it."^[123] A novel, *Death of a Monk*, based on the Damascus affair, was published in 2004.

See also

- Blood atonement
- Blood curse
- Blood ritual
- Cake of Light
- Conspiracy theory
- Human cannibalism
- Kiddush#History of using white wine
- Sefer HaRazim
- Moral panic
- Pizzagate conspiracy theory
- QAnon
- Satanic ritual abuse

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- Example of anti-Semitic propaganda (<https://web.archive.org/web/20121213064109/http://www.stsimonoftrent.com/>)
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Jewish Bolshevism

Jewish Bolshevism, also **Judeo–Bolshevism**, is an anti-communist and antisemitic canard, which alleges that the Jews were the originators of the Russian Revolution in 1917, and that they held primary power among the Bolsheviks who led the revolution. Similarly, the conspiracy theory of **Jewish Communism** alleges that Jews have dominated the Communist movements in the world, and is related to the Zionist Occupation Government conspiracy theory (ZOG), which alleges that Jews control world politics.^[1]

In 1917, after the Russian Revolution, the antisemitic canard was the title of the pamphlet *The Jewish Bolshevism*, which featured in the racist propaganda of the anti-communist White movement forces during the Russian Civil War (1918–1922). During the 1930s, the Nazi Party in Germany and the German American Bund in the United States propagated the antisemitic theory to their followers, sympathisers, and fellow travellers.^{[2][3][4][5]} In Poland, *Żydokomuna* was a term for the antisemitic opinion that the Jews had a disproportionately high influence in the administration of Communist Poland. In far-right politics, the antisemitic canards of "Jewish Bolshevism", "Jewish Communism", and the ZOG conspiracy theory are catchwords falsely asserting that Communism is a Jewish conspiracy.^[6]

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Origins

The conflation of Jews and revolution emerged in the atmosphere of destruction of Russia during World War I. When the revolutions of 1917 crippled Russia's war effort, conspiracy theories developed far from Berlin and Petrograd. Many Britons for example ascribed the Russian Revolution to an "apparent

conjunction of Bolsheviks, Germans and Jews".^[8] By December 1917, five of the twenty-one members of the Communist Central Committee were Jews: the commissar for foreign affairs, the president of the Supreme Soviet, the deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, the president of Petrograd Soviet, and the deputy director of the Cheka secret police.^[9]

The worldwide spread of the concept in the 1920s is associated with the publication and circulation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fraudulent document that purported to describe a secret Jewish conspiracy aimed at world domination. The expression made an issue out of the Jewishness of some leading Bolsheviks (such as Leon Trotsky) during and after the October Revolution. Daniel Pipes said that "primarily through *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the Whites spread these charges to an international audience."^[10] James Webb wrote that it is rare to find an antisemitic source after 1917 that "does not stand in debt to the White Russian analysis of the Revolution".^[11]

Jewish involvement in Russian Communism

Antisemitism in the Russian Empire existed both culturally and institutionally. The Jews were restricted to live within the Pale of Settlement,^[12] and suffered pogroms.^[13]

As a result, many Jews supported gradual or revolutionary changes within the Russian Empire. Those movements ranged among the far left (Jewish Anarchism,^[14] Bundists, Bolsheviks, Mensheviks,^[15]) and moderate left (Trudoviks^[16]) and constitutionalist (Constitutional Democrats^[17]) parties. According to the 1922 Bolshevik party census, there were 19,564 Jewish Bolsheviks, comprising 5.21% of the total, and in the 1920s of the 417 members of the Central Executive Committee, the party Central Committee, the Presidium of the Executive of the Soviets of the USSR and the Russian Republic, the People's Commissars, 6% were ethnic Jews.^[18] Between 1936 and 1940, during the Great Purge, Yezhovshchina and after the rapprochement with Nazi Germany, Stalin had largely eliminated Jews from senior party, government, diplomatic, security and military positions.^[19]

Some scholars have grossly exaggerated Jewish presence in the Soviet Communist Party. For example, Alfred Jensen said that in the 1920s "75 per cent of the leading Bolsheviks" were "of Jewish origin". According to Aaronovitch, "a cursory examination of membership of the top committees shows this figure to be an absurd exaggeration".^[20]

In 2013, speaking about the Schneerson Collection at the Moscow Jewish Museum and the Center for Tolerance, Russian President Vladimir Putin erroneously noted that

"The decision to nationalize the library was made by the first Soviet government, and Jews were approximately 80–85% members".^[21]



White movement propaganda poster from the Russian Civil War era (1919), a caricature of Leon Trotsky, who was viewed as a symbol of Jewish Bolshevism.^[7]

According to historian Vladimir Ryzhkov, Putin's ignorant statement about the predominance of Jews in the Council of People's Commissars is due to the fact that "during the years of perestroika, he read the tabloid press".^[22] Some media outlets also criticized the statements of the President of the Russian Federation. So the editors of the newspaper Vedomosti, condemning the head of state for marginality, posted the following statistics:^{[23][24]}

"If we discard the speculations of pseudoscientists who know how to find the Jewish origin of every revolutionary, it turns out that in the first composition of the Council of People's Commissars of Jews there were 8%: of its 16 members, only Leon Trotsky was a Jew. In the government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic of 1917–1922 Jews were 12% (six out of 50 people). Apart from the government, the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) on the eve of October 1917 had 20% Jews (6 out of 30), and in the first composition of the political bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) – 40% (3 out of 7)".— Vedomosti (dated 17 June 2013).

Nazi Germany

Walter Laqueur traces the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy theory to Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, for whom Bolshevism was "the revolt of the Jewish, Slavic and Mongolian races against the German (Aryan) element in Russia". Germans, according to Rosenberg, had been responsible for Russia's historic achievements and had been sidelined by the Bolsheviks, who did not represent the interests of the Russian people, but instead those of its ethnic Jewish and Chinese population.^[25]

Michael Kellogg, in his Ph.D. thesis, argues that the racist ideology of Nazis was to a significant extent influenced by White émigrés in Germany, many of whom, while being former subjects of the Russian Empire, were of non-Russian descent: ethnic Germans, residents of Baltic lands including Baltic Germans, and Ukrainians. Of particular role was their Aufbau organization (Aufbau: Wirtschafts-politische Vereinigung für den Osten (Reconstruction: Economic-Political Organization for the East)). For example, its leader was instrumental in making *The Protocols of The Elders of Zion* available in German language. He argues that early Hitler was rather philosemitic, and became rabidly antisemitic after 1919 under the influence of the White émigré convictions about the conspiracy of the Jews, an unseen unity from financial capitalists to Bolsheviks, to conquer the world.^[26] Therefore, his conclusion is that White émigrés were at the source of the Nazi concept of Jewish Bolshevism. Annemarie Sammartino argues that this view is contestable. While there is no doubt that White emigres were instrumental in reinforcing the idea of 'Jewish Bolshevism' among Nazis, the concept is also found in many German early post–World War I documents. Also, Germany had its own share of Jewish Communists "to provide fodder for the paranoid fantasies of German antisemites" without Russian Bolsheviks.^[27]



Wochenspruch der NSDAP of 28 September 1941, accuses Jews of creating Marxism

During the 1920s, Hitler declared that the mission of the Nazi movement was to destroy "Jewish Bolshevism".^[28] Hitler asserted that the "three vices" of "Jewish Marxism" were democracy, pacifism and internationalism,^[29] and that the Jews were behind Bolshevism, communism and Marxism.^[30]

In Nazi Germany, this concept of Jewish Bolshevism reflected a common perception that Communism was a Jewish-inspired and Jewish-led movement seeking world domination from its origin. The term was popularized in print in German journalist Dietrich Eckhart's 1924 pamphlet "Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin" ("Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin") which depicted Moses and Lenin as both being Communists and Jews. This was followed by Alfred Rosenberg's 1923 edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in 1925, which saw Bolshevism as "Jewry's twentieth century effort to take world dominion unto itself".

According to French spymaster and writer Henri Rollin, "Hitlerism" was based on "anti-Soviet counter-revolution" promoting the "myth of a mysterious Jewish–Masonic–Bolshevik plot", entailing that the First World War had been instigated by a vast Jewish–Masonic conspiracy to topple the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian Empires and implement Bolshevism by fomenting liberal ideas.^[31]

A major source for propaganda about Jewish Bolshevism in the 1930s and early 1940s was the pro-Nazi and antisemitic international *Welt-Dienst* news agency founded in 1933 by Ulrich Fleischhauer.

Within the German Army, a tendency to see Soviet Communism as a Jewish conspiracy had grown since the First World War, something that became officialized under the Nazis. A 1932 pamphlet by Ewald Banse of the Government-financed German National Association for the Military Sciences described the Soviet leadership as mostly Jewish, dominating an apathetic and mindless Russian population.^[32]

Propaganda produced in 1935 by the psychological war laboratory of the German War Ministry described Soviet officials as "mostly filthy Jews" and called on Red Army soldiers to rise up and kill their "Jewish commissars". This material was not used at the time, but served as a basis for propaganda in the 1940s.^[33]

Members of the SS were encouraged to fight against the "Jewish Bolshevik sub-humans". In the pamphlet *The SS as an Anti-Bolshevik Fighting Organization*, published in 1936, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler wrote:

We shall take care that never again in Germany, the heart of Europe, will the Jewish-Bolshevik revolution of subhumans be able to be kindled either from within or through emissaries from without.^[34]

In his speech to the *Reichstag* justifying Operation Barbarossa in 1941, Hitler said:

For more than two decades the Jewish Bolshevik regime in Moscow had tried to set fire not merely to Germany but to all of Europe ... The Jewish Bolshevik rulers in Moscow have unswervingly undertaken to force their domination upon us and the other European nations and that is not merely spiritually, but also in terms of military power ... Now the time has come to confront the plot of the Anglo-Saxon Jewish war-mongers and the equally Jewish rulers of the Bolshevik centre in Moscow!^[35]



German antisemitic and anti-Soviet propaganda poster, written in the Polish language. The text reads "Death! to Jewish-Bolshevik pestilence of murdering!"

Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel gave an order on 12 September 1941 which declared: "the struggle against Bolshevism demands ruthless and energetic, rigorous action above all against the Jews, the main carriers of Bolshevism".^[36]

Historian Richard J. Evans wrote that Wehrmacht officers regarded the Russians as "sub-human", and were from the time of the invasion of Poland in 1939 telling their troops the war was caused by "Jewish vermin", explaining to the troops that the war against the Soviet Union was a war to wipe out what were variously described as "Jewish Bolshevik subhumans", the "Mongol hordes", the "Asiatic flood" and the "red beast", language clearly intended to produce war crimes by reducing the enemy to something less than human.^[37]

Joseph Goebbels published an article in 1942 called "the so-called Russian soul" in which he claimed that Bolshevism was exploiting the Slavs and that the battle of the Soviet Union determined whether Europe would become under complete control by international Jewry.^[38]

Nazi propaganda presented Barbarossa as an ideological-racial war between German Nazism and "Judeo-Bolshevism", dehumanising the Soviet enemy as a force of Slavic *Untermensch* (sub-humans) and "Asiatic" savages engaging in "barbaric Asiatic fighting methods" commanded by evil Jewish commissars whom German troops were to grant no mercy.^[39] The vast majority of the Wehrmacht officers and soldiers tended to regard the war in Nazi terms, seeing their Soviet opponents as sub-human.^[40]

While National Socialism brought about a new version and formulation of European culture, Bolshevism is the declaration of war by Jewish-led international subhumans against culture itself. It is not only anti-bourgeois, but it is also anti-cultural. It means, in the final consequence, the absolute destruction of all economic, social, state, cultural, and civilizing advances made by western civilization for the benefit of a rootless and nomadic international clique of conspirators, who have found their representation in Jewry.

— Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, September 1935^[41]

Outside Nazi Germany

Great Britain, 1920s

In the early 1920s, a leading British antisemite, Henry Hamilton Beamish, stated that Bolshevism was the same thing as Judaism.^[42] In the same decade, future wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill penned an editorial entitled "Zionism versus Bolshevism", which was published in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald*. In the article, which asserted that Zionism and Bolshevism were engaged in a "struggle for the soul of the Jewish people", he called on Jews to repudiate "the Bolshevik conspiracy" and make clear that "the Bolshevik movement is not a Jewish movement" but stated that:

[Bolshevism] among the Jews is nothing new. From the days of Spartacus-Weishaupt to those of Karl Marx, and down to Trotsky (Russia), Bela Kun (Hungary), Rosa Luxemburg (Germany), and Emma Goldman (United States), this world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality, has been steadily growing.^[43]

Author Gisela C. Lebzelter noted that Churchill's analysis failed to analyze the role that Russian oppression of Jews had played in their joining various revolutionary movements, but instead "to inherent inclinations rooted in Jewish character and religion".^[44]

Works propagating the Jewish Bolshevism canard

The Octopus

The Octopus is a 256-page book self-published in 1940 by Elizabeth Dilling under the pseudonym "Rev. Frank Woodruff Johnson". In it she describes her theories of Jewish Bolshevism.^[45]

Behind Communism

Frank L. Britton, editor of *The American Nationalist* published a book, *Behind Communism*, in 1952 which disseminated the myth that Communism was a Jewish conspiracy originating in Palestine.^[46]

Analysis of the Jewish Bolshevism canard

Researchers in the field, such as Polish philosopher Stanisław Krajewski^[47] or André Gerrits,^[48] denounce the concept of Jewish Bolshevism as a prejudice. Law professor Ilya Somin agrees, and compares Jewish involvement in other communist countries:

"Overrepresentation of a group in a political movement does not prove either that the movement was 'dominated' by that group or that it primarily serves that group's interests. The idea that communist oppression was somehow Jewish in nature is belied by the record of communist regimes in countries like China, North Korea, and Cambodia, where the Jewish presence was and is minuscule."^[49]

Several scholars have observed that Jewish involvement in Communist movements was primarily a response to antisemitism and rejection by established politics.^{[50][51][52]} Others note that this involvement was greatly exaggerated to accord with existing antisemitic narratives.^{[53][54][55][56][57][58]}

Philip Mendes observed this on a policy level:

The increasing Jewish involvement in political radicalism... left government authorities with a number of potential options for response. One option was to recognize the structural link between the oppression of the Jews and their involvement in the Left, and to introduce social and political reforms which ended discrimination against Jews... This option would have meant accepting that Jews had as much right as any other religious or ethnic grouping to freely participate in political activities. The second option... was to reject any social or political emancipation of Jews... Instead, this policy blamed the Jewish victims for their persecution, and assumed that anti-Semitic legislation and violence was justified as a response to the alleged threat of 'Jewish Bolshevism'. In short, cause and effect were reversed, and Jewish responses to anti-Semitism were utilized to rationalize anti-Semitic practices.^[52]

See also

- [Cultural Bolshevism](#)
- [Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory](#)

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The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (Протоколы сионских мудрецов) or ***The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion*** is a fabricated antisemitic text purporting to describe a Jewish plan for global domination. The hoax, which was shown to be plagiarized from several earlier sources, some not antisemitic in nature,^[1] was first published in Russia in 1903, translated into multiple languages, and disseminated internationally in the early part of the 20th century.

Henry Ford funded printing of 500,000 copies that were distributed throughout the United States in the 1920s.^[2] Distillations of it were assigned by some German teachers, as if factual, to be read by German schoolchildren after the Nazis came to power in 1933,^[3] despite having been exposed as fraudulent by the British newspaper *The Times* in 1921 and the German *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1924. It remains widely available in numerous languages, in print and on the Internet, and continues to be presented by neofascist, fundamentalist and antisemitic groups as a genuine document. It has been described as "probably the most influential work of antisemitism ever written".^[4]

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The Protocols of the Elders of Zion



Cover of first book edition, *The Great within the Minuscule and Antichrist*

Author	Unknown; plagiarised from various authors
Original title	<i>Програма завоевания мира евреями</i> (<i>Programa zavoevaniya mira evreyami</i>) "The Jewish Programme to Conquer the World"
Country	<u>Russian Empire</u>
Language	<u>Russian</u> ^[a]
Subject	<u>Antisemitic conspiracy theory</u>
Genre	<u>Propaganda</u>

Towards the end of the 18th century, following the Partitions of Poland, the Russian Empire inherited the world's largest Jewish population. The Jews lived in *shtetls* in the West of the Empire, in the Pale of Settlement and until the 1840s, local Jewish affairs were organised through the *qahal*, the semi-autonomous Jewish government, including for purposes of taxation and conscription into the Imperial Russian Army. Following the ascent of liberalism in Europe, the Russian ruling class became more hardline in its reactionary policies, upholding the banner of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality, whereby non-Orthodox and non-Russian subjects, including Jews, were not always embraced. Jews who attempted to assimilate were regarded with suspicion as potential "infiltrators" supposedly trying to "take over society", while Jews who remained attached to traditional Jewish culture were resented as undesirable aliens.

Resentment towards Jews, for the aforementioned reasons, existed in Russian society, but the idea of a *Protocols*-esque international Jewish conspiracy for world domination was minted in the 1860s. Jacob Brafman, a Russian Jew from Minsk, had a falling out with agents of the local *qahal* and consequently turned against Judaism. He subsequently converted to the Russian Orthodox Church and authored polemics against the Talmud and the *qahal*.^[8] Brafman claimed in his books *The Local and Universal Jewish Brotherhoods* (1868) and *The Book of the Kahal* (1869), published in Vilna, that the *qahal* continued to exist in secret and that it had as its principal aim undermining Christian entrepreneurs, taking over their property and ultimately seizing power. He also claimed that it was an international conspiratorial network, under the central control of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, which was based in Paris and then under the leadership of Adolphe Crémieux, a prominent freemason.^[8] The Vilna Talmudist, Jacob Barit, attempted to refute Brafman's claim.



The Book of the Kahal (1869)
by Jacob Brafman, in the
Russian language original

The impact of Brafman's work took on an international aspect when it was translated into English, French, German and other languages. The image of the "*qahal*" as a secret international Jewish shadow government working as a state within a state was picked up by anti-Jewish publications in Russia and was taken seriously by some Russian officials such as P. A. Cherevin and Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev who in the 1880s urged governors-general of provinces to seek out the supposed *qahal*. This was around the time of the *Narodnaya Volya* assassination of Tsar Alexander II of Russia and the subsequent pogroms. In France, it was translated by Monsignor Ernest Jouin in 1925, who supported the Protocols. In 1928, Siegfried Passarge, a geographer who later gave his support to the Nazis, translated it into German.

Aside from Brafman, there were other early writings which posited a similar concept to the *Protocols*. This includes *The Conquest of the World by the Jews* (1878),^[9] published in Basel and authored by Osman Bey (born Frederick Millingen). Millingen was a British subject and son of English physician Julius Michael Millingen, but served as an officer in the Ottoman Army where he was born. He converted to Islam, but later became a Russian Orthodox Christian. Bey's work was followed up by Hippolytus Lutostansky's *The Talmud and the Jews* (1879) which claimed that Jews wanted to divide Russia among themselves.^[10]

Sources employed

Source material for the forgery consisted jointly of *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu* (*Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*), an 1864 political satire by Maurice Joly,^[11] and a chapter from *Biarritz*, an 1868 novel by the antisemitic German novelist Hermann Goedsche,

which had been translated into Russian in 1872.^[12]

A major source for the *Protocols* was *Der Judenstaat* (1896) by Theodor Herzl, which was referred to as *Zionist Protocols* in its initial French and Russian editions. Paradoxically, early Russian editions of the *Protocols* assert that they did not come from a Zionist organization.^[13] The text, which nowhere advocates for Zionism, resembles a parody of Herzl's ideas.^[14]

Literary forgery

The Protocols is one of the best-known and most-discussed examples of literary forgery, with analysis and proof of its fraudulent origin dating as far back as 1921.^[15] The forgery is an early example of "conspiracy theory" literature.^[16] Written mainly in the first person plural,^[b] the text includes generalizations, truisms, and platitudes on how to take over the world: take control of the media and the financial institutions, change the traditional social order, etc. It does not contain specifics.^[18]

Maurice Joly

Elements of the *Protocols* were plagiarized from Joly's fictional *Dialogue in Hell*, a thinly veiled attack on the political ambitions of Napoleon III, who, represented by the non-Jewish character Machiavelli,^[19] plots to rule the world. Joly, a republican who later served in the Paris Commune, was sentenced to 15 months as a direct result of his book's publication.^[20] Umberto Eco considered that *Dialogue in Hell* was itself plagiarised in part from a novel by Eugène Sue, *Les Mystères du Peuple* (1849–56).^[21]

Identifiable phrases from Joly constitute 4% of the first half of the first edition, and 12% of the second half; later editions, including most translations, have longer quotes from Joly.^[22]

The Protocols 1–19 closely follow the order of Maurice Joly's *Dialogues* 1–17. For example:

<i>Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu</i>	<i>The Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i>
<p>How are loans made? By the issue of bonds entailing on the Government the obligation to pay interest proportionate to the capital it has been paid. Thus, if a loan is at 5%, the State, after 20 years, has paid out a sum equal to the borrowed capital. When 40 years have expired it has paid double, after 60 years triple: yet it remains debtor for the entire capital sum.</p> <p>— Montesquieu, <i>Dialogues</i>, p. 209</p>	<p>A loan is an issue of Government paper which entails an obligation to pay interest amounting to a percentage of the total sum of the borrowed money. If a loan is at 5%, then in 20 years the Government would have unnecessarily paid out a sum equal to that of the loan in order to cover the percentage. In 40 years it will have paid twice; and in 60 thrice that amount, but the loan will still remain as an unpaid debt.</p> <p>— <i>Protocols</i>, p. 77</p>
<p>Like the god Vishnu, my press will have a hundred arms, and these arms will give their hands to all the different shades of opinion throughout the country.</p> <p>— Machiavelli, <i>Dialogues</i>, p. 141</p>	<p>These newspapers, like the Indian god Vishnu, will be possessed of hundreds of hands, each of which will be feeling the pulse of varying public opinion.</p> <p>— <i>Protocols</i>, p. 43</p>
<p>Now I understand the figure of the god Vishnu; you have a hundred arms like the Indian idol, and each of your fingers touches a spring.</p> <p>— Montesquieu, <i>Dialogues</i>, p. 207</p>	<p>Our Government will resemble the Hindu god Vishnu. Each of our hundred hands will hold one spring of the social machinery of State.</p> <p>— <i>Protocols</i>, p. 65</p>

Philip Graves brought this plagiarism to light in a series of articles in *The Times* in 1921, being the first to expose the *Protocols* as a forgery to the public.^{[1][23]}

Hermann Goedsche

Daniel Keren wrote in his essay "Commentary on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion", "Goedsche was a postal clerk and a spy for the Prussian Secret Police. He had been forced to leave the postal work due to his part in forging evidence in the prosecution against the Democratic leader Benedict Waldeck in 1849."^[24] Following his dismissal, Goedsche began a career as a conservative columnist, and wrote literary fiction under the pen name Sir John Retcliffe.^[25] His 1868 novel *Biarritz (To Sedan)* contains a chapter called "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague and the Council of Representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel." In it, Goedsche (who was unaware that only two of the original twelve Biblical "tribes" remained) depicts a clandestine nocturnal meeting of members of a mysterious rabbinical cabal that is

planning a diabolical "Jewish conspiracy." At midnight, the Devil appears to contribute his opinions and insight. The chapter closely resembles a scene in Alexandre Dumas' *Giuseppe Balsamo* (1848), in which Joseph Balsamo a.k.a. Alessandro Cagliostro and company plot the Affair of the Diamond Necklace.^[26]

In 1872 a Russian translation of "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague" appeared in Saint Petersburg as a separate pamphlet of purported non-fiction. François Bournand, in his *Les Juifs et nos Contemporains* (1896), reproduced the soliloquy at the end of the chapter, in which the character Levit expresses as factual the wish that Jews be "kings of the world in 100 years" —crediting a "Chief Rabbi John Readcliff." Perpetuation of the myth of the authenticity of Goedsche's story, in particular the "Rabbi's speech", facilitated later accounts of the equally mythical authenticity of the *Protocols*.^[25] Like the *Protocols*, many asserted that the fictional "rabbi's speech" had a ring of authenticity, regardless of its origin: "This speech was published in our time, eighteen years ago," read an 1898 report in *La Croix*, "and all the events occurring before our eyes were anticipated in it with truly frightening accuracy."^[27]

Fictional events in Joly's *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu*, which appeared four years before *Biarritz*, may well have been the inspiration for Goedsche's fictional midnight meeting, and details of the outcome of the supposed plot. Goedsche's chapter may have been an outright plagiarism of Joly, Dumas père, or both.^{[28][c]}

Structure and content

The *Protocols* purports to document the minutes of a late-19th-century meeting attended by world Jewish leaders, the "Elders of Zion", who are conspiring to take over the world.^{[29][30]} The forgery places in the mouths of the Jewish leaders a variety of plans, most of which derive from older antisemitic canards.^{[29][30]} For example, the *Protocols* includes plans to subvert the morals of the non-Jewish world, plans for Jewish bankers to control the world's economies, plans for Jewish control of the press, and — ultimately — plans for the destruction of civilization.^{[29][30]} The document consists of 24 "protocols", which have been analyzed by Steven Jacobs and Mark Weitzman, who documented several recurrent themes that appear repeatedly in the 24 protocols,^[d] as shown in the following table:^[31]

Protocol	Title ^[31]	Themes ^[31]
1	The Basic Doctrine: "Right Lies in Might"	Freedom and Liberty; Authority and power; Gold=money
2	Economic War and Disorganization Lead to International Government	International Political economic conspiracy; Press/Media as tools
3	Methods of Conquest	Jewish people, arrogant and corrupt; Chosenness/Election; Public Service
4	The Destruction of Religion by Materialism	Business as Cold and Heartless; Gentiles as slaves
5	Despotism and Modern Progress	Jewish Ethics; Jewish People's Relationship to Larger Society
6	The Acquisition of Land, The Encouragement of Speculation	Ownership of land
7	A Prophecy of Worldwide War	Internal unrest and discord (vs. Court system) leading to war vs Shalom/Peace
8	The transitional Government	Criminal element
9	The All-Embracing Propaganda	Law; education; Freemasonry
10	Abolition of the Constitution; Rise of the Autocracy	Politics; Majority rule; Liberalism; Family
11	The Constitution of Autocracy and Universal Rule	Gentiles; Jewish political involvement; Freemasonry
12	The Kingdom of the Press and Control	Liberty; Press censorship; Publishing
13	Turning Public Thought from Essentials to Non-essentials	Gentiles; Business; Chosenness/Election; Press and censorship; Liberalism
14	The Destruction of Religion as a Prelude to the Rise of the Jewish God	Judaism; God; Gentiles; Liberty; Pornography
15	Utilization of Masonry: Heartless Suppression of Enemies	Gentiles; Freemasonry; Sages of Israel; Political power and authority; King of Israel
16	The Nullification of Education	Education
17	The Fate of Lawyers and the Clergy	Lawyers; Clergy; Christianity and non-Jewish Authorship
18	The Organization of Disorder	Evil; Speech;
19	Mutual Understanding Between Ruler and People	Gossip; Martyrdom
20	The Financial Program and Construction	Taxes and Taxation; Loans; Bonds; Usury; Moneylending
21	Domestic Loans and Government Credit	Stock Markets and Stock Exchanges
22	The Beneficence of Jewish Rule	Gold=Money; Chosenness/Election
23	The Inculcation of Obedience	Obedience to Authority; Slavery; Chosenness/Election
24	The Jewish Ruler	Kingship; Document as Fiction

Conspiracy references

According to Daniel Pipes,

The book's vagueness—almost no names, dates, or issues are specified—has been one key to this wide-ranging success. The purportedly Jewish authorship also helps to make the book more convincing. Its embrace of contradiction—that to advance, Jews use all tools available, including capitalism and communism, philo-Semitism and antisemitism, democracy and tyranny—made it possible for *The Protocols* to reach out to all: rich and poor, Right and Left, Christian and Muslim, American and Japanese.^[18]

Pipes notes that the *Protocols* emphasizes recurring themes of conspiratorial antisemitism: "Jews always scheme", "Jews are everywhere", "Jews are behind every institution", "Jews obey a central authority, the shadowy 'Elders'", and "Jews are close to success."^[32]

As fiction in the genre of literature, the tract was analyzed by Umberto Eco in his novel *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988):

The great importance of *The Protocols* lies in its permitting antisemites to reach beyond their traditional circles and find a large international audience, a process that continues to this day. The forgery poisoned public life wherever it appeared; it was "self-generating; a blueprint that migrated from one conspiracy to another."^[33]

Eco also dealt with the *Protocols* in 1994 in chapter 6, "Fictional Protocols", of his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* and in his 2010 novel *The Cemetery of Prague*.

History

Publication history

The Protocols appeared in print in the Russian Empire as early as 1903, published as a series of articles in *Znamya*, a Black Hundreds newspaper owned by Pavel Krushevan. It appeared again in 1905 as the final chapter (Chapter XII) of the second edition of *Velikoe v malom i antikhrisť* ("The Great in the Small & Antichrist"), a book by Sergei Nilus. In 1906, it appeared in pamphlet form edited by Georgy Butmi de Katzman.^[34]

These first three (and subsequently more) Russian language imprints were published and circulated in the Russian Empire during the 1903–06 period as a tool for scapegoating Jews, blamed by the monarchists for the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905. Common to all three texts is the idea that Jews aim for world domination. Since *The Protocols* are presented as merely a document, the front matter and back matter are needed to explain its alleged origin. The diverse imprints, however, are mutually inconsistent. The general claim is that the document was stolen from a secret Jewish organization. Since the alleged original stolen manuscript does not exist, one is forced to restore a purported original edition. This has been done by the Italian scholar, Cesare G. De Michelis in 1998, in a work which was translated into English and published in 2004, where he treats his subject as Apocrypha.^{[34][35]}

As the Russian Revolution unfolded, causing White movement-affiliated Russians to flee to the West, this text was carried along and assumed a new purpose. Until then, *The Protocols* had remained obscure;^[35] it now became an instrument for blaming Jews for the Russian Revolution. It became a tool, a political weapon, used against the Bolsheviks who were depicted as overwhelmingly Jewish, allegedly

executing the "plan" embodied in *The Protocols*. The purpose was to discredit the October Revolution, prevent the West from recognizing the Soviet Union, and bring about the downfall of Vladimir Lenin's regime.^{[34][35]}

First Russian language editions

The chapter "In the Jewish Cemetery in Prague" from Goedsche's *Biarritz*, with its strong antisemitic theme containing the alleged rabbinical plot against the European civilization, was translated into Russian as a separate pamphlet in 1872.^[12] However, in 1921, Princess Catherine Radziwill gave a private lecture in New York in which she claimed that the *Protocols* were a forgery compiled in 1904–05 by Russian journalists Matvei Golovinski and Manasevich-Manuilov at the direction of Pyotr Rachkovsky, Chief of the Russian secret service in Paris.^[36]

In 1944, German writer Konrad Heiden identified Golovinski as an author of the *Protocols*.^[37] Radziwill's account was supported by Russian historian Mikhail Lepekhine, who published his findings in November 1999 in the French newsweekly *L'Express*.^[38] Lepekhine considers the *Protocols* a part of a scheme to persuade Tsar Nicholas II that the modernization of Russia was really a Jewish plot to control the world.^[39] Stephen Eric Bronner writes that groups opposed to progress, parliamentarianism, urbanization, and capitalism, and an active Jewish role in these modern institutions, were particularly drawn to the antisemitism of the document.^[40] Ukrainian scholar Vadim Skuratovsky offers extensive literary, historical and linguistic analysis of the original text of the *Protocols* and traces the influences of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's prose (in particular, *The Grand Inquisitor* and *The Possessed*) on Golovinski's writings, including the *Protocols*.^[39]

Golovinski's role in the writing of the *Protocols* is disputed by Michael Hagemeister, Richard Levy and Cesare De Michelis, who each write that the account which involves him is historically unverifiable and to a large extent provably wrong.^{[41][42][43]}

In his book *The Non-Existent Manuscript*, Italian scholar Cesare G. De Michelis studies early Russian publications of the *Protocols*. The *Protocols* were first mentioned in the Russian press in April 1902, by the Saint Petersburg newspaper *Novoye Vremya* (Новое Время – *The New Times*). The article was written by famous conservative publicist Mikhail Menshikov as a part of his regular series "Letters to Neighbors" ("Письма к ближним") and was titled "Plots against Humanity". The author described his meeting with a lady (Yuliana Glinka, as it is known now) who, after telling him about her mystical revelations, implored him to get familiar with the documents later known as the *Protocols*; but after reading some excerpts, Menshikov became quite skeptical about their origin and did not publish them.^[44]

Krushevan and Nilus editions

The *Protocols* were published at the earliest, in serialized form, from August 28 to September 7 (O.S.) 1903, in *Znamya*, a Saint Petersburg daily newspaper, under Pavel Krushevan. Krushevan had initiated the Kishinev pogrom four months earlier.^[45]



The frontispiece of a 1912 edition using occult symbols

In 1905, Sergei Nilus published the full text of the *Protocols* in *Chapter XII*, the final chapter (pp. 305–417), of the second edition (or third, according to some sources) of his book, *Velikoe v malom i antikhrist*, which translates as "The Great within the Small: The Coming of the Anti-Christ and the Rule of Satan on Earth". He claimed it was the work of the First Zionist Congress, held in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland.^[34] When it was pointed out that the First Zionist Congress had been open to the public and was attended by many non-Jews, Nilus changed his story, saying the Protocols were the work of the 1902–03 meetings of the Elders, but contradicting his own prior statement that he had received his copy in 1901:

In 1901, I succeeded through an acquaintance of mine (the late Court Marshal Alexei Nikolayevich Sukotin of Chernigov) in getting a manuscript that exposed with unusual perfection and clarity the course and development of the secret Jewish Freemasonic conspiracy, which would bring this wicked world to its inevitable end. The person who gave me this manuscript guaranteed it to be a faithful translation of the original documents that were stolen by a woman from one of the highest and most influential leaders of the Freemasons at a secret meeting somewhere in France—the beloved nest of Freemasonic conspiracy.^[46]

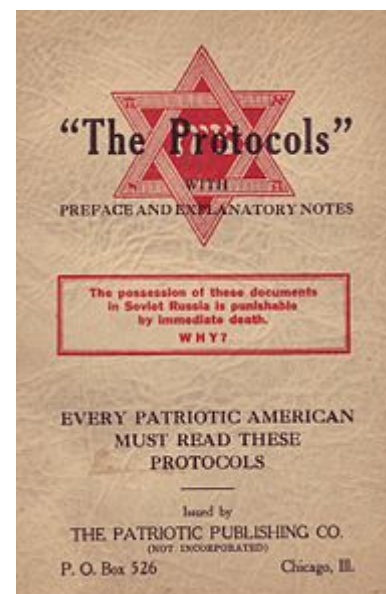
Stolypin's fraud investigation, 1905

A subsequent secret investigation ordered by Pyotr Stolypin, the newly appointed chairman of the Council of Ministers, came to the conclusion that the *Protocols* first appeared in Paris in antisemitic circles around 1897–98.^[47] When Nicholas II learned of the results of this investigation, he requested, "The Protocols should be confiscated, a good cause cannot be defended by dirty means."^[48] Despite the order, or because of the "good cause", numerous reprints proliferated.^[45]

The Protocols in the West

In the United States, *The Protocols* are to be understood in the context of the First Red Scare (1917–20). The text was purportedly brought to the United States by a Russian army officer in 1917; it was translated into English by Natalie de Bogory (personal assistant of Harris A. Houghton, an officer of the Department of War) in June 1918,^[49] and Russian expatriate Boris Brasol soon circulated it in American government circles, specifically diplomatic and military, in typescript form,^[50] a copy of which is archived by the Hoover Institute.^[51] It also appeared in 1919 in the *Public Ledger* as a pair of serialized newspaper articles. But all references to "Jews" were replaced with references to *Bolsheviki* as an exposé by the journalist and subsequently highly respected Columbia University School of Journalism dean Carl W. Ackerman.^{[52][51]}

In 1923, there appeared an anonymously edited pamphlet by the Britons Publishing Society, a successor to The Britons, an entity created and headed by Henry Hamilton Beamish. This imprint was allegedly a translation by Victor E. Marsden, who had died in October 1920.^[51]



A 1934 edition by the Patriotic Publishing Company of Chicago

Most versions substantially involve "protocols", or minutes of a speech given in secret involving Jews who are organized as Elders, or Sages, of Zion,^[53] and underlies 24 protocols that are supposedly followed by the Jewish people. *The Protocols* has been proven to be a literary forgery and hoax as well as a clear case of plagiarism.^{[1][54][55][56][57]}

English language imprints

On October 27 and 28, 1919, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* published excerpts of an English language translation as the "Red Bible," deleting all references to the purported Jewish authorship and re-casting the document as a Bolshevik manifesto.^[58] The author of the articles was the paper's correspondent at the time, Carl W. Ackerman, who later became the head of the journalism department at Columbia University. On May 8, 1920, an article^[59] in *The Times* followed German translation and appealed for an inquiry into what it called an "uncanny note of prophecy". In the leader (editorial) titled "The Jewish Peril, a Disturbing Pamphlet: Call for Inquiry", Wickham Steed wrote about *The Protocols*:

What are these 'Protocols'? Are they authentic? If so, what malevolent assembly concocted these plans and gloated over their exposition? Are they forgery? If so, whence comes the uncanny note of prophecy, prophecy in part fulfilled, in part so far gone in the way of fulfillment?^[60]

Steed retracted his endorsement of *The Protocols* after they were exposed as a forgery.^[61]

United States

In 1920 in the United States, Henry Ford published in a newspaper he owned – *The Dearborn Independent* – an American version of the *Protocols*, as part of a series of antisemitic articles titled "The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem". He later published the articles in book form, with a half million in circulation in the United States, as well as translations into a number of other languages.^{[62][63]} In 1921, Ford cited evidence of a Jewish threat: "The only statement I care to make about the *Protocols* is that they fit in with what is going on. They are 16 years old, and they have fitted the world situation up to this time."^[64] Robert A. Rosenbaum wrote that "In 1927, bowing to legal and economic pressure, Ford issued a retraction and apology—while disclaiming personal responsibility—for the anti-Semitic articles and closed the *Dearborn Independent* in 1927.^[65] He was also an admirer of Nazi Germany.^[66]



Title page of 1920 edition from Boston

In 1934, an anonymous editor expanded the compilation with "Text and Commentary" (pp 136–41). The production of this uncredited compilation was a 300-page book, an inauthentic expanded edition of the twelfth chapter of Nilus's 1905 book on the coming of the anti-Christ. It consists of substantial liftings of excerpts of articles from Ford's antisemitic periodical *The Dearborn Independent*. This 1934 text circulates most widely in the English-speaking world, as well as on the internet. The "Text and Commentary" concludes with a comment on Chaim Weizmann's October 6, 1920, remark at a banquet: "A beneficent protection which God has instituted in the life of the Jew is that He has dispersed him all over the world". Marsden, who was dead by then, is credited with the following assertion:

It proves that the Learned Elders exist. It proves that Dr. Weizmann knows all about them. It proves that the desire for a "National Home" in Palestine is only camouflage and an infinitesimal part of the Jew's real object. It proves that the Jews of the world have no intention of settling in Palestine or any separate country, and that their annual prayer that they may all meet "Next Year in Jerusalem" is merely a piece of their characteristic make-believe. It also demonstrates that the Jews are now a world menace, and that the Aryan races will have to domicile them permanently out of Europe.^[67]

***The Times* exposes a forgery, 1921**

In 1920–1921, the history of the concepts found in the *Protocols* was traced back to the works of Goedsche and Jacques Crétineau-Joly by Lucien Wolf (an English Jewish journalist), and published in London in August 1921. But a dramatic exposé occurred in the series of articles in *The Times* by its Constantinople reporter, Philip Graves, who discovered the plagiarism from the work of Maurice Joly.^[1]

According to writer Peter Grose, Allen Dulles, who was in Constantinople developing relationships in post-Ottoman political structures, discovered "the source" of the documentation and ultimately provided him to *The Times*. Grose writes that *The Times* extended a loan to the source, a Russian émigré who refused to be identified, with the understanding the loan would not be repaid.^[68] Colin Holmes, a lecturer in economic history at Sheffield University, identified the émigré as Mikhail Raslovlev, a self-identified antisemite, who gave the information to Graves so as not to "give a weapon of any kind to the Jews, whose friend I have never been."^[69]

In the first article of Graves' series, titled "A Literary Forgery", the editors of *The Times* wrote, "our Constantinople Correspondent presents for the first time conclusive proof that the document is in the main a clumsy plagiarism. He has forwarded us a copy of the French book from which the plagiarism is made."^[1] In the same year, an entire book^[70] documenting the hoax was published in the United States by Herman Bernstein. Despite this widespread and extensive debunking, the *Protocols* continued to be regarded as important factual evidence by antisemites. Dulles, a successful lawyer and career diplomat, attempted to persuade the US State Department to publicly denounce the forgery, but without success.^[71]

Switzerland

The Berne Trial, 1934–35

The selling of the *Protocols* (edited by German antisemite Theodor Fritsch) by the National Front during a political meeting in the Casino of Berne on June 13, 1933,^[e] led to the Berne Trial in the *Amtsgericht* (district court) of Berne, the capital of Switzerland, on October 29, 1934. The plaintiffs (the Swiss Jewish Association and the Jewish Community of Berne) were

"JEWISH WORLD PLOT."

AN EXPOSURE.

THE SOURCE OF THE PROTOCOLS.

TRUTH AT LAST.

The so-called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were published in London last year under the title of "The Jewish Plot."

This book is a translation of a book published in Russia in 1905, by Sergei Nilus, a Government official, who professed to have received from a friend a copy of a summary of the minutes of a secret meeting, held in Paris, by a Jewish organization that was plotting to overthrow civilization in order to establish a Jewish world state.

These "Protocols" attracted little attention until after the Russian Revolution of 1917, when the appearance of the Bolsheviks, among whom were many Jews, professing and practising political doctrines that in some points resembled those advocated in the "Protocols," led many to believe that Nilus's alleged discovery was genuine. The "Protocols" were widely disseminated and translated into several European languages. Their authenticity has been frequently attacked and many arguments have been adduced for the theory that they are a forgery.

In the following articles our Constantinople Correspondent for the first time presents conclusive proof that the document is in the main a clumsy plagiarism. He has forwarded us a copy of the French book from which the plagiarism is made. The British Museum has a complete copy of the book, which is entitled "Dialogue avec Enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu, ou la Politique de Machiavel au XIX. Siècle. Par un Contemporain," and was published at Brussels in 1865. Shortly after its publication the author, Maurice Joly, a Paris lawyer and publicist, was arrested by the police of Napoleon III, and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment.

A LITERARY FORGERY.

(From Our Constantinople Correspondent.)

"There is one thing about Constantinople that is worth your while to remember," said a diplomatist to the writer in 1908. "If you

The Times exposed the *Protocols* as a forgery on August 16–18, 1921.

represented by Hans Matti and Georges Brunschvig, helped by Emil Raas. Working on behalf of the defense was German antisemitic propagandist Ulrich Fleischhauer. On May 19, 1935, two defendants (Theodore Fischer and Silvio Schnell) were convicted of violating a Bernese statute prohibiting the distribution of "immoral, obscene or brutalizing" texts^[72] while three other defendants were acquitted. The court declared the *Protocols* to be forgeries, plagiarisms, and obscene literature. Judge Walter Meyer, a Christian who had not previously heard of the *Protocols*, said in conclusion,

I hope the time will come when nobody will be able to understand how in 1935 nearly a dozen sane and responsible men were able for two weeks to mock the intellect of the Bern court discussing the authenticity of the so-called Protocols, the very Protocols that, harmful as they have been and will be, are nothing but laughable nonsense.^[45]

Vladimir Burtsev, a Russian émigré, anti-Bolshevik and anti-Fascist who exposed numerous Okhrana agents provocateurs in the early 1900s, served as a witness at the Berne Trial. In 1938 in Paris he published a book, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: A Proved Forgery*, based on his testimony.

On November 1, 1937, the defendants appealed the verdict to the *Obergericht* (Cantonal Supreme Court) of Berne. A panel of three judges acquitted them, holding that the *Protocols*, while false, did not violate the statute at issue because they were "political publications" and not "immoral (obscene) publications (Schundliteratur)" in the strict sense of the law.^[72] The presiding judge's opinion stated, though, that the forgery of the *Protocols* was not questionable and expressed regret that the law did not provide adequate protection for Jews from this sort of literature. The court refused to impose the fees of defense of the acquitted defendants to the plaintiffs, and the acquitted Theodor Fischer had to pay 100 Fr. to the total state costs of the trial (Fr. 28,000) that were eventually paid by the Canton of Berne.^[73] This decision gave grounds for later allegations that the appeal court "confirmed authenticity of the Protocols" which is contrary to the facts. A view favorable to the pro-Nazi defendants is reported in an appendix to Leslie Fry's *Waters Flowing Eastward*.^[74] A more scholarly work on the trial is in a 139-page monograph by Urs Lüthi.^[75]

Evidence presented at the trial, which strongly influenced later accounts up to the present, was that the *Protocols* were originally written in French by agents of the Tzarist secret police (the Okhrana).^[43] However, this version has been questioned by several modern scholars.^[43] Michael Hagemeister discovered that the primary witness Alexandre du Chayla had previously written in support of the blood libel, had received four thousand Swiss francs for his testimony, and was secretly doubted even by the plaintiffs.^[42] Charles Ruud and Sergei Stepanov concluded that there is no substantial evidence of Okhrana involvement and strong circumstantial evidence against it.^[76]

The Basel Trial

A similar trial in Switzerland took place at Basel. The Swiss Frontists Alfred Zander and Eduard Rüegsegger distributed the *Protocols* (edited by the German Gottfried zur Beek) in Switzerland. Jules Dreyfus-Brodsky and Marcus Cohen sued them for insult to Jewish honor. At the same time, chief rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis of Stockholm (who also witnessed at the Berne Trial) sued Alfred Zander who contended that Ehrenpreis himself had said that the *Protocols* were authentic (referring to the foreword of the edition of the *Protocols* by the German antisemite Theodor Fritsch). On June 5, 1936 these proceedings ended with a settlement.^[f]

Germany

According to historian Norman Cohn,^[78] the assassins of German Jewish politician Walter Rathenau (1867–1922) were convinced that Rathenau was a literal "Elder of Zion".

It seems likely Adolf Hitler first became aware of the *Protocols* after hearing about it from ethnic German white émigrés, such as Alfred Rosenberg and Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter.^[79] Hitler refers to the *Protocols* in *Mein Kampf*:

... [The Protocols] are based on a forgery, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* moans [] every week ... [which is] the best proof that they are authentic ... the important thing is that with positively terrifying certainty they reveal the nature and activity of the Jewish people and expose their inner contexts as well as their ultimate final aims.^[80]

The *Protocols* also became a part of the Nazi propaganda effort to justify persecution of the Jews. In *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933–1945*, Nora Levin states that "Hitler used the Protocols as a manual in his war to exterminate the Jews":

Despite conclusive proof that the *Protocols* were a gross forgery, they had sensational popularity and large sales in the 1920s and 1930s. They were translated into every language of Europe and sold widely in Arab lands, the US, and England. But it was in Germany after World War I that they had their greatest success. There they were used to explain all of the disasters that had befallen the country: the defeat in the war, the hunger, the destructive inflation.^[81]

Hitler did not mention the Protocols in his speeches after his defense of it in *Mein Kampf*.^{[43][82]} "Distillations of the text appeared in German classrooms, indoctrinated the Hitler Youth, and invaded the USSR along with German soldiers."^[3] Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels proclaimed: "The Zionist Protocols are as up-to-date today as they were the day they were first published."^[83]

Richard S. Levy criticizes the claim that the *Protocols* had a large effect on Hitler's thinking, writing that it is based mostly on suspect testimony and lacks hard evidence.^[43] Randall Bytwerk agrees, writing that most leading Nazis did not believe it was genuine despite having an "inner truth" suitable for propaganda.^[82]

Publication of the *Protocols* was stopped in Germany in 1939 for unknown reasons.^[84] An edition that was ready for printing was blocked by censorship laws.^[85]

German-language publications

Having fled Ukraine in 1918–19, Piotr Shabelsky-Bork brought the *Protocols* to Ludwig Muller Von Hausen who then published them in German.^[86] Under the pseudonym Gottfried Zur Beek he produced the first and "by far the most important"^[87] German translation. It appeared in January 1920 as a part of a larger antisemitic tract^[88] dated 1919. After *The Times* discussed the book respectfully in May 1920 it became a bestseller. "The Hohenzollern family helped defray the publication costs, and Kaiser Wilhelm II had portions of the book read out aloud to dinner guests".^[83] Alfred Rosenberg's 1923 edition^[89] "gave a forgery a huge boost".^[83]

Italy

Fascist politician Giovanni Preziosi published the first Italian edition of the *Protocols* in 1921.^[90] The book however had little impact until the mid-1930s. A new 1937 edition had a much higher impact, and three further editions in the following months sold 60,000 copies total.^[90] The fifth edition had an introduction by Julius Evola, which argued around the issue of forgery, stating: "The problem of the authenticity of this document is secondary and has to be replaced by the much more serious and essential problem of its truthfulness".^[90]

Post World War II

Middle East

Neither governments nor political leaders in most parts of the world have referred to the *Protocols* since World War II. The exception to this is the Middle East, where a large number of Arab and Muslim regimes and leaders have endorsed them as authentic, including endorsements from Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Sadat of Egypt, President Abdul Salam Arif of Iraq,^[91] King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, and Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi of Libya.^{[92][93]} A translation made by an Arab Christian appeared in Cairo in 1927 or 1928, this time as a book. The first translation by an Arab Muslim was also published in Cairo, but only in 1951.^[92]

The 1988 charter of Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist group, stated that the *Protocols* embodies the plan of the Zionists.^[94] The reference was removed in the new covenant issued in 2017.^[95] Recent endorsements in the 21st century have been made by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Ekrima Sa'id Sabri, the education ministry of Saudi Arabia,^[93] and a member of the Greek Parliament, Ilias Kasidiaris.^[96] The Palestinian Solidarity Committee of South Africa reportedly distributed copies of the *Protocols* at the World Conference against Racism 2001.^[97] The book was sold during the conference in the exhibition tent set up for the distribution of the antiracist literature.^{[98][99]}

However, figures within the region have publicly asserted that The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a forgery such as former Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa, who made an official court complaint concerning a publisher who falsely put his name on an introduction to its Arabic translation.^[100]

Contemporary conspiracy theories

The *Protocols* continue to be widely available around the world, particularly on the Internet.

The Protocols is widely considered influential in the development of other conspiracy theories, and reappears repeatedly in contemporary conspiracy literature. Notions derived from the *Protocols* include claims that the "Jews" depicted in the Protocols are a cover for the Illuminati,^[37] Freemasons, the Priory of Sion or, in the opinion of David Icke, "extra-dimensional entities".^[101] In his book *And the truth shall set you free* (1995), Icke asserted that the *Protocols* are genuine and accurate.^[102]

Adaptations

Print

Masami Uno's book *If You Understand Judea You Can Comprehend the World: 1990 Scenario for the 'Final Economic War'* became popular in Japan around 1987 and was based upon the *Protocols*.^[103]

Television

In 2001–2002, Arab Radio and Television produced a 30-part television miniseries entitled *Horseman Without a Horse*, starring prominent Egyptian actor Mohamed Sobhi, which contains dramatizations of the *Protocols*. The United States and Israel criticized Egypt for airing the program.^[104] *Ash-Shatat* (Arabic: الشتات *The Diaspora*) is a 29-part Syrian television series produced in 2003 by a private Syrian film company and was based in part on the *Protocols*. Syrian national television declined to air the program. *Ash-Shatat* was shown on Lebanon's Al-Manar, before being dropped. The series was shown in Iran in 2004, and in Jordan during October 2005 on Al-Mamnou, a Jordanian satellite network.

Notes

- a. With plagiarism from German and French texts
- b. The text contains 44 instances of the word "I" (9.6%), and 412 instances of the word "we" (90.4%).^[17]
- c. This complex relationship was originally exposed by Graves 1921. The exposé has since been elaborated in many sources.
- d. Jacobs analyses the Marsden English translation. Some other less common imprints have more or fewer than 24 protocols.
- e. The main speaker was the former chief of the Swiss General Staff Emil Sonderegger.
- f. Zander had to withdraw his contention and the stock of the incriminated *Protocols* were destroyed by order of the court. Zander had to pay the fees of this Basel Trial.^[77]

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See also

Pertinent concepts

- Black propaganda
- Blood libel
- Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory
- Jewish Bolshevism
- Disinformation
- Hate speech
- Shadow government (conspiracy)
- World government

Individuals

- Martin Heidegger and Nazism

Related or similar texts

- A Racial Program for the Twentieth Century
- Alta Vendita
- Tanaka Memorial
- Protocols of Zion
- Hamas Covenant
- The Prague Cemetery
- Memoirs of Mr. Hempher, The British Spy to the Middle East
- Warrant for Genocide

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Holocaust denial

Holocaust denial is an antisemitic conspiracy theory^{[1][2]} that asserts that the Nazi genocide of Jews, known as "the Holocaust", is a myth or fabrication.^{[3][4][5]} Holocaust deniers make one or more of the following false statements:^{[6][7][8]}

- Nazi Germany's Final Solution was aimed only at deporting Jews and did not include their extermination.
- Nazi authorities did not use extermination camps and gas chambers for the genocidal mass murder of Jews.
- The actual number of Jews murdered is significantly lower than the accepted figure of 5 to 6 million, typically around a tenth of that figure.
- The Holocaust is a hoax perpetrated by the Allies, a Jewish conspiracy, or the Soviet Union.^{[9][4]}

The methodologies of Holocaust deniers are based on a predetermined conclusion that ignores overwhelming historical evidence to the contrary.^[10] Scholars use the term *denial* to describe the views and methodology of Holocaust deniers in order to distinguish them from legitimate historical revisionists, who challenge orthodox interpretations of history using established historical methodologies.^[11] Holocaust deniers generally do not accept *denial* as an appropriate description of their activities and use the euphemism *revisionism* instead.^[12] In some former Eastern Bloc countries, Holocaust deniers do not deny the mass murder of Jews, but deny the participation of their own nationals in the Holocaust.^[13] In 2019 the *Holocaust Remembrance Project Report* highlighted this form of denial which they described as "revisionism". They picked out Hungary, Poland, Croatia and Lithuania as the worst offenders.^[14]

Holocaust denial is considered a serious societal problem in many places where it occurs and is illegal in several European countries and Israel.

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Terminology and etymology

Holocaust deniers prefer to refer to their work as historical revisionism, and object to being referred to as "deniers".^[12] Emory University professor [Deborah Lipstadt](#) has written that: "The deniers' selection of the name revisionist to describe themselves is indicative of their basic strategy of deceit and distortion and of their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate historians engaged in the traditional practice of illuminating the past."^[15] Scholars consider this misleading since the methods of Holocaust denial differ

from those of legitimate historical revision.^[16] Legitimate historical revisionism is explained in a resolution adopted by the Duke University History Department, November 8, 1991, and reprinted in *Duke Chronicle*, November 13, 1991 in response to an advertisement produced by Bradley R Smith's Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust:^[17]

That historians are constantly engaged in historical revision is certainly correct; however, what historians do is very different from this advertisement. Historical revision of major events ... is not concerned with the actuality of these events; rather, it concerns their historical interpretation – their causes and consequences generally.

Lipstadt writes that modern Holocaust denial draws its inspiration from various sources, including a school of thought which used an established method to question government policies.^[18]

In 1992, Donald L. Niewyk gave some examples of how legitimate historical revisionism—the re-examination of accepted history and its updating with newly discovered, more accurate, or less-biased information—may be applied to the study of the Holocaust as new facts emerge to change the historical understanding of it:

With the main features of the Holocaust clearly visible to all but the willfully blind, historians have turned their attention to aspects of the story for which the evidence is incomplete or ambiguous. These are not minor matters by any means, but turn on such issues as Hitler's role in the event, Jewish responses to persecution, and reactions by onlookers both inside and outside Nazi-controlled Europe.^[19]

In contrast, the Holocaust denial movement bases its approach on the predetermined idea that the Holocaust, as understood by mainstream historiography, did not occur.^[10] Sometimes referred to as "negationism", from the French term *négationnisme* introduced by Henry Rousso,^[20] Holocaust deniers attempt to rewrite history by minimizing, denying, or simply ignoring essential facts. Koenraad Elst writes:

Negationism means the denial of historical crimes against humanity. It is not a reinterpretation of known facts, but the denial of known facts. The term negationism has gained currency as the name of a movement to deny a specific crime against humanity, the Nazi genocide on the Jews in 1941–45, also known as the Holocaust (Greek: complete burning) or the *Shoah* (Hebrew: disaster). Negationism is mostly identified with the effort at re-writing history in such a way that the fact of the Holocaust is omitted.^[21]

In "Secondary Anti-Semitism: From Hard-Core to Soft-Core Denial of the Shoah", Clemens Heni writes:

Contrary to the hard-core version, soft-core denial is often not easily identifiable. Often it is tolerated, or even encouraged and reproduced in the mainstream, not only in Germany. Scholars have only recently begun to unravel this disturbing phenomenon. Manfred Gerstenfeld discusses Holocaust trivialization in an article published in 2008. In Germany in 2007 two scholars, Thorsten Eitz and Georg Stötzel, published a voluminous dictionary of German language and discourse regarding National Socialism and the Holocaust. It includes

chapters on Holocaust trivialization and contrived comparisons, such as the infamous "atomic Holocaust", "Babycast," "Holocaust of abortion", "red Holocaust" or "biological Holocaust."^[22]

Background

Denial as a means of genocide

Lawrence Douglas argues that denial was invented by the perpetrators and employed as a means of genocide. For example, trucks of Zyklon B were labeled with Red Cross symbols and victims were told that they would be "resettled". Douglas also cites the Posen speeches as an example of denial while genocide was ongoing, with Himmler referring to the Holocaust as "an unnamed and never to be named page of glory". Denial of the mass murder of gas chambers, according to Douglas, repeats the Nazi efforts to persuade the victims that they were actually harmless showers.^[23]

Efforts to conceal the historical record

German efforts

While the Second World War was still underway, the Nazis had already formed a contingency plan that if defeat was imminent they would carry out the total destruction of German records.^[24] Historians have documented evidence that as Germany's defeat became imminent and Nazi leaders realized they would most likely be captured and brought to trial, great effort was made to destroy all evidence of mass extermination. Heinrich Himmler instructed his camp commandants to destroy records, crematoria, and other signs of mass extermination.^[25] As one of many examples, the bodies of the 25,000 mostly Latvian Jews whom Friedrich Jeckeln and the soldiers under his command had shot at Rumbula (near Riga) in late 1941 were dug up and burned in 1943.^[26] Similar operations were undertaken at Belzec, Treblinka and other death camps.^[25]



Members of a *Sonderkommando* 1005 unit pose next to a bone-crushing machine in the Janowska concentration camp (photo taken in August 1944, after camp's liberation)

French collaboration in archive destruction

In occupied France, the situation with respect to preserving war records was not much better, partly as a result of French state secrecy rules dating back to well before the war aimed at protecting the French government and the state from embarrassing revelations, and partly to avoid culpability. For example, at Liberation, the Prefecture of Police destroyed nearly all of the massive archive of Jewish arrest and deportation.^[24]

Efforts to preserve the historical record

During the war

One of the earliest efforts to save historical record of the Holocaust occurred during the war, in France, where Drancy internment camp records were carefully preserved and turned over to the new National Office for Veterans and Victims of War; however, the bureau then held them in secret, refusing to release copies later, even to the Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation (CDJC).

In 1943, Isaac Schneersohn, anticipating the need for a center to document and preserve the memory of the persecution for historical reasons and also support claims post-war, gathered together 40 representatives from Jewish organizations in Grenoble which was under Italian occupation at the time^[27] in order to form a *centre de documentation*.^[28] Exposure meant the death penalty, and as a result little actually happened before liberation.^[29] Serious work began after the center moved to Paris in late 1944 and was renamed the CDJC.^{[28][29]}

Immediate post-war period

In 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, anticipated that someday an attempt would be made to recharacterize the documentation of Nazi crimes as propaganda and took steps against it.^[30] Eisenhower, upon finding the victims of Nazi concentration camps, ordered all possible photographs to be taken, and for the German people from surrounding villages to be ushered through the camps and made to bury the dead.^{[31][32]}

Nuremberg trials

The Nuremberg trials took place in Germany after the war in 1945–1946. The stated aim was to dispense justice in retribution for atrocities of the German government. This Allied intention to administer justice post-war was first announced in 1943 in the Declaration on German Atrocities in Occupied Europe and reiterated at the Yalta Conference and at Berlin in 1945.^[33] While the intention was not specifically to preserve the historical record of the Holocaust, some of the core documents required to prosecute the cases were provided to them by the CDJC, and much of the huge trove of archives were then transferred to the CDJC after the trials and became the core of future Holocaust historiography.^[34]

The Nuremberg trials were important historically, but the events were still very recent, television was in its infancy and not present, and there was little public impact. There were isolated moments of limited public awareness from Hollywood films such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) or the 1961 *Judgment at Nuremberg* which had some newsreel footage of actual scenes from liberated Nazi concentration camps including scenes of piles of naked corpses laid out in rows and bulldozed into large pits, which was considered exceptionally graphic for the time. Public awareness changed when the Eichmann trial riveted the world's attention fifteen years after Nuremberg.^{[35][36]}

Trial of Adolf Eichmann



April 12, 1945: Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar Bradley and George S. Patton inspect an improvised crematory pyre at Ohrdruf concentration camp.



United States Army clerks with evidence collected for the Nuremberg trials

In 1961, the Israeli government captured Adolf Eichmann in Argentina and brought him to Israel to stand trial for war crimes. Chief prosecutor Gideon Hausner's intentions were not only to demonstrate Eichmann's guilt personally but to present material about the entire Holocaust, thus producing a comprehensive record.^[37]

The Israeli government arranged for the trial to have prominent media coverage.^[38] Many major newspapers from all over the globe sent reporters and published front-page coverage of the story.^[37] Israelis had the opportunity to watch live television broadcasts of the proceedings, and videotape was flown daily to the United States for broadcast the following day.^{[37][39]}

Significant individuals and organizations

In the immediate aftermath of the war, prior to the extensive documentation efforts by the Allied forces, a sense of disbelief caused many to deny the initial reports of the Holocaust.^[40] Compounding this disbelief was the memory of forged newspaper accounts of the German Corpse Factory, an anti-German atrocity propaganda campaign during WWI, which was widely known to be false by 1945.^[41]

During the 1930s, the Nazi government used this propaganda against the British, claiming allegations of concentration camps were malicious lies put forward by the British government, and historians Joachim Neander and Randal Marlin note that this story "encouraged later disbelief when early reports circulated about the Holocaust under Hitler".^[41] Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, chairman of the British Joint Intelligence Committee, noted that these reports were similar to "stories of employment of human corpses during the last war for the manufacture of fat which was a grotesque lie"; likewise, *The Christian Century* commented that "The parallel between this story and the 'corpse factory' atrocity tale of the First World War is too striking to be overlooked."^[42] Neander notes that "There can be no doubt that the reported commercial use of the corpses of the murdered Jews undermined the credibility of the news coming from Poland and delayed action that might have rescued many Jewish lives."^[42]

The Neo-Nazi movement has been revitalized by Holocaust denial. Small but vocal numbers of Neo-Nazis realized that recreation of a Hitlerite-style regime may be impossible, but a replica might be produced in the future; the rehabilitation of Nazism, they concluded, required the discrediting of the Holocaust.^[43]

Maurice Bardèche

The first person to openly write after the end of World War II that he doubted the reality of the Holocaust was French journalist Maurice Bardèche in his 1948 book *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* ("Nuremberg or the Promised Land").^[44] Viewed as "the father-figure of Holocaust denial", Bardèche introduced in his works many aspects of neo-fascist and Holocaust denial propaganda techniques and ideological structures; his work is deemed influential in regenerating post-war European far-right ideas at a time of identity crisis in the 1950–1960s.^{[45][46][47]} His arguments formed the basis of numerous works of Holocaust denial that followed: "testimonies are not reliable, essentially coming from the mouth of Jews and communists", "atrocities committed in camps were the fact of deportees [essentially the kapos]", "disorganization occurred in Nazi camps following the first German defeats", "the high mortality is due to the 'weakening' of prisoners and epidemics", "only lice were gassed in Auschwitz", etc.^[48]

Harry Elmer Barnes

Harry Elmer Barnes, at one time a mainstream American historian, assumed a Holocaust-denial stance in his later years. Between World War I and World War II, Barnes was an anti-war writer and a leader of the historical revisionism movement. Starting in 1924, Barnes worked closely with the Centre for the Study of the Causes of the War, a German government-funded think tank whose sole purpose was to disseminate the official government position that Germany was the victim of Allied aggression in 1914 and that the Versailles Treaty was morally invalid.^[49] Headed by Major Alfred von Wegerer, a *völkisch* activist, the organization portrayed itself as a scholarly society, but historians later described it as "a clearinghouse for officially desirable views on the outbreak of the war."^[50]

Following World War II, Barnes became convinced that allegations made against Germany and Japan, including the Holocaust, were wartime propaganda that had been used to justify the United States' involvement in World War II. Barnes claimed that there were two false claims made about World War II, namely that Germany started the war in 1939, and the Holocaust, which Barnes claimed did not happen.^[51]

In his 1962 pamphlet, *Revisionism and Brainwashing*, Barnes claimed that there was a "lack of any serious opposition or concerted challenge to the atrocity stories and other modes of defamation of German national character and conduct".^[52] Barnes argued that there was "a failure to point out the atrocities of the Allies were more brutal, painful, mortal and numerous than the most extreme allegations made against the Germans".^[53] He claimed that in order to justify the "horrors and evils of the Second World War", the Allies made the Nazis the "scapegoat" for their own misdeeds.^[51]

Barnes cited the French Holocaust denier Paul Rassinier, whom Barnes called a "distinguished French historian" who had exposed the "exaggerations of the atrocity stories".^[53] In a 1964 article, "Zionist Fraud", published in the *American Mercury*, Barnes wrote: "The courageous author [Rassinier] lays the chief blame for misrepresentation on those whom we must call the swindlers of the crematoria, the Israeli politicians who derive billions of marks from nonexistent, mythical and imaginary cadavers, whose numbers have been reckoned in an unusually distorted and dishonest manner."^[53] Using Rassinier as his source, Barnes claimed that Germany was the victim of aggression in both 1914 and 1939 and that reports of the Holocaust were propaganda to justify a war of aggression against Germany.^[53]

Beginnings of modern denialism

In 1961, a protégé of Barnes, David Hoggan, published *Der erzwungene Krieg* (*The Forced War*) in West Germany, which claimed that Germany had been the victim of an Anglo-Polish conspiracy in 1939. Though *Der erzwungene Krieg* was primarily concerned with the origins of World War II, it also downplayed or justified the effects of Nazi antisemitic measures in the pre-1939 period.^[54] For example, Hoggan justified the huge one billion Reichsmark fine imposed on the entire Jewish community in Germany after the 1938 *Kristallnacht* as a reasonable measure to prevent what he called "Jewish profiteering" at the expense of German insurance companies and alleged that no Jews were killed in the *Kristallnacht* (in fact, 91 German Jews were murdered in the *Kristallnacht*).^[54] Subsequently, Hoggan explicitly denied the Holocaust in 1969 in a book entitled *The Myth of the Six Million*, which was published by the Noontide Press, a small Los Angeles publisher specializing in antisemitic literature.^[55]

In 1964, Paul Rassinier published *The Drama of the European Jews*. Rassinier was himself a concentration camp survivor (he was held in Buchenwald for having helped French Jews escape the Nazis), and modern-day deniers continue to cite his works as scholarly research that questions the accepted facts of the Holocaust. Critics argued that Rassinier did not cite evidence for his claims and

ignored information that contradicted his assertions; he nevertheless remains influential in Holocaust denial circles for being one of the first deniers to propose that a vast Zionist/Allied/Soviet conspiracy faked the Holocaust, a theme that would be picked up in later years by other authors.^[56]

Austin App, a La Salle University medieval English literature professor, is considered the first major mainstream American holocaust denier.^{[57][58]} App defended the Germans and Nazi Germany during World War II. He published numerous articles, letters, and books on Holocaust denial, quickly building a loyal following. App's work inspired the Institute for Historical Review, a California center founded in 1978 whose sole task is the denial of the Holocaust.^[59]

The publication of Arthur Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The case against the presumed extermination of European Jewry* in 1976; and David Irving's *Hitler's War* in 1977 brought other similarly inclined individuals into the fold.^[60] Butz was a tenured associate professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University. In December 1978 and January 1979, Robert Faurisson, a French professor of literature at the University of Lyon, wrote two letters to *Le Monde* claiming that the gas chambers used by the Nazis to exterminate the Jews did not exist. A colleague of Faurisson, Jean-Claude Pressac, who initially shared Faurisson's views, later became convinced of the Holocaust's evidence while investigating documents at Auschwitz in 1979. He published his conclusions along with much of the underlying evidence in his 1989 book, *Auschwitz: Technique and operation of the gas chambers*.^[61]

Henry Bienen, the former president of Northwestern University, has described Arthur Butz's view of the Holocaust as an "embarrassment to Northwestern".^[62] In 2006, sixty of Butz's colleagues from the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science faculty signed a censure describing Butz's Holocaust denial as "an affront to our humanity and our standards as scholars".^[63] The letter also called for Butz to "leave our Department and our University and stop trading on our reputation for academic excellence".^[63]

Institute for Historical Review

In 1978 the American far-right activist Willis Carto founded the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), an organization dedicated to publicly challenging the commonly accepted history of the Holocaust.^[64] The IHR's founding was inspired by Austin App, a La Salle professor of medieval English literature and considered the first major American holocaust denier.^[58] The IHR sought from the beginning to establish itself within the broad tradition of historical revisionism, by soliciting token supporters who were not from a neo-Nazi background such as James J. Martin and Samuel Edward Konkin III, and by promoting the writings of French socialist Paul Rassinier and American anti-war historian Harry Elmer Barnes, in an attempt to show that Holocaust denial had a base of support beyond neo-Nazis. The IHR republished most of Barnes's writings, which had been out of print since his death. While it included articles on other topics and sold books by mainstream historians, the majority of material published and distributed by IHR was devoted to questioning the facts surrounding the Holocaust.^[65]

In 1980, the IHR promised a \$50,000 reward to anyone who could prove that Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. Mel Mermelstein wrote a letter to the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* and others including *The Jerusalem Post*. The IHR wrote back, offering him \$50,000 for proof that Jews were, in fact, gassed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Mermelstein, in turn, submitted a notarized account of his internment at Auschwitz and how he witnessed Nazi guards ushering his mother and two sisters and others towards (as he learned later) gas chamber number five. Despite this, the IHR refused to pay the reward. Represented by public interest attorney William John Cox, Mermelstein subsequently sued the IHR in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County for breach of contract, anticipatory repudiation, libel, injurious

denial of established fact, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and declaratory relief. On October 9, 1981, both parties in the Mermelstein case filed motions for summary judgment in consideration of which Judge Thomas T. Johnson of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County took "judicial notice of the fact that Jews were gassed to death at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Poland during the summer of 1944,"^{[66][67]} judicial notice meaning that the court treated the gas chambers as common knowledge, and therefore did not require evidence that the gas chambers existed. On August 5, 1985, Judge Robert A. Wenke entered a judgment based upon the Stipulation for Entry of Judgment agreed upon by the parties on July 22, 1985. The judgment required IHR and other defendants to pay \$90,000 to Mermelstein and to issue a letter of apology to "Mr. Mel Mermelstein, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald, and all other survivors of Auschwitz" for "pain, anguish and suffering" caused to them.^[67]

In the "About the IHR" statement on their website, the IHR states, "The IHR does not 'deny' the Holocaust. Indeed, the IHR as such has no 'position' on any specific event..."^[68] British historian Richard J. Evans wrote that the Institute's acknowledgment "that a relatively small number of Jews were killed" was a means to draw attention away from its primary beliefs, i.e. that the number of victims was not in the millions and that Jews were not systematically murdered in gas chambers.^[69]

James Keegstra

In 1984, James Keegstra, a Canadian high-school teacher, was charged under the Canadian *Criminal Code* for "promoting hatred against an identifiable group by communicating anti-Semitic statements to his students". During class, he would describe Jews as a people of profound evil who had "created the Holocaust to gain sympathy." He also tested his students in exams on his theories and opinion of Jews.

Keegstra was charged under s 281.2(2) of the *Criminal Code* (now s 319(2)), which provides that "Every one who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, wilfully promotes hatred against any identifiable group" commits a criminal offence.^[70] He was convicted at trial before the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench. The court rejected the argument, advanced by Keegstra and his lawyer, Doug Christie, that promoting hatred is a constitutionally protected freedom of expression as per s 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Keegstra appealed to the Alberta Court of Appeal. That court agreed with Keegstra, and he was acquitted. The Crown then appealed the case to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled by a 4–3 majority that promoting hatred could be justifiably restricted under s 1 of the Charter. The Supreme Court restored Keegstra's conviction.^[71] He was fired from his teaching position shortly afterward.^[72]

Zündel trials

The Toronto-based photo retoucher Ernst Zündel operated a small-press called Samisdat Publishers, which published and distributed Holocaust-denial material such as *Did Six Million Really Die?* by Richard Harwood (a pseudonym of Richard Verrall – a British neo-Nazi). In 1985, he was tried in *R. v. Zundel* and convicted under a "false news" law and sentenced to 15 months imprisonment by an Ontario court for "disseminating and publishing material denying the Holocaust".^[73] The Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg was a witness for the prosecution at the 1985 trial. Zündel's conviction was overturned in an appeal on a legal technicality, leading to a second trial in 1988, in which he was again convicted. The 1988 trial included, as witnesses for the defence, Fred A. Leuchter, David Irving and Robert Faurisson. The pseudo-scientific Leuchter report was presented as a defence document and was published in Canada in 1988 by Zundel's Samisdat Publishers, and in Britain in 1989 by Irving's Focal Point

Publishing. In both of his trials, Zündel was defended by Douglas Christie and Barbara Kulaszka. His conviction was overturned in 1992 when the Supreme Court of Canada declared the "false news" law unconstitutional.^[73]

Zündel had a website, web-mastered by his wife Ingrid, which publicises his viewpoints.^[74] In January 2002, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal delivered a ruling in a complaint involving his website, in which it was found to be contravening the Canadian Human Rights Act. The court ordered Zündel to cease communicating hate messages. In February 2003, the American INS arrested him in Tennessee, USA, on an immigration violations matter, and few days later, Zündel was sent back to Canada, where he tried to gain refugee status. Zündel remained in prison until March 1, 2005, when he was deported to Germany and prosecuted for disseminating hate propaganda. On February 15, 2007, Zündel was convicted on 14 counts of incitement under Germany's *Volksverhetzung* law, which bans the incitement of hatred against a portion of the population and given the maximum sentence of five years in prison.^[75]

Bradley Smith and the CODOH

In 1987, Bradley R. Smith, a former media director of the Institute for Historical Review,^[76] founded the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH).^[77] In the United States, CODOH has repeatedly attempted to place advertisements questioning whether the Holocaust happened, especially in college campus newspapers.^[78]

Bradley Smith took his message to college students—with little success. Smith referred to his tactics as the CODOH campus project. He said, "I don't want to spend time with adults anymore, I want to go to students. They are superficial. They are empty vessels to be filled." "What I wanted to do was I wanted to set forth three or four ideas that students might be interested in, that might cause them to think about things or to have questions about things. And I wanted to make it as simple as possible, and to set it up in a way that could not really be debated."^[79] Holocaust deniers have placed "Full page advertisements in college and university newspapers, including those of Brandeis University, Boston College, Pennsylvania State University, and Queens College (part of CUNY). Some of these ads arguing that the Holocaust never happened ran without comment; others generated op-ed pieces by professors and students".^[80] On September 8, 2009, student newspaper *The Harvard Crimson* ran a paid ad from Bradley R Smith. It was quickly criticized and the editor issued an apology, saying publishing the ad was a mistake.^[81]

Ernst Nolte

The German philosopher and historian Ernst Nolte, starting in the 1980s, advanced a set of theories, which though not denying the Holocaust appeared to flirt with an Italian Holocaust denier, Carlo Mattogno, as a serious historian.^[82] In a letter to the Israeli historian Otto Dov Kulka of December 8, 1986, Nolte criticized the work of the French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson on the ground that the Holocaust did occur, but went on to argue that Faurisson's work was motivated by what Nolte claimed were the admirable motives of sympathy towards the Palestinians and opposition to Israel.^[83] In his 1987 book *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg (The European Civil War)*, Nolte claimed that the intentions of Holocaust deniers are "often honourable", and that some of their claims are "not obviously without foundation".^{[82][84]} Nolte himself, though he has never denied the occurrence of the Holocaust, has claimed that the Wannsee Conference of 1942 never happened and that the minutes of the conference were post-war forgeries done by "biased" Jewish historians designed to discredit Germany.^[84]

The British historian Ian Kershaw has argued that Nolte was operating on the borderlines of Holocaust denial with his implied claim that the "negative myth" of the Third Reich was created by Jewish historians, his allegations of the domination of Holocaust scholarship by "biased" Jewish historians, and his statements that one should withhold judgment on Holocaust deniers, whom Nolte takes considerable pains to stress are not exclusively Germans or fascists.^[85] In Kershaw's opinion, Nolte is attempting to imply that perhaps Holocaust deniers are on to something.^[85]

In a 1990 interview, Nolte implied that there was something to the Leuchter report: "If the revisionists [Holocaust deniers] and Leuchter among them have made it clear to the public that even 'Auschwitz' must be an object of scientific inquiry and controversy then they should be given credit for this. Even if it finally turned out that the number of victims was even greater and the procedures were even more horrific than has been assumed until now."^[86] In his 1993 book *Streitpunkte (Points of Contention)*, Nolte praised the work of Holocaust deniers as superior to "mainstream scholars".^[87] Nolte wrote that "radical revisionists have presented research which, if one is familiar with the source material and the critique of the sources, is probably superior to that of the established historians of Germany".^{[87][88]} In a 1994 interview with *Der Spiegel* magazine, Nolte stated "I cannot rule out the importance of the investigation of the gas chambers in which they looked for remnants of the [chemical process engendered by Zyklon B]", and that "'Of course, I am against revisionists, but Fred Leuchter's 'study' of the Nazi gas ovens has to be given attention because one has to stay open to 'other' ideas."^[89]

The British historian Richard J. Evans in his 1989 book *In Hitler's Shadow* expressed the view that Nolte's reputation as a scholar was in ruins as a result of these and other controversial statements on his part.^[90] The American historian Deborah Lipstadt in a 2003 interview stated:

Historians such as the German Ernst Nolte are, in some ways, even more dangerous than the deniers. Nolte is an anti-Semite of the first order, who attempts to rehabilitate Hitler by saying that he was no worse than Stalin; but he is careful not to deny the Holocaust. Holocaust-deniers make Nolte's life more comfortable. They have, with their radical argumentation, pulled the center a little more to their side. Consequently, a less radical extremist, such as Nolte, finds himself closer to the middle ground, which makes him more dangerous.^[91]

Mayer controversy

In 1988, the American historian Arno J. Mayer published a book entitled *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?*, which did not explicitly deny the Holocaust, but according to Lucy Dawidowicz lent support to Holocaust denial by stating that most people who died at Auschwitz were the victims of "natural causes" such as disease, not gassing.^[92] Dawidowicz argued that Mayer's statements about Auschwitz were "a breathtaking assertion".^[93] Holocaust historian Robert Jan van Pelt has written that Mayer's book is as close as a mainstream historian has ever come to supporting Holocaust denial.^[94] Holocaust deniers such as David Irving have often cited Mayer's book as one reason for embracing Holocaust denial.^[94] Though Mayer has been often condemned for his statement about the reasons for the Auschwitz death toll, his book does not deny the use of gas chambers at Auschwitz, as Holocaust deniers often claim.^[95]

Some mainstream Holocaust historians have labeled Mayer a denier. The Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer wrote that Mayer "popularizes the nonsense that the Nazis saw in Marxism and Bolshevism their main enemy, and the Jews unfortunately got caught up in this; when he links the destruction of the Jews to the

ups and downs of German warfare in the Soviet Union, in a book that is so cocksure of itself that it does not need a proper scientific apparatus, he is really engaging in a much more subtle form of Holocaust denial".^[96]

Defenders of Mayer argue that his statement that "Sources for the study of the gas chambers are at once rare and unreliable" has been taken out of context, particularly by Holocaust deniers.^[97] Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman observe that the paragraph from which the statement is taken asserts that the SS destroyed the majority of the documentation relating to the operation of the gas chambers in the death camps, which is why Mayer feels that sources for the operation of the gas chambers are "rare" and "unreliable".^[98]

False equivalence and effect

Denialist focus on Allied war crimes

The focus on so-called Allied atrocities during the war has been a theme in Holocaust denial literature, particularly in countries where outright denial of the Holocaust is illegal.^[99] According to historian Deborah Lipstadt, the concept of "comparable Allied wrongs", such as the expulsion of Germans after World War II and the bombing of Dresden,^[100] is at the center of, and a continuously repeated theme of, contemporary Holocaust denial; a phenomenon she calls "immoral equivalencies".^[101] Pierre Vidal-Naquet pointed out the same phenomenon in the earlier version of *Les Assassins de la mémoire* under the title *Auschwitz et le tiers monde* (*Les Assassins de la mémoire*, Paris, 2005, pp. 170–180), and accurately about the declarations of Klaus Barbie's lawyer Jacques Vergès. In 1977, Martin Broszat, in a review of David Irving's book *Hitler's War*, maintained that the picture of World War II drawn by Irving was done in a such way to imply moral equivalence between the actions of the Axis and Allied states with both sides equally guilty of terrible crimes, leading to Hitler's "fanatical, destructive will to annihilate" being downgraded to being "no longer an exceptional phenomenon".^[102]

Propaganda

According to James Najarian, Holocaust deniers working for the Institute for Historical Review are not trained in history and "put out sham scholarly articles in the mock-academic publication, the *Journal of Historical Review*".^[103] They appeal to "our objectivity, our sense of fair play, and our distrust of figurative language".^[104] Thus, they rely on facts to grab the readers' attention. These facts, however, are strung by what Najarian calls "fabricated decorum" and are re-interpreted for their use. For example, they pay particular attention to inconsistencies in numbers.^[105]

Holocaust denial propaganda in all forms has been shown to influence the audiences that it reaches. In fact, even the well-educated—that is, college graduates and current university students alike—are susceptible to such propaganda when it is presented before them. This stems from the growing disbelief that audiences feel after being exposed to such information, especially since Holocaust witnesses themselves are decreasing in number.^[106] Studies centered on the psychological effects of Holocaust denial propaganda confirm this assertion. Linda M. Yelland and William F. Stone, in particular, show that Denial essays decrease readers' belief in the Holocaust, regardless of their prior Holocaust awareness.^[107]

Middle East

General

Gamal Abdel Nasser, the President of Egypt, told a German newspaper in 1964 that "no person, not even the most simple one, takes seriously the lie of the six million Jews that were murdered [in the Holocaust]".^{[108][109]}

Denials of the Holocaust have been promoted by various Middle Eastern figures and media. Holocaust denial is sponsored by some Middle Eastern governments, including Iran^[110] and Syria.^[111] In 2006 Robert Satloff writing in *The Washington Post*, reported that "A respected Holocaust research institution recently reported that Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia all promote Holocaust denial and protect Holocaust deniers."^[112]

Prominent figures from the Middle East have rarely made publicized visits to Auschwitz—Israel's Arab community being the exception. In 2010, Hadash MK Mohammed Barakeh visited, following a previous visit of two other Arab-Israeli lawmakers, and a group of about 100 Arab-Israeli writers and clerics in 2003.^[113]

Palestinian territories

Individuals from the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and a number of Palestinian groups have all engaged in various aspects of Holocaust denial.^[114]

Hamas have promoted Holocaust denial;^[115] Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi held that the Holocaust never occurred, that Zionists were behind the action of Nazis, and that Zionists funded Nazism.^[116] A press release by Hamas in April 2000 decried "the so-called Holocaust, which is an alleged and invented story with no basis".^[117] In August 2009, Hamas' told UNRWA that it would "refuse" to allow Palestinian children to study the Holocaust, which it called "a lie invented by the Zionists" and referred to Holocaust education as a "war crime".^[118] Hamas continued to hold this position in 2011, when the organization's Ministry for Refugee Affairs said that Holocaust education was "intended to poison the minds of our children."^[119]

The thesis of the 1982 doctoral dissertation of Mahmoud Abbas, a co-founder of Fatah and president of the Palestinian National Authority, was "The Secret Connection between the Nazis and the Leaders of the Zionist Movement".^{[120][121][116]} In his 1983 book *The Other Side: the Secret Relationship Between Nazism and Zionism* based on the dissertation, Abbas denied that six million Jews had died in the Holocaust; dismissing it as a "myth" and a "fantastic lie".^[122] At most, he wrote, 890,000 Jews were murdered by the Germans. Abbas claimed that the number of deaths has been exaggerated for political purposes. "It seems that the interest of the Zionist movement, however, is to inflate this figure [of Holocaust deaths] so that their gains will be greater. This led them to emphasize this figure [six million] in order to gain the solidarity of international public opinion with Zionism. Many scholars have debated the figure of six million and reached stunning conclusions—fixing the number of Jewish victims at only a few hundred thousand."^{[116][123][124][125][126]}

In his March 2006 interview with *Haaretz*, Abbas stated, "I wrote in detail about the Holocaust and said I did not want to discuss numbers. I quoted an argument between historians in which various numbers of casualties were mentioned. One wrote there were 12 million victims and another wrote there were 800,000. I have no desire to argue with the figures. The Holocaust was a terrible, unforgivable crime against the Jewish nation, a crime against humanity that cannot be accepted by humankind. The Holocaust was a terrible thing and nobody can claim I denied it."^[127] While acknowledging the existence of the Holocaust in 2006 and 2014,^[128] Abbas has defended the position that Zionists collaborated with

the Nazis to perpetrate it. In 2012, Abbas told Al Mayadeen, a Beirut TV station affiliated with Iran and Hezbollah, that he "challenges anyone who can deny that the Zionist movement had ties with the Nazis before World War II".^[129]

Surveys conducted by Sammy Smootha of the University of Haifa found that the fraction of Israeli Arabs denying that millions of Jews were murdered by the Nazis increased from 28% in 2006 to 40% in 2008.^[130] Smootha commented:

In Arab eyes disbelief in the very happening of the Shoah is not hate of Jews (embedded in the denial of the Shoah in the West) but rather a form of protest. Arabs not believing in the event of Shoah intend to express strong objection to the portrayal of the Jews as the ultimate victim and to the underrating of the Palestinians as a victim. They deny Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state that the Shoah gives legitimacy to. Arab disbelief in the Shoah is a component of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, unlike the ideological and anti-Semitic denial of the Holocaust and the desire to escape guilt in the West.^[130]

Iran

Former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad frequently denied the Holocaust,^[131] formally 'questioning' the reliability of the historical evidence,^[132] although he on occasion confirmed belief in it.^{[133][134]} In a December 2005 speech, Ahmadinejad said that a legend was fabricated and had been promoted to protect Israel. He said:

They have fabricated a legend, under the name of the Massacre of the Jews, and they hold it higher than God himself, religion itself and the prophets themselves.... If somebody in their country questions God, nobody says anything, but if somebody denies the myth of the massacre of Jews, the Zionist loudspeakers and the governments in the pay of Zionism will start to scream.^[135]



Protest in Brazil against former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, criticising his Holocaust denial

The remarks immediately provoked international controversy as well as swift condemnation from government officials in Israel, Europe, and the United States. All six political parties in the German parliament signed a joint resolution condemning Ahmadinejad's Holocaust denial.^[136] In contrast, Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal described Ahmadinejad's comments as "courageous" and stated, "Muslim people will defend Iran because it voices what they have in their hearts, in particular the Palestinian people."^[137] In the United States, the Muslim Public Affairs Council condemned Ahmadinejad's remarks.^[138] In 2005, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader, Mohammed Mahdi Akef, denounced what he called "the myth of the Holocaust" in defending Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust.^[139]

On December 11, 2006, the Iranian state-sponsored "International Conference to Review the Global Vision of the Holocaust" began to widespread condemnation.^[140] The conference, called for and held at the behest of Ahmadinejad,^[141] was widely described as a "Holocaust denial conference" or a "meeting of Holocaust deniers",^[142] though Iran denied it was a Holocaust denial conference.^[143] A few months before it opened, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi stated: "The Holocaust is not a sacred issue that one can't touch. I have visited the Nazi camps in Eastern Europe. I think it is exaggerated."^[144]

In 2013, in an interview with CNN, newly elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani condemned the Holocaust, stating: "I can tell you that any crime that happens in history against humanity, including the crime the Nazis created towards the Jews as well as non-Jews is reprehensible and condemnable. Whatever criminality they committed against the Jews, we condemn."^[145] Iranian media later accused CNN of fabricating Rouhani's comments.^[146]

In his official 2013 Nowruz address, Supreme Leader of Iran Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei questioned the veracity of the Holocaust, remarking that "The Holocaust is an event whose reality is uncertain and if it has happened, it's uncertain how it has happened."^{[147][148]} This was consistent with Khamenei's previous comments regarding the Holocaust.^[149]

In 2015, the House of Cartoon and the Sarcheshmeh Cultural Complex in Iran organized the Second International Holocaust Cartoon Competition,^[150] a competition in which artists were encouraged to submit cartoons on the theme of Holocaust denial. The winner of the contest will receive \$12,000. Hamshahri, a popular Iranian newspaper, held a similar contest in 2006.^[151]

Turkey

In Turkey, in 1996, the Islamic preacher Adnan Oktar under the pen name of Harun Yahya, distributed thousands of copies of a book which was originally published the previous year, entitled *Soykırım Yalanı* ("The Genocide Lie", referring to the Holocaust) and mailed unsolicited texts to American and European schools and colleges.^[152] The publication of *Soykırım Yalanı* sparked much public debate.^[153] This book claims, "what is presented as Holocaust is the death of some Jews due to the typhus plague during the war and the famine towards the end of the war caused by the defeat of the Germans."^[154] In March 1996, a Turkish painter and intellectual, Bedri Baykam, published a strongly worded critique of the book in the Ankara daily newspaper *Siyah-Beyaz* ("Black and White"). A legal suit for slander was brought against him. During the trial in September, Baykam exposed the real author of the book as Adnan Oktar.^[153] The suit was withdrawn in March 1997.^{[155][156]}

Eastern Europe

In some Eastern European countries, such as Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, and Romania, Holocaust deniers do not deny the very fact of mass murder of Jews, but deny some national or regional elements of the Holocaust.^[13]

According to Zvi Gitelman, Soviet writers tended either to ignore or downplay the Holocaust, treating it as one small part of a larger phenomenon of 20 million dead Soviet citizens during the Great Patriotic War. According to Gitelman, Soviet authorities were concerned about raising the consciousness of Soviet Jews and retarding their assimilation to the greater Soviet population. The Holocaust also raised the issue of collaboration with the Nazi occupiers, an uncomfortable topic for Soviet historiography.^[157]

In 2018, the United States Department of State warned about "the glorification of the Ustasha regime and denial of the Holocaust" in Croatia, citing the placement of a plaque with the Ustasha-era salute 'Za dom spremni' on the grounds of a concentration camp memorial site, far-right rallies and the concert of the controversial band Thompson among other events.^[158] Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center describes Croatia as a "cradle of Holocaust distortion".^[159] Holocaust denial in Croatia typically involves the downplaying or denial of the Holocaust carried out by the Ustasha regime, particularly against Serbs and Jews at the Jasenovac concentration camp and it is done by public figures, though the regime's victims also included Roma and anti-fascist Croats.^{[159][160][161]} The Society for Research of the Threefold Jasenovac Camp in Croatia, an NGO with authors and academics among its members, claims that Jasenovac was a labour camp during World War II and that it was later used by Yugoslav Communists to imprison Ustasha members and regular Croatian Home Guard army troops until 1948, then alleged Stalinists until 1951.^[162] Following a series of book publications denying the Ustashe regime's crimes, the Simon Wiesenthal Center urged Croatian authorities in 2019 to ban such works, noting that they "would immediately be banned in Germany and Austria and rightfully so".^{[163][164]}

In Hungary, Holocaust distortion and denial take place in the form of downplaying the country's role in the killing and deportation of Jews. The Arrow Cross Party committed numerous crimes and killed or deported Jews. A total of 437,000 Jews were deported by Miklós Horthy's government in the Kingdom of Hungary, an Axis collaborator.^{[165][166]}

In Serbia, Holocaust distortion and denial is manifested in the downplaying of Milan Nedić and Dimitrije Ljotić's roles in the extermination of Serbia's Jews in concentration camps in Nedić's Serbia, by a number of Serbian historians.^{[167][168]} Serb collaborationist armed forces, including the Chetniks, were involved, either directly or indirectly, in the mass killings of mainly Jews and Roma as well as Croats, Muslims and those Serbs who sided with any anti-German resistance.^{[169][170]} Since the end of the war, Serbian collaboration in the Holocaust has been the subject of historical revisionism by Serbian leaders.^[171]

In Slovakia, some anti-communist writers claim that Jozef Tiso was a savior of Jews or that the Slovak State was not responsible for the Holocaust in Slovakia.^{[172][173]}

The post-Soviet radical right activists do not question the existence of Nazi death camps or Jewish ghettos. However, they deny the participation of local population in anti-Jewish pogroms or the contribution of national paramilitary organizations in capture and execution of Jews.^[13] Thus, denial of the antisemitic nature and participation in the Holocaust of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists has become a central component of the intellectual history of the Ukrainian diaspora and nationalists.^[174]

Western Europe

In France, Holocaust denial became more prominent in the 1990s as *négaționnisme*, though the movement has existed in ultra-left French politics since at least the 1960s, led by figures such as Pierre Guillaume (who was involved in the bookshop La Vieille Taupe during the 1960s). Elements of the extreme far-right in France have begun to build on each other's negationist arguments, which often span beyond the Holocaust to cover a range of antisemitic views, incorporating attempts to tie the Holocaust to the Biblical massacre of the Canaanites, critiques of Zionism, and other material fanning what has been called a "conspiratorial Judeo-phobia" designed to legitimize and "banalize" antisemitism.^[175]

In Belgium in 2001, Roeland Raes, the ideologue and vice-president of one of the country's largest political parties, the Vlaams Blok, gave an interview on Dutch TV where he cast doubt over the number of Jews murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. In the same interview, he questioned the scale of the Nazis' use of gas chambers and the authenticity of Anne Frank's diary. In response to the media assault

following the interview, Raes was forced to resign his position but vowed to remain active within the party.^[176] Three years later, the Vlaams Blok was convicted of racism and chose to disband. Immediately afterwards, it legally reformed under the new name Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest) with the same leaders and the same membership.^[177]

The trial of a Canadian woman, Monika Schaefer, and her German-Canadian brother, Alfred Schaefer started in Germany in early July 2018. They were charged with *Volksverhetzung*, "incitement to hatred". The pair had published video clips on YouTube of their denial of the genocide of Jews. In the clips, Alfred Schaefer said that Jews wanted to destroy Germans, blamed them for starting both World Wars, and referred to the Holocaust as a "Jewish fantasy".^[178] Monika Schaefer was arrested in January 2018 in Germany while attending a court hearing of Sylvia Stolz.^{[179][180][181]} Schaefer had been the Green Party candidate in the Alberta riding of Yellowhead during the federal elections in 2006, 2008, and 2011, but was expelled from the party after news reports surfaced of a July 2016 video^[182] where she describes the Holocaust as "the most persistent lie in all of history" and insisted that those in concentration camps had been kept as healthy and as well-fed as possible.^{[183][184]} In late October 2018, Monika Schaefer was convicted of the charge of "incitement of the people" (often reworded as *incitement of hatred* by the news media). She was sentenced to ten months while Alfred Schaefer, also convicted, received a sentence of three years and two months.^[185]

In January 2019, a survey conducted by Opinion Matters, on behalf of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust found that 5% of UK adults did not believe the Holocaust took place and one in 12 (8%) believed its scale has been exaggerated. One in five respondents incorrectly answered that less than 2 million Jews were murdered, and 45% couldn't say how many people were murdered in the Holocaust. Speaking in light of the survey's findings, Karen Pollock, chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said: "One person questioning the truth of the Holocaust is one too many, and so it is up to us to redouble our efforts to ensure future generations know that it did happen and become witnesses to one of the darkest episodes in our history."^[186] The BBC Radio 4 More or Less programme, specialising on statistics, investigated the survey finding it was unlikely to be accurate. Participants were incentivised to complete the online survey by shopping vouchers encouraging speedy answering, and the principal question was a "reverse question" with most participants having to give the reverse answer to surrounding questions requiring careful answering. Another question asked how many Jewish people had been murdered in the holocaust with only 0.2% of participants giving the answer zero, which was considered to be a closer estimate of the number of UK adults that did not believe the Holocaust took place.^[187]

Other

Japanese Holocaust denial first appeared in 1989 and reached its peak in 1995 with the publication in February 1995 by the Japanese magazine *Marco Polo*, a 250,000-circulation monthly published by Bungei Shunju, of a Holocaust denial article by physician Masanori Nishioka^[188] which stated: "The 'Holocaust' is a fabrication. There were no execution gas chambers in Auschwitz or in any other concentration camp. Today, what is displayed as 'gas chambers' at the remains of the Auschwitz camp in Poland are a post-war fabrication by the Polish communist regime or by the Soviet Union, which controlled the country. Not once, neither at Auschwitz nor in any territory controlled by the Germans during the Second World War, was there 'mass murder of Jews' in 'gas chambers'.^[189] The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center instigated a boycott of Bungei Shunju advertisers, including Volkswagen, Mitsubishi, and Cartier. Within days, Bungei Shunju shut down *Marco Polo* and its editor, Kazuyoshi Hanada, quit, as did the president of Bungei Shunju, Kengo Tanaka.^[190]

According to a 2020 survey of American adult Millennials and Generation Z members, 24% said the Holocaust might be a myth or had been exaggerated.^{[191][192]}

Reactions to Holocaust denial

Scholars

Scholarly response to Holocaust denial can be roughly divided into three categories. Some academics refuse to engage Holocaust deniers or their arguments at all, on grounds that doing so lends them unwarranted legitimacy.^[193] The second group of scholars, typified by the American historian Deborah Lipstadt, have tried to raise awareness of the methods and motivations of Holocaust denial without legitimizing the deniers themselves. "We need not waste time or effort answering the deniers' contentions," Lipstadt wrote. "It would be never-ending.... Their commitment is to an ideology and their 'findings' are shaped to support it."^[194] A third group, typified by the Nizkor Project, responds to arguments and claims made by Holocaust denial groups by pointing out inaccuracies and errors in their evidence.^{[195][196][197]}

In December 1991 the American Historical Association, the oldest and largest society of historians and teachers of history in the United States, issued the following statement: *The American Historical Association Council strongly deplores the publicly reported attempts to deny the fact of the Holocaust. No serious historian questions that the Holocaust took place.* This followed a strong reaction by many of its members and commentary in the press against a near-unanimous decision that the AHA had made in May 1991 that studying the *significance of the Holocaust* should be encouraged. The association's May 1991 statement was in response to an incident where certain of its members had questioned the reality of the Holocaust. The December 1991 declaration is a reversal of the AHA's earlier stance that the association should not set a precedent by certifying historical facts.^[198] The AHA has also stated that Holocaust denial is "at best, a form of academic fraud".^[199]

Literary theorist Jean Baudrillard described Holocaust denial as "part of the extermination itself".^[200] Holocaust survivor and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel, during a 1999 discussion at the White House in Washington D.C., called the Holocaust "the most documented tragedy in recorded history. Never before has a tragedy elicited so much witness from the killers, from the victims and even from the bystanders—millions of pieces here in the museum what you have, all other museums, archives in the thousands, in the millions."^[201]

Deborah Lipstadt's 1993 book, *Denying the Holocaust*, sharply criticized various Holocaust deniers, including British author David Irving, for deliberately misrepresenting evidence to justify their preconceived conclusions. In the book, Lipstadt named Irving as "one of the more dangerous" Holocaust deniers, because he was a published author, and was viewed by some as a legitimate military historian. He was "familiar with historical evidence", she wrote, and "bends it until it conforms with his ideological leanings and political agenda". In 1996, Irving filed a libel suit against Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin Books. Irving, who appeared as a defense witness in Ernst Zündel's trial in Canada, and once declared at a rally of Holocaust deniers that "more women died in the back seat of Edward Kennedy's car than ever died in a gas chamber at Auschwitz,"^[202] claimed that Lipstadt's allegation damaged his reputation. American historian Christopher Browning, an expert witness for the defense, wrote a comprehensive essay for the court summarizing the voluminous evidence for the reality of the Holocaust, and under cross-examination, effectively countered all of Irving's principal arguments to the contrary.^[96] Cambridge historian Richard J. Evans, another defense expert witness, spent two years examining Irving's writings and confirmed his misrepresentations, including evidence that he had knowingly used forged documents as source material. After a two-month trial in London the trial judge, Justice Charles Gray, issued a 333-page ruling against Irving, which referred to him as a "Holocaust denier" and "right-wing pro-Nazi polemicist."^{[97][203]}

Ken McVay, an American resident in Canada, was disturbed by the efforts of organizations like the Simon Wiesenthal Center to suppress the speech of the Holocaust deniers, feeling that it was better to confront them openly than to try to censor them. On the Usenet newsgroup *alt.revisionism* he began a campaign of "truth, fact, and evidence", working with other participants on the newsgroup to uncover factual information about the Holocaust and counter the arguments of the deniers by proving them to be based upon misleading evidence, false statements, and outright lies. He founded the Nizkor Project to expose the activities of the Holocaust deniers, who responded to McVay with personal attacks, slander, and death threats.^[204]

Public figures

A number of public figures have spoken out against Holocaust denial. In 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said: "Remembering is a necessary rebuke to those who say the Holocaust never happened or has been exaggerated. Holocaust denial is the work of bigots; we must reject their false claims whenever, wherever and by whomever they are made."^[205] In January 2007, the United Nations General Assembly condemned "without reservation any denial of the Holocaust", though Iran disassociated itself from the resolution.^[206]

In July 2013, Iran's then president-elect Hassan Rohani described Ahmadinejad's remarks about the Holocaust and Israel as "hate rhetoric"^[207] and in September 2013 Rohani stated that "The Nazis carried out a massacre that cannot be denied, especially against the Jewish people" and "The massacre by the Nazis was condemnable. We never want to sit by side with the Nazis..They committed a crime against Jews — which is a crime against..all of humanity."^[208] While declining to give a specific number of Jewish victims, Iranian analysts suggested that "Rouhani pushed the envelope as far as it could go..without infuriating the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and other conservatives back home."^[145]

Former Auschwitz SS personnel

Critics of Holocaust denial also include members of the Auschwitz SS. Camp physician and SS-*Untersturmführer* Hans Münch considered the facts of Auschwitz "so firmly determined that one cannot have any doubt at all", and described those who negate what happened at the camp as "malevolent" people who have "personal interest to want to bury in silence things that cannot be buried in silence".^[209] Zyklon B handler and SS-*Oberscharführer* Josef Klehr said that anyone who maintains that nobody was gassed at Auschwitz must be "crazy or in the wrong".^[210] SS-*Unterscharführer* Oswald Kaduk stated that he did not consider those who maintain such a thing as normal people.^[211] Hearing about Holocaust denial compelled former SS-*Rottenführer* Oskar Gröning to publicly speak about what he witnessed at Auschwitz, and denounce Holocaust deniers,^[212] stating:

I would like you to believe me. I saw the gas chambers. I saw the crematoria. I saw the open fires. I was on the ramp when the selections took place. I would like you to believe that these atrocities happened because I was there.^{[213][214]}

Holocaust denial and antisemitism

Holocaust denial is given as an example of antisemitism in the Working Definition of Antisemitism,^[215] adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as well as the United Kingdom, Israel, Austria, Scotland, Romania, Germany and Bulgaria. The European Parliament voted in favor of a resolution calling for member states to adopt the definition on June 1, 2017.^{[216][217][218]}

The *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity* defines Holocaust denial as "a new form of anti-Semitism, but one that hinges on age-old motifs".^[219] The Anti-Defamation League has stated that "Holocaust denial is a contemporary form of the classic anti-Semitic doctrine of the evil, manipulative and threatening world Jewish conspiracy"^[220] and French historian Valérie Igounet has written that "Holocaust denial is a convenient polemical substitute for anti-semitism."^[221]

According to Walter Reich, psychiatrist and then a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, one-time director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and now professor of international affairs at George Washington University:

The primary motivation for most deniers is anti-Semitism, and for them the Holocaust is an infuriatingly inconvenient fact of history. After all, the Holocaust has generally been recognized as one of the most terrible crimes that ever took place, and surely the very emblem of evil in the modern age. If that crime was a direct result of anti-Semitism taken to its logical end, then anti-Semitism itself, even when expressed in private conversation, is inevitably discredited among most people. What better way to rehabilitate anti-Semitism, make anti-Semitic arguments seem once again respectable in civilized discourse and even make it acceptable for governments to pursue anti-Semitic policies than by convincing the world that the great crime for which anti-Semitism was blamed simply never happened—indeed, that it was nothing more than a frame-up invented by the Jews, and propagated by them through their control of the media? What better way, in short, to make the world safe again for anti-Semitism than by denying the Holocaust?^[222]

The French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet described the motivation of deniers more succinctly, explaining, "One revives the dead in order the better to strike the living."^[223] German political scientist Matthias Küntzel has argued, "Every denial of the Holocaust... contains an appeal to repeat it."^[224]

Examination of claims

The key claims, which cause Holocaust denial to differ from established fact, are:^{[7][8]}

- The Nazis had no official policy or intention of exterminating Jews.
- The Nazis did not use gas chambers to mass murder Jews.^[225]
- The figure of 5 to 6 million Jewish deaths is a gross exaggeration, and the actual number is an order of magnitude lower.

Other claims include the following:

- Stories of the Holocaust were a myth initially created by the Allies of World War II to demonize Germans,^[8] Jews having spread this myth as part of a grander plot intended to enable the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and now to garner continuing support for the state of Israel.^[226]
- Documentary evidence of the Holocaust, from photographs to The Diary of Anne Frank, is fabricated.^[8]

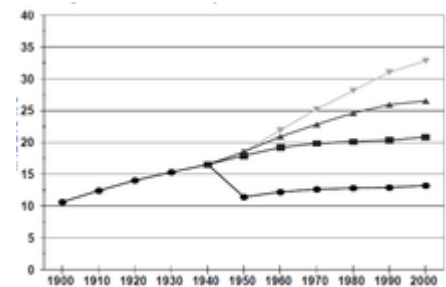
- Survivor testimonies are filled with errors and inconsistencies, and are thus unreliable.^[8]
- Interrogators obtained Nazi prisoners' confessions of war crimes through the use of torture.^[8]
- The Nazi treatment of Jews was no different from what the Allies did to their enemies in World War II.^[227]

Holocaust denial is widely viewed as failing to adhere to principles for the treatment of evidence that mainstream historians (as well as scholars in other fields) regard as basic to rational inquiry.^[228]

The Holocaust was well documented by the bureaucracy of the Nazi government itself.^{[229][230]} It was further witnessed by the Allied forces who entered Germany and its associated Axis states towards the end of World War II.^{[231][232][233]} It was also witnessed from the inside by non-Jewish captives such as Catholic French Resistance member André Rogerie who wrote extensively and testified about his experiences in seven camps including Auschwitz-Birkenau^[234] and also produced the oldest contemporary sketch of a camp crematorium.^[235]

According to researchers Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, there is a "convergence of evidence" that proves that the Holocaust happened. This evidence includes:^[236]

1. *Written documents*—hundreds of thousands of letters, memos, blueprints, orders, bills, speeches, articles, memoirs, and confessions.
2. *Eyewitness testimony*—accounts from survivors, Jewish Sonderkommandos (who helped load bodies from the gas chambers into the crematoria in exchange for a chance of survival), SS guards, commandants, local townspeople, and even high-ranking Nazis who spoke openly about the mass murder of the Jews.
3. *Photographs*—including official military and press photographs, civilian photographs, secret photographs taken by survivors, aerial photographs, German and Allied film footage, and unofficial photographs taken by the German military.
4. *The camps themselves*—concentration camps, work camps, and extermination camps that still exist in varying degrees of originality and reconstruction.
5. *Inferential evidence or argument from silence* — population demographics, reconstructed from the pre-World War II era; if six million Jews were not murdered, what happened to them?



Jewish World Population without Holocaust (mln people) by Sergio DellaPergola

Much of the controversy surrounding the claims of Holocaust deniers centers on the methods used to present arguments that the Holocaust allegedly *never happened as commonly accepted*. Numerous accounts have been given by Holocaust deniers (including evidence presented in court cases) of claimed facts and evidence; however, independent research has shown these claims to be based upon flawed research, biased statements, or even deliberately falsified evidence. Opponents of Holocaust denial have documented numerous instances in which such evidence was altered or manufactured (see Nizkor Project and David Irving). According to Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "in our society of image and spectacle, extermination on paper leads to extermination in reality."^[237]

Laws against Holocaust denial

Holocaust denial is explicitly or implicitly illegal in 17 countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Switzerland.^{[238][239]} Romania officially denied the Holocaust occurred on its territory up until the Wiesel Commission in 2004.^{[240][241]} The European Union's Framework decision on Racism and Xenophobia states that denying or grossly trivializing "crimes of genocide" should be made "punishable in all EU Member States".^[242]



Countries where Holocaust denial is illegal

Such legislation remains controversial. In October 2007, a tribunal declared Spain's genocide denial law unconstitutional.^[243] In 2007 Italy rejected a denial law proposing a prison sentence of up to four years. In 2006 the Netherlands rejected a draft law proposing a maximum sentence of one year on denial of genocidal acts in general, although specifically denying the Holocaust remains a criminal offense there. The United Kingdom has twice rejected Holocaust denial laws. Denmark and Sweden have also rejected such legislation.^[244]

A number of deniers have been prosecuted under various countries' denial laws. French literature professor Robert Faurisson, for example, was convicted and punished under the Gayssot Act in 1990. Some historians oppose such laws, among them Pierre Vidal-Naquet, an outspoken critic of Faurisson, on the grounds that denial legislation imposes "historical truth as legal truth".^[245] Other academics favor criminalization. Holocaust denial, they contend, is "the worst form of racism and its most respectable version because it pretends to be a research".^[246] Holocaust historian Deborah E. Lipstadt expressed her opposition to laws against expressing Holocaust denial, saying, "I don't think they work. I think they turn whatever is being outlawed into forbidden fruit." She also said that politicians should not be able to decide what can and cannot be said.^[247]

David Irving conviction

In February 2006 Irving was convicted in Austria, where Holocaust denial is illegal, for a speech he had made in 1989 in which he denied the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz.^[248] Irving was aware of the outstanding arrest warrant, but chose to go to Austria anyway "to give a lecture to a far-right student fraternity".^[248] Although he pleaded guilty to the charge, Irving said he had been "mistaken", and had changed his opinions on the Holocaust. "I said that then, based on my knowledge at the time, but by 1991 when I came across the Eichmann papers, I wasn't saying that anymore and I wouldn't say that now. The Nazis did murder millions of Jews."^[249] Irving served 13 months of a 3-year sentence in an Austrian prison, including the period between his arrest and conviction, and was deported in early 2007.^[248] The episode sparked intense international debate over the limits of freedom of speech. Upon hearing of Irving's sentence, Lipstadt said, "I am not happy when censorship wins, and I don't believe in winning battles via censorship.... The way of fighting Holocaust deniers is with history and with truth."^[249]

According to CNN, upon Irving's return to the UK, he "vow[ed] to repeat views denying the Holocaust that led to his conviction" stating he felt "no need any longer to show remorse" for his Holocaust views.^[250]

Genocide denials

Other acts of genocide have met similar attempts to deny and minimize them. Gregory H. Stanton, formerly of the US State Department and the founder of Genocide Watch, lists denial as the final stage of a genocide development: "Denial is the eighth stage that always follows a genocide. It is among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres. The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence and intimidate the witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims."^[251]

Holocaust denial is often compared to Armenian genocide denial because of similar tactics of misrepresenting evidence, false equivalence, claiming that atrocities were invented by war propaganda and that powerful lobbies manufacture genocide allegations for their own profit, subsuming one-sided systematic extermination into war deaths, and shifting blame from the perpetrators to the victims of genocide. Both forms of negationism share the goal of rehabilitating the ideologies which brought genocide about.^{[252][253]}

See also

Holocaust:

- Double genocide theory
- Holocaust trivialization
- Secondary antisemitism

Other sources:

- Denialism
- Pseudohistory
- Temple denial

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7. Key elements of Holocaust denial:

- "Before discussing how Holocaust denial constitutes a conspiracy theory, and how the theory is distinctly American, it is important to understand what is meant by the term 'Holocaust denial'. Holocaust deniers, or 'revisionists', as they call themselves, question all three major points of definition of the Nazi Holocaust. First, they contend that, while mass murders of Jews did occur (although they dispute both the intentionality of such murders as well as the supposed deservedness of these killings), there was no official Nazi policy to murder Jews. Second, and perhaps most prominently, they contend that there were no homicidal gas chambers, particularly at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where mainstream historians believe over 1 million Jews were murdered, primarily in gas chambers. And third, Holocaust deniers contend that the death toll of European Jews during World War II was well below 6 million. Deniers float numbers anywhere between 300,000 and 1.5 million, as a general rule." Mathis, Andrew E. *Holocaust Denial, a Definition* (<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/denial/abc-clio/>), *The Holocaust History Project*, July 2, 2004. Retrieved December 18, 2006.
- "In part III we directly address the three major foundations upon which Holocaust denial rests, including ... the claim that gas chambers and crematoria were used not for mass extermination but rather for delousing clothing and disposing of people who died of disease and overwork; ... the claim that the six million figure is an exaggeration by an order of magnitude—that about six hundred thousand, not six million, died at the hands of the Nazis; ... the claim that there was no intention on the part of the Nazis to exterminate European Jewry and that the Holocaust was nothing more than the unfortunate by-product of the vicissitudes of war." Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman. *Denying History: who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and why Do They Say It?*, University of California Press, 2000, ISBN 0-520-23469-3, p. 3.
- "Holocaust Denial: Claims that the mass extermination of the Jews by the Nazis never happened; that the number of Jewish losses has been greatly exaggerated; that the Holocaust was not systematic nor a result of an official policy; or simply that the Holocaust never took place." *What is Holocaust Denial* (http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/faqs/answers/faq_35.html) Archived (https://archive.today/20050216030123/http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/faqs/answers/faq_35.html) February 16, 2005, at *archive.today*, *Yad Vashem* website, 2004. Retrieved December 18, 2006.
- "Among the untruths routinely promoted are the claims that no gas chambers existed at Auschwitz, that only 600,000 Jews were killed rather than six million, and that Hitler had no murderous intentions toward Jews or other groups persecuted by his government." *Holocaust Denial* (<http://www.adl.org/hate-patrol/holocaust.asp>), *Anti-Defamation League*, 2001. Retrieved June 28, 2007.
- "In general, Holocaust denial consists of four central points: minimization of numbers killed, denial of use of gassing, denial of the systematic nature of the genocide, and claims that the evidence was fabricated, above all after the war." Mark M. Hull, Vera Moynes. *Masquerade: Treason, the Holocaust, and an Irish Impostor*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2017, p. 181. ISBN 978-0-80615836-5
- "According to the deniers, the Nazis did not murder six million Jews, the notion of homicidal gas chambers is a myth, and any deaths of Jews that did occur under the Nazis were the result of wartime privations, not of systematic persecution and state-organised mass murder." Deborah Lipstadt. "Denying the Holocaust" (https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/genocide/deniers_01.shtml), *History*, *BBC Online*. Retrieved June 7, 2018.

8. "The kinds of assertions made in Holocaust-denial material include the following:

- Several hundred thousand rather than approximately six million Jews died during the war.
- Scientific evidence proves that gas chambers could not have been used to kill large numbers of people.
- The Nazi command had a policy of deporting Jews, not exterminating them.
- Some deliberate killings of Jews did occur, but were carried out by the peoples of Eastern Europe rather than the Nazis.
- Jews died in camps of various kinds, but did so as the result of hunger and disease (most died to the unavailability of food due to allied bombings). The Holocaust is a myth created by the Allies for propaganda purposes, and subsequently nurtured by the Jews for their own ends.
- Errors and inconsistencies in survivors' testimonies point to their essential unreliability.
- Alleged documentary evidence of the Holocaust, from photographs of concentration camp victims to Anne Frank's diary, is fabricated.
- The confessions of former Nazis to war crimes were extracted through torture." The nature of Holocaust denial: What is Holocaust denial? (http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20110718044959/http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) July 18, 2011, at the Wayback Machine, JPR report No. 3, 2000. Retrieved December 18, 2006.

9. A hoax designed to advance the interests of Jews:

- "The title of App's major work on the Holocaust, *The Six Million Swindle*, is informative because it implies on its very own the existence of a conspiracy of Jews to perpetrate a hoax against non-Jews for monetary gain." Mathis, Andrew E. *Holocaust Denial, a Definition* (<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/denial/abc-clio/>), *The Holocaust History Project*, July 2, 2004. Retrieved May 16, 2007.
- Another belief of deniers is the death of the millions of Jews was caused by sickness and disease. "Holocaust Denial and Distortion" (<http://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/holocaust-denial-and-distortion>). *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Retrieved November 6, 2013.
- "Jews are thus depicted as manipulative and powerful conspirators who have fabricated myths of their own suffering for their own ends. According to the Holocaust deniers, by forging evidence and mounting a massive propaganda effort, the Jews have established their lies as 'truth' and reaped enormous rewards from doing so: for example, in making financial claims on Germany and acquiring international support for Israel." *The nature of Holocaust denial: What is Holocaust denial?* (http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20110718044959/http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) July 18, 2011, at the *Wayback Machine*, JPR report No. 3, 2000. Retrieved May 16, 2007.
- "Why, we might ask the deniers, if the Holocaust did not happen would any group concoct such a horrific story? Because, some deniers claim, there was a conspiracy by Zionists to exaggerate the plight of Jews during the war in order to finance the state of Israel through war reparations." Michael Shermer & Alex Grobman. *Denying History: who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and why Do They Say It?*, University of California Press, 2000, ISBN 0-520-23469-3, p. 106.
- "Since its inception ... the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), a California-based Holocaust denial organization founded by Willis Carto of Liberty Lobby, has promoted the antisemitic conspiracy theory that Jews fabricated tales of their own genocide to manipulate the sympathies of the non-Jewish world." *Antisemitism and Racism Country Reports: United States* (<http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2000-1/usa.htm>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110628184616/http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2000-1/usa.htm>) June 28, 2011, at the *Wayback Machine*, *Stephen Roth Institute*, 2000. Retrieved May 17, 2007.
- "The central assertion for the deniers is that Jews are not victims but victimizers. They 'stole' billions in reparations, destroyed Germany's good name by spreading the 'myth' of the Holocaust, and won international sympathy because of what they claimed had been done to them. In the paramount miscarriage of injustice, they used the world's sympathy to 'displace' another people so that the state of Israel could be established. This contention relating to the establishment of Israel is a linchpin of their argument." *Deborah Lipstadt. Denying the Holocaust – The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, Penguin, 1993, ISBN 0-452-27274-2, p. 27.
- "They [Holocaust deniers] picture a vast shadowy conspiracy that controls and manipulates the institutions of education, culture, the media and government in order to disseminate a pernicious mythology. The purpose of this Holocaust mythology, they assert, is the inculcation of a sense of guilt in the white, Western Christian world. Those who can make others feel guilty have power over them and can make them do their bidding. This power is used to advance an international Jewish agenda centered in the Zionist enterprise of the State of Israel." *Introduction: Denial as Anti-Semitism* (<http://www.adl.org/holocaust/theory.asp>), "Holocaust Denial: An Online Guide to Exposing and Combating Anti-Semitic Propaganda", *Anti-Defamation League*, 2001. Retrieved June 12, 2007.
- "Deniers argue that the manufactured guilt and shame over a mythological Holocaust led to Western, specifically United States, support for the establishment and sustenance of the Israeli state – a sustenance that costs the American taxpayer over three billion dollars per year. They assert that American taxpayers have been and continue to be swindled...." *Introduction: Denial as Anti-Semitism* (<http://www.adl.org/holocaust/theory.asp>), "Holocaust Denial: An Online Guide to Exposing and Combating Anti-Semitic Propaganda", *Anti-Defamation League*, 2001. Retrieved June 12, 2007.

- "The stress on Holocaust revisionism underscored the new anti-Semitic agenda gaining ground within the Klan movement. Holocaust denial refurbished conspiratorial anti-Semitism. Who else but the Jews had the media power to hoodwink unsuspecting masses with one of the greatest hoaxes in history? And for what motive? To promote the claims of the illegitimate state of Israel by making non-Jews feel guilty, of course." Lawrence N. Powell, *Troubled Memory: Anne Levy, the Holocaust, and David Duke's Louisiana*, University of North Carolina Press, 2000, ISBN 0-8078-5374-7, p. 445

10. Predetermined conclusion:

- "'Revisionism' is obliged to deviate from the standard methodology of historical pursuit because it seeks to mold facts to fit a preconceived result, it denies events that have been objectively and empirically proved to have occurred, and because it works backward from the conclusion to the facts, thus necessitating the distortion and manipulation of those facts where they differ from the preordained conclusion (which they almost always do). In short, 'revisionism' denies something that demonstrably happened, through methodological dishonesty." McFee, Gordon. "Why 'Revisionism' Isn't" (<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/revisionism-isnt/>), The Holocaust History Project, May 15, 1999. Retrieved December 22, 2006.
- Alan L. Berger, "Holocaust Denial: Tempest in a Teapot, or Storm on the Horizon?", in Zev Garber and Richard Libowitz (eds), *Peace, in Deed: Essays in Honor of Harry James Cargas*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998, p. 154.

11. Denial vs. "revisionism":

- "This is the phenomenon of what has come to be known as 'revisionism', 'negationism', or 'Holocaust denial,' whose main characteristic is either an outright rejection of the very veracity of the Nazi genocide of the Jews, or at least a concerted attempt to minimize both its scale and importance.... It is just as crucial, however, to distinguish between the wholly objectionable politics of denial and the fully legitimate scholarly revision of previously accepted conventional interpretations of any historical event, including the Holocaust." **Bartov, Omer**. *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation and Aftermath*, Routledge, pp.11–12. Bartov is John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History at the Watson Institute, and is regarded as one of the world's leading authorities on genocide ("Omer Bartov" (http://www.watsoninstitute.org/contacts_detail.cfm?id=97) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20081216115629/http://www.watsoninstitute.org/contacts_detail.cfm?id=97) December 16, 2008, at the Wayback Machine, The Watson Institute for International Studies).
- "The two leading critical exposés of Holocaust denial in the United States were written by historians **Deborah Lipstadt** (1993) and **Michael Shermer** and Alex Grobman (2000). These scholars make a distinction between historical revisionism and denial. Revisionism, in their view, entails a refinement of existing knowledge about an historical event, not a denial of the event itself, that comes through the examination of new empirical evidence or a reexamination or reinterpretation of existing evidence. Legitimate historical revisionism acknowledges a 'certain body of irrefutable evidence' or a 'convergence of evidence' that suggest that an event—like the black plague, American slavery, or the Holocaust—did in fact occur (Lipstadt 1993:21; Shermer & Grobman 200:34). Denial, on the other hand, rejects the entire foundation of historical evidence...." Ronald J. Berger. *Fathoming the Holocaust: A Social Problems Approach*, Aldine Transaction, 2002, ISBN 0-202-30670-4, p. 154.
- "At this time, in the mid-1970s, the specter of Holocaust Denial (masked as 'revisionism') had begun to raise its head in Australia...." **Bartrop, Paul R**. "A Little More Understanding: The Experience of a Holocaust Educator in Australia" in Samuel Totten, Steven Leonard Jacobs, Paul R Bartrop. *Teaching about the Holocaust*, Praeger/Greenwood, 2004, p. xix. ISBN 0-275-98232-7
- "**Pierre Vidal-Naquet** urges that denial of the Holocaust should not be called 'revisionism' because 'to deny history is not to revise it'. *Les Assassins de la Memoire. Un Eichmann de papier et autres essays sur le revisionisme* (The Assassins of Memory—A Paper-Eichmann and Other Essays on Revisionism) 15 (1987)." Cited in Roth, Stephen J. "Denial of the Holocaust as an Issue of Law" in the *Israel Yearbook on Human Rights*, Volume 23, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1993, ISBN 0-7923-2581-8, p. 215.
- "This essay describes, from a methodological perspective, some of the inherent flaws in the 'revisionist' approach to the history of the Holocaust. It is not intended as a polemic, nor does it attempt to ascribe motives. Rather, it seeks to explain the fundamental error in the 'revisionist' approach, as well as why that approach of necessity leaves no other choice. It concludes that 'revisionism' is a misnomer because the facts do not accord with the position it puts forward and, more importantly, its methodology reverses the appropriate approach to historical investigation.... 'Revisionism' is obliged to deviate from the standard methodology of historical pursuit, because it seeks to mold facts to fit a preconceived result; it denies events that have been objectively and empirically proved to have occurred; and because it works backward from the conclusion to the facts, thus necessitating the distortion and manipulation of those facts where they differ from the preordained conclusion (which they almost always do). In short, 'revisionism' denies something that demonstrably happened, through methodological dishonesty." McFee, Gordon. "**Why 'Revisionism' Isn't**" (<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/revisionism-isnt/>), The Holocaust History Project, May 15, 1999. Retrieved December 22, 2006.

- "Holocaust denial can be a particularly insidious form of antisemitism precisely because it often tries to disguise itself as something quite different: as genuine scholarly debate (in the pages, for example, of the innocuous-sounding *Journal for Historical Review*). Holocaust deniers often refer to themselves as 'revisionists', in an attempt to claim legitimacy for their activities. There are, of course, a great many scholars engaged in historical debates about the Holocaust whose work should not be confused with the output of the Holocaust deniers. Debate continues about such subjects as, for example, the extent and nature of ordinary Germans' involvement in and knowledge of the policy of genocide, and the timing of orders given for the extermination of the Jews. However, the valid endeavour of historical revisionism, which involves the re-interpretation of historical knowledge in the light of newly emerging evidence, is a very different task from that of claiming that the essential facts of the Holocaust, and the evidence for those facts, are fabrications." *The nature of Holocaust denial: What is Holocaust denial?* (http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20110718044959/http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) July 18, 2011, at the *Wayback Machine*, JPR report No. 3, 2000. Retrieved May 16, 2007.
- "The deniers' selection of the name revisionist to describe themselves is indicative of their basic strategy of deceit and distortion and of their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate historians engaged in the traditional practice of illuminating the past. For historians, in fact, the name revisionism has a resonance that is perfectly legitimate – it recalls the controversial historical school known as World War I 'revisionists', who argued that the Germans were unjustly held responsible for the war and that consequently the Versailles treaty was a politically misguided document based on a **false premise**. Thus the deniers link themselves to a specific historiographic tradition of reevaluating the past. Claiming the mantle of the World War I revisionists and denying they have any objective other than the dissemination of the truth constitute a tactical attempt to acquire an intellectual credibility that would otherwise elude them." *Deborah Lipstadt. Denying the Holocaust – The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, Penguin, 1993, ISBN 0-452-27274-2, p. 25.

12. Refer to themselves as revisionists:

- "The deniers' selection of the name revisionist to describe themselves is indicative of their basic strategy of deceit and distortion and of their attempt to portray themselves as legitimate historians engaged in the traditional practice of illuminating the past." *Deborah Lipstadt. Denying the Holocaust—The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, Penguin, 1993, ISBN 0-452-27274-2, p. 25.
- "Dressing themselves in pseudo-academic garb, they have adopted the term 'revisionism' in order to mask and legitimate their enterprise." *Introduction: Denial as Anti-Semitism* (<http://www.adl.org/holocaust/theory.asp>), "Holocaust Denial: An Online Guide to Exposing and Combating Anti-Semitic Propaganda", *Anti-Defamation League*, 2001. Retrieved June 12, 2007.
- "Holocaust deniers often refer to themselves as 'revisionists', in an attempt to claim legitimacy for their activities. There are, of course, a great many scholars engaged in historical debates about the Holocaust whose work should not be confused with the output of the Holocaust deniers. Debate continues about such subjects as, for example, the extent and nature of ordinary Germans' involvement in and knowledge of the policy of genocide, and the timing of orders given for the extermination of the Jews. However, the valid endeavour of historical revisionism, which involves the re-interpretation of historical knowledge in the light of newly emerging evidence, is a very different task from that of claiming that the essential facts of the Holocaust, and the evidence for those facts, are fabrications." *"The nature of Holocaust denial: What is Holocaust denial? (http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20110718044959/http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) July 18, 2011, at the Wayback Machine"*, JPR report No. 3, 2000. Retrieved May 16, 2007.

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16. "The two leading critical exposés of Holocaust denial in the United States were written by historians Deborah Lipstadt (1993) and Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman (2000). These scholars make a distinction between historical revisionism and denial. Revisionism, in their view, entails a refinement of existing knowledge about a historical event, not a denial of the event itself, that comes through the examination of new empirical evidence or a reexamination or reinterpretation of existing evidence. Legitimate historical revisionism acknowledges a 'certain body of irrefutable evidence' or a 'convergence of evidence' that suggest that an event—like the black plague, American slavery, or the Holocaust—did, in fact, occur (Lipstadt 1993:21; Shermer & Grobman 200:34). Denial, on the other hand, rejects the entire foundation of historical evidence...."
17. Lipstadt, Deborah E. (1994). *Denying the Holocaust: the growing assault on truth and memory* (<http://archive.org/details/denyingholocaust00lips>) (reprint ed.). Plume. ISBN 978-0-452-27274-3.
18. Deborah E. Lipstadt (December 18, 2012). *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (https://books.google.com/books?id=_yLm_cHp_REC). Simon and Schuster. ISBN 978-1-4767-2748-6. "Modern Holocaust denial draws inspiration from a variety of sources. Among them is a legitimate historical tradition that was highly critical of government policies and believed that history was being used to justify these policies. The deniers consider themselves heirs of a group of influential American historians who were deeply disturbed by American involvement in World War I. These respected scholars, who called themselves revisionists, would have been appalled to learn of the purposes to which their arguments were put."
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21. Koenraad Elst. Chapter One – Negationism in General (<http://voiceofdharma.org/books/negaind/ch1.htm>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20071025063927/http://voiceofdharma.org/books/negaind/ch1.htm>) October 25, 2007, at the [Wayback Machine](#), *Negationism in India: Concealing the Record of Islam, The Voice of India*, 2002.
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- "Jews are thus depicted as manipulative and powerful conspirators who have fabricated myths of their own suffering for their own ends. According to the Holocaust deniers, by forging evidence and mounting a massive propaganda effort, the Jews have established their lies as 'truth' and reaped enormous rewards from doing so: for example, in making financial claims on Germany and acquiring international support for Israel." The nature of Holocaust denial: What is Holocaust denial? (http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20110718044959/http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/CS_Reports/no_3_2000/index.htm) July 18, 2011, at the Wayback Machine, JPR report No. 3, 2000. Retrieved May 16, 2007.
- "Why, we might ask the deniers, if the Holocaust did not happen would any group concoct such a horrific story? Because, some deniers claim, there was a conspiracy by Zionists to exaggerate the plight of Jews during the war in order to finance the state of Israel through war reparations." Michael Shermer & Alex Grobman. *Denying History: who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and why Do They Say It?*, University of California Press, 2000, ISBN 0-520-23469-3, p. 106.
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External links

- an online lecture by Ephraim Kaye, of Yad Vashem (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_U0y2IUxNL4)
- When Denying History is Incitement to Violence (<http://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/holocaust-anti-semitism/rozett-denying-history>), By Robert Rozett of Yad Vashem
- The Wiener Holocaust Library (<https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/>) — The World's Oldest Holocaust Memorial Institution
- The Nizkor Project (<http://www.nizkor.org/>) – responses to Holocaust denial
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- Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team (HEART) (<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/>)
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Zionist Occupation Government conspiracy theory

The **Zionist occupation government**, **Zionist occupational government** or **Zionist-occupied government** (**ZOG**), sometimes also referred to as the **Jewish occupational government** (**JOG**),^{[1][2]} is an antisemitic conspiracy theory claiming Jews secretly control the governments of Western states.^{[3][4]} According to believers, a secret Zionist organization controls international banks, and through them the governments, in order to collude against white, Christian, or Islamic interests.^[5]

The expression is used by white supremacist, white nationalist, far-right, nativist,^[6] or antisemitic groups in Europe^[7] and the United States^{[8][9][10][11][12][13]} as well as by ultra-nationalists such as Pamyat in Russia and various far-right groups including the Freemen, Identity Christians and the Ku Klux Klan.^[6]

The word *Zionist* in "Zionist occupation government" should not be confused with the ideology of Zionism, the movement for support of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. As the conspiracy theorists chiefly name countries outside that area, the usage of *Zionist* in this context is misleading because it is intended to portray Jews as conspirators who aim to control the world^[8] as depicted in the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.^[14]

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Origins

The association of Jews to the control of economic forces is the modern resurgence of an old stereotype, that of the "greedy Jewish merchant" which has been present in the Christian world since the Middle Ages.^[5] The conspiracy theory illustrates a specifically American far-right agrarian preoccupation, namely the vital possibility of extinction allegedly faced by the rural world, seen as the backbone of America, a danger caused by a remote, centralized and power-hungry metropolitan elite corrupted by "alien" influences.^[15]

History

The British fascist Arnold Leese already had the habit of referring to the "Jewish government" of his own nation in the interwar and postwar decades, while Nazis under the Weimar Republic dismissed a so-called "Jewish" hand behind that regime. In late 19th-century France, the insinuation that the French government was in the power of the Jews was a commonplace claim in nationalist discourse.^[15]

An early appearance of the term was in a 1976 article, "Welcome to ZOG-World", attributed to an American neo-Nazi named Eric Thomson, although Canadian white nationalists used the term "ZOG" as well.^[16] It also features as the main theme in the 1978 book *The Turner Diaries* written by William Luther Pierce, founder of the National Alliance, a white nationalist organization. The term came to the attention of a larger audience in a 27 December 1984 article in *The New York Times* about robberies committed in California and Washington by a white supremacist group called The Order. According to the newspaper, the crimes "were conducted to raise money for a war upon the United States Government, which the group calls 'ZOG', or Zionist Occupation Government".^{[15][17]} In 1985, the Oregon-based far-right group Posse Comitatus claimed: "Our nation is now completely under the control of the International Invisible government of World Jewry."^[18]

The Order of the Silent Brotherhood was an offshoot of the Aryan Nations, an organization founded in the early 1970s by Richard Girnt Butler; the latter had since the 1950s been associated with another antisemitic group, the Church of Jesus Christ Christian. Both of these groups trace their origins to antisemitic activists such as Gerald L.K. Smith and have interacted with the Ku Klux Klan. The term appeared extensively in Aryan Nations literature. In December 1984, *Newsweek* magazine reported that the Aryan Nations had set up an electronic bulletin board system called "Aryan Nation Liberty Net" to offer information for the locations of Communist Party USA offices and "ZOG informers".

In 1996, the Aryan Nations posted on its website an "Aryan Declaration of Independence", stating that "the history of the present Zionist Occupied Government of the United States of America is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations [...] [all] having a direct object—the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states." Claiming that "the eradication of the White race and its culture" is "one of its foremost purposes", the "ZOG" is accused of relinquishing powers of government to private corporations, white traitors and ruling class Jewish families. It accused "ZOG" Jews of subverting the constitutional rule of law; responsibility for post-Civil War Reconstruction; subverting the monetary system with the Federal Reserve System, confiscating land and property; limiting freedoms of speech, religion and gun ownership; murdering, kidnapping and imprisoning patriots; abdicating national sovereignty to the United Nations; political repression; wasteful bureaucracy; loosening restrictions on immigration and drug trafficking; raising taxes; polluting the environment; commandeering the military, mercenaries and police; denying Aryan cultural heritage; and inciting immigrant insurrections.^{[15][19]}

Since 1996, the term has spread in usage and is now popular with many other antisemitic organizations. Swedish Neo-Nazis say that Jews—in what they call the Swedish Zionist occupied government—are importing immigrants to "dilute the blood of the white race".^[20] The antisemitic website Jew Watch claims that the entire spectrum of Western nations and other countries are being ruled by "Zionist Occupation Governments".^[21]

Slovak politician Marian Kotleba, whose party (People's Party Our Slovakia) won two seats in the European Parliament in the 2019 election,^[22] claims that the "Z. O. G." controls Slovak politics.^[23]

Conspiracy theories

A variety of plots gravitating around the original conspiracy theory were imagined by activists, one stating for instance that as many as 4,000 Jews were warned of the September 11 attacks before they happened. Believers also claim that ZOG-like forces control the American foreign policy. Despite their

own singularities, most ZOG theories involve the idea of a Jewish power over the finance or banking, including one imagining a Jewish control on the Federal Reserve.^[5]

Neo-Nazi David Lane developed his version of the white genocide conspiracy theory in his c. 1995 *White Genocide Manifesto*, the origin of the later use of the term.^{[24][25][26][27]} Lane claimed that the government policies of many Western countries had the intent of destroying white European culture and making white people an "extinct species".^[28] Lane—a founding member of the organization The Order—criticized miscegenation, abortion, homosexuality, Jewish control of the media, "multi-racial sports" and the legal repercussions against those who "resist genocide" and the ZOG that he said controls the United States and the other majority-white countries and which encourages "white genocide".^[28]

See also

- Andinia Plan
- Antisemitic canard
- Blood libel
- Cultural Bolshevism
- Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory
- Doctors' plot
- Dreyfus affair
- The Eternal Jew (art exhibition)
- The Eternal Jew (book)
- The Eternal Jew (film)
- The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century
- Franklin Prophecy
- The International Jew
- The Protocols of the Elders of Zion
- Jewish Bolshevism
- Jewish question
- Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory
- Kosher tax conspiracy theory
- New World Order (conspiracy theory)
- QAnon
- Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda
- Rootless cosmopolitan
- Stab-in-the-back myth
- Żydokomuna

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Vatican conspiracy theories

Vatican conspiracy theories are conspiracy theories that concern the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church. A majority of the theories allege that the Church and its representatives are secretly controlling secular society with a Satanic agenda for global domination.



St. Peter's Basilica

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Pope John Paul I conspiracy theories

Pope John Paul I died in September 1978, only a month after his election to the papacy. The timing of his death and the Vatican's alleged difficulties with ceremonial and legal death procedures have fostered several conspiracy theories. British author David Yallop wrote extensively about unsolved crimes and conspiracy theories, and in his 1984 book *In God's Name* suggested that John Paul I died because he was about to uncover financial scandals allegedly involving the Vatican.^[1] John Cornwell responded to Yallop's charges in 1987 with *A Thief In The Night*, in which he analyzed the various allegations and denied the conspiracy.^[2] According to Eugene Kennedy, writing for the New York Times, Cornwell's book "helps to purge the air of paranoia and of conspiracy theories, showing how the truth, carefully excavated by an able journalist in a refreshing volume, does make us free."^[3]

Pope John Paul II's 1981 attempted assassination

Various theories have been brought forward in regards to the attempt by Mehmet Ali Ağca to kill Pope John Paul II. Those theories have involved the Grey Wolves,^[4] the Bulgarian Secret Service,^[5] and others.

Know Nothings

The Know Nothings were an anti-Catholic political group in the United States, in the 1840s and 1850s, who claimed that the Irish and other Roman Catholic immigrants to the United States would be controlled by the Pope for anti-American purposes.^[6]

Secret Archives

There are several theories about the contents of the Vatican Apostolic Archives: some theories claim that they contain secret information about the Priory of Sion, proof that Jesus had a wife and descendents,^[7] secret information about the third secret of the Fatima, the real Spear of Destiny, secret information about the Holy Grail and/or the Ark of the Covenant,^{[8][9][10]} a supposedly-real Chronovisor machine, and many other secrets. There are also theories that claim that the Vatican has information about the Illuminati,^[11] and even secretly contains the world's largest collection of porn.^[12]

Jesuit conspiracy theories

See also

- List of conspiracy theories#Anti-Catholic conspiracy theories
- Legends surrounding the papacy
- Anti-Catholicism
- Jesuit conspiracy theories
- Pope John Paul I conspiracy theories
- Crypto-papism

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Jesuit conspiracy theories

A **Jesuit conspiracy** is a conspiracy theory about the members of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), a religious order in the Catholic Church. Such theories began appearing in 1550, just ten years after the founding of the Jesuits, and were often fabricated by their enemies because of the intellectual and political influence which members of the Society of Jesus exerted.

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History

The earliest recorded Jesuit conspiracy theory is found from Augustinian monk, George Browne, who had exclaimed from the pulpit to a crowd in 1551 the following conspiracy theory:

But there is a new fraternity of late sprung up who call themselves Jesuits, which will deceive many, who are much after the Scribes and Pharisees' manner. Among the Jews they shall strive to abolish the truth, and shall come very near to do it. For these sorts will turn themselves into several forms; with the Heathen a Heathenist, with the Atheists an Atheist, with the Jews a Jew, with the Reformers a Reformade, purposely to know your intentions, your minds, your hearts, and your inclinations, and thereby bring you at last to be like the fool that "said in his heart there was no God." These shall spread over the whole world, "shall be admitted into the counsels of Princes, and they never the wiser," charming of them, yea, making your Princes reveal their hearts, and the secrets therein, and yet they not perceive it; which will happen from falling from the law of God, by neglect of fulfilling the law of God, and by winking at their sins; yet in the end . . . they shall become odious to all nations: so that at the end they shall be worse than Jews, having no resting place upon earth; and then shall a Jew have more favor than a Jesuit.^[1]

Less than a decade later, another widely spread libel against the society would appear. The zealous Dominican, Melchor Cano, who had publicized a letter two days before his death, stated the following:

God grant that it may not happen to me as is fabled of Cassandra, who was captured and burned. If the members of the Society continue as they have begun, God grant that the time may not come when kings will wish to resist them, but will not have the means of doing so.^[2]

Later these claims would find its proofs in the Monita secreta, a document detailing the supposed illicit ways that inducted members of the Society were using to gain both temporal and spiritual ascendancy over all.^[3] First published in Krakow, 1612, edited and published by the former Jesuit, Jerome Zahorowski,^[4] he alleged that it was written by Jesuit Superior General Claudio Acquaviva, whose Regional Assistant and Admonitor, Paul Hoffaeus, S.J., had likewise brought scandal to the Society as visitor for the Upper German Province of the Society in 1596, when he had written the following anti-Jesuit report to the Jesuit College of Ingolstadt:

It is to be regretted that so many beneficial precautionary measures are not always observed, or are observed very carelessly. Feasting and frequent visits to single females at their residences take place without necessity. Rendezvous are given in the church for long conversations with women, and there are scandalously long confessions of women, even of those who frequently confess. Confessions of sick women in their houses are heard without the presence of a companion who can see the confessor and penitent. Frequently, yes, very frequently, intimacy prevails between two persons without any trace of strict repression on the confessor's part. I fear that sweet and agreeable words are exchanged, which are tinged with carnal lust and carnal feelings. Unpleasant occurrences, which lead to apostasy and to expulsions from the Society, teach us what great evils are caused by such transgressions in the case of confessors. Must there not be a strange aberration of intellect and heart when confessors in a free and unembarrassed manner, and without fear of shame, dare to pass many hours joking with women before the criticising eyes of the world, as if they themselves and their penitents were not in any danger from such unrestricted intercourse? It is known and has also reached the ears of the princes that confessors from amongst our Order have become entangled through such Satanic examples of vice, and have apostatised or been expelled from the Society as evil nuisances.^[5]

The Protestant Reformation, the English Reformation, and later the Age of Enlightenment brought new suspicions against the Jesuits, who were accused of upholding Ultramontanism, infiltrating political realms and non-Catholic churches. In England, it was forbidden to belong to the Jesuits, under grave penalties, including the death penalty. A 1689 work, *Foxes and Firebrands* by Robert Ware (later exposed as a forger^[6]), claimed Jesuits took a secret oath that stated:

I do further promise and declare that I will, when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants and Masons, as I am directed to do, to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth; and that I will spare neither age, sex nor condition, and that will hang, burn, waste, boil, flay, strangle, and bury alive these infamous heretics; rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women, and crush their infants' heads against the walls in order to annihilate their execrable race. That when the same cannot be done openly I will secretly use the poisonous cup, the strangulation cord, the steel of the poniard, or the leaden bullet, regardless of the honour, rank, dignity or authority of the persons, whatever may be their condition in life, either public or private, as I at any time may be directed so to do by any agents of the Pope or Superior of the Brotherhood of the Holy Father of the Society of Jesus. In confirmation of which I hereby dedicate my life, soul, and all corporal powers, and with the dagger which I now receive I will subscribe my name

written in my blood in testimony thereof; and should I prove false, or weaken in my determination, may my brethren and fellow soldiers of the militia of the Pope cut off my hands and feet and my throat from ear to ear, my belly be opened and sulphur burned therein with all the punishment that can be inflicted upon me on earth, and my soul shall be tortured by demons in eternal hell forever.^{[7][8]}

Jesuitism is the term their opponents coined for the practices of the Jesuits in the service of the Counter-Reformation.^[9]

Other conspiracy theories and criticisms relate to the role of the Jesuits in the colonization of the New World, and to their involvement with indigenous peoples. Some allege that the Jesuits, through their settlements (reductions), may willingly have contributed to the assimilation of indigenous nations, even accusing the Society of commanding them in guerrilla warfare.^[10] On the other hand, the Jesuits were hated by the Catholic rulers and colonists, who saw their reductions, which were cut off from contact with European Christians, as subversive and a threat to good order, at times even believing in the worst of accusations against the Society. Étienne François, the Foreign Minister of France, who had a strong influence on France, and supposedly even on Spain's global strategy, firmly believed that the Society was a shadow government, believing that:

the Society was involved in and able to influence everything.^[11]

These hostile views contributed so greatly to the campaign against the Jesuits (which resulted in the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Pope Clement XIV in 1773,^[12]) that historian Hamish Scott determined Étienne as the true "destroyer of the Jesuit Order", rather than the commonly alleged arch-nemesis of the Society, King Charles III.^[13]

The French Revolution

In 17th Century France, the development of Jansenism, a Catholic theological movement emphasising original sin, led to intra-church rivalries between Jesuits and Jansenists. And although the pro-papal Jesuits ultimately prevailed, it cost them dearly with regard to their reputation in the largely Gallican-influenced French Church.

Many anti-Jesuit conspiracy theories emerged in the 18th century Enlightenment, as a result of an alleged rivalry between the Freemasons and the Jesuits. Intellectual attacks on Jesuits were seen as an efficient rebuttal to the anti-masonry promoted by conservatives, and this ideological conspiracy pattern persisted into the 19th century as an important component of French anti-clericalism. It was, however, largely confined to political elites until the 1840s, when it entered the popular imagination through the writings of the historians Jules Michelet and Edgar Quinet of the Collège de France who declared "la guerre aux jesuites", and the novelist Eugène Sue who in his best-seller *Le Juif errant* depicted the Jesuits as a "secret society bent on world domination by all available means".^[14] Sue's heroine, Adrienne de Cardoville, said that she could not think about Jesuits "without ideas of darkness, of venom and of nasty black reptiles being involuntarily aroused in me".^[15]

Many, since Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma* was first published in 1871, have come to view the Freemasons as the lineal heirs of the Knights Templar, but other conspiracy theorists ascribe that role to the Jesuits, citing Pike in the aforementioned work:

Hugues de Payens himself had not that keen and far-sighted intellect nor that grandeur of purpose which afterward distinguished the military founder of another soldiery that became formidable to kings. The Templars were unintelligent and therefore unsuccessful Jesuits.^[16]

Eight hundred Degrees of one kind and another were invented: infidelity and even Jesuitry were taught under the mask of Masonry.^[17]

Others still place all three under the same umbrella, loosely or otherwise:

But before his execution, the Chief of the doomed Order organized and instituted what afterward came to be called the Occult, Hermetic, or Scottish Masonry. In the gloom of his prison, the Grand Master created four Metropolitan Lodges, at Naples for the East, at Edinburgh for the West, at Stockholm for the North, and at Paris for the South.^[18]

German attitudes toward the Jesuits

Jesuit conspiracy theories found fertile soil in Imperial Germany, where anti-Jesuits saw the order as a sinister and extremely powerful organization which was characterized by strict internal discipline, utter unscrupulousness in its choice of methods, and undeviating commitment to the creation of a universal empire which would be ruled by the Papacy. Citing historian Friedrich Heyer's metaphor of the specter of Jesuitism (*Jesuitengespenst*) and similar imagery from other authors, Róisín Healey writes: "The Jesuit of anti-Jesuit discourse had what might be called an uncanny quality: he was both subhuman and superhuman. Jesuits were allegedly so extreme in their submission to their order that they became like machines and, in their determination to achieve their goals, drew on powers unavailable to other men, through witchcraft. The peculiar location of the Jesuit, at the boundaries of humanity, unsettled the producers and consumers of anti-Jesuit discourse. In this sense, the Jesuit specter haunted imperial Germany."^[19] Healey observes that "feeling themselves haunted by the Jesuits, anti-Jesuits revealed themselves to be less rational than they believed." Their discourse, with its "skewed" perception of reality, "resembled, in certain respects, the 'paranoid style' of politics identified by the American historian, Richard Hofstadter".^[20]

Anti-Jesuitism played an important part in the *Kulturkampf*, culminating in the Jesuit Law of 1872, endorsed by Otto von Bismarck, which required Jesuits to dissolve their houses in Germany, forbade members from exercising most of their religious functions, and allowed the authorities to deny residency to individual members of the order. Some of the law's provisions were removed in 1904, but it was only repealed in 1917.^[21]

In the 1930s, Jesuit conspiracy theories were made use of by the Nazi Party with the goal of reducing the influence of the Jesuits, who ran secondary schools and engaged in youth work. A propaganda pamphlet, "The Jesuit: The Obscurantist without a Homeland" by Hubert Hermanns, warned against the Jesuits' "dark power" and "mysterious intentions". Declared "public vermin" [*Volksschädlinge*] by the Nazis, Jesuits were persecuted, interned, and sometimes murdered.^[22]

A notable source of modern conspiracy theories which involve the Jesuits is *Vatican Assassins* by Eric Jon Phelps.^[23] It is said to allege that Newt Gingrich is "one of the ten most dangerous, Jesuitical politicians of the Pope's 'Holy Roman' Fourteenth Amendment, Cartel-Corporate-Fascist, Socialist-

Communist American Empire" and it also alleges that the Jesuits played a role in the Assassination of John F. Kennedy.^[24] Skeptic Bob Blaskiewicz also claims that Phelps told him that the alleged "Grey aliens" are not aliens but creations of Jesuit science.^[25]

Sinking the *Titanic*

In their book *Titanic & Olympic: The Truth Behind the Conspiracy*, historians Bruce Beveridge and Steve Hall debunk various conspiracy theories about the sinking of the *Titanic*, including one that the Jesuits were responsible, which they describe as falling into the category of the "completely ridiculous". According to that theory, in the early 20th century, the Jesuits were seeking a means to fund their schemes and wars. In 1910, at a clandestine meeting which was hosted by J. P. Morgan, seven major financiers, all of whom were either controlled by or in league with the Jesuits, came to an agreement on the need to eliminate outside competition in the banking world and create a central bank which would be backed by the United States Government, a bank which would later be known as the Federal Reserve. This scheme, however, was opposed by certain influential businessmen such as Benjamin Guggenheim, Isidor Straus and John Jacob Astor IV. In order to eliminate those three powerful "enemies", the Jesuits ordered Morgan to build the *Titanic* and arrange for them to board it for a pre-arranged fatal maiden voyage.^[26]

The theory includes the claim that Captain Edward Smith was a "Jesuit temporal coadjutor".^[27] The "accidental sinking" was arranged by having Smith's "Jesuit master", Father Francis Browne, board the *Titanic* and order Smith to run his ship at full speed through an ice field on a moonless night, ignoring any ice warnings including those from the lookouts, with the purpose of hitting an iceberg severely enough to cause the ship to founder and the three businessmen to drown. In other words, the *Titanic* was built and then sunk, and her crew and passengers sacrificed, to eliminate three men. As evidence of Conspiracy on Rome's part, the conspiracy theorists cite Browne asking permission from his Jesuit superior to proceed with some potential wealthy american benefactors, in which he received the reply telegram unambiguously saying "GET OFF THAT SHIP – PROVINCIAL",^[28] and that after the sinking, all opposition to the Federal Reserve disappeared. It was set up in December 1913, and eight months later the Jesuits had sufficient funding to launch a European war. Beveridge and Hall note that the theory never considers "why conspirators in 1910 would feel sinking a ship was an economical way to eliminate 'enemies' or how they would arrange for all three victims to board a specific ship on a specific voyage two years later".^[26]

See also

- List of conspiracy theories
- Alumbrados
- Knights Templar
- Sovereign Military Order of Malta
- Fourth vow
- Anti-Catholicism
- Vatican conspiracy theories
- Pope John Paul I conspiracy theories

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Controversies about Opus Dei

Opus Dei is a personal prelature within the Roman Church that has been the subject of numerous **controversies**. The organisation is sometimes referred to as "**Santa Mafia**"^[1] or "**Holy Mafia**"^[2] due to questionable business activities. Those activities include the "systematic" baby-trafficking of "around 300,000" stolen babies under the Spanish dictator Franco.^[3]

Throughout its history, Opus Dei has been criticized by many, including by numerary members who knew the founder and had roles in Opus Dei's internal government.^{[4][5][6][7][8][9]} The reports by former members in the USA, England, Spain, Latin America, France, Germany, and other countries are published. Journalists have described it as "the most controversial force in the Catholic Church" and its founder Josemaría Escrivá as a "polarizing" figure.^{[10][11][12]}

The canonization process of Escrivá has been described as unreliable (<https://www.newsweek.com/questionable-saint-197568>). Former members who worked and lived with him for years reported that they "did not recognize" the highly flattering portrait of Escrivá promoted by Opus Dei at the time of the canonization process as the same man they had known. Numerous members also reported being excluded from the process because prelate Javier Echevarría feared that they would reveal unflattering facts about Escrivá. Another former member has reported that John Paul II allowed an unusually swift canonization of Escrivá because Opus Dei had bailed out the Vatican Bank with \$250 million in 1985. Those who question the infallibility of the canonization of Escrivá note that John Paul II was naïve in the cases of Theodore McCarrick and Marcial Maciel,^[13] both of whom procured large sums of money for the Vatican,^{[14][15][16][17][18][19]} like Opus Dei.

Controversies about Opus Dei have centered on allegations of secretiveness,^[20] including the cover-up of sexual abuse in Spain, Mexico, Uruguay, Chile, and the United States;^{[21][22][23][24][25][26][27][28][29][30][31]} recruiting methods aimed at teenagers becoming numeraries; the illicit use of psychiatric drugs in its central headquarters; the misleading of its lay faithful about their status and rights under Canon Law; the "mortification of the flesh" practiced by its celibate members (cilice, discipline, and sleeping on a board);^[32] elitism and misogyny; and support of authoritarian or right-wing governments, including the reactionary Franco regime.^[33]

According to former members of Opus Dei, the controversies about Opus Dei are rooted in practices institutionalized while Escrivá was alive and are written into internal documents and orally-transmitted customs that have not been reviewed by the Catholic Church.

Some of the more famous former numeraries who have reported on these matters are: Maria del Carmen Tapia (<https://www.amazon.com/Beyond-Threshold-Life-Opus-Dei/dp/0826410960>), Secretary to Escrivá in Rome and commissioned by Escrivá to start the women's branch of Opus Dei in Venezuela; Vladimir Felzmann, a numerary priest;^[7] Miguel Fisac, who accompanied Escrivá across the Pyrenees during the Spanish Civil War and lived for years with him in Rome; Antonio Perez Tenessa, Secretary General of Opus Dei and regional director of Opus Dei in Spain; and María Angustias Moreno.

Opus Dei has also been criticized for allegedly seeking independence and more influence within the Catholic Church.^[34]

According to some journalists, criticisms against Opus Dei are based on jealousy or fabrications by opponents.^{[10][35][11][36][37]} Critics respond that some of these journalists are associated with Opus Dei,^{[38][39]} and that none of them interviewed numeraries who left Opus Dei in protest or examined internal governing documents.

Defenders of Opus Dei point out that John Paul II and other Catholic leaders have endorsed Opus Dei's teaching on the sanctifying value of work, and its fidelity to Catholic beliefs.^{[40][41]}

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Historical opposition from Jesuits

Josemaría Escrivá had a Jesuit priest as a spiritual director (Fr. Sánchez) at the time that he founded Opus Dei (1928ff.).^[42] As a result, he apparently based some of the practices of Opus Dei on the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*,^[43] such as: required manifestation of conscience to a superior, seeking prestigious people for membership, a military-style hierarchical authority structure,^[44] and an emphasis on blind obedience as a means of efficiency in the apostolate.^[45]

Nevertheless, the Superior-General of the Society of Jesus Fr. Włodimir Ledóchowski (1866–1942) later told the Vatican he considered Opus Dei "very dangerous for the Church in Spain." He described it as having a "secretive character" and saw "signs in it of a covert inclination to dominate the world with a form of Christian Masonry."^[46] In the 1950's, some Jesuits told Italian parents of members of Opus Dei that their sons were being led to damnation.

Allegations like this from within well-regarded ecclesiastical circles ("the opposition by good people," as Escrivá called it), were interpreted by Escrivá as misunderstandings or jealousies, and defenders of Opus Dei today claim that present-day criticisms are merely vestiges of this old prejudice.^[10] Specifically, they argue that criticism of Opus Dei by members of the Society of Jesus was caused by these Jesuits' not understanding the difference between Opus Dei and religious orders, and that this misunderstanding continues among people with a "clerical" or "religious" mentality. For Opus Dei officially describes itself^[47] in contrast to "religious" (monastic) life: ordinary lay Christians living out their baptismal call to holiness without being externally distinguished from other citizens.

Messori, a journalist associated with Opus Dei, also identifies political ideology as the root of some controversies involving some Jesuits. After Vatican II certain sectors of the Church became politically and theologically "liberal," including Jesuits in Latin America who were experimenting with "liberation theology." In contrast, some Opus Dei laymen had been working for the far-right Franco regime in Spain and similar regimes in Latin America. Escrivá himself gave a spiritual retreat to Franco, and the numerary priest and bishop Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne was reportedly friendly with Peru's president Fujimori and unsupportive of human rights advocates.^{[48][49][50]} Messori emphasizes, however, that Opus Dei has also had members from left-wing parties such as the UK Labour Party (see Opus Dei and politics).^[51]

Corporal mortification

Much public attention has focused on Opus Dei's encouragement of the practice of bodily mortification, especially after descriptions of the practice appeared in the popular novel *The Da Vinci Code*.^[52]

Opus Dei's celibate members (numeraries, numerary assistants, and associates) practice three forms of corporal mortification that were traditionally used in religious orders and also by some laypeople in Catholic countries such as Spain.^[53] One of the more controversial forms of mortification is the use of a cilice, a small metal chain with inwardly pointing spikes that is worn around the upper thigh. The cilice's spikes cause pain and may leave small marks, but typically do not cause bleeding.^[54] Numeraries, associates, and numerary assistants are expected wear a cilice for two hours each day except feast days. Another mortification is to whip themselves with a small "discipline" (a corded rope whip) for a few minutes once a week while saying a prayer, as a participation in Jesus' scourging. (Escrivá had special whips for himself with metal tips on the end; these caused bleeding.^[55]) Additionally, female numeraries only are required to sleep on a board instead of a mattress; former female members have explained that Escrivá justified this rule by saying that since numerary women had to give up having children, they needed this mortification to keep them emotionally strong. Male numeraries are expected to sleep on the floor one night a week instead. Supernumeraries and associates, who do not live in Opus Dei centers (and hence share a bed or bedroom with family), are instead expected or encouraged to sleep without a pillow one night per week.



Closeup of a cilice—a small metal chain with inwardly pointing spikes

Mortification ("dying to oneself") has had a long history within the Catholic Church, e.g. fasting on certain days with prayers, etc. Corporal mortification of the type practiced by Opus Dei celibates, however, is a rare practice for modern Catholics. Opus Dei points out mortification was practiced by many highly revered individuals such as Mother Teresa, Óscar Romero and Padre Pio.^[56] Escrivá accused the secularised world of inconsistency in accepting physical pain and sacrifice in other domains (such as athletics, business, and personal beautification), but objecting to such acts when done for a religious purpose.

Allegations of aggressive recruiting

Opponents allege Opus Dei uses cult-like practices in recruitment. For instance, Jesuit priest and writer James Martin wrote that Opus Dei puts great emphasis on recruiting, and pointed to Escrivá's writings which say "You must kill yourselves for proselytism."^[57] David Clark, a consultant who specialises in helping people leave cults, claimed in 2006 that Opus Dei used a cult-like recruitment technique called "love bombing", in which potential members are showered with flattery and admiration by members of the organization in order to entice them into joining.^[58] The mother of a member at Harvard University claimed the group separated her daughter from her family, and in 1991 founded Opus Dei Awareness Network, a group that aims to provide information and critique on the group's practices.^[59]

Allegations of being highly controlling

Critics accuse the organization of maintaining an extremely high degree of control over its members. Ex-members claim that Opus Dei directors^[60] read letters of the members. According to a 2006 Wayback Machine (https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.bbc.co.uk/spanish/specials/1428_od_radiografi_a/page12.shtml) report by BBC Mundo Jose Carlos Martin de la Hoz, priest of the prelature in Spain, said this practice existed in the past, but clarified it was a manifestation of opening and confidence of the faithfuls of the Opus Dei.^[61] In 2001, an Opus Dei spokesman said the practice of reading the mail of numeraries was abandoned years ago,^[62] since written letters are now rarely used for correspondence. As an additional means of guidance, it was deemed fitting for numeraries to first show to or tell the Directors about the contents of the letter, especially when the letter would need to touch on vocation.

About 20% of Opus Dei are celibate. They live in special residential centers where they lead extremely structured lives— critics say this practice isolates its members from the rest of society and allows Opus Dei to have nearly total control over its members' environments. For some books, a numerary's direct supervisor can provide permission, but for other books, permission can only be given by the prelate in Rome. According to some critics, Opus Dei pressures numeraries to cut off social contact with non-members, including their own families.^[58] Numeraries in Opus Dei generally hand over their entire salaries to the organization, and critics say this makes numeraries extremely dependent upon the organization.

Opus Dei denies exerting any undue control over its members, and supporters say Opus Dei places an extraordinary emphasis on the personal freedom of its members. They quote Escrivá who said "Respect for its members' freedom is an essential condition for Opus Dei's very existence."

Supporters defend Opus Dei's list of inappropriate books by pointing out the Vatican itself maintained a similar list until the 1960s. To explain the celibate lifestyle of numeraries and their relationships with their families, supporters quote Jesus's comment that "He who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."^[63]

Allegations of secrecy

Critics have often accused Opus Dei of intense secrecy. Due to its secrecy critics such as the Jesuit Wladimir Ledóchowski sometimes refer to Opus Dei as a "Catholic", "christian", or "white" form of Freemasonry.^{[64][65][66][67][68]} Opus Dei does not publish memberships lists, and members generally do not publicly reveal they are part of the organization. ^[69] According to its 1950 constitution, members are

forbidden to reveal their membership without the express permission of their superiors.^[70] This practice has led to rampant speculation about who may or may not be a member of Opus Dei. The 1950 constitution similarly prohibited even revealing how many people were members of Opus Dei.^[71]

Additionally, critics claim Opus Dei is secretive about its activities. Opponents cite the fact Opus Dei often will not directly reveal its relationship to many of its institutions.^[69] According to critics, Opus Dei does not allow many of its own rules to be made public. For example, the 1950 Constitution states, "These Constitutions, published instructions, and those which in the future may be published, and the other things pertaining to the government of the Institute are never to be made public. Indeed, without the permission of the Father [Escrivá] those documents which are written in the Latin language may not be translated into [other] languages." Similarly, Opus Dei does not reveal details about its finances.^[72]

Allen says, "Opus Dei cannot be called secretive." Accusations of secrecy, he says, stem from mistakenly equating its members with monks and expecting members to behave as clerics. Instead, its lay members, like normal professionals, are ultimately responsible for their personal actions, and do not externally represent the prelature which provides them spiritual training. Opus Dei itself, he says, provides abundant information.^[73] Supporters claim Opus Dei's relative silence stems not from a secretive nature, but rather is the result of a deep commitment to privacy, humility, and "avoidance of self-aggrandizement."^[73] Supporters argue Opus Dei "has the obligation to respect its members' privacy"^[74] They say members of Opus Dei do generally reveal their membership status to their family and closest friends. The historical opposition to Opus Dei may also have contributed to the need for privacy— as one author speculates, "I think part of it, too, is that, historically, because a lot of people didn't like Opus Dei, there was just a sense that it would be better not to be too upfront because you're just inviting hostility."^[75]

Legal disputes

Recently, Opus Dei has twice been engaged in legal disputes in connection with their trademark (CTM Registration No. 844.860 OPUS DEI (word)),^[76] as they claimed infringement firstly in 2002 regarding the magazine "Opus Gay" and lost,^[77] and secondly regarding the currently ongoing case of the philosophy-themed atheist card game "Opus-Dei: Existence After Religion".

Women

The role of women in Opus Dei is another source of criticism. Women are treated as equal in Opus Dei but are separated from men in their personal spiritual training. In many male Opus Dei centres, women visit every evening to cook for the men and then leave without social interaction, as Escrivá recognised that despite the equality of men and women, centres for men may need a female influence to function.

Alleged independence and influence within the Roman Catholic Church

Critics have argued that Opus Dei's unique status as a personal prelature within the Church gives it too much independence. According to critics, elevating Opus Dei to the status of a personal prelature allows its members to "go about their business almost untouched by criticism or oversight by bishops".^[78] According to critics, Opus Dei has such autonomy it has become essentially a "church within a church".^[79]

Catholic officials say church authorities have even greater control of Opus Dei now its head is a prelate appointed by the Pope, and they argue members are "even more conscious of belonging to the Church".^[80] They point to canon law which states that Opus Dei members remain under "jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop in what the law lays down for all the ordinary [Catholics]". Similarly, they point out that Opus Dei must obtain permission from the local bishop before establishing an Opus Dei center within the diocese.

Some critics claim Opus Dei exerts a disproportionately large influence within the Church itself. They point to the unusually hasty (and otherwise irregular) process in which Escriva was canonized.^[81] Pope John Paul II was a supporter of Opus Dei, and during his pontificate the head of the Vatican press office was a member of Opus Dei. An Opus Dei spokesman says "the influence of Opus Dei in the [Vatican] has been exaggerated."^[82] Of the nearly 200 cardinals in the Roman Catholic Church, only two are known to be members of Opus Dei.^{[83][84]} Similarly, of the nearly 4000 bishops, only 20 are known to be members of Opus Dei.^{[84][85]}

John L. Allen Jr. said that Escriva's relatively quick canonization does not have anything to do with power but with improvements in procedures and John Paul II's decision to make Escriva's sanctity and message known.^[10] (see Opus Dei and politics)

Objections to critics

Supporters of Opus Dei say criticisms of it are often motivated by bad faith, jealousy, vengefulness, or other biases on the part of the critics.^[86] In some cases, supporters accuse critics of merely misunderstanding Opus Dei, its mission, or its novelty.

Secularism

Opus Dei's supporters often see criticism as motivated by a religious bias or political agenda. Many supporters say criticisms of Opus Dei stem from a generalized disapproval of spirituality, Christianity, or Catholicism.^[87] Some supporters see criticisms of Opus Dei as one facet of a larger prejudice against Catholics.^[88]

Jesuits and liberal Catholics

Many supporters of Opus Dei believe the Jesuits hold a grudge against Opus Dei borne of jealousy and ideological differences. Richard John Neuhaus said: "The opposition to Opus Dei cannot be explained without at least some reference to jealousy. Competition and jealousy among religious movements in the Catholic Church is nothing new, and some Opus Dei members are not hesitant to suggest that theirs is now the role in the Church once played by the Jesuits. The Jesuits, who were once viewed as the elite corps of the papacy, have in recent decades had a sharply attenuated relationship to the hierarchical leadership of the Church. The famous "fourth vow" of allegiance to the pope is now frequently understood by Jesuits as a vow to the papacy in general---meaning the papacy as they think it ought to be."

"Nothing attracts criticism like success," says author Robert Royal, "In the seventy years since its founding, the Work has grown to almost eighty thousand members, over half in Europe, another third in the Americas, and the rest scattered throughout the world. As Vittorio Messori notes, this movement,

which was once thought of as a pre-Vatican II fossil by progressives, has not only survived the heyday of progressive Catholic movements, but continues growing while the left in general, religious and lay, is shrinking."

According to *Time* magazine, "church liberals, once riding high, have understood for decades that Rome does not incline their way. They feel abandoned, says John L. Allen Jr., 'and whenever you feel that way, there's a natural desire to find someone to blame.'"

The animosity from within the Church derives from the conflicting views of the role of the Church following Vatican II. At the time, the superior of the Jesuits, Pedro Arrupe, "symbolised the new post-Vatican II ethos, calling his Jesuits to be 'men for others', which in practice sometimes meant joining movements for peace and justice," while "Escrivá walked another path, insisting on the primacy of traditional forms of prayer, devotion, and the sacramental life." Making Opus Dei a "personal prelature" and Escrivá a saint "seemed like a clampdown on the Jesuits---almost as if a torch was being passed." As Allen points out, some of Opus Dei's harshest critics were once Jesuit priests."^[89]

According to Vittorio Messori, a major source of hostility towards Opus Dei is the application of political categories to a religious phenomenon such as Opus Dei. These groups against Opus Dei, he says, see everything happening in the world only through the prism of power-seeking, that is, of political spectrums of people in the left versus people on the right. Since Opus Dei is one of the major religious groups, the application of politically motivated campaigns against it is even stronger.

According to Allen, Opus Dei became the lightning rod for the attacks of liberals in the culture wars when John Paul II, perceived as a conservative by the liberals, granted several favorable things to Opus Dei such as beatification, canonization of the founder, and personal prelature status.

Controversy as a sign of contradiction

Some supporters of Opus Dei have viewed the controversy surrounding the organization as a "Sign of contradiction." Proponents of this view hold that blessed, divinely inspired Christian organizations will always be criticized, just as Jesus was criticized by his contemporaries. Accordingly, they see the very existence of critics as further proof of the organization's sanctity.^{[90][91]} A theological explanation is given by John Carmel Heenan, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. He commented in 1975: "One of the proofs of God's favour is to be a sign of contradiction. Almost all founders of societies in the Church have suffered. Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer is no exception. Opus Dei has been attacked and its motives misunderstood. In this country and elsewhere an inquiry has always vindicated Opus Dei."^[92]

According to Catholic tradition, a sign of contradiction points to the presence of Christ or the presence of the divine due to the union of that person or reality with God. In his book, *Sign of Contradiction*, John Paul II says that "sign of contradiction" might be "a distinctive definition of Christ and of his Church."

John Paul II stated, in his decree on the heroic virtues of Opus Dei's founder, Josemaría Escrivá: "God allowed him to suffer public attacks. He responded invariably with pardon, to the point of considering his detractors as benefactors. But this Cross was such a source of blessings from heaven that the Servant of God's apostolate [or evangelizing work] spread with astonishing speed."

See also

- Criticism of Pope John Paul II § Opus Dei and Legion of Christ controversies

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Christ crucified. Jesus Christ who was spoken against, attacked and killed is a sign of contradiction. According to Cardinal Heenan, Opus Dei is a sign of contradiction. On the other hand, liberal Catholics and theologians, like Hans Küng or Juan José Tamayo deny this argument, and says that Opus Dei has a cult-like style

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- Opus Dei official website (<http://www.opusdei.org/>)
- How Opus Dei is still synonymous with homophobia (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/how-opus-dei-is-still-synonymous-with-homophobia-6101303.html>) The Independent, UK/May 10, 2006
- An inside look at Opus Dei (<https://culteducation.com/group/1086-opus-dei/15678-an-inside-look-at-opus-dei.html>) (summary by Rick A. Ross of an article in *Time* magazine/April 16, 2006)

- [Catholic-NYC.org \(http://www.catholic-nyc.org/\)](http://www.catholic-nyc.org/) List of Opus Dei organizations in and around NYC
-

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Bible conspiracy theory

A **Bible conspiracy theory** is any conspiracy theory that posits that much of what is believed about the Bible is a deception created to suppress some secret, ancient truth. Some of these theories claim that Jesus really had a wife and children, or that a group such as the Priory of Sion has secret information about the true descendants of Jesus; some claim that there was a secret movement to cancel books that truly belonged in the Bible, etc.

This subject should not be confused with deliberately *fictional* Bible conspiracy theories. A number of bestselling modern novels, the most popular of which was *The Da Vinci Code*, have incorporated elements of Bible conspiracy theories to flesh out their storylines, rather than to push these theories as actual suggestions.

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Common theories

Jesus-myth theory

Some proponents of the Jesus-myth or Christ-myth theory consider that the whole of Christianity is a conspiracy. American author Acharya S (Dorothy Murdock) in *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (1999) argues that Jesus and Christianity were created by members of various secret societies, mystery schools, and religions, that these people drew on numerous myths and rituals which existed previously, and that the church then constructed these ideas into Christianity by suppressing the originally intended understanding.^{[1][2]} In the 1930s British spiritualist Hannen Swaffer's home circle, following the teachings of the native-American spirit "Silver Birch", also claimed a Jesus-myth.^[3]

Church suppression of reincarnation conspiracy

Some New Age believers consider that Jesus taught reincarnation but the Christian Church suppressed it. Geddes MacGregor in *Reincarnation in Christianity* (1978)^[4] suggests that Origen's texts written in support of the belief in reincarnation somehow disappeared or were suppressed.^[5]

Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail

Some common hypotheses are that:

- Mary Magdalene was one of the apostles of Jesus, possibly even the only disciple, but this was suppressed by the early Church.^[6]
- Jesus had an intimate relationship with Mary Magdalene which may or may not have resulted in marriage, and/or children; their continued bloodline is then said to be Christianity's deepest secret.^[6]

The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail, by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln (1982) is seen by many as the source of that plotline in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Books

- *The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History*, Michael Baigent (2006)
- *Jesus the Magician: Charlatan or Son of God?*, Morton Smith (1978)
- *The Jesus Dynasty*, James Tabor (2006)
- *Jesus the Man: New Interpretations from the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Barbara Thiering (1993)
- *The Jesus Scroll*, Donovan Joyce (1972)
- *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln (1982)
- *The Templar Revelation*, Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince (1997)
- *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?*, Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy (1999)
- *The Jesus Conspiracy: The Turin Shroud and the Truth About the Resurrection*, Holger Kersten and Elmar R. Gruber (1994)
- *History of the first Council of Nice : a world's Christian convention, A.D. 325; with a life of Constantine*, Dean Dudley (1880)

See also

- Constantinian shift
- Criticism of the Bible
- *Forged: Writing in the Name of God – Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*
- Gospel of Judas
- Holy Grail
- Islamic view of the Christian Bible
- Panbabylonism
- *The True Word*
- *The Two Babylons*
- Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera
- *Toledot Yeshu*
- *Zeitgeist* (film series)

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- History of the first Council of Nicea : a world's Christian convention, A.D. 325; with a life of Constantine (<https://archive.org/details/historyoffirstco00dudl>)(Internet Archive) by Dean Dudley

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War on Islam controversy

War against Islam is a term used to describe a concerted effort to harm, weaken or annihilate the societal system of Islam, using military, economic, social and cultural means, or means invading and interfering in Islamic countries under the pretext of the war on terror, or using the media to create a negative stereotype about Islam. The perpetrators of the theory are thought to be non-Muslims, particularly the Western world and "false Muslims", allegedly in collusion with political actors in the Western world. While the contemporary narrative of the "War against Islam" mostly covers general issues of societal transformations in modernization and secularization as well as general issues of international power politics among modern states, the crusades are often narrated as its alleged starting point.

The phrase or similar phrases have been used by Islamists such as Sayyid Qutb,^{[1][2]} Ayatollah Khomeini,^[3] Anwar al-Awlaki,^{[4][5]} Osama bin Laden,^[6] Chechen militant Dokka Umarov,^{[7][8]} cleric Anjem Choudary,^[9] and Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hasan.^[10] It has also been used in propaganda by al-Qaida and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.^[11] The English-language political neologism of "War on Islam" was coined in Islamist discourse in the 1990s and popularized as a conspiracy theory only after 2001.^[12]

Jonathan Schanzer has argued that the historical Muslim indifference to the West turned to "alarmed dislike" with the beginning of Western military superiority in the 17th century. However, with the end of the era of Western colonialism, rage against non-Muslims and the governments of Muslim-majority countries stems not from alleged non-Muslim aggression and enmity, but allegedly from frustration over the unrelenting encroachment of mostly Western culture, technology, economies, and from a yearning for a "return to the glorious days when Islam reigned supreme."^[13]

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Usage of the term and concept

The most influential Islamists who have alleged a broad malicious conspiracy against the societal system of Islam are:

Sayyid Qutb

From the background of the Muslim Brotherhood organization and ideology, Sayyid Qutb, possibly the most influential Islamist author, often described as "the man whose ideas would shape Al Qaeda",^[14] also preached that the West was not just in conflict with Islam but plotting against it. In his book *Milestones*, first published in 1964, he wrote:

The Western ways of thought ... [have] an enmity toward all religion, and in particular with greater hostility toward Islam. This enmity toward Islam is especially pronounced and many times is the result of a well-thought-out scheme the object of which is first to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs and then gradually to demolish the structure of Muslim society.^[15]

Olivier Roy has described Qutb's attitude as one of "radical contempt and hatred" for the West,^[16] and complains that the propensity of Muslims like Qutb to blame problems on outside conspiracies "is currently paralyzing Muslim political thought. For to say that every failure is the devil's work is the same as asking God, or the devil himself (which is to say these days the Americans), to solve one's problems."^[17]

Among the early books following Qutb is *Qadat al-gharb yaquluman: dammiru al-Islam, ubidu ahlahu* (*Western Leaders Are Saying: Destroy Islam, Annihilate All of Its People*) written by Jalal `Alam and published in 1977.^[18]

Ayatollah Khomeini

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Shia Islamist leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, preached that Western imperialists or neoimperialists sought to make Muslims suffer, to "plunder" their resources and other wealth, and had to undermine Islam first because Islam stood in the way of this stealing and immiseration.^[19] Khomeini claims some of the alleged Western plots being not recent but hundreds of years old.^{[20][21]}

[Europeans] have known the power of Islam themselves for it once ruled part of Europe, and they know that true Islam is opposed to their activities. (...) From the very outset, therefore, they have sought to remove this obstacle from their path by disparaging Islam (...). They have resorted to malicious propaganda (...).^[22] *The agents of imperialism are*

busy in every corner of the Islamic world drawing our youth away from us with their evil propaganda.^[23] They are destroying Islam! Agents – both foreigners sent by the imperialists and natives employed by them – have spread out into every village and region of Iran and are leading our children and young people astray.^[24]

Osama bin Laden

From a Salafist perspective, Osama bin Laden emphasizes the alleged war and urges Muslims to take arms against it in almost all of his written or recorded messages.^[25] In his 1998 fatwa where he declared the killing of "Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it," bin Laden listed three reasons for the fatwa: the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia, the increase in infant mortality in Iraq following US-supported sanctions there, and US aid to Israel.

All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims. What bears no doubt in this fierce Judeo-Christian campaign against the Muslim world, the likes of which has never been seen before, is that the Muslims must prepare all possible might to repel the enemy (...).^[26] Every day, from east to west, our umma of 1200 million Muslims is being slaughtered (...).^[27] We (...) see events not as isolated incidents, but as part of a long chain of conspiracies, a war of annihilation (...).^[28] The West (...) will not be able to respect others' beliefs or feelings. (...) They regard jihad for the sake of God or defending one's self or his country as an act of terror.^[29]

Allegations relating to the supposed War against Islam

Islamic tradition and history

According to scholar David B. Cook, a religious studies professor at Rice University, what some believe is scriptural evidence for the existence of the alleged "War against Islam" is found in a popular hadith, one that supposedly prophesies a war against Islam is the "Tradition of Thawban":^[31]

The Messenger of God said: The nations are about to flock against you [the Muslims] from every horizon, just as hungry people flock to a kettle. We said: O Messenger of God, will we be few on that day? He said: No, you will be many in number, but you will be scum, like the scum of a flash-flood, without any weight, since fear will be removed from the hearts of your enemies, and weakness (wahn) will be placed in your hearts. We said: O Messenger of God, what does the word wahn mean? He said: Love of this world, and fear of death.^{[32][33]}

Cook claims that the idea of a Western war against the societal system of Islam is a belief "at the heart of the radical Muslim and especially the globalist radical Muslim;" a factor "binding globalist radical Muslims together."^[34]

Western supporters of the belief in ingrained Western hatred/hostility of Islam include historian Roger Savory, and Boston-based novelist and author James Carroll. According to Savory, Christendom felt threatened by Islam and its march into Europe, (the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate advanced into Europe as far as northern France before being defeated at the Battle of Tours in 732; the Muslim Ottoman Empire attempted to conquer Vienna twice, laying siege to the city in 1485 and 1683), and thus became hostile to it.^{[35][36]}

Alleged legacy of the Crusades

Islamists who use this term often point to the Crusades and European colonization, believing it to be an example of an attempt to destroy the Muslim way of life. Sayyid Qutb, for example, not only believed the West had "a well-thought-out scheme the object of which is first to shake the foundations of Islamic beliefs," but maintained that the medieval Christian Crusades were not "a form of imperialism," but rather Western imperialism was a new form of the Crusades, "latter-day" imperialism in Muslim lands being "but a mask for the crusading spirit."^[37] Savory says:

It is not surprising, therefore, to find a great similarity between the medieval view that it was safe to speak ill of Muhammad because his malignity exceeded whatever ill could be spoken of him, and the tone of nineteenth-century missionary tracts which exhorted the Muslims in India to abandon the false religion which they had been taught. There were even echos of the old crusading spirit. When the French occupied Algeria in 1830, they declared that they had in mind 'the greatest benefit to Christendom'. Similarly, Canning's solution to the 'problem' of the Ottoman empire was to bring it into modern Europe under Christian tutelage. When the French invaded Tunis in 1881, they considered their action a sacred duty 'which a superior civilisation owes to the populations which are less advanced'.^[38]

On September 16, 2001, President George W. Bush referred to the war in Afghanistan as a Crusade: "*This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient.*"^[39]

In contrast, historian Bernard Lewis points out that the Crusaders had strong motives to wage the Crusade other than the denigration of Islam. The lands they attempted to recover were the lands where Christianity was founded, including "the holy land where Christ had lived, taught and died", and where "a substantial proportion of the population ... perhaps even a majority, was still Christian", since "not much more than four centuries had passed since the Arab Muslim conquerors had wrested these lands from Christendom". Rather than the Crusades leaving a psychological scar passed down through the ages among Muslims, the Arabs of the time did not refer to the Crusaders as Crusaders or Christians but as



Pope Urban II preaches the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont "I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it."^[30]

Franks or Infidels, and "with few exceptions", the Muslim historians of the time showed "little interest in whence or why the Franks had come, and report their arrival and their departure with equal lack of curiosity".^[Note 1]

Modern-day events

The alleged perpetrators of the "War on Islam" include Western powers (especially the United States), pro-Western Muslim states regimes (e.g. Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Pakistan) and non-Western, non-Muslim states such as Israel (Israeli–Palestinian conflict), Myanmar (Rohingya genocide), Serbia (Massacre in Bosnia), Russia (Chechen–Russian conflict),^{[41][42][43][44]} India (for the conflict in Kashmir), and more recently China (for the Xinjiang conflict). Osama bin Laden mentions: "Meanwhile, a UN resolution passed more than half a century ago gave Muslim Kashmir the liberty of choosing independence from India and Kashmir. George Bush, the leader of the Crusaders' campaign, announced a few days ago that he will order his converted agent [Pakistan President Pervez] Musharraf to shut down the Kashmir mujahidin camps, thus affirming that it is a Zionist-Hindu war against Muslims."^[45]



U.S. and UK soldiers in Helmand province. George W. Bush referred to the invasion of Afghanistan as a Crusade^[39]

In particular, Western support for the continued occupation of Palestine territory outside its borders by the State of Israel has been declared part of a "war against Islam." Osama bin Laden declared that "the West's rejection of the fairly elected Hamas government is a reaffirmation of the 'injustice, aggression, and rancor' against Palestinians."^[46] Enver Masud, an Indian Muslim and author of the book *The War on Islam* stated that while there are no Muslims in high-level policy making and media jobs in the United States, "Jewish Americans occupy nearly every single position relating to US Arab-Israeli policy."^[47] India's control of Muslim-majority Kashmir has been called a "Zionist-Hindu war against Muslims" by Osama bin Laden.^[48] In modern day, events alleged to be attacks on Islam include media portrayal of the religion itself and "the War on Terror".^[49] Alleged conspiracies against Islam sometimes involve other Muslims who are accused of being apostates. The Ayatollah Khomeini believed that "agents of imperialism", the term he gave to "secular" pro-Western Muslims, were "busy in every corner of the Islamic world drawing our youth away from us with their evil propaganda."^[50]

In 2016, the US National Security Adviser said: "Islamism a vicious cancer in body of all Muslims that has to be excised".^[51]

The 2005 Danish cartoon controversy were satirical cartoons depicting Muhammad in a Danish newspaper that led to protests and the burning of the Norwegian and Danish embassies in Syria, and were seen by Osama bin Laden as part of the "Zionist-crusaders war on Islam".^{[52][53][54][55]} In an audio message,^[56] Osama bin Laden described the cartoons as taking place in the framework of a "new Crusade" against Islam, in which he said the pope has played a "large and lengthy role" and asserted "you went overboard in your unbelief and freed yourselves of the etiquettes of dispute and fighting and went to the extent of publishing these insulting drawings."^[57] "This is the greater and more serious tragedy (than bombing Muslim villagers), and reckoning for it will be more severe." Among others,^[58] Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed a "Zionist conspiracy" for the row over the cartoons.^[59] The Palestinian envoy to Washington D.C. alleged the Likud party concocted distribution of Muhammad caricatures worldwide in a bid to create a clash between the West and the Muslim world.^[60] After the killing of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a Jordanian commentator writing for the Jordanian newspaper, Al-Dustour, claimed that Al-Baghdadi had been an Israeli agent, who had been trained by the Israeli foreign intelligence service, the Mossad, for a mission to tarnish the image of Islam.^[61]

Media

The Universities of Georgia and Alabama in the United States conducted a study comparing media coverage of "terrorist attacks" committed by Islamist militants with those of non-Muslims in the United States. Researchers found that "terrorist attacks" by Islamist militants receive 357% more media attention than attacks committed by non-Muslims or whites. Terrorist attacks committed by non-Muslims (or where the religion was unknown) received an average of 15 headlines, while those committed by Muslim extremists received 105 headlines. The study was based on an analysis of news reports covering terrorist attacks in the United States between 2005 and 2015.^[62]

Religious restrictions

In 2016, seven countries – Belgium, Ethiopia, France, Hungary, Niger and Sweden – used emergency laws that restricted religion within their borders. While the official justifications for these measures varied, Pew Research Center's latest annual religious restrictions study finds that across the seven countries, Muslims, more than any other religious group, were specifically targeted by law enforcement and security services acting in accordance with emergency laws. This fact, along with others, helped place five of these seven countries among the 105 nations, globally, where government restrictions on religion rose in 2016.^[63]

Reception

Reactions in the non-Muslim West to the alleged war have varied. Some Western political leaders have dismissed the claims of a war being fought against Islam as untrue, while also being sensitive to Muslim fears of such a "war" and shaping some of their political statements and actions with Muslim fears in mind—including denouncing those who verbally attack Muslims.^[64] Other non-Muslims have argued that the truth of a religious war is the other way around—it being Muslims who are waging war against non-Muslims.^[65]

Reception in American politics

Following Islamist terrorist attacks both President Barack Obama (following the San Bernardino attack) and George W. Bush (after the 9/11 attacks) made a point of stating that the US was not at war with Islam, instead saying that they were at "war against evil" (Bush) and "people who have perverted Islam" (Obama).^{[64][66]}

When Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump stated that foreign Muslims should not be allowed to enter into the United States, until the administration can figure out what is going on, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham replied that "Donald Trump has done the one single thing you cannot do — declare war on Islam itself. To all of our Muslim friends throughout the world, like the king of Jordan and the president of Egypt, I am sorry. He does not represent us."^[66] Another reaction was that of the *Washington Blade*, a gay newspaper, which printed a full-page headline stating: "To All Muslims: Trump Does Not Speak For Us."^[66] White House Chief Strategist, Steve Bannon, has also been accused of inciting a war against Islam, and has accused Muslims of being a "fifth column here in the United States that needs to be dealt with immediately", and has called Islam "a religion of submission", in contrast with the "enlightened ... Judeo-Christian West".^[67]

Madiha Afzal of the Brookings Institution wrote in August 2016 that Trump's allegations of an Islamic war on America were helping ISIS convince Muslims that America is at war with Islam.^[68]

Reception in Muslim discourse

A measure of the strength of the belief that a non-Muslim power (the United States) is at least attempting to weaken, if not annihilate, Islam can be found in opinion polls that showed, as of late 2006/ early 2007, strong majorities — at least 70% — in the Muslim countries of Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Indonesia, answering "yes" to the pollsters' question: do you believe the United States seeks to "weaken and divide the Islamic world?"^[69]

Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon write in their book *Age of Sacred Terror*:

In the Middle East and Pakistan, religious discourse dominates societies, the airwaves, and thinking about the world. Radical mosques have proliferated throughout Egypt. Bookstores are dominated by works with religious themes ... The demand for sharia, the belief that their governments are unfaithful to Islam and that Islam is the answer to all problems, and *the certainty that the West has declared war on Islam*; these are the themes that dominate public discussion. Islamists may not control parliaments or government palaces, but they have occupied the popular imagination.^[70]

The idea that the West is waging war on Islam has however been dismissed by many non-Muslims in the west. Salman Rushdie, victim of a Fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini calling for his death, has argued that what Islamists have called a war of "the west versus Islam" is more complicated. Islamists are "opposed not only to the west and 'the Jews' but to their fellow Islamists", an example being the fight between the Sunni Taliban and the Shia Islamic Republic of Iran.^[71] "This paranoid Islam, which blames outsiders, 'infidels', for all the ills of Muslim societies and whose proposed remedy is the closing of those societies to the rival project of modernity, is presently the fastest-growing version of Islam in the world," according to Rushdie.^[71]

Western proponents of the "War against Islam" theory

According to James Carroll, the conflict between Muslims and Westerners "has its origins more in 'the West' than in the House of Islam", and can be traced to "the poison flower of the Crusades, with their denigrations of distant cultures," and other Western injustices.^[72] Proponents of this view often consider the War on Terrorism with the accompanying 2001 military activity in Afghanistan, 2003 invasion of Iraq to be part of the war against Islam.^{[73][74]} Western colonialism in the Middle East throughout the 20th century is also regarded as such an attack by some.^[75]

See also

- Conspiracy theories in the Arab world
- Conspiracy theories in Turkey
- List of conspiracy theories
- Destruction of early Islamic heritage sites in Saudi Arabia
- Grand Mosque seizure
- Islam and modernity
- Islamophobia in the media
- Islam and secularism
- Islamophobia in the United States

- Persecution of Muslims
- Violence against Muslims in India

Notes

1. "In recent years it has become the practice, in both western Europe and the Middle East, to see and present the Crusades as an early exercise in Western imperialism - as a wanton and predatory aggression by the European powers of the time against the Muslim or, as some would now say, against the Arab lands. They were not seen in that light at the time, either by Christians or by Muslims. For contemporary Christians, the Crusades were religious wars, the purpose of which was to recover the lost lands of Christendom and in particular the holy land where Christ had lived, taught and died. In this connection, it may be recalled that when the Crusaders arrived in the Levant not much more than four centuries had passed since the Arab Muslim conquerors had wrested these lands from Christendom - less than half the time from the Crusades to the present day - and that a substantial proportion of the population of these lands, perhaps even a majority, was still Christian."^[40]

"With few exceptions, the Muslim historians show little interest in whence or why the Franks had come, and report their arrival and their departure with equal lack of curiosity. This was the age of Muslim weakness and division, and the Muslim world, in East and West alike, was being invaded by barbarians, both external and internal, from every side."^[40]

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External links

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Black genocide

In the United States, **black genocide** is the characterization that the mistreatment of African Americans by both the United States government and white Americans, both in the past and the present, amounts to genocide. The decades of lynchings and long-term racial discrimination were first formally described as genocide by a now defunct organization, the Civil Rights Congress, in a petition which it submitted to the United Nations in 1951. In the 1960s, Malcolm X accused the US government of engaging in genocide against black people, citing long-term injustice, cruelty, and violence against blacks by whites.^{[1][2]}

Some accusations of genocide have been described as conspiracy theories. In response to the War on Poverty legislation proposed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in the mid-1960s, which included public funding of the Pill for the poor, at the first Black Power Conference, which was held in July 1967, family planning (birth control) was said to be "black genocide."^{[3][4][5]} After abortion was more widely legalized in 1970, some black militants named abortion specifically as part of the conspiracy theory.^{[6][7]} Most African-American women were not convinced of a conspiracy, and rhetoric about race genocide faded.^[8] However, 1973 media revelations about decades of government-sponsored compulsory sterilization led some to say that this was part of a plan for black genocide.^[9] Other events around this time period were also declared methods of black genocide, such as the War on Drugs, War on Crime, and War on Poverty, which had detrimental effects on the black community.^[10]

During the Vietnam War, the increasing use of black soldiers in combat provided another basis for the accusation of a government supported "black genocide." In recent decades, the disproportionately high black prison population has also been cited to support the claim of black genocide.

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Slavery as genocide

Throughout the existence of the enslavement of Africans in the US, instances demonstrative of genocide have arguably occurred countless times. Professor Walter Johnson at Harvard University depicts in his book, *The Broken Heart of America*, numerous accounts of violence displayed against black Americans. One instance depicts how enslaved men would be separated from their wives.^[11] Such practices would inevitably serve as a method of population control by altering natural reproduction patterns. On another occasion, after not being able to find his keys, one slave owner brutally murdered his slave, and was later acquitted by a jury after a one-day trial.^[11] Johnson noted that this case was similar to the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, a black teenager killed in Ferguson, Missouri.^[11] Johnson argues that the violence of the slavery era is still present in modern times.^[11] For a black American living in the era of U.S. slavery, no rights were guaranteed, whether they were personally enslaved or not. Walt Whitman, a U.S. poet, stated that it was the law of history for the black race to be eliminated.^[11] According to author Khalil Gibran Muhammad, who wrote *The Condemnation of blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*, the majority of the white people who envisioned the day coming when black people were legally deemed equal were abolitionists.^[12] When enslaved African Americans were emancipated, many of their white counterparts were uncomfortable with the idea of these two races living amongst each other, coexisting in the same nation with the same rights that were previously reserved solely for white Americans.^[12] Not surprisingly, many white Americans began advocating for colonization of African nations with black Americans.^[12] More information on the black experience with slavery in the United States can be found in African-American history.

Jim Crow as genocide

Petition to the United Nations

The United Nations (UN) was formed in 1945. The UN debated and adopted a Genocide Convention in late 1948, holding that genocide was the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part", a racial group.^[13] In 1948, even if African Americans worked side by side with their white counterparts, they were not permitted to live in the same neighborhoods.^[14] Based on the "in part" definition, the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), a group composed of African Americans with Communist affiliations, presented to the UN in 1951 a petition called "We Charge Genocide." The petition listed 10,000 unjust deaths of African Americans in the nine decades since the American Civil War.^[15] It described lynching, mistreatment, murder and oppression by whites against blacks, concluding that the US government was refusing to address "the persistent, widespread, institutionalized commission of the crime of genocide".^[13] The petition was presented to the UN convention in Paris by CRC leader William L. Patterson, and in New York City by the singer and actor Paul Robeson who was a civil rights activist and a Communist member of CRC.^[13] After World War II and following many years of mistreatment of African Americans by white Americans, the US government's official policies regarding this mistreatment shifted significantly. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said in 1946 that negative international opinion about US racial policies helped to pressure the US into alleviating the mistreatment of ethnic minorities.^[13] In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed an order desegregating the military, and black citizens increasingly challenged other forms of racial discrimination.^[13]



This image demonstrates segregation laws in practice in the Jim Crow era.

The Cold War raised American concerns about Communist expansionism. The CRC petition was viewed by the US government as being against America's best interests with regard to fighting Communism. The petition was ignored by the UN; many of the charter countries looked to the US for guidance and were not willing to arm the enemies of the US with more propaganda about its failures in domestic racial policy. American responses to the petition were various: Radio journalist Drew Pearson spoke out against the supposed "Communist propaganda" before it was presented to the UN.^[13] Professor Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer who had helped draft the UN Genocide Convention, said that the CRC petition was a misguided effort which drew attention away from the Soviet Union's genocide of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) issued a statement saying that there was no black genocide even though serious matters of racial discrimination certainly did exist in America. Walter Francis White, leader of the NAACP, wrote that the CRC petition contained "authentic" instances of discrimination, mostly taken from reliable sources.^[13] He said, "Whatever the sins of the nation against the Negro—and they are many and gruesome—genocide is not among them."^[13] UN Delegate Eleanor Roosevelt said that it was "ridiculous" to characterize long term discrimination as genocide.^[13]



Paul Robeson signed the We Charge Genocide petition.

The "We Charge Genocide" petition received more notice in international news than in domestic US media. French and Czech media carried the story prominently, as did newspapers in India. In 1952, African-American author J. Saunders Redding traveling in India was repeatedly asked questions about specific instances of civil rights abuse in the US, and the CRC petition was used by Indians to rebut his assertions that US race relations were improving. In the US, the petition faded from public awareness by the late 1950s.^[13] In 1964, Malcolm X and his Organization of Afro-American Unity, citing the same lynchings and oppression described in the CRC petition, began to prepare their own petition to the UN asserting that the US government was engaging in genocide against black people.^{[1][2][9]} The 1964 Malcolm X speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" also draws from "We Charge Genocide".^[16]

Lynching and other racial killings

Arguably the first lynching to occur in the United States was that of Francis McIntosh, a free man of black and white ancestry.^[11] Walter Johnson argued that this lynching ignited a series of them, all with the goal of "ethnic cleansing."^[11] Even Abraham Lincoln, who was not yet president, was more concerned by the vigilantism of the lynching than the murder itself, going so far as to refer to McIntosh as "obnoxious" in his 1838 speech later dubbed the Lyceum Address.^[11] According to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice 4,400 black people had been slain in lynchings and other racial killings between 1877 and 1950.^[17] Brandy Marie Langley argued, "The physical killing of black people in America, at this time period, was consistent with Lemkin's original idea of genocide."^[18] Lynching was so ubiquitous within the US that famous literary and social activist figures such as Mark Twain and Ida B. Wells were compelled to speak out about these killings.^[19] Twain's essay describing these horrific murders was titled "The United States of Lyncherdom," a remark on widespread nature of lynchings in 1800s and 1900s US.^[19] "War of Words: The Controversy over the Definition of Lynching, 1899-1940", is an article regarding the history of lynching in the United States.^[20] The article covers the horrific acts of violence acted upon black citizens by white ones.^[20] The media and racist whites, both inadvertently and not, exaggerated the presence of black crime as a method of appeasing their own guilt surrounding the brutal killings of African Americans.^[20]

Sterilization

Beginning in 1907, some US state legislatures passed laws allowing for the compulsory sterilization of criminals, mentally retarded people, and institutionalized mentally ill patients. At first, African Americans and white Americans suffered sterilization in roughly equal ratio. By 1945, some 70,000 Americans had been sterilized in these programs.^[21] In the 1950s, the federal welfare program Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was criticized by some whites who did not want to subsidize poor black families.^[22] States such as North and South Carolina performed sterilization procedures on low-income black mothers who were giving birth to their second child. The mothers were told that they would have to agree to have their tubes tied or their welfare benefits would be cancelled, along with the benefits of the families they were born into.^[23] Because of such policies, especially prevalent in Southern states, sterilization of African Americans increased from 23% of the total in the 1930s and 1940s to 59% at the end of the 1950s, and rose further to 64% in the mid-1960s.^[22]

In mid-1973 news stories revealed the forced sterilization of poor black women and children, paid for by federal funds. Two girls of the Relf family in Mississippi, deemed mentally incompetent at ages 12 and 14, and also 18-year-old welfare recipient Nial Ruth Cox of North Carolina, were prominent cases of involuntary sterilization.^{[9][24]} *Jet* magazine presented the story under the headline "Genocide".^[25] Critics said these stories were publicized by activists against legal abortion.^[26] "The Economics of Race and Eugenic Sterilization in North Carolina: 1958–1968" explores how government policies led to higher rates of sterilization amongst black Americans than white on the basis of racist beliefs.^[27] The article describes how, in the early 1900s, the time period of the Holocaust, the goal of eugenecists was to create a biologically fit population.^[27] These standards of biological fitness deliberately excluded black people, who were claimed to not be capable of making legitimate contributions to the national economy.^[27]

Systemic native black American ethnocide

War's effects on black communities

African Americans pushed for equal participation in US military service in the first part of the 20th century and especially during World War II. Finally, President Harry S. Truman signed legislation to integrate the US military in 1948. However, Selective Service System deferments, military assignments, and especially the recruits accepted through Project 100,000 resulted in a greater representation of blacks in combat in the Vietnam War in the second half of the 1960s.^{[28][29]} African Americans represented 11% of the US population but 12.6% of troops sent to Vietnam.^[30] Cleveland Sellers said that the drafting of poor black men into war was "a plan to commit calculated genocide".^[31] Former SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael, black congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and SNCC member Rap Brown agreed.^{[9][32]} In October 1969, King's widow Coretta Scott King spoke at an anti-war protest held at the primarily black Morgan State College in Baltimore. Campus leaders published a statement against what they termed "black genocide" in Vietnam, blaming President Richard Nixon in the US as well as President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Vice President Nguyễn Cao Kỳ from South Vietnam.^[33]

Author James Forman Jr. declared the War on Drugs "a misstep [that] is so damaging that future generations are left shaking their heads in disbelief."^[34] The so-called war had widespread effects, including an even more punitive criminal justice system. Black Americans, especially those in low-income neighborhoods, got hit especially hard, according to Forman's book, Locking up our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America.^[34] The book explores the harsh realities of life that are the legacy of the War on Drugs.^[34] One such reality is that, even though black and white people have similar rates of drug use, black people are more likely to be punished for it by the judicial system.^[34]

Two other wars that have had detrimental effects on the black community are the War on Poverty and War on Crime, which are explored thoroughly in *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: the Making of Mass Incarceration in America*, written by historian Elizabeth Hinton. According to Hinton black men are imprisoned at a rate of 1 in 11.^[35] This topic is also explored in Michelle Alexander's *New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. It discusses how, despite many Americans wanting to believe that the election of President Obama ushered in a new age where race no longer mattered, or at least not as much, America is still deeply affected by its racial history.^[36] Alexander highlights “the systemic breakdown of black and poor communities devastated by mass unemployment, social neglect, economic abandonment, and intense police surveillance.”^[36] Even President Lyndon B. Johnson stated in a commencement speech delivered at Howard University that there is a stark contrast between black and white poverty.^[10] The contrast is a result of systemic injustices carried out over the course of centuries against the black community, according to Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor's book, *From #BlackLivesMatter to black Liberation*.^[10]

Prison

In 1969, H. Rap Brown wrote in his autobiography, *Die Nigger Die!*, that American courts “conspire to commit genocide” against blacks by putting a disproportionate number of them in prison.^[37] Political scientist Joy A. James wrote that “antiblack genocide” is the motivating force which explains the way that US prisons are filled largely with black prisoners.^[38] Author and former prisoner Mansfield B. Frazier contends that the rumor in American ghettos “that whites are secretly engaged in a program of genocide against the black race” is given “a measure of validity” by the number of “black men of child-producing age who are imprisoned for crimes for which men of other races are not.”^[39]

The book *New Directions for Youth Development* discusses the school to prison pipeline and how to eradicate it, and it states that “The public school system in the United States, like the country as a whole, is plagued by vast inequalities—that all too frequently are defined along lines of race and class.”^[40] Over time, as schools have become harsher in enforcing their policies and disciplining students, the criminal justice system has also become harsher in dealing with children.^[40] “Since 1992, fortyfive states have passed laws making it easier to try juveniles as adults, and thirty-one have stiffened sanctions against youths for a variety of offenses”, claims *New Directions for Youth Development*.^[40]

The way in which certain drugs are criminalized also factors into the large disparities in involvement in the prison system between black and white communities.^[41] For instance, “The Effects of Mass Incarceration on Communities of Color” describes how “conviction for crack selling (more heavily sold and used by people of color) [results] in a sentence 100 times more severe than for selling the same amount of powder cocaine (more heavily sold and used by whites).”^[41]

Conspiracy theories

Birth control

A falling birth rate has been identified by some observers as harmful to a race of people; for instance, in 1905 Teddy Roosevelt said that it was “race suicide” for white Americans if educated white women continued to have fewer children.^[42] Certain African-American leaders also taught that political power came with greater population. In 1934, Marcus Garvey and his *Universal Negro Improvement Association* resolved that birth control constituted black genocide.^[43]

The combined oral contraceptive pill, popularly known as "the Pill", was approved for US markets in 1957 as a medicine, and in 1961 for birth control. In 1962, civil rights activist Whitney Young told the National Urban League not to support birth control for blacks.^[9] Marvin Davies, leader of the Florida chapter of the NAACP, said that black women should reject birth control and produce more babies so that black political influence would increase in the future.^[9]



Lyndon B. Johnson and Martin Luther King, Jr., agreed that birth control was beneficial to poor black families.

The Pill was considered expensive by working-class women; the first users were upper- and middle-class women.^[44] After President Lyndon B. Johnson, as part of his War on Poverty, obtained legislation in 1964 for government funding of birth control,^[45] Black militants became more concerned about a possible government-sponsored black genocide. Cecil B. Moore, head of the NAACP chapter in Philadelphia, spoke out against a Planned Parenthood program which was to establish a stronger presence in northern Philadelphia; the population in the targeted neighborhoods was 70% black. Moore said it would be "race suicide" for blacks to embrace birth control.^[9]

From 1965 to 1970, black militant males, especially younger men from poverty-stricken areas, spoke out against birth control as black genocide. The Black Panther Party and the Nation of Islam were the strongest voices. The Black Panther Party identified a number of injustices as contributing to black genocide, including social ills that were more serious in black populations, such as drug abuse, prostitution and sexually transmitted disease. Other injustices included unsafe housing, malnutrition and the over-representation of young black men on the front lines of the Vietnam War.^[9] Influential black activists such as singer/author Julius Lester and comedian Dick Gregory said that blacks should increase in population and avoid genocidal family planning measures.^[46] H. Rap Brown of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) held that black genocide consisted of four elements: more blacks executed than whites, malnutrition in impoverished areas affected blacks more than whites, the Vietnam War killed more blacks than whites, and birth control programs in black neighborhoods were trying to end the black race. A birth control clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, was torched by black militants who said it contributed to black genocide.^[9]



H. Rap Brown said that black genocide was based on four factors, including birth control.

Black Muslims said that birth control was against the teachings of the Koran, and that the role of women in Muslim society was to produce children. In this context, the black Muslims felt that birth control was a genocidal attack by whites. The Muslim weekly journal, Muhammad Speaks, carried many articles demonizing birth control.^[9]

In Newark, New Jersey, in July 1967, the Black Power movement held its first convention: the National Conference on Black Power. The convention identified several means by which whites were attempting the annihilation of blacks. Injustices in housing practices, reductions in welfare benefits, and government-subsidized family planning were named as elements of "black genocide".^{[5][9]} Ebony magazine printed a story in March 1968 which revealed that black genocide was believed by poor blacks to be the impetus behind government-funded birth control.^[46]

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., was a strong proponent of birth control for blacks. In 1966, he was honored with the Margaret Sanger Award in Human Rights, an award based on the tireless birth control activism of Margaret Sanger, a co-founder of Planned Parenthood. King emphasized that birth control gave the black man better command over his personal economic situation, keeping the number of his children within his monetary means.^[9] In April 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., was shot and killed. Charles V. Willie wrote in 1971 that this event marked the beginning of serious reflection among African Americans "about the possibility of [black] genocide in America. There were lynchings, murders, and manslaughters in the past. But the assassination of Dr. King was too much. Many blacks believed that Dr. King had represented their best... If America could not accept Dr. King, then many felt that no black person in America was safe."^[47]



Angela Davis said that equating birth control with black genocide appeared to be "an exaggerated—even paranoiac—reaction."^[48]

Black women were generally critical of the Black Power rejection of birth control. In 1968, a group of black radical feminists in Mt. Vernon, New York issued "The Sisters Reply"; a rebuttal which said that birth control gave black women the "freedom to fight the genocide of black women and children," referring to the greater death rate among children and mothers in poor families.^[49] Frances M. Beal, co-founder of the Black Women's Liberation Committee of the SNCC, refused to believe that the black woman must be subservient to the black man's wishes. Angela Davis and Linda LaRue reacted against the Black Power limitations directing women to serve as mothers producing "warriors for the revolution."^[9] Toni Cade said that indiscriminate births would not bring the liberation of blacks closer to realization; she advocated the Pill as a tool to help space out the births of black children, to make it easier for families to raise them.^{[9][50]} The Black Women's Liberation Group accused "poor black men" of failing to support the babies they helped produce, therefore supplying young black women with reason to use contraceptives. Dara Abubakari, a black separatist, wrote that "women should be free to decide if and when they want children".^[9] A 1970 study found that 80% of black women in Chicago approved of birth control, and that 75% of women in their child-bearing years were using it. A 1971 study found that a majority of black men and women were in favor of government-subsidized birth control.^[9]

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a community struggle for and against a birth control clinic in the Homewood area of east Pittsburgh made national news. Women in Pittsburgh had lobbied for a birth control clinic in the 1920s and were relieved in 1931 when the American Birth Control League (ABCL) established one. The ABCL changed its name in 1942 to Planned Parenthood. The Pittsburgh clinic initiated an educational outreach program to poor families in the Lower Hill District in 1956. This program was twinned into the poverty-stricken Homewood-Brushton area in 1958. Planned Parenthood considered opening another clinic there, and conducted meetings with community leaders. In 1963 a mobile clinic was moved around the area. In December 1965, the Planned Parenthood Clinic of Pittsburgh (PPCP) applied for federal funding based on the War on Poverty legislation Johnson had promoted. In May 1966 the application was approved, and PPCP began to establish clinics throughout Pittsburgh, a total of 18 by 1967, 11 of these subsidized by the federal government and placed in poor districts. In mid-1966 the Pennsylvania state legislature held up family planning funds in committee. Catholic bishops gained media exposure for their assertion that Pittsburgh birth control efforts were a form of covert black genocide. In November 1966 the bishops said that the government was coercing poor people to have smaller families. Some black leaders such as local NAACP member Dr. Charles Greenlee agreed with the bishops that birth control was black genocide.^[9] Greenlee said Planned Parenthood was "an honorable and good organization" but that the federal Office of Economic Opportunity was sponsoring genocidal programs.^[51] Greenlee said "the Negro's birth rate is the only

weapon he has. When he reaches 21 he can vote."^[51] Greenlee targeted the Homewood clinic for closure; in doing so he allied with black militant William "Bouie" Haden and Catholic prelate Charles Owen Rice to speak out against black genocide, and against PPCP's educational outreach program. Planned Parenthood's Director of Community Relations Dr. Douglas Stewart said that the false charge of black genocide was harming the national advancement of blacks. In July 1968, Haden announced he was willing to blow up the clinic to keep it from operating. The Catholic church paid him a salary of \$10,000, igniting an outcry in Pittsburgh media. Bishop John Wright was called a "puppet of Bouie Haden".^[9] The PPCP closed the Homewood clinic in July 1968 and stopped its educational program because of concerns about violence. The black congregation of the Bethesda United Presbyterian Church issued a statement saying that accusations of black genocide were "patently false".^[9] A meeting was scheduled for March 1969 to discuss the issue.^[9] About 200 women, mostly black, appeared in support of the clinic, and it was reopened.^[3] This was seen as a major defeat for the black militant notion that government-funded birth control was black genocide.^[9]

Other prominent black advocates for birth control included Carl Rowan, James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, Jerome H. Holland, Ron Dellums and Barbara Jordan.^[9]

In the US in the 21st century, black people are most likely to be at risk of unintended pregnancy: 84% of black women of reproductive age use birth control, in contrast to 91% of Caucasian and Hispanic women, and 92% of Asian Americans.^[52] This results in black women having the highest rate of unintended pregnancy—in 2001, almost 10% of black women giving birth between the ages of 15 to 44 had unintended pregnancies, which was more than twice the rate of white women. Poverty affects these statistics, as low-income women are more likely to experience disruption in their lives; disruption which affects the steady use of birth control. People in poor areas are more suspicious of the health care system, and they may refuse medical treatment and advice, especially for less-critical wellness treatments such as birth control.^[53]

Abortion

Slave women brought with them from Africa the knowledge of traditional folk birth control practices, and of abortion obtained through the use of herbs, blunt trauma, and other methods of killing the fetus or producing strong uterine cramps. Slave women were often expected to breed more slave children to enrich their owners, but some quietly rebelled.^[54] In 1856 a white doctor reported that a number of slave owners were upset that their slaves appeared to hold a "secret by which they destroy the foetus at an early age of gestation".^{[55][56][57]} However, this folk knowledge was suppressed in the new American culture, especially by the nascent American Medical Association, and its practice fell away.^{[55][57]}

After slavery ended, black women formed social groups and clubs in the 1890s to "uplift their race."^[56] The revolutionary idea that a black woman might enjoy a full life without ever being a mother was presented in Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's magazine *The Woman's Era*. Knowledge was secretly shared among clubwomen regarding how to find practitioners offering illegal medical or traditional abortion services. Working-class black women, who were more often forced into having sex with white men, continued to have a need for birth control and abortions. Black women who earned less than \$10 per day paid \$50 to \$75 for an illegal and dangerous abortion. Throughout the 20th century, "backstreet" abortion providers in black neighborhoods were also sought out by poor white women who wanted to rid themselves of pregnancies. Abortion providers who were black were prosecuted much more often than white ones were.^[55]

During this time the Black Panthers printed pamphlets which described abortion as black genocide, expanding on their earlier stance with regard to family planning.^[58] However, most minority groups stood in favor of the decriminalization of abortion; *The New York Times* reported in 1970 that more non-white women than white women died as a result of "crude, illegal abortions".^[59] Legalized abortion was expected to produce fewer deaths of the mother. A poll in Buffalo, New York, conducted by the National Organization for Women (NOW), found that 75% of blacks supported the decriminalization of abortion.^[60]



In the 1970s, Jesse Jackson spoke out against abortion as a form of black genocide.

After the January 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision made abortion legal in the US, *Jet* magazine publisher Robert E. Johnson authored an article titled "Legal Abortion: Is It Genocide Or Blessing In Disguise?" Johnson cast the issue as one which polarized the black community along gender lines: black women generally viewed abortion as a "blessing in disguise" but black men such as Reverend Jesse Jackson viewed it as black genocide.^{[46][61]} Jackson said he was in favor of birth control but not abortion.^[61] The next year, Senator Mark Hatfield, an activist against legal abortion, emphasized to Congress that Jackson "regards abortion as a form of genocide practiced against blacks."^{[62][63][64]}

In *Jet*, Johnson quoted Lu Palmer, a radio journalist in Chicago, who said that there was inequity between the sexes: a young black man who helped create an unwanted pregnancy could go his "merry way" while the young woman who had been involved in it was stigmatized by society and saddled with a financial and emotional burden, often without a safety net of caregivers to sustain her.^[61] Civil rights lawyer Florynce Kennedy criticized the idea that black women were needed to populate the Black Power revolution. She said that black majorities in the Deep South were not known to be hotbeds of revolution, and that limiting black women to the role of mothers was "not too far removed from a cultural past where black women were encouraged to be breeding machines for their slave masters."^[61] In the Tennessee General Assembly in 1967, Dorothy Lavinia Brown, MD, the first African-American woman surgeon and a state assemblywoman, sponsored a proposed bill to fully legalize abortion.^[55] Later Brown, would say black women "should dispense quickly the notion that abortion is genocide." Rather, they should look to the earliest Atlantic slave traders as the root of genocide.^[55] Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm wrote in 1970 that the linking of abortion and genocide "is male rhetoric, for male ears."^{[65][66]}

However, a link between abortion and black genocide has been claimed by later observers. Mildred Fay Jefferson, a surgeon and an activist against legal abortion, wrote about black genocide in 1978, saying "abortionists have done more to get rid of generations and cripple others than all of the years of slavery and lynching."^{[67][68][69]} Jefferson's views were shared by Michigan state legislator and NAACP member Rosetta A. Ferguson, who led the effort to defeat a Michigan abortion liberalization bill in 1972. Ferguson described abortion as black genocide.^[70]

In 2009, American pro-life activists in Georgia revived the idea that a black genocide was in progress.^[42] A strong response from this strategy was observed among blacks, and in 2010 more focus was placed on describing abortion as black genocide. White pro-life activist Mark Crutcher produced a documentary called *Maafa 21* which criticizes Planned Parenthood and its founder Margaret Sanger, and describes various historic aspects of eugenics, birth control and abortion with the aim of convincing the viewer that abortion is black genocide. Pro-life activists showed the documentary to black audiences across the US.^{[71][72]} The film was criticized as propaganda and a false representation of Sanger's work.^{[73][74][75]} In March 2011, a series of abortion-as-genocide billboard advertisements were shown in South Chicago, an

area with a large population of African Americans.^[76] From May to November 2011, presidential candidate Herman Cain criticized Planned Parenthood, calling abortion "planned genocide" and "black genocide".^[77]

After Stacey Abrams lost the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election, anti-abortion activist Arthur A. Goldberg wrote that she lost in part because of her stance in favor of abortion rights, which he said ignored "the staggering number of abortions in the black community" which amounted to black genocide.^[78] In 2019, *The New York Times* wrote that "the abortion debate is inextricably tied to race" in the view of black American communities that are challenged with many other racial disparities which together constitute black genocide.^[79]

People hold varied stances on the topic of abortion and whether individuals should be allowed to have them performed. "The Effects of Economic Conditions and Access to Reproductive Health Services on State Abortion Rates and Birth Rates" talks about how abortions are a result of a variety of factors.^[80] "Wages, welfare policies and access to physicians, family planning clinics and abortion providers" are some of those factors listed in the article.^[80] "Every individual has the right to decide freely and responsibly – without discrimination, coercion and violence – the number, spacing and timing of their children, and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health (ICPD 1994)" is a valued principle for the World Health Organization, which advocates for the ability of individuals to receive safe medical care, a category inclusive of abortions.^[81]

Analysis

In 1976, sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz published an analysis of black genocide and concluded that racist vigilantism and sporadic actions by individual whites were to blame for the various statistics which show that blacks experience higher death rates than whites do. Horowitz concluded that the US government could not be implicated as a conspirator and there was no conspiracy to engage in a concerted black genocide.^[82]

Political scientist Joy A. James wrote in 2013 that the "logical conclusion" of American racism is genocide and members of the black elite are complicit, along with white Americans, in carrying out black genocide.^[83]

See also

- Black supremacy
- Civil Rights Movement
- Harry R. Jackson Jr., owner of *The Truth in Black & White* website
- Kalergi Plan
- List of conspiracy theories
- Maafa
- Mass racial violence in the United States
- *Medical Apartheid*, a book by Harriet A. Washington which describes the history of unethical human experimentation on African Americans
- Political positions of Herman Cain
- Racism in the United States
- Title X

- Tuskegee syphilis experiment
- White genocide conspiracy theory
- White nationalism
- White supremacy

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The Plan (Washington, D.C.)

The Plan is a conspiracy theory in Washington, D.C., which posits that since the enactment of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act in 1973, white people have had a "plan to take back" the black-majority city and the offices of the local government.^{[1][2]} The theory asserts that the decline of low-income black residents and their replacement by wealthier whites from outside of Washington, D.C. is intentional through the calculated use of gentrification and urban renewal.^[3] The Plan is generally regarded as false within Washington, D.C., while some believe it has quiet but considerable support among black residents and influences local elections.^[4]

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It appears that Lillian Wiggins, a columnist for the *Washington Afro American* newspaper, was the first to "articulate" the conspiracy theory. In 1979, she wrote: "Many residents believe that the Marion Barry era may be the last time Washington will have a black mayor. If negative programming and characterization of black leadership are allowed to continue in the city of Washington and especially the black community, there is a strong possibility of the 'master plan' which I have so often spoken about maturing in the 1980s." Believers note that the Federal City Council, an organized group of civic and corporate leaders, mostly white, meets in secret and uses its power to influence the city's direction.^[1] The theory particularly gained sway in the 1980s and early 1990s, as the city became increasingly unaffordable to low-income minorities. Urban renewal was also seen as intended to push out minority populations.^[5]

Anti-theorists note that instead of an organized conspiracy, there are market forces, demographics, and gentrification—which is happening quickly in the District of Columbia—at work. Black residents have left the District, just as many whites moved to the suburbs beginning in the 1950s. Both groups left a decaying city, its crime, and its failing schools seeking "a better, safer life. . . . One could argue that middle-class blacks abandoned the city. Was that part of 'the plan'?"^[1] Others counter that the existence of the theory reflects "the fears of a black community that already feels under attack in a city whose rising cost of living makes hanging on difficult . . . if such paranoia seems laughable, it reflects a reality that's easily illustrated in bright colors",^[6] although the theory has been around longer than the city's changing demographics.

21st Century

Census figures show that between 2000 and 2010, the District lost about 39,000 black residents while over 50,000 whites moved in. The black population declined by 11.1%, while the white population saw a 31.4% increase.^{[7][8]} "The District, once 'Chocolate City', is becoming, as the saying goes, 'Vanilla Village'."^[4] As of 2010, the city was about 51% black and 39% white^[7]—compared to 61%–34% in 2000. The black population peaked in 1970 at 71%. If trends continue, the city would get a white majority any time from 2014 to 2020.^[9] This has been attributed to The Plan.^[10] In 2013, the black population of Washington D.C. dropped below 50% to 49.5%.^[11]

Efforts to improve the District of Columbia Public Schools have been linked to the purported conspiracy, as the improvements have tended to increase enrollment of white children. Although shifting demographics are broadening school demand, these are seen as either the effectuation or the result of The Plan.^[4] Similarly, rising real estate values, increased business, more abundant night life and other factors which "would otherwise be viewed as a positive becomes evidence" of the scheme, even to those who benefit from the improvements.^[12] One commentator opined "Don't ask [Mayor] Fenty or [Schools Chancellor] Rhee whom this world-class school system will serve if low-income black residents are being evicted from his world-class city in droves" and went on to claim "The scheme was odious: re-create a more sophisticated version of the plantation-style, federally appointed three-member commission that ruled the city for more than a century until 1967."^[13]

The Plan, and related fears, are said to have contributed to the defeat of incumbent mayor Adrian Fenty in the 2010 primary election.^{[1][14][13]} One observer noted: "A vote for [challenger Vincent] Gray, admirers of the D.C. Council chairman imply, stops The Plan dead, putting all those whiny newcomers in their place."^[14] Sharon Pratt Kelly, who was mayor before Fenty, does not believe The Plan is real. She sees no malicious intent, but does allow for "a reckless disregard for a great many people" among the "power elite" in the city.^[15]

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White genocide conspiracy theory

The **white genocide**, **white extinction**,^[1] or **white replacement conspiracy theory**^{[2][3][4]} is a white supremacist^{[5][6][7][8]} conspiracy theory which states that there is a deliberate plot, often blamed on Jews,^{[5][8]} to promote miscegenation,^[9] interracial marriage, mass non-white immigration, racial integration, low fertility rates, abortion, governmental land-confiscation from whites, organised violence,^[10] and eliminationism in white-founded countries^[5] in order to cause the extinction of whites through forced assimilation^[10] mass immigration, and violent genocide.^{[11][12][13][14]} Less frequently, black people,^[15] Hispanics,^[16] and Muslims^[17] are blamed, but merely as more fertile immigrants,^[18] invaders,^[19] or violent aggressors,^[20] rather than the masterminds of a secret plot.^[21]



Anti-immigrant protesters in Calais hold a sign in French reading "Diversity is a code word for white genocide", above a banner calling for remigration. November 8, 2015

White genocide is a myth,^{[22][23][15]} based on pseudoscience, pseudohistory, and hatred,^[24] driven by a psychological panic often termed "white extinction anxiety".^{[25][16]} There is no evidence that white people are dying out or facing extermination.^{[26][27][28][21]} The purpose of the conspiracy theory is to scare white people,^[26] and justify a commitment to a white nationalist agenda^[29] in support of increasingly successful calls to violence.^{[22][20][19]}

The theory was popularized by white separatist neo-Nazi David Lane around 1995, and has been leveraged as propaganda in Europe, North America, South Africa, and Australia. Similar conspiracy theories were prevalent in Nazi Germany^[30] and have been used in the present-day interchangeably with,^[31] and as a broader and more extreme version of, Renaud Camus's 2011 *The Great Replacement*, focusing on the white population of France.^{[32][33]} Since the 2019 Christchurch and El Paso shootings, of which the shooters' manifestos decried a "white replacement" and have referenced the concept of "Great Replacement", Camus's 2012 Great Replacement fallacy (often called "replacement theory" or "population replacement"),^[34] along with Bat Ye'or's 2002 Eurabia concept^[35] and Gerd Honsik's resurgent 1970s myth of a Kalergi plan,^[31] have all been used synonymously with "white genocide" and are increasingly referred to as variations of the conspiracy theory.

In August 2018, US President Donald Trump was accused of endorsing the conspiracy theory in a foreign policy tweet instructing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to investigate South African "land and farm seizures and expropriations and the large scale killing of farmers",^{[36][37][38]} claiming that the "South African government is now seizing land from white farmers".^[39] The often critical narrative derived from the South African farm attacks, and land reform in South Africa, is an established subset theme of the broader conspiracy theory,^[26] portrayed in media as a form of gateway or proxy issue to "white genocide" within the wider context of the Western world.^{[40][39]} The topic of farm seizures in South Africa and Zimbabwe has been a rallying cry of white nationalists and alt-right groups^{[41][42]} who use it to justify their vision of white supremacy.^{[43][39]}

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References

History

The idea of a distinct white human race began with German physician and anthropologist [Johann Blumenbach](#), who in 1775 claimed that there were five such races, [Caucasian](#), [Mongolian](#), [Malayan](#), [Ethiopian](#) (or [Negroid](#)), and [American Indian](#).^[44] Previously, [François Bernier](#) had in 1684 published a four-page essay postscript which posited five races, combining [Europeans](#) ("except for part of [Muscovy](#)") with inhabitants of the Northern coastal regions of Africa, and Arabia, Persia, Mongolia, India, and parts of China, Sumatra, Bantam, and Borneo, and described skin color as "merely accidental."^[45] Prior classifications of ethnicity and culture were narrower and more mutable through antiquity, drawing distinctions closer to those of tribal and familial groups, and were based on environmental factors such as geography and climate as well as appearance, physiology, and learned behaviors such as language and diet.^[46] Present-day racial and ethnic distinctions are only loosely correlated with [genetic ancestry](#), with which they are being replaced in medical science.^{[47][48]}

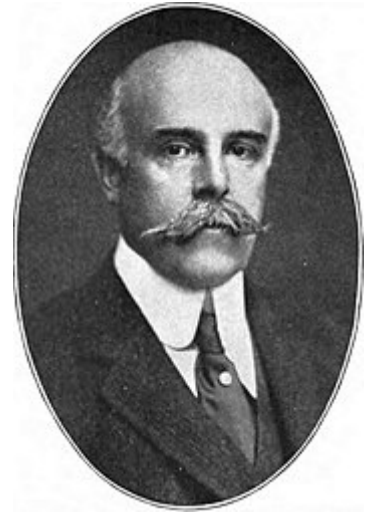
Background

Madison Grant

The conspiracy theory had precursors in early 20th-century [eugenics](#) theories,^[49] which were popular in white-majority countries such as [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#), where it was feared that non-white immigrants would eventually supplant the white population.^[50]

In 1916, the American eugenicist and lawyer Madison Grant wrote a book entitled *The Passing of the Great Race* which, while largely ignored when it first appeared, went through four editions, becoming part of popular culture in 1920s America and, in the process, spawned the ideology that the founding-stock of the United States, the so-called Nordic race, were under extinction threats from assimilation with non-whites. Grant wrote of it:

Neither the black, nor the brown, nor the yellow, nor the red will conquer the white in battle. But if the valuable elements in the Nordic race mix with inferior strains or die out through race suicide, then the citadel of civilization will fall for mere lack of defenders.^[51]



Madison Grant

The *Harvard Gazette* described Grant's assertion that the race which "built" America was in danger of extinction unless the US reined in immigration of Jews and others.^[52] Author F. Scott Fitzgerald made a lightly disguised reference to Grant in *The Great Gatsby*, in which the character Tom Buchanan was reading a book called *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by "this man Goddard", a combination of Grant and his colleague Lothrop Stoddard. (Grant wrote the introduction to Stoddard's book *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*.) "Everybody ought to read it", Buchanan explained. "The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be – will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."^[53]

Nazi Germany

Adolf Hitler wrote to Grant to thank him for writing *The Passing of the Great Race*, calling it "my Bible."^[54] Nazis employed the conspiracy theory widely as propaganda, as exemplified in a 1934 pamphlet written for the "Research Department for the Jewish question" of Walter Frank's "Reich Institute" with the title "Are the White Nations Dying? The Future of the White and the Colored Nations in the Light of Biological Statistics."^[30] Nazis used the conspiracy theory as a call to arms in a bid to gain power through cultural hegemony and scapegoating Jews by leveraging long-running historical prejudices.^{[55][56]}

Prior to Nazis coming to power, German eugenicists including Jewish medical and psychiatric professionals did consider Jews to be distinct from white Europeans, but not so "degenerate" or unfit as to require anything more than guidance avoiding heritable disease via marriage counseling and, as early as 1918, screening for Jews wishing to emigrate to Palestine.^[57]

Neo-Nazis' accusations against Jews

The modern conspiracy theory can be traced back to post-war European neo-Nazi circles, especially René Binet's 1950 book *Théorie du Racisme*.^{[58][59][60]} The latter influenced French 1960s far-right movements such as *Europe-Action*, which argued that "systematic race mixing [was] nothing more than a slow genocide".^{[61][62]} In December 1948, Binet's newspaper *L'Unité* wrote: "We accuse the Zionists and anti-racists of the crime of genocide because they claim to be imposing on us a crossbreeding that would be the death and destruction of our race and civilization".^[58]

The term "white genocide" appeared sporadically in the American Nazi Party's *White Power* newspaper as early as 1972^[63] and was used by the White Aryan Resistance^[64] in the 1970s and 1980s, where it primarily referred to contraception and abortion. The conspiracy theory was developed by the neo-Nazi David Lane in his *White Genocide Manifesto* (c. 1995, origin of the later use of the term),^{[65][66][67][63]} where he made the claim that the government policies of many Western countries had the intent of destroying white European culture and making white people an "extinct species".^[68] Lane—a founding member of the organization The Order—criticized miscegenation, abortion, homosexuality, Jewish control of the media, "multi-racial sports," the legal repercussions against those who "resist genocide", and the "Zionist Occupation Government" that he said controls the United States and the other majority-white countries and which encourages "white genocide".^{[68][69]}

Shortly after Lane's *Manifesto*, the Aryan Nations published their 1996 *Declaration of Independence* stating that the Zionist Occupation Government sought "the eradication of the white race and its culture" as "one of its foremost purposes." It accused such Jews of subverting the constitutional rule of law; responsibility for post-Civil War Reconstruction; subverting the monetary system with the Federal Reserve System, confiscating land and property; limiting freedoms of speech, religion, and gun ownership; murdering, kidnapping and imprisoning patriots; abdicating national sovereignty to the United Nations; political repression; wasteful bureaucracy; loosening restrictions on immigration and drug trafficking; raising taxes; polluting the environment; commandeering the military, mercenaries, and police; denying Aryan cultural heritage; and inciting immigrant insurrections.^{[70][71][72][73]} Of these accusations, only passage of the Federal Reserve Act, ratification of the Charter of the United Nations, and imprisonment of members of The Order were cited as specific instances.

Another strand developed in Europe in the 1970s by Austrian neo-Nazi Gerd Honsik, who distorted the early 20th century writings of Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi with his invention of the Kalergi plan conspiracy theory, which was popularized in a 2005 book.^{[74][75]}

Rhodesian scare tactics

In 1966, Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith was described as having convinced white Rhodesians that their only alternative to his government's Rhodesian Bush War was "dictatorship and white genocide" by communist-backed black nationalist guerrillas.^{[76][77]}

White supremacists are described as being obsessed with the treatment of the formerly dominant white minorities in Zimbabwe and South Africa by the black majorities where "the diminished stature of whites is presented as an ongoing genocide that must be fought."^[77] In particular, the story of Rhodesia, as Zimbabwe was formerly known, ruled by a segregationist government under which most black people were denied the right to vote, holds a particular fascination for white supremacists. Zimbabwe's disastrous economic collapse under the leadership of its second black president, Robert Mugabe, together with the Mugabe government's policies towards the white minority has been cited by white supremacists as evidence of both the inferiority of blacks and a case of genocide against whites.^[77] In alt-right and white supremacist groups, there is much nostalgia for Rhodesia, which is seen as a state that fought valiantly for white supremacy in Africa in the 1960–1970s until it was betrayed.^[78]



Ian Smith c. 1954

Alt-right

In 2008, the conspiracy theory spread beyond its explicit neo-Nazi and white nationalist origins, to be embraced by the newly founded alt-right movement. Discussion threads on the white nationalist Internet forum Stormfront often center around the theme of white people being subjected to genocidal policies by their governments.^[68] The concept has also been popularized by the alt-right and alt-lite movements in the United States.^{[79][80]} The notion of racial purity, homogeneity or "racial hygiene" is an underlying theme of the white genocide discourse and it has been used by people with neo-Nazi and white supremacist backgrounds.^{[81][82]}

While individual iterations of the conspiracy theory vary on who is assigned blame, Jewish influence, people who hate whites,^[81] and liberal political forces are commonly cited by white supremacists as being the main factors leading to a white genocide.^{[14][83][84][68]} This view is held by prominent figures such as David Duke, who cites Jews and "liberal political ideals" as the main causes.^{[85][68]} White nationalist Robert Whitaker, who coined the phrase "anti-racist is a code word for anti-white" in a widely circulated 2006 piece seeking to popularize the white genocide concept online, used "anti-White" to describe those he believed are responsible for the genocide of white people, and continued to view it as a Jewish conspiracy while emphasizing that others also supported the "anti-White" cause.^{[86][87][88][65]} However, the view that Jews are responsible for a white genocide is contested by other white supremacist figures, such as Jared Taylor.^{[89][90][91][92][93]}

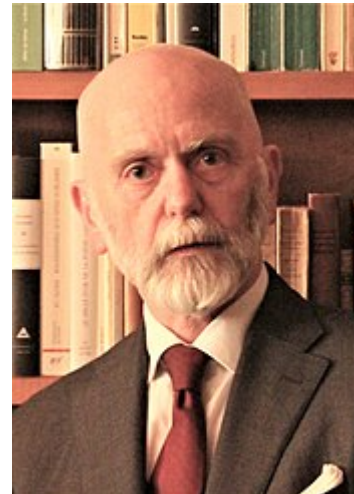


David Duke

The Great Replacement

Starting with French author Renaud Camus and his 2011 book *Le Grand Remplacement*, the conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement focused on a displacement of French whites by predominantly Muslim population from the Middle East and Africa, then turned into a pan-European concept which spread across most major countries' politics on the continent.^[94] Despite a common reference to a "genocide" of indigenous white peoples and a global plan led by a conspiring power, Camus's theory does not include an antisemitic Jewish plot. His removal of antisemitism from the original neo-Nazi theory (which has been replaced in the European context with Islamophobia), along with his use of simple catch-all slogans, have been cited as reasons for its broader appeal.^{[95][96]}

The Great Replacement has also been compared with the European Islamophobic strain of Bat Ye'or's 2002 Eurabia conspiracy theory,^[34] and with ideas expressed by far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, the perpetrator of the 2011 Norway attacks, in his 2083: *A European Declaration of Independence* manifesto.^[35] Since the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, where the shooter named his manifesto *The Great Replacement*, the French-originated phrase has been widely established as synonymous with "white genocide", used by mainstream Western media interchangeably, and deemed largely responsible for the emerging term of "white replacement".^{[17][4]}



Renaud Camus, progenitor of the Great Replacement theory. March 2019

By 2017, at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, white nationalists were referencing the conspiracy theory as tiki torch-wielding protestors, who yelled "You will not replace us!" and "Jews will not replace us!".^{[97][98][99]} In response, Camus stated that he did not support Nazis or violence, but that

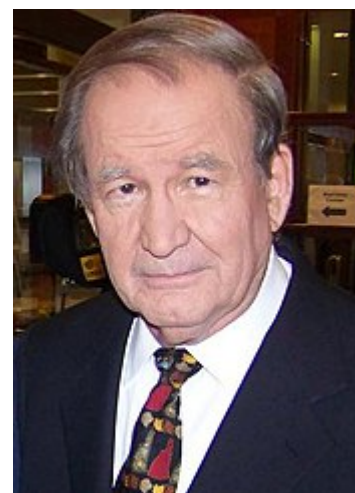
he could understand why white Americans felt angry about being replaced, and that he approved of the sentiment.^[100]

White extinction anxiety

"White genocide anxiety,"^[101] "white displacement anxiety,"^[102] and, the most commonly referred to, "white extinction anxiety" or panic,^[25] is said to be one of the key driving forces behind the conspiracy theory and its supporters' adherence to it. The thesis, often cited as an explanation for some sections of white society's resistance to racial diversity,^[103] is reported as virtually inseparable from the conspiracy theory itself.^{[16][104][105]}

Former diplomat and scholar Alfredo Toro Hardy, who credits journalist Charles M. Blow with the term "white extinction anxiety", has outlined how "the anxieties related to the changing racial landscape of the United States" were at the heart of the concept, and propelled policies such as the Trump administration's "extreme measures against Southern immigrants".^[106] In this regard, Trump has been accused of capitalizing on "white genocide anxiety" with claims that immigration had "changed the fabric of Europe", and empowering his supporters in media, such as Laura Ingraham, to stoke fears of "massive demographic changes" within the US.^[101] Science journalist Ronald Bailey proposes that Trump is merely "the latest demagogue to rise to power by stoking white folks' ethnic fears", and that "white extinction panics" have historically occurred in the US each time the foreign-born population reached above 13 percent.^[25]

Blow has defined "white extinction anxiety" as the fear that white people will become a minority, stripped of their race-based privilege.^[107] Analyzing the concept, he examined Pat Buchanan's rhetoric (described by Bailey as a form of blood and soil mantra);^[25] of whether the nations of Europe and North America had the "will and capacity to halt the invasion of the countries" before immigration altered the "political, social, racial, ethnic - character of the country entirely." Addressing Buchanan's arguably ethnic nationalist conclusions that "You cannot stop these sentiments of people who want to live together with their own and they want their borders protected", Blow said, "Make no mistake here, Buchanan is talking about protecting white dominance, white culture, white majorities and white power".^[105]



Pat Buchanan in 2008

Anti-racism activist Jane Elliott has suggested that this anxiety, or "Fear of White Genetic Annihilation", is so great that political leaders will resort to any measures in order to prevent the white extinction event that they believe is unfolding, including measures such as the Alabama abortion ban.^[108] Anders Behring Breivik's core ideology, and motivations behind his white supremacist attacks, has been described as white extinction anxiety.^[109] He had written: "This crisis of mass immigration and sub-replacement fertility is an assault on the European people that, if not combated, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people".

According to professor Alexandra Minna Stern, who has detailed the connection between the conspiracy theory and the anxiety-framed concept, factions of the alt-right are distorting fertility statistics into a "conspiratorial campaign of white extinction" which is being fueled by a looming "white extinction anxiety". This phenomenon is driving alt-right strategies such as encouraging couples of Western and Northern European ethnicity to have up to eight children.^[104]

Advocacy and spread

The white genocide conspiracy theory has continuously recurred among the far-right in a variety of forms, all centered around a core theme of white populations being replaced, removed, or simply killed.^[43]

Africa

South Africa

Far-right and alt-right figures, such as singer Steve Hofmeyr, have claimed that a "white genocide" is taking place in South Africa.^[110] The South African singer, songwriter, political activist, actor, and TV presenter supports and promotes the conspiracy theory.^{[32][111][23]} *The Conversation* has credited Hofmeyr with popularizing the concept.^[110] In January 2017, media reported that Hofmeyr was set to meet US President-elect Donald Trump to discuss "white genocide" in South Africa.^{[112][113]} Hofmeyr later thanked Trump when the latter shared a tweet asking "Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo] to closely study the South Africa land and farm seizures and expropriations and the large scale killing of farmers."^[114]

The manifesto of far-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, entitled *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, devotes an entire section to an alleged "genocide" against Afrikaners. It also contains several other references to alleged persecution of whites in South Africa and the attacks on white farmers.^[110] Mike Cernovich, an American alt-right commentator, has previously stated that "white genocide in South Africa is real".^[115] The survivalist group the Suidlanders has claimed credit for internationally publicizing the risks of a race war and ethnic cleansing against whites.^{[116][43]}



Steve Hofmeyr

Africa Check, a fact-checking organisation, rejected these claims as false in 2013: "In fact, whites are less likely to be murdered than any other race group." Africa Check reported that while whites account for nearly 9% of the South African population they represent just 1.8% of murder victims. Lizette Lancaster from the Institute for Security Studies has said that "Whites are far less likely to be murdered than their black or coloured counterparts."^{[117][118][119]} British journalist Joe Walsh reported that the murder rates in the mainly white suburbs of Johannesburg were far lower than in the black townships of Johannesburg, leading him to conclude: "If there was any kind of genocide being carried out against white people in the country then the safest areas of the continent's most dangerous city would not be predominately white."^[42]

South African journalist Lynsey Chutel reported in 2018: "After a peak in 2001/2002, the number of farm attacks—rape, robbery and other forms of violent crime short of murder—has decreased to about half. Similarly, the number of murders on farms peaked in 1997/1998 at 153, but today that number is below 50."^{[42][120]} Chutel stated that although some of the murders of white farmers may indeed be racially motivated, South Africa is a country with a high violent crime rate and white farmers are "isolated and believed to be wealthy".^{[42][120]} In the period July 2017 to July 2018, 47 farmers of all races were killed in South Africa, down from 66 murdered between July 2016 and July 2017.^[121] The worst year for farm murders in South Africa was 1998, when 153 farmers were killed. Between April 2016 and March 2017, there were a total of 19,016 murders in South Africa, suggesting that farmers are not

especially likely to be killed in South Africa.^[121] Gregory Stanton of Genocide Watch has condemned the misuse of his groups' reports of the threat of polarization in South Africa to further the idea of "white genocide".^[122]

Much of the white genocide claims in South Africa rest on a misrepresentation of the Afrikaner people as conforming to the popular *Boer* stereotype as hard-working, devoutly Calvinist, gun-loving farmers. In 1989, the British journalist Patrick Brogan noted that the Afrikaners once called themselves *Boers* (lit. 'farmers') because that was what they were, but the term *Boer* fell out of use in the 20th century as most of the Afrikaners moved to urban areas, making the term *Boer* highly anachronistic.^[123] Brogan concluded the popular *Boer* stereotype does not accurately describe the majority of the Afrikaners, whose way of life is very similar to that of middle-class people in other Western nations.^[123]

Even mainstream American conservatives who often championed the causes of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa, seeing both regimes as having supposedly more enlightened policies towards black people than the policy of integration in the United States, embraced the variants of the white genocide theory as part of the defense of Rhodesia and South Africa.^[124] In 2015, the Canadian journalist Jeet Heer wrote: "The idea that whites in America have a natural affinity with white colonialists in Africa did not spring from the neo-Nazi far-right, but rather the conservative movement that coalesced around *National Review* in the 1950s."^[124] In 1957, the American journalist William F. Buckley wrote a justification in *National Review* of white supremacy in the American South with a defense of colonial rule in Kenya: "The question, as far as the White community is concerned, is whether the claims of civilization supersede those of universal suffrage. The British believe they do, and acted accordingly, in Kenya, where the choice was dramatically one between civilization and barbarism, and elsewhere; the South, where the conflict is by no means dramatic, as in Kenya, nevertheless perceives important qualitative differences between its culture and the Negroes', and intends to assert its own."^[124]



William F. Buckley, Jr. at the second inauguration of US President Ronald Reagan in 1985

Heer wrote that Buckley's equation of whiteness with "civilization" and blackness with "barbarism" led him to support racist regimes in both South Africa and Rhodesia, to paint the possibility of majority rule in both places in the darkest of colors, and his writings on the subject from the 1950s to the 1990s show a strong emotional identification with the whites of Rhodesia and South Africa.^[124] Buckley and other American conservatives consistently portrayed apartheid era South Africa in a favorable light, and warned that majority rule would cause a disaster for whites.^[125] On 23 April 1960 in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, *National Review* ran an editorial stating "the whites are entitled, we believe, to pre-eminence in South Africa."^[125] Russell Kirk in a column in *National Review* on 9 March 1965 warned that letting African-Americans vote in the US "will work mischief—much injuring, rather than fulfilling, the responsible democracy for which Tocqueville hoped," but in the case of South Africa "this degradation of the democratic dogma, if applied, would bring anarchy and the collapse of civilization."^[125] Kirk stated apartheid was just because South African whites were racially superior and "Bantu political domination would be domination by witch doctors (still numerous and powerful) and reckless demagogues."^[125] On 13 April 1979, Buckley in a column gave an account of South African history very sympathetic to Afrikaner nationalists, suggesting that their concerns about black rule were rational and "their fears are understandable."^[125] In an editorial on 14 March 1986, *National Review* asked "To what extent, is the vast majority of South African blacks intellectually and practically prepared to assume the social, economic, and political leadership in a highly industrialized country?"^[125] In the July 1988 edition of *Commentary*, David Roberts, Jr compared Nelson Mandela to Pol Pot and the

African National Congress (ANC), the now ruling party in South Africa, to the Khmer Rouge, implying that the ANC would exterminate South African whites if it came to power.^[125] Shortly before his death in 2005 Samuel T. Francis, the former editor of the conservative Washington Times, warned about the possibility of a "white genocide" in South Africa.^[124]

Simon Roche, an Afrikaner nationalist from South Africa and a spokesman for the survivalist group, the Suidlanders, that exists in his words "to prepare a Protestant Christian South African Minority for a coming violent revolution," visited the US in 2017 to promote the thesis that the white minority in South Africa is faced with the threat of ethnic cleansing.^[43] Roche stated he went to the US to "raise awareness of and support for the Caucasian Christian conservative *volk* [people] of South Africa ... There's a natural affinity with conservative white Americans."^[78]

The Afrikaner group AfriForum's deputy director Ernst Roets has been erroneously linked by Radio 702, which it later apologised for,^[126] to false claims of white genocide,^[127] and South African government authorization of uncompensated seizures of land from white farmers.^[128] Roets' 2018 book *Kill the Boer* argues that the government is also complicit in attacks on white farmers,^[129] and characterizes the events as ethnic cleansing.^[130] Another South African, Willem Petzer, appeared as a guest on Gavin McInnes's podcast, accusing the ANC government of planning genocide.^[43]

Europe

France

Figures on the right of French politics, such as Renaud Camus, have claimed that a "white genocide" or "Great Replacement" is occurring in France.^[131] Camus's definition, which focuses largely on the white Christian population in France, has been used in media interchangeably with white genocide,^[31] and described as a narrower, less extreme and more nationally focused version of the broader conspiracy theory.^{[32][33]} Despite his focus on the specific demographics of France, Camus also believes all Western countries are facing a form of "ethnic and civilizational substitution".^[132]

In September 2016, François Lafargue, a senior lecturer at the Paris School of Business, claimed that the Boer white minority of South Africa (referring to them as "Europeans") will experience "the same fate as the French of Algeria or the British of Southern Rhodesia". Invoking the themes of both white Rhodesians and the French-Algerian colonist population; Lafargue stated that around 400,000 white South Africans lived in poverty, "grouped together in makeshift encampments to better protect themselves", and that thousands had been violently murdered since 2000, claiming that the country's apparently increased "crime fuels the fear of a white genocide".^[133] White genocide was used as a slogan by anti-immigrant/refugee protesters in Calais during the European migrant crisis.



François Lafargue in 2006

In June 2017, Senator Stéphane Ravier's aide, running as one of the National Front's candidates, endorsed the conspiracy theory.^{[134][135]} Publishing a blonde girl's photograph with the words "Say no to white genocide"; days before the 2017 French legislative election, Ravier's assistant gave a political ultimatum "the National Front or the invasion".^[136]

Germany

The 2015 New Year's Eve attacks in Cologne resulted in accusations that the federal government and media were deliberately avoiding public interest reporting on 1,200 sexual assaults by thousands of young male Muslim immigrants. Apologies for hesitancy by public television channel ZDF strengthened claims of a Lügenpresse (lying press) by populist and far-right parties as evidence for widespread conspiracy by German institutions. The unprecedented scale of border crossings during 2015 and 2016 compelled Chancellor Angela Merkel to impose "temporary restrictions" on transit across the border with Austria. The alt-right conspiracy website Zero Hedge listed statistics on migrant crime in Germany alongside statements from politicians and news articles, presented as "contradictions confirming a deep-state level of conspiracy ... to push through a pro-immigration policy in Germany". During the 2017 German election campaign, the far-right Alternative for Germany party ran advertisements featuring a pregnant woman's abdomen with the slogan, "New Germans? We'll make them ourselves."^[74]

Hungary

A state-sponsored campaign led by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has employed a wide range of historical anti-Semitic tropes to accuse philanthropist George Soros of engaging in conspiracies to support and deceive the public about nonwhite immigrants. Orbán has accused Soros, a Jew whose family survived hostile conditions during Hungary's Nazi occupation, of being a Nazi himself, and has introduced legislation known as the "Stop Soros law" to criminalize organized support of immigrants. These fabrications have become popular with the alt-right in Europe and the US.^[74] Orbán's 2018 campaign slogan was, "Christianity is Europe's last hope",^[137] saying, "our worst nightmares can come true. The West falls as it fails to see Europe being overrun."^[138]



Viktor Orbán

Poland

Hundreds of Polish Facebook groups such as "Stop White Genocide" have produced and disseminated images depicting African and Middle eastern people as belonging to separate "primitive" species, lacking the human intelligence of white Europeans. Websites such as "Conspiracy Files" have fabricated allegations of political compacts to bolster nonwhite immigration against popular will, such as agreements signed by EU leaders and African nations to increase Europe's African population to 300 million by 2068, making native whites, "minorities within their own homeland".^[74]

Russia

Much of the theory that South African whites are faced with the threat of "genocide" originates with internet rumors started by the Government of Russia. Russia-24, a television channel owned by the Russian government, aired a segment in the summer of 2018 about Afrikaner farmers wanting to immigrate to Russia as "brothers in faith". The present government in Russia led by Vladimir Putin often attacks the ideology of liberalism for putting the individual before the collective, and promotes "white genocide" stories both as a way of showing the failure of liberalism and to promote the thesis that group identities matter far more than individual identities. The ideology of the Russian state is that the interests of the collective take precedence over the individual, and evidence of alleged failures of liberalism abroad are extensively covered by the Russian media.^[10] The Australian historian Mark Edele stated: "There is definitely an attempt [by Russia] to support alt-right views and extreme right organisations outside of Russia ... Russia supports groups that will undermine liberal views. That's the

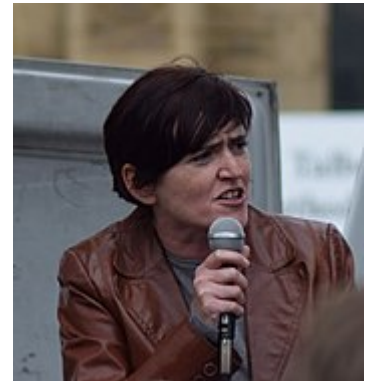
logic of sponsorship of alt-right groups by Russia ... There is a longstanding anxiety among Russia's nationalists that Russians are dying out because of falling birth rates compared to non-Slavic peoples. It reverberates with white genocide fears."^[10]

The Canadian alt-right personality Lauren Southern had a sympathetic interview with the Russian fascist thinker Aleksandr Dugin, who told her "liberalism denies the existence of any collective identities" and that "liberalism is based on the absence of any form of collective identity". Dugin used the case of white South African farmers allegedly threatened with genocide as proof of the failure of liberalism, for putting the individual ahead of the collective. After the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa was presented as the "rainbow nation" where henceforward people, regardless of their skin color, would be judged only as individuals. From the viewpoint of the Russian state, presenting liberalism in South Africa as a blood-soaked disaster is a way of discrediting liberalism in general.^[10]

United Kingdom

In a 2015 *Breitbart News* article, the anti-Islamic For Britain party founder and leader Anne Marie Waters described white genocide as "part of a broad-ranging, virulent, and vicious hatred of white Western people" and claimed that European leaders aimed to "extinguish Western culture".^[74]

In December 2015, former EDL leader Tommy Robinson endorsed the white genocide myth.^[139] In his 2015 book *Enemy of the State*, Robinson claimed how previously white British majority areas of his hometown, Luton, had suffered "ethnic cleansing" and claimed that the United Kingdom was "sleepwalking" its "way towards a Muslim takeover".^[140]



Anne Marie Waters

A few weeks before the 2016 Brexit referendum, an unemployed gardener with links to far-right organisations murdered Member of Parliament Jo Cox because of her support of the European Union and work in support of immigrants, saying she was part of a left-wing conspiracy perpetuated by the mainstream media and a traitor to the white race.^[74] A March 2016 survey ahead of the referendum found 41% of Britons thought their government was concealing the true number of immigrants.^[74]

In March 2018, journalist Rod Liddle was reported to have promoted the conspiracy theory. According to *Vice*, he pushed the narrative of "white genocide", after publishing an article in *The Spectator* which suggested that the apparent genocide that Lauren Southern had exposed in her documentary in South Africa would have been rewarded with professional acclaim had it been "any other brand of genocide".^[141]

Katie Hopkins, an English media personality, has made a documentary supporting the conspiracy theory of an ongoing genocide against white farmers in South Africa.^{[141][142]} She has also promoted the idea that both immigration and multiculturalism are intended to cause white genocide.^[143] *Yahoo! News* reported that while traveling for the documentary, "her intention was to 'expose' the white genocide" happening to farmers in South Africa.^{[144][145]}

In September 2018, with the arrest of some Neo-Nazi members of National Action, the counter-terrorist Prevent programme identified the white supremacist group as subscribing to the white extinction conspiracy theory. A governmental co-ordinator stated that the organization "sees the extinction of white people as a very real and likely possibility".^[146]

In March 2019, Catherine Blaiklock resigned as leader of The Brexit Party after she shared a photo on social media of a multi-racial primary school in England with the caption "This is a British school. This is white genocide".^[147] Another shared post of Blaiklock's claimed that multiculturalism amounted to "the replacement of the indigenous European people".^[147] In April 2019, a Conservative Party candidate for local elections was revealed to have promoted the conspiracy theory after endorsing online material which claimed that the "destruction of the white race" was being brought about by non-white immigrants who were "flooding" Europe "disguised as so-called 'refugees'" in an alleged plot to "enforce miscegenation" on white Europeans. He was subsequently suspended from his party but remained on the ballot for the election.^[148]

The identitarian movement Generation Identity party leader and neo-Nazi Mark Collett has been actively promoting the conspiracy theory on Twitter and YouTube.^{[149][150]}

North America

Canada

In June 2017, far-right political commentator Faith Goldy endorsed the conspiracy theory. Publishing a video for The Rebel Media called "White Genocide in Canada?",^[151] Goldy compared the shifting demographics of Canada and its immigration policies to "white genocide".^{[152][153]} Goldy has been described by GQ magazine as "one of Canada's most prominent propagandists" for the theory.^[154] Later that month, Vice Media co-founder Gavin McInnes promoted the conspiracy theory after stating that white women having abortions and immigration is "leading to white genocide in the West". He also claimed "white genocide" was "much more intense" in South Africa.^{[155][156][157]} McInnes is one of the main leaders of the far-right factions that believe in the conspiracy theory.^[157]



Gavin McInnes

In December 2017, YouTuber Stefan Molyneux pushed the conspiracy theory, claiming there was a "demographic decline among the whites that is happening in Europe and in North America", that supposedly predicted a "quasi-extinction" of white people.^[158] Molyneux, an advocate of the theory,^[159] in February 2018 published a video regarding the concept, titled "White Farmers Slaughtered in South Africa", which interviewed fellow white genocide conspiracy theorist Lauren Southern.^[141] Southern, a far-right activist, has frequently pushed white genocide rhetoric, using it as an argument against immigration.^{[160][161][162]} She has advocated for European countries to refuse refugees from Africa and Asia, saying that immigration would lead to white genocide,^[161] and has been labelled in media as a "booster" for the conspiracy at large.^[10] In 2018, Southern produced a documentary called *Farmlands* about post-Apartheid farm violence in South Africa.^[163]

In March 2019, white supremacist Paul Fromm was reported to have endorsed the "white genocide" themed (*The Great Replacement*) manifesto of the Christchurch mosque shooting perpetrator.^[164] Referring to it as "cogent" and a "historical document", Fromm republished the manifesto on his website, stating that he agreed with its analysis.^[165]

United States

As early as 2007, conservative Ann Coulter described non-white immigration to the United States as "white genocide" in her article titled "Bush's America: Roach Motel".^{[166][167][168]} Vox has reported on Coulter as one of many providing a platform for "the 'white genocide' myth".^[51] She has been described as a "champion" of the ideas behind the conspiracy theory following a book she wrote on the subject.^[169] She has also claimed that "a genocide" is occurring against white South African farmers.^[10]

In October 2014, white nationalist Greg Johnson promoted the white extinction conspiracy theory, suggesting that "the organized Jewish community is the *principal* enemy — not the sole enemy, but the principal enemy — of every attempt to halt and reverse white extinction. One cannot defeat an enemy one will not name. Therefore, White Nationalism is inescapably anti-Semitic".^[170]

In December 2014, Ku Klux Klan leader Thomas Robb proposed in an interview with Al Jazeera that a white genocide was occurring due to the immigration and high birth-rates of non-whites. He claimed that demographic change was affecting the economic, racial and social landscape of Harrison, Arkansas and the US at large, and that this amounted to "white genocide being committed against our people".^[171] Around that time, the concept appeared on billboards in the United States near Birmingham, Alabama,^[172] and Harrison, Arkansas.^[173]



Ann Coulter at the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference.

2016 US presidential election campaigns

In October 2015, Mike Cernovich, a social media personality, published the white nationalist catchphrase "diversity is code for white genocide", claiming that his discovery of the concept had caused him to cease being a libertarian and instead become an alt-right activist.^{[174][175][176]} Days later, he invoked the conspiracy theory again, warning that "white genocide will sweep up the SJWs"; a prediction that Muslims would murder what he labelled social justice warriors in the United States.^[177] In November 2015, Cernovich insisted that "white genocide is real" in relation to South Africa.^[178] After a public backlash, he deleted several tweets referring to the conspiracy theory.^{[179][180][121]}



Mike Cernovich in August 2018

During the 2016 US presidential election, there were allegations that aspects of the conspiracy theory had been adopted as dog-whistling by some mainstream conservative political figures. In January 2016, Donald Trump garnered controversy after retweeting Twitter user @WhiteGenocideTM,^[181] and @EustaceFash, whose Twitter header image at the time also included the term "white genocide".^[182] A 2016 analysis of his Twitter feed during the Republican presidential primaries showed that 62% of those that he chose to retweet in an average week followed multiple accounts which discussed the conspiracy theory, and 21% followed prominent white nationalists online.^[183]

By March 2016, Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., had been accused by mainstream media of being an advocate of the conspiracy theory,^[184] or pretending to be an advocate for political gain,^[185] after his interview with white supremacist James Edwards during the 2016 Trump presidential campaign.^[186] The following month, Jack Posobiec, a leading alt-right Trump activist and, at the time, US naval intelligence officer with military security clearance, began frequently tweeting about white genocide.^[187]

While Donald Trump supporters on the Reddit discussion forum /r/The Donald generally agreed that white genocide is occurring, they disagreed about the responsible parties. The Southern Poverty Law Center said "Tea Party conservatives characterize it as a scheme by Democrats to gain voters. For the white nationalists, the main villain is 'international Jewry.' InfoWars fans blame 'globalists'—a label that is often interchangeable with 'Jews'—seeking to dumb down Western populations with 'low-IQ migrants' who are more easily controlled." In August 2017, at least 330 /r/The_Donald posts referred to the "Kalergi plan", a purported conspiracy to replace the European population with African migrants.^[31]

The month before the US presidential election, white supremacist Richard B. Spencer declared that whatever the upcoming result, that he would be "profoundly grateful to Donald Trump for the rest of my life". Invoking "white genocide" in the same interview, he labelled anti-discrimination laws "the enemy of all tradition, not just the Anglo-Saxon American society it has helped destroy", and Martin Luther King Jr. as "the god of white dispossession".^[188] The same month, William Daniel Johnson, leader of the American Freedom Party, was pushing the theory in support of Trump for president; denouncing "the death of the white race, caused by the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism", he said that America needed a "strong leader" like Trump, likening the Republican candidate favorably with Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte.^[189]



Richard B. Spencer in 2016

By early November, one week before the election, KKK leader Thomas Robb was invoking the conspiracy theory in support of Trump's Make America Great Again message, claiming that the concept was inextricably linked with the restoration of white power in the US^[190] In February 2017, it was reported that neo-Confederate activist Michael Hill was using Rhodesia to reference and warn against an apparent "racial genocide" of whites in the United States.^[191] Hill, a co-founder of the League of the South, equates multiculturalism within the country as part of an ongoing white genocide.^[192]

By March 2017, Republican congressman Steve King was using rhetoric that Mother Jones and Paste writers described as invoking the conspiracy theory, saying that "We can't restore our civilization with somebody else's babies" and using the phrase "cultural suicide".^[193] Vox and The New Republic have described him as an adherent of the theory that immigration and other forms of population shift represent a slow genocide against white populations.^{[51][194]} In the same month, white supremacist David Duke, a former Republican Louisiana State Representative, posted YouTube videos stating that Jews are "organizing white genocide."^{[195][196][197][198][199]} The former Grand Wizard of the KKK also accused Anthony Bourdain of wanting a genocide of white people.^{[200][201]}

Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville

In August 2017, a white supremacist protest named the Unite the Right rally was held in Charlottesville, Virginia, largely driven by the ideology of the "white genocide" narrative. The protest was ostensibly centered around the impending removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee, who was the commander of the Confederate States Army during the American Civil War. The night before the rally, leaflets were distributed en masse in the city, bearing the recurrent slogan "Diversity is a code word for white genocide".^[99]

Speaking at the event in Charlottesville, Jason Kessler, the primary organizer behind the rally and a white nationalist blogger, claimed that "the first and foremost reason that we're having this rally, is for that park and for that statue. It's about white genocide. It's about the replacement of our people,

culturally and ethnically".^[98] Kessler has repeatedly promoted the conspiracy theory, using his website to criticize what he called "white genocide" and an "attack on white history".^{[202][203][204]}

Other prominent white nationalists also tied the conspiracy theory to the motivations behind Unite the Right. Giving a speech at the rally, Neo-nazi Mike Enoch said "We're here to talk about white genocide, the deliberate and intentional displacement of the white race".^[205]

Trump administration foreign policy on South Africa

In the fall of 2017, it was reported broadcaster Alex Jones and his fake news organization *InfoWars* were promoting the white genocide myth. The Suidlanders (a völkisch group involved in spreading the conspiracy theory in South Africa) accepted invitations to contribute to the platform on multiple occasions.^[93] Around the same time, Jones claimed white genocide was a serious threat in the US; on a cultural front, with what he asserted were black NFL players advocating for "white genocide" by refusing to stand for the national anthem, and the apparent physical threat of Democrats and communists plotting genocidal attacks specifically against white Americans.^[206]

Jones has been described as particularly instrumental in the American spread of conspiracy theories about white genocide in Africa,^{[93][207]} while his long-time political ally, radio host Michael Savage, has devoted an episode of his show to conspiracy theories about white genocide in the region.^[43]

In August 2018, US President Donald Trump brought the concept of "white genocide" in relation to South Africa significantly further into mainstream media discourse, after he publicly instructed Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to investigate South African farm attacks,^[37] an instruction which was broadly portrayed in media as the Trump and his administration advocating for an unfounded conspiracy theory.^{[41][208][209][210]}

Trump had apparently gained his information from Tucker Carlson, a conservative political commentator for Fox News, who has been described as bringing the conspiracy theory of an ongoing "white genocide" in South Africa into the mainstream after a piece about the topic on his show caught the attention of president.^{[211][212][43][213][214]} *Vox* described him as having "taken up the cause" of the "virulent, racist conspiracy theory" of white genocide.^[42] *Amanda Marcotte*, writing in *Salon*, has said that Carlson avoids using the specific phrase "white genocide," but that "its basic premise is embedded throughout his show."^[211] The SPLC has accused his website, *The Daily Caller*, of promoting the theory in relation to South African farm attacks.^{[215][43]} Carlson asserted he was shocked his statements could be considered an appeal to white nationalists, dismissing questions about his show's high support among them as "stupid" and saying he knew nothing about them.^[212]

New York magazine had claimed Trump was attempting to "change the conversation – to one about 'white genocide' in South Africa";^[39] *Esquire* reported that the "President of the United States is now openly promoting an international racist conspiracy theory as the official foreign policy of the United States."^[216] According to the SPLC, Trump had "tweeted out his intention to put the full force of the US State Department behind a white nationalist conspiracy theory."^[217]



Jason Kessler c. 2017



Alex Jones in 2017

Reaction to US-South Africa policy

In August 2018, many politicians and public figures responded critically to US President Donald Trump's foreign policy initiative to investigate the seizure of land from white farmers and apparent evoking of the conspiracy theory. These included multiple members of the South African Parliament and RSA Deputy President David Mabuza, who rejected the conspiracy theory, calling it "far from the truth." He stated that "we would like to discourage those who are using this sensitive and emotive issue of land to divide us as South Africans by distorting our land reform measures to the international community and spreading falsehoods that our 'white farmers' are facing the onslaught from their own government."^[38]

Julius Malema MP reacted, saying "there is no white genocide in South Africa",^[218] that Trump's intervention into their ongoing land reform issues "only made them more determined ... to expropriate our land without compensation",^{[219][38]} and that there is a black genocide in the US^[219] Jeremy Cronin MP stated that the South African government needed to "send a signal to the courts, to Trump, to Fox News Agency" over the issue. The deputy Minister of Public Works spoke against the conspiracy theory; in a committee meeting in the South African parliament, he indicated that land expropriation without compensation should not be viewed as a white genocide.^[220] Whereas Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Lindiwe Sisulu, claimed that his foreign policy tweet was "regrettable" and "based on false information",^[121] and that the conspiracy theory in general was "a right-wing ideology, and it is very unfortunate."^[221]

In the US, former US Ambassador to South Africa Patrick Gaspard, and American media personalities Chris Cuomo, Mika Brzezinski and Al Sharpton spoke out against the US President on the issue. Labelling Trump's actions as "dangerous and poisoned",^[38] Gaspard opposed the concept, claiming the conspiracy theory was "trafficking in a white supremacist story line,"^[222] and that the concept is a "white-supremacist meme from the darkest place."^[38]

Cuomo, a television journalist, while stating that "like all conspiracy tripe, there's a kernel of truth" to the theory (in relation to land reform in South Africa) but concluded that the concept was a "bogus cause that white nationalists are selling."^{[223][224]} He rejected what he said was Donald Trump, and his administration, claiming "white farmers" were "being hunted down and killed and having their land stolen".^[224]

With a substantive response, American anti-racism activist, Tim Wise, critically analyzed the conspiracy theory further; stating that it was a form of negrophobia, being directed politically to "scare white Americans" about non-whites within the US^[225] Wise has proposed that the paranoia around the conspiracy theory dates back to the Haitian Revolution and North American slave rebellions, but that changing demographics of the United States have heightened existing anxiety, stating that "the reason it is amplified today is that in the recent past the cultural norm of the country was still dominantly white."^[28]

While Mika Brzezinski, co-host of *Morning Joe*, spoke out against the concept,^[226] labelling it as a "a racist conspiracy theory",^[227] American civil rights activist, Al Sharpton joined Brzezinski in her opposition, labelling it as "neo-Nazi propaganda." Discussing the issue on an MSNBC segment with Katy Tur and foreign correspondent Greg Myre, Sharpton stated that it's "not true" that "white farmers are being killed in South Africa" for racial reasons.^{[228][229]} A year later, Trump administration speechwriter Stephen Miller claimed US citizens were facing the same threat, saying that nonwhite congresswomen want to, "destroy America with open borders," even if "American citizens lose their jobs, lose their homes, lose their livelihoods, lose their health coverage, and lose their very lives."^[230]

Subsequent events

In November 2018, Matthew Heimbach, former leader of the neo-Nazi Traditionalist Worker Party, led a protest in Little Rock, Arkansas over an alleged white genocide occurring in South Africa.^[15] He called on the US government to sanction South Africa for the "violation of international law" in its treatment of white South Africans.^[139] In January 2019, the KKK distributed business cards in Philadelphia with various racist slogans such as "White People are a World Wide minority and there are programs of Genocide against white children",^[192] in what appeared to be deliberately targeting African-American neighborhoods with material which promoted the conspiracy theory.^[231]

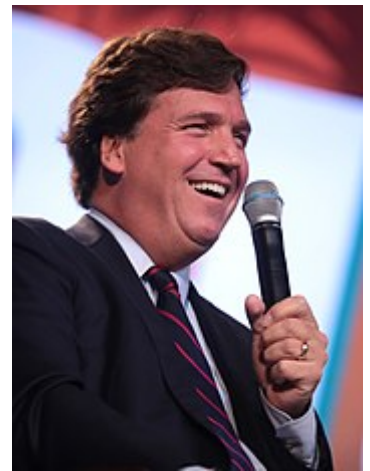


Stephen Miller in 2016

Three independent analyses of Trump re-election campaign advertisements shown in 2019 found 2,200 ads warning of an "invasion" by immigrants. In asking for help to fund a wall along the US-Mexico border, the ads included all-caps warnings of a "state of emergency," saying, "America's safety is at risk," and that it is "critical that we stop the invasion."^[232] Other ads said Trump has, "taken multiple trips to the border to show the true invasion happening but the Democrats and the Fake News Media just won't listen."^[233] In remarks in the Oval Office in March 2019, Trump said immigrants were trying to, "rush our borders.... People hate the word 'invasion,' but that's what it is. It's an invasion of drugs and criminals and people." In a June 6 interview, Trump told Fox News, "I told Mexico, if you don't stop this onslaught, this invasion -- people get angry when I use the word 'invasion' -- people like Nancy Pelosi that honestly they don't know what the hell they're talking about."^[234]

Fox News era

The American news channel Fox News is described by multiple mainstream media sources as aligned with the concept and narrative of the white genocide conspiracy theory and using its prominence to bring rhetoric of demographic threats to white Americans further into the center of US discourse. Amanda Marcotte, writing in Salon, has stated that Fox's default ideology is "strikingly similar" to "fascistic replacement theory" and "white genocide". Marcotte wrote that this ideology is especially the case for the network's prime-time commentators, such as Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham.^[235] Paste magazine has argued that "far-right" Great Replacement rhetoric is not only a nightly fixture of Tucker Carlson Tonight, but a "foundational" principle of Rupert Murdoch's media empire.^[236]



Tucker Carlson in 2018

GQ has reported that Fox News' "popular primetime" shows are an important pipeline to President Donald Trump's political positions, such as the investigation into land reform in South Africa, and that Carlson's show in particular dedicates segments to "'great replacement' propaganda".^[4] The warnings delivered by "conservative pundits on Fox News" are driving fears of an "existential threat" of a white genocide, according to The Atlantic, who particularly analyzed Laura Ingraham's nativist remarks, such as "massive demographic changes" apparently being inflicted upon white Americans against their will.^[53] While The New York Times identified Carlson as engaging in replacement theory fear-mongering, in relation to family birthrates in

the US,^[237] *ThinkProgress* accused him of using the popularity of Fox News, as a platform, to push fears of demographic change through immigration and feminism, causing a so-called "genocide" of American white men.^[238]

Oceania

Australia

American Neo-Nazi literature such as *The Turner Diaries* and Lane's *White Genocide Manifesto* have spread online to right wing groups in Australia. A collection of writings called *Siege* by James Mason was cited as an inspiration by some of the twenty-two neo-Nazis who infiltrated the New South Wales Young Nationals party from which they were banned for life for trying to advance the creation of an ethno-state.^[239] Themes of the "defense of Western civilization" and the achievements of ethnic Whites have become racist dog whistles for groups advancing theories of an impending white genocide.^[240]

In March 2018, several Australian tabloids owned by the News Corporation ran articles alleging that South African whites were faced with genocide and which led the Australian home affairs minister Peter Dutton to promise fast-track visas for any South African white wishing to emigrate to Australia.^[43] Dutton is known for his anti-immigrant and anti-refugee stance, which led to questions about his willingness to accept South African whites into Australia as refugees, since he normally opposes Australia accepting refugees.^[10] One News Corp columnist, Miranda Devine, wrote about the ties as she saw them between the Australian people and "our oppressed white, Christian, industrious, rugby and cricket-playing Commonwealth cousins" threatened by South African blacks whom she promised would integrate "seamlessly" into Australia as opposed to immigration from Third World countries.^[241]

Another Australian News Corporation columnist Caroline Marcus connected the alleged plight of South African whites to what she saw as a broader attack on whites across the world, writing "the truth is, there are versions of this anti-white, vengeance theme swirling in movements around the western world, from Black Lives Matter in the US to Invasion Day protests back home."^[241] The British journalist Jason Wilson noted that the News Corporation run by the Australian media magnate Rupert Murdoch also owns Fox News, which has aired stories portraying South African whites as a persecuted minority, leading him to accuse the News Corporation of promoting this narrative around the world.^[43]

In 2018, a resolution declaring "It's OK to be white", and decrying "the deplorable rise of anti-white racism and attacks on the Western civilization," was introduced in the Australian Senate by Pauline Hanson, an anti-immigrant Senator who leads the One Nation Party. The motion was narrowly defeated.^[242] The same slogan, which is associated with white supremacist rhetoric, was also depicted on a shirt worn by the far-right Canadian youtuber Lauren Southern during a visit to Australia.^{[239][242]}

After Australian white-genocide conspiracy theorist Brenton Tarrant carried out the March 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings, Queensland Senator Fraser Anning released a statement saying the cause of the attacks was "the immigration program which allowed Muslim fanatics to migrate to New Zealand in the first place". Anning has called for a "final solution" to nonwhite immigration to Australia,^[243] and frequently issues calls to



Pauline Hanson in 2017

New Zealand

The accused perpetrator of the Christchurch mosque shootings alluded to "white genocide" and ethnic and racial "replacement" in a 74-page manifesto posted shortly before the attacks.^[245]

South African expatriates in New Zealand have been spreading white genocide myths on Facebook and by demonstrating in marches.^[240]

Influence on far-right terrorism

United States

Examples of white supremacist mass murders and terrorist attacks

Timothy McVeigh, the main perpetrator of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that killed 168 and injured more than 680, carried pages from *The Turner Diaries*, a fictional account of white supremacists who ignite a revolution by blowing up the FBI headquarters with a truck bomb.^[246] The book was greatly influential in shaping white nationalism and in the later development of white genocide conspiracy theory.^{[239][247]} Although the bomber didn't attribute his motives to the white nationalist movement, he frequently cited *The Turner Diaries* and had been reprimanded in the Army for wearing a "white power" T-shirt purchased at a Ku Klux Klan rally.^[248]

Year	Location	Killed	Injured
1995	Oklahoma*	168	680
2000	Pittsburgh	5	1
2011	Norway	77	209
2014	Kansas	3	0
2015	Charleston	9	1
2017	Charlottesville	1	28
2018	Pittsburgh	11	7
2019	Christchurch	51	49
2019	San Diego	1	3
2019	El Paso	22	24

Richard Baumhammers, the perpetrator of a 2000 shooting spree in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that killed five people and injured a sixth, complained that European Americans are being outnumbered by minorities and immigrants, calling on a website for "an end to non-white immigration" because "almost all" present day immigration "is non-European."^{[249][250]}

Frazier Glenn Miller Jr., the perpetrator of a shooting spree that killed three people at a Jewish community center and retirement home in Overland Park, Kansas, had supported the slogan: "Diversity is code for white genocide."^[251] He stated that the "systematic genocide of white people by Jews" was his motive,^[252] and that he, "had a patriotic intent to stop genocide against my people".^[253] On Easter Sunday, the day after the shooting, white supremacists delivered "white genocide" themed Easter eggs to several houses in Henrico County, Virginia, repeating the "Diversity = white genocide" mantra.^{[254][255]}

Dylann Roof, the perpetrator of the Charleston church shooting that killed nine people and injured a tenth, included a photo on his Facebook page of his wearing a jacket decorated with two emblems that are popular among American white supremacists: the flag of the former Rhodesia (now known as Zimbabwe) and the flag of apartheid-era South Africa.^{[256][257][258]} He had been blogging on a website called "The Last Rhodesian" (www.lastrhodesian.com) registered on February 9, 2015,^{[259][260][261]} which included an unsigned manifesto containing his opinions of "Blacks", "Jews", "Hispanics" and "East Asians."^{[262][263]} Saying he became "racially aware" as a result of the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin, he wrote that because he kept hearing people talk about the incident, he "decided to look him up" and

read the [Wikipedia](#) article about it. He concluded that [George Zimmerman](#) had been in the right, and was unable to comprehend why the case had gained national attention. He said he then searched for black on white crime on [Google](#) and found the website of the [Council of Conservative Citizens](#), where he read "pages upon pages" of cases involving black people murdering white people, stating that he had "never been the same since that day."^[261] For these reasons, Federal prosecutors said he was "self-radicalized" online, instead of adopting his white supremacist ideology through personal associations or experiences with white supremacists.^[264]

The driver responsible for the [Charlottesville car attack](#) against protesters at the [Unite the Right](#) rally had previously espoused [neo-Nazi](#) and [white supremacist](#) beliefs.^{[265][266]} He had driven from Ohio to join the rally in which participants chanted, "Jews will not replace us."^[267] He killed one person and injured 28.

The perpetrator of the [Pittsburgh synagogue shooting](#) that killed eleven and injured another seven wrote "Jews are the children of Satan" in his social media profile, using neo-Nazi and white supremacist symbolism associated with David Lane, along with the Nazi slogan, "*Heil Hitler*."^[268] He supported white genocide conspiracy theories, writing in one instance, "Daily Reminder: Diversity means chasing down the last white person."^[269] He also wrote diatribes against white women who have relationships with black men.^[270] In the weeks before the shooting, Bowers made anti-Semitic posts directed at the [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society](#)^{[271][272]} who sponsor the National Refugee Shabbat.^[273] Shortly before the attack, in an apparent reference to [immigrants to the United States](#), he posted on Gab that "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in."^{[274][275]}



Memorials to victims of the mass shooting outside the [Tree of Life synagogue](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on November 4, 2018

The perpetrator of the [Poway synagogue shooting](#) that killed one and injured three others blamed Jews for white genocide, which he described as the "meticulously planned genocide of the European race" in his manifesto.^{[276][277]}

The perpetrator of the [2019 El Paso shooting](#) that killed 23 and injured another 23^[278] had published a manifesto expressing support for the [Christchurch shooter](#) and his manifesto, saying the El Paso attack was in response to a "Hispanic invasion of Texas ... defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement.... the Hispanic community was not my target before I read *The Great Replacement*."^[279] Several commentators noted that the manifesto echoed themes in [Donald Trump's](#) campaign speeches, including repeated claims of a Hispanic invasion along with general extremism and hateful language, whose proponents have been emboldened and mobilized by Trump's rhetoric^{[20][280][281]} and increasingly frequent talking points in right-wing media outlets.^[19] Trump, in turn, called for "strong background checks, perhaps marrying this legislation with desperately needed immigration reform", which some commentators said blamed immigration for the massacre.^[282]

Europe

[Anders Behring Breivik](#), the perpetrator of the [2011 Norway attacks](#), had participated for years in debates on Internet forums and spoken against Islam and immigration.^[283] He wrote a 1,518-page compendium including frequent mentions of alleged ongoing genocide against white Europeans.^{[68][284]} Analysts described him as having [Islamophobic](#) views and a hatred of Islam,^{[285][286]} and as someone who

considered himself as a knight dedicated to stemming the tide of Muslim immigration into Europe.^{[287][288]} The text copies sections of the *Unabomber* manifesto, without giving credit, while substituting the words "cultural Marxists" for "leftists" and "Muslims" for "black people."^[289] *The New York Times* described American influences in the writings, noting that the compendium mentions the anti-Islamist American Robert Spencer 64 times and cites Spencer's works at great length.^[290] The work of Bat Ye'or^[291] is cited dozens of times.^[292] It regards Islam and "cultural Marxism" as the enemy and argues for the annihilation of "Eurabia" and multiculturalism, to preserve a Christian Europe.^{[293][294][295]}



The 2011 Oslo bombing killed eight people and injured at least 209. A few hours later, the attacker shot and killed 69 others, all but 14 of whom were teenagers.^[283]

New Zealand

The perpetrator of the *Christchurch mosque shootings* that killed 51 and injured 49 explained in a manifesto that he carried out the attack to fight ongoing "white genocide" by foreign "invaders."^[296] He had forwarded stories about white women's low fertility rates on his social media accounts. Photographs from his initial court appearance showed him making the "OK" symbol appropriated by white supremacists with his fingers.^[297]

Criticism and resistance

White genocide is a myth based on false science, false history, and hatred.^{[22][23][24]} There is no evidence that white people are dying out or will die out, or that they are facing extermination.^{[24][26][28]} White supremacists claim that ethnic diversity is equivalent to white genocide.^[28] Scholars describe white supremacists as fabricating paranoid claims that their survival as a race is threatened, for example by, "individualism, celibacy, feminism and other forms of sex-role confusion, misplaced environmentalism, and white demonization and guilt," all of which are claimed to promote reproductive failure.^[298]

The purpose of the white genocide conspiracy theory is to scare white people in countries that are diversifying and justify a commitment to a white nationalist agenda,^[26] using evidence of a declining birth rate in support of their extremist views and calls to violence.^[299] White supremacists are successfully constructing false narratives of genocide to incite violence at an increasing rate.^[22] Literature propounding the white genocide conspiracy theory has incited violence; *The Turner Diaries*, for instance, is responsible for inciting many violent crimes, including those of Timothy McVeigh.^{[245][247][26]} The US Republican Party as led by Donald Trump has repeatedly and openly courted white supremacists and endorsed the falsehoods they promote, including those of white genocide.^[29]



Timothy McVeigh

In October 2016, Sanjiv Bhattacharya analyzed the belief in the conspiracy theory amongst the alt-right. While considering the prospect that non-Hispanic whites will be less than 50% of the US population by 2044; Bhattacharya, a British journalist, pointed out the racist hypocrisy in the statement "Diversity equals white genocide", discussing how the "alt right loves to evoke genocide while harbouring Holocaust deniers".^[300]

Around the Christmas period of 2016, George Ciccariello-Maher, an American political scientist, satirically tweeted "All I Want for Christmas is White Genocide". As a result of the ensuing controversy, Ciccariello-Maher resigned from his job as an associate professor of politics and global studies at Drexel

University.^[301] Ciccariello-Maher continued to strongly oppose the conspiracy theory, claiming that it was "invented by white supremacists and used to denounce everything from inter-racial relationships to multicultural policies."^[302] He has labelled the concept as a "figment of the racist imagination" and claimed that "it should be mocked."^[303]

Derek Black, an American former white supremacist and godson of David Duke, after initially supporting and helping to popularize the concept,^{[304][305]} has renounced and opposed the white genocide conspiracy theory.^[306] Black has claimed that the concept was about pushing white nationalists into a false and overt paranoia about demographics of the United States.^[26] Eli Saslow, an American journalist who worked with Black on his 2018 book *Rising out of hatred*, has spoken against the conspiracy theory, labelling it as a "really effective" form of propaganda or indoctrination. He stated that "unfortunately, in part because it's built upon a very real and dark truth in American history—which is that white supremacy has always been a big part of what this country is—white nationalists were able to start capitalizing on that."^[307] Saslow has claimed the conspiracy theory is a way to "sanitize" white America's history of racism and violence, by focusing on the "ways that white people are under attack in this country," including "white genocide" and "building a wall."^[305]

In January 2019, Democratic Philadelphia City Council member Kenyatta Johnson labelled the Ku Klux Klan's distribution of "white genocide" promotional material in black neighborhoods of Philadelphia as an "upsetting and disgusting" act.^[231] In June 2019, Canadian author Naomi Klein addressed the narrative of "white genocide", criticizing the concept as an attack on women's reproductive freedom, in that it wished to deny abortion rights to white women having white children, while seeking to suppress non-white immigrant birthrates.^[308] The following month, critical theorist Bernard Harcourt detailed how the American New Right was seeking to orient its political message around the fear of a white genocide occurring. He proposed that "neo-fascist, white supremacist, revolutionary language" was becoming mainstream and was in effect "starting to change the way people are willing to express themselves", including President Trump.^[309]

In March 2019, journalist Adam Serwer suggested that the conspiracy theory did not sincerely refer to "mass murder, ethnic cleansing, or even violence," but rather to a perceived "loss of political and cultural hegemony in countries that white supremacists think should belong to white people by law." Serwer proposed that the conspiracy was "a kind of projection, a paranoia that the past genocide, colonialism, and ethnic cleansing forced on the West's former subjects will be visited upon it."^{[55][56]} The same month, Farhad Manjoo detailed how "white-extinction theory" was nonsense. Proposing that the "white genocide" label had "failed to take off", proving ineffective for conspiracy theorists attempting to push the narrative. Manjoo, an American journalist, suggested that the "Great Replacement" (which the Christchurch mosque shooter used for a manifesto title) was a softer reinvention, being to the white genocide conspiracy theory what the term Identitarian is to "white supremacist."^[310]

In April 2019, British academic Elif Shafak detailed how Renaud Camus' theory of the Great Replacement has created an ideological worldview for the far-right to amplify into a "white genocide" narrative in the West. Shafak argues that the conspiracy theory is also embedded in the works of Thilo Sarrazin, such as *Germany Abolishes Itself* and 2018's *Hostile Takeover*.^[311] Later that month, Jonathan Freedland and Mehdi Hasan released a joint analysis of far-right extremism and the ideology behind "white genocide". Discussing Pittsburgh synagogue shooter, Robert Gregory Bowers, and his rhetoric, Freedland and Hasan, both political journalists, labelled the conspiracy theory as racist and unhinged and argued that it had both the Muslim and Jewish "communities in its murderous sights". They concluded that both groups should "stand and fight it together".^[312]



Thilo Sarrazin in 2009

In May 2019, political commentator Nick Cohen analyzed how "white genocide" narratives created anti-immigrant and societal sexual tension. He argued that the conspiracy theory was an effective form of racism and propaganda, which had penetrated Viktor Orbán's Hungarian government, but revealed a far-right paranoia that European men were not virile enough.^[313] In June 2019, professor of economics Jonathan Portes, while describing the concept as a "lunatic" conspiracy theory, detailed how more respectable versions of "white genocide" were being promoted by academic and media figures, and therefore pushing the idea further into mainstream discourse.^[314]

See also

- Angry white male
- Disappearing blonde gene hoax
- Solutrean hypothesis controversy
- Demographic threat

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UFO conspiracy theories

UFO conspiracy theories argue that various governments, and politicians globally, most especially the officials of Washington, D.C., are suppressing evidence of extraterrestrial unidentified flying objects and alien visitors. Such conspiracy theories usually argue that Earth governments, especially the Government of the United States, are in communication or cooperation with extraterrestrials despite public claims to the contrary, and further that some of these theories claim that the governments are explicitly allowing alien abduction.^[1]

Various UFO conspiracy ideas have flourished on the internet and were frequently featured on Art Bell's program, *Coast to Coast AM*.^[2]

Individuals who have publicly stated that UFO evidence is being suppressed include Senator Barry Goldwater, British Admiral Lord Hill-Norton (former NATO head and chief of the British Defence Staff), Vice Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter (first CIA director), Israeli brigadier general Haim Eshed (former director of space programs for the Israel Ministry of Defense),^[3] astronauts Gordon Cooper^{[4][5]} and Edgar Mitchell,^[6] and former Canadian Defence Minister Paul Hellyer. Beyond their testimonies and reports they have presented no evidence to substantiate their statements and claims. According to the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry little or no evidence exists to support them despite significant research on the subject by non-governmental scientific agencies.^{[7][8][9][10]}

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Chronology

1930s

On the night before Halloween in 1938, [Orson Welles](#) directed *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* live radio adaptation of [H. G. Wells's](#) novel, *The War of the Worlds* (serialized in 1897). By mimicking a news broadcast, the show was quite realistic sounding for its time, and some listeners were fooled into thinking that a [Martian invasion](#) was underway in the United States. Widespread confusion was followed by outrage and [controversy](#). Some later studies have argued that the contemporary press exaggerated the extent of the panic, but it remains clear that many people were caught up, to some degree, in the confusion.

In other countries, reactions were similar. In 1949, part of the script for *The War of the Worlds* was read out over the radio in Quito, Ecuador, without announcement, as if it were a major piece of breaking news. Huge crowds of people emerged onto the streets and sought refuge inside churches with their families. When the radio station was informed of this, its announcers broadcast the fact that no invasion was happening. An angry mob formed and burned the station to the ground, causing between six and twenty deaths. Many other countries also experienced problems when broadcasting *The War of the Worlds*.

According to U.S. Air Force Captain [Edward J. Ruppelt](#),^[11] the Air Force's files often mentioned the panicked aftermath of the 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast as a possible reaction of the public to confirmed evidence of UFOs; however, the files have not been made available to corroborate his assertions.

1940s

[Donald Keyhoe](#) later began investigating flying saucers for *True* magazine. Keyhoe was one of the first significant conspiracy theorists, asserting eventually that the saucers were from outer space and were on some sort of scouting mission. Keyhoe claimed to derive his theory from his contacts in Air Force and Navy intelligence. Project Sign, based at Air Technical Intelligence Command at [Wright-Patterson Air Force Base](#) and its successors [Project Grudge](#) and [Project Blue Book](#) were officially assigned to

investigate the flying saucers. Edward Ruppelt's book *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects*,^[12] reports that many people within these research groups did in fact support the hypothesis that the flying saucers were from outer space.

Keyhoe later founded NICAP, a civilian investigation group that asserted the U.S. government was lying about UFOs and covering up information that should be shared with the public. NICAP had many influential board members, including Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, the first director of the CIA. To date no substantiating evidence for NICAP's assertions has been presented beyond accounts that are anecdotal and documented hear-say or rumor.^[7]

The Great Los Angeles Air Raid

"The Great Los Angeles Air Raid" also known as "The Battle of Los Angeles" is the name given by contemporary sources to the imaginary enemy attack and subsequent anti-aircraft artillery barrage which took place from late February 24 to early February 25, 1942 over Los Angeles, California.^{[13][14]}

Initially, the target of the aerial barrage was thought to be an attacking force from Japan, but Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox speaking at a press conference shortly afterward called the incident a "false alarm." A small number of modern-day UFOlogists have suggested the reported targets were extraterrestrial spacecraft.^[15]

When documenting the incident in 1983, the U.S. Office of Air Force History attributed the event to a case of "war nerves" likely triggered by a lost weather balloon and exacerbated by stray flares and shell bursts from adjoining batteries.^[16]

Ghost rockets

In 1946 and 1947, numerous reports occurred of so-called ghost rockets appearing over Scandinavian countries, primarily Sweden, which then spread into other European countries.^[17] One USAF top secret document from 1948 stated that Swedish Air Force Intelligence informed them that some of their investigators felt that the reported objects were not only real but could not be explained as having earthly origins. Similarly, 20 years later, Greek physicist Dr. Paul Santorini publicly stated that in 1947 he was put in charge of a Greek military investigation into reports of ghost rockets sighted over Greece [Timothy Good 1988, p 23; Donald Keyhoe, p 142].^[17] Again, they quickly concluded the objects were real and not of conventional origin. Santorini claimed their investigation was killed by U.S. scientists and high military officials who had already concluded the objects were extraterrestrial in origin and feared public panic because no defense existed.^[18]

Roswell Incident

In 1947, the United States Air Force issued a press release stating that a "flying disk" had been recovered near Roswell, New Mexico. This press release was quickly withdrawn, and officials stated that a weather balloon had been misidentified. The Roswell case quickly faded even from the attention of most UFOlogists until the 1970s. Speculation persisted despite the official denial that an alien spacecraft crashed near Roswell.

In the 1990s, the US military published two reports disclosing the true nature of the crashed aircraft: a surveillance balloon from Project Mogul. Nevertheless, the Roswell incident continues to be of interest to the media, and conspiracy theories surrounding the event persist. Roswell has been described as "the world's most famous, most exhaustively investigated and most thoroughly debunked UFO claim".^[19]

Mantell Incident

In 1948, Air Force pilot Thomas Mantell was killed in a crash while pursuing what he described as "a metallic object...of tremendous size".^[20] Project Blue Book concluded that Mantell had lost control of his aircraft while chasing a then-classified Skyhook balloon.^[21] Some UFOlogists reject Bluebook's conclusion because of its initial suggestion that Mantell was chasing "Venus or a comet".^[22]

Project Sign

The U.S. Air Force may have planted the seeds of UFO conspiracy theories with Project Sign (established 1947) (which became Project Grudge and Project Blue Book). Edward J. Ruppelt, the first director of Blue Book, characterized the Air Force's public behavior regarding UFOs as "schizophrenic": alternately open and transparent, then secretive and dismissive. Ruppelt also revealed that in mid-1948, Project Sign issued a top secret Estimate of the Situation concluding that the flying saucers were not only real but probably extraterrestrial in origin. According to Ruppelt, the Estimate was ordered destroyed by Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg.^[11]

Project Sign's final report, published in early 1949, stated that while some UFOs appeared to represent actual aircraft, data were insufficient to determine their origin.^[23]

On April 3, 1949, radio personality Walter Winchell broadcast the claim that flying saucers were Russian in origin.^{[24][25]}

Interplanetary Phenomenon Unit

Some UFOlogists have claimed the existence of a U.S. government group called the "Interplanetary Phenomenon Unit" allegedly established by General Douglas MacArthur that was "supposedly formed to investigate crashed and retrieved flying saucers".^[26]

1950s

The 1950s saw an increase in both governmental and civilian investigative efforts and reports of public disinformation and suppression of evidence.

The UK Ministry of Defence's UFO Project has its roots in a study commissioned in 1950 by the MOD's then Chief Scientific Adviser, the great radar scientist Sir Henry Tizard. As a result of his insistence that UFO sightings should not be dismissed without some form of proper scientific study, the Department set up the Flying Saucer Working Party (or FSWP).^[27]

In August 1950, Montanan baseball manager Nicholas Mariana filmed several UFOs with his color 16mm camera. Project Blue Book was called in and, after inspecting the film, Mariana claimed it was returned to him with critical footage removed, clearly showing the objects as disc-shaped. The incident sparked nationwide media attention.

Frank Scully's 1950 *Behind the Flying Saucers* suggested that the U.S. government had recovered a crashed flying saucer and its dead occupants near Aztec, New Mexico, in 1948. It was later revealed that Scully had been the victim of a prank by "two veteran confidence artists".^[28]

Donald Keyhoe was a retired U.S. Marine who wrote a series of popular books and magazine articles that were very influential in shaping public opinion, arguing that UFOs were indeed real and that the U.S. government was suppressing UFO evidence. Keyhoe's first article on the subject came out in *True* magazine, January 1950, and was a national sensation. His first book, *Flying Saucers Are Real* also came out in 1950, about the same time as Frank Scully's book, and was a bestseller. In 1956, Keyhoe helped establish NICAP, a powerful civilian UFO investigating group with many inside sources. Keyhoe became its director and continued his attacks on the Air Force. Other contemporary critics also charged that the United States Air Force was perpetrating a cover-up with its Project Blue Book.

Canadian radio engineer Wilbert B. Smith, who worked for the Canadian Department of Transport, was interested in flying saucer propulsion technology and wondered if the assertions in the just-published Scully and Keyhoe books were factual. In September 1950, he had the Canadian embassy in Washington D.C. arrange contact with U.S. officials to try to discover the truth of the matter. Smith was briefed by Dr. Robert Sarbacher, a physicist and consultant to the Defense Department's Research and Development Board. Other correspondence, having to do with Keyhoe needing to get clearance to publish another article on Smith's theories of UFO propulsion, indicated that Bush and his group were operating out of the Research and Development Board.^[29] Smith then briefed superiors in the Canadian government, leading to the establishment of Project Magnet, a small Canadian government UFO research effort. Canadian documents and Smith's private papers were uncovered in the late 1970s, and by 1984, other alleged documents emerged claiming the existence of a highly secret UFO oversight committee of scientists and military people called Majestic 12, again naming Vannevar Bush. Sarbacher was also interviewed in the 1980s and corroborated the information in Smith's memos and correspondence. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Smith granted public interviews, and among other things stated that he had been lent crashed UFO material for analysis by a highly secret U.S. government group which he wouldn't name.^[30]

A few weeks after the Robertson Panel, the Air Force issued Regulation 200-2, ordering air base officers to publicly discuss UFO incidents only if they were judged to have been solved, and to classify all the unsolved cases to keep them out of the public eye. In addition, UFO investigative duties started to be taken on by the newly formed 4602nd Air Intelligence Squadron (AISS) of the Air Defense Command. The 4602nd AISS was tasked with investigating only the most important UFO cases having intelligence or national security implications. These were deliberately siphoned away from Blue Book, leaving Blue Book to deal with the more trivial reports.^[31]

In 1954 an automatic working station for UFO monitoring was installed at Shirley's Bay near Ottawa in Canada. After this station detected the first suspicious event, all data gained by this station was classified as secret, although the cameras of the monitoring station could not make any pictures because of fog.^[32]

1956 saw the publication of Gray Barker's *They Knew Too Much About Flying Saucers*, the book which publicized the idea of sinister Men in Black who appear to UFO witnesses and warn them to keep quiet. There has been continued speculation that the men in black are government agents who harass and threaten UFO witnesses.

Also in 1956, the group Foundation for Earth-Space Relations, led by film producer Tzadi Sophit, tested their own flying saucer outside the Long Island town of Ridge Landing. It is speculated in Robertson's *The Long Island Saucer* that an FBI cover-up silenced witnesses.^[33]

On January 22, 1958, when Donald Keyhoe appeared on CBS television, his statements on UFOs were censored by the Air Force. During the show when Keyhoe tried to depart from the censored script to "reveal something that has never been disclosed before", CBS cut the sound, later stating Keyhoe was about to violate "predetermined security standards" and about to say something he wasn't "authorized to

release". What Keyhoe was about to reveal were four publicly unknown military studies concluding UFOs were interplanetary including the 1948 Project Sign Estimate of the Situation and a 1952 Project Blue Book engineering analysis of UFO motion presented at the Robertson Panel.^[34]

Astronaut Gordon Cooper reported suppression of a flying saucer movie filmed in high clarity by two Edwards AFB range photographers on May 3, 1957. Cooper said he viewed developed negatives of the object, clearly showing a dish-like object with a dome on top and something like holes or ports in the dome. When later interviewed by James McDonald, the photographers and another witness confirmed the story. Cooper said military authorities then picked up the film and neither he nor the photographers ever heard what happened to it. The incident was also reported in a few newspapers, such as the Los Angeles Times. The official explanation was that the photographers had filmed a weather balloon distorted by hot desert air.^[35]

1960s

Throughout much of the 1960s, atmospheric physicist James E. McDonald suggested—via lectures, articles and letters—that the U.S. Government was mishandling evidence that would support the extraterrestrial hypothesis.^[36]

Vallee and the "Pentacle Memorandum"

In June 1967, researcher Jacques Vallee was tasked with organizing files collected by Project Bluebook investigator J. Allen Hynek.^{[37][38]} Among those files, Vallee found a memo dated 9 January 1953 addressed an assistant of Edward J. Ruppelt, an Air Force officer assigned to Bluebook.^[37] The memo was signed "H.C. Cross", but Vallee elected to refer to the author under the pseudonym "Pentacle".^[37]

The memo referred to a previously-unknown analysis of several thousand UFO reports, along with calls for agreements about "what can and what cannot be discussed" with the 1953 Robertson Panel.^[37] Writing in his 1967 journal, Vallee expressed the opinion that the memo, if it were published, "would cause an even bigger uproar among foreign scientists than among Americans: it would prove the devious nature of the statements made by the Pentagon all these years about the non-existence of UFOs".^[37]

1970s

Jerome Clark comments that many UFO conspiracy theory tales "can be traced to a mock documentary Alternative 3, broadcast on British television on June 20, 1977 (but intended for April Fools' Day), and subsequently turned into a paperback book."^[39]

Holloman Air Force Base

Clark cites a 1973 encounter as perhaps the earliest suggestion that the U.S. government was involved with ETs. That year, Robert Emenegger and Allan Sandler of Los Angeles, California were in contact with officials at Norton Air Force Base in order to make a documentary film. Emenegger and Sandler report that Air Force Officials (including Paul Shartle) suggested incorporating UFO information in the documentary, including as its centerpiece genuine footage of a 1971 UFO landing at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico. Furthermore, says Emenegger, he was given a tour of Holloman AFB and was shown where officials conferred with Extraterrestrial Biological Entities (EBEs). This was supposedly not the first time the U.S. had met these aliens, as Emenegger reported that his U.S. military sources had

"been monitoring signals from an alien group with which they were unfamiliar, and did their ET guests know anything about them? The ETs said no" ^[40] The documentary was released in 1974 as *UFOs: Past, Present, and Future* (narrated by Rod Serling) containing only a few seconds of the Holloman UFO footage, the remainder of the landing depicted with illustrations and re-enactments.

In 1988, Shartle said that the film in question was genuine, and that he had seen it several times.

In 1976 a televised documentary report *UFOs: It Has Begun*^[41] written by Robert Emenegger was presented by Rod Serling, Burgess Meredith and José Ferrer. Some sequences were recreated based upon the statements of eyewitness observers, together with the findings and conclusions of governmental civil and military investigations. The documentary uses a hypothetical UFO landing at Holloman AFB as a backdrop.

Paul Bennewitz

The late 1970s also saw the beginning of controversy centered on Paul Bennewitz of Albuquerque, New Mexico.^[42]

1980s

MJ-12

The so-called Majestic 12 documents surfaced in 1982, suggesting that there was secret, high-level U.S. government interest in UFOs dating to the 1940s. Upon examination, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) declared the documents to be "completely bogus", and many ufologists consider them to be an elaborate hoax.^{[43][44]}

Linda Moulton Howe

Linda Moulton Howe is an advocate of conspiracy theories that cattle mutilations are of extraterrestrial origin and speculations that the U.S. government is involved with aliens.^{[45][46][47][48]}

Milton William Cooper

In the 1980s, Milton William Cooper achieved a degree of prominence due to his conspiratorial writings.^[49]

Bob Lazar

In November 1989, Bob Lazar appeared in a special interview with investigative reporter George Knapp on Las Vegas TV station KLAS to discuss his alleged employment at S-4.^[50] In his interview with Knapp, Lazar said he first thought the saucers were secret, terrestrial aircraft, whose test flights must have been responsible for many UFO reports. Gradually, on closer examination and from having been shown multiple briefing documents, Lazar came to the conclusion that the discs must have been of extraterrestrial origin. He claims that they use moscovium, an element that decays in a fraction of a second, to warp space, and that "Grey" aliens are from the Zeta Reticuli star system. According to the Los Angeles Times, he never obtained the degrees he claims to hold from MIT and Caltech.^{[51][52]}

UFO Cover-Up?: Live!

On October 14, 1988, actor Mike Farrell hosted *U.S. UFO Cover-Up: Live!*, a two-hour television special "focusing on the government's handling of information regarding UFOs" and "whether there has been any suppression of evidence supporting the existence of UFOs".^[53]

July 1989 MUFON Convention

The Mutual UFO Network held their 1989 annual convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, on July 1, 1989.

The Ufologist Bill Moore was scheduled as the main speaker, and he refused to submit his paper for review prior to the convention, and also announced that he would not answer any follow-up questions as was common practice. Unlike most of the convention's attendees, Moore did not stay at the same hotel that was hosting the convention.

When he spoke, Moore said that he and others had been part of an elaborate, long-term disinformation campaign begun primarily to discredit Paul Bennewitz: "My role in the affair ... was primarily that of a freelancer providing information on Paul's (Bennewitz) current thinking and activities".^[54] Air Force Sergeant Richard C. Doty was also involved, said Moore, though Moore thought Doty was "simply a pawn in a much larger game, as was I."^[54] One of their goals, Moore said, was to disseminate information and watch as it was passed from person to person in order to study information channels.

Moore said that he "was in a rather unique position" in the disinformation campaign: "judging by the positions of the people I knew to be directly involved in it, [the disinformation] definitely had something to do with national security. There was no way I was going to allow the opportunity to pass me by ... I would play the disinformation game, get my hands dirty just often enough to lead those directing the process into believing I was doing what they wanted me to do, and all the while continuing to burrow my way into the matrix so as to learn as much as possible about who was directing it and why."^[55] Once he finished the speech, Moore immediately left the hotel and Las Vegas that same night.

Moore's claims sent shock waves through the small, tight-knit UFO community, which remains divided as to the reliability of his assertions.

1990s

On November 24, 1992, a UFO reportedly crashed in Southaven Park, Shirley, New York.^[56] John Ford, a Long Island MUFON researcher, investigated the crash. Four years later, on June 12, 1996, Ford was arrested and charged with plotting to poison several local politicians by sneaking radium in their toothpaste. On advice of counsel Ford pleaded insanity and was committed to the Mid Hudson Psychiatric Center. Critics say the charges are a frame-up.

The Branton Files have circulated on the internet at least since the mid-1990s. They essentially recirculate the information presented above, with many asides from "Branton", the document's editor.

Philip Schneider of the patriot movement, an engineer and geologist formerly working for the U.S. government, made a few appearances at UFO conventions in the 1990s, espousing essentially a new version of the theories mentioned above. He claimed to have played a role in the construction of Deep Underground Military Bases (DUMBs) across the United States, and as a result he said that he had been exposed to classified information of various sorts as well as having personal experiences with EBEs. He claimed to have survived the Dulce Base catastrophe and decided to tell his tale.^[57] He died by suicide on

January 17, 1996, after a series of lectures given in late 1995 on topics including the Black Budget and underground alien bases. Others believe that Schneider did not take his own life and that he was actually murdered by the government.^[58]

In 1999 a group in France published a study, "UFOs and Defense: What Must We Be Prepared For?" Among other topics, the study concluded that the United States government has withheld valuable evidence.^[59]

2000s

2003 saw the publication of *Alien Encounters* (ISBN 1-57821-205-7), by Chuck Missler and Mark Eastman, which primarily re-stated the notions presented above (especially Cooper's) and presents them as fact.

MoD secret files

Eight files from 1978 to 1987 on UFO sightings were first released on May 14, 2008, to the National Archives' website by the British Ministry of Defence. Two hundred files were set to be made public by 2012. The files are correspondence from the public sent to government officials, such as the MoD and Margaret Thatcher. The information can be downloaded.^[60] Copies of Lt. Col. Halt's letter regarding the sighting at RAF Woodbridge (see above) to the U.K. Ministry of Defence were routinely released (without additional comment) by the USA's base public affairs staff throughout the 1980s until the base closed. The MoD released the files due to requests under the Freedom of Information Act.^[61] The files included, among other things, alien craft flying over Liverpool and Waterloo Bridge in London.^[62]

Disclosure

In the early 2000s, the concept of "disclosure" became increasingly popular in the UFO conspiracy community: that the government had classified and withheld information on alien contact and full disclosure was needed, and was pursued by activist lobbying groups.

In 1993, Steven M. Greer founded the Disclosure Project to promote the concept. In May 2001, Greer held a press conference at the National Press Club in D.C that demanded Congress hold hearings on "secret U.S. involvement with UFOs and extraterrestrials".^{[63][64][65]} It was described by an attending BBC reporter as "the strangest ever news conference hosted by Washington's august National Press Club."^[66] The Disclosure Project's claims were met with by derision by skeptics and spokespeople for the U. S. Air Force.^{[67][68]}

In 2013, the production company CHD2, LLC^[69] held a "Citizen Hearing on Disclosure" at the National Press Club in D.C from 29 April to 3 May 2013. The group paid former U.S. Senator Mike Gravel and former Representatives Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, Roscoe Bartlett, Merrill Cook, Darlene Hooley, and Lynn Woolsey \$20,000 each to participate, and to preside over panels of academics and former government and military officials discussing UFOs and extraterrestrials.^[70]

Other such groups include Citizens Against UFO Secrecy, founded in 1977.

Allegations of evidence suppression

Allegations of suppression of UFO related evidence have persisted for many decades. Some conspiracy theories also claim that some governments might have removed and/or destroyed/suppressed physical evidence; some examples follow.

On July 7, 1947, William Rhodes photographed an unusual object over Phoenix, Arizona.^[71] The photos appeared in a Phoenix newspaper and a few other papers. An Army Air Force intelligence officer and an FBI agent interviewed Rhodes on August 29 and convinced him to surrender the negatives, which he did the next day. He was informed he wouldn't get them back, but later he tried, unsuccessfully, to retrieve them.^{[72][73]} The photos were analyzed and subsequently appeared in some classified Air Force UFO intelligence reports. (Randle, 34–45, full account)^[74]

A June 27, 1950, movie of a "flying disk" over Louisville, Kentucky, taken by a Louisville *Courier-Journal* photographer, had the USAF Directors of counterintelligence (AFOSI) and intelligence discussing in memos how to best obtain the movie and interview the photographer without revealing Air Force interest. One memo suggested the FBI be used, then precluded the FBI getting involved. Another memo said "it would be nice if OSI could arrange to secure a copy of the film in some covert manner," but if that wasn't feasible, one of the Air Force scientists might have to negotiate directly with the newspaper. In a recent interview, the photographer confirmed meeting with military intelligence and still having the film in his possession until then, but refused to say what happened to the film after that.^[75]

In another 1950 movie incident from Montana, Nicholas Mariana filmed some unusual aerial objects and eventually turned the film over to the U.S. Air Force, but insisted that the first part of the film, clearly showing the objects as spinning discs, had been removed when it was returned to him.^[76]

According to some conspiracy theorists, during the military investigation of green fireballs in New Mexico, UFOs were photographed by a tracking camera over White Sands Proving Grounds on April 27, 1949. They claim that the final report in 1951 on the green fireball investigation claimed there was insufficient data to determine anything. Conspiracy theorists claim that documents later uncovered by Dr. Bruce Maccabee indicate that triangulation was accomplished. The conspiracy theorists also claim that the data reduction and photographs showed four objects about 30 feet in diameter flying in formation at high speed at an altitude of about 30 miles. According to conspiracy theorists, Maccabee says this result was apparently suppressed from the final report.^[77]

On January 22, 1958, when NICAP director Donald Keyhoe appeared on CBS television, his statements on UFOs were censored by the Air Force. During the show when Keyhoe tried to depart from the censored script to "reveal something that has never been disclosed before," CBS cut the sound, later stating Keyhoe was about to violate "predetermined security standards" and about to say something he wasn't "authorized to release." Conspiracy theorists claim that what Keyhoe was about to reveal were four publicly unknown military studies concluding UFOs were interplanetary (including the 1948 Project Sign Estimate of the Situation and Blue Book's 1952 engineering analysis of UFO motion). (Good, 286–287; Dolan 293–295)^{[17][78]}

A March 1, 1967 memo directed to all USAF divisions, from USAF Lt. General Hewitt Wheless, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, stated that unverified information indicated that unknown individuals, impersonating USAF officers and other military personnel, had been harassing civilian UFO witnesses, warning them not to talk, and also confiscating film, referring specifically to the Heflin incident. AFOSI was to be notified if any personnel were to become aware of any other incidents. (Document in Fawcett & Greenwood, 236.)^[79]

John Callahan, former Division Chief of the Accidents and Investigations Branch of the FAA, Washington D.C., also a Disclosure Project witness, said that following the Japan Air Lines flight 1628 incident that involved a giant UFO over Alaska, recorded by air and ground radar, the FAA conducted an investigation.

Callahan held a briefing a few days later for President Reagan's Scientific Study Group, the FBI, and CIA. After the briefing, one of the CIA agents told everybody they "were never there and this never happened," adding they were fearful of public panic.^[80]

According to one theory related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the CIA killed Kennedy in order to prevent him from leaking information to the Soviet Union about a covert program to reverse-engineer alien technology (i.e., Majestic 12).^[81]

Nick Cook, an aviation investigative journalist for *Jane's Information Group* and researcher of *Billion Dollar Secret*^[82] and author of *The Hunt for Zero Point*^[83] claims to have uncovered documentary evidence that top-secret US Defense Industry technology has been developed by government-backed Defense Industry programs, beginning in the 1940s using research conducted by Nazi scientists during WWII and recovered by Allied Military Intelligence, then taken to the U.S. and developed further with the collaboration of the same former German scientists at top-secret facilities established at White Sands, New Mexico, and later at Area 51, allegedly resulting in production of real-world prototype operational supersonic craft actually tested and used in clandestine military exercises, with other developments incorporated later into spy aircraft tasked with overflying hostile countries: the UFO story that evidence of alien technology is being suppressed and removed or destroyed was generated and then promoted by the CIA, beginning 1947, as false-lead disinformation to cover it all up for the sake of National Security, particularly during the Cold War, at a time when (his investigations found) the Soviet Union too was developing its own top-secret high-tech UFO craft. Cook's conclusions, alleging suppression of evidence of advanced *human* technology instead of alien, together with what he presents as declassified top-secret documents and blueprints, and his interviews of various experts (some of doubtful reliability), was developed and broadcast as a feature documentary on British television in 2005 as "UFOs: The Secret Evidence" and in the US in 2006 as a two-part episode on the History Channel's UFO Files, retitled "An Alien History of Planet Earth", with an added introduction by actor William Shatner. The *History Channel* program teaser promised "...a look at rumors of classified military aircraft incorporating alien technology into their designs."

In 1993, Steven M. Greer founded the Disclosure project to promote the concept of disclosing allegedly suppressed evidence of extraterrestrials. In May 2001, Greer held a press conference at the National Press Club in D.C that featured "20 retired Air Force, Federal Aviation Administration and intelligence officers" who demanded that Congress begin hearings on "secret U.S. involvement with UFOs and extraterrestrials"^{[63][64][65]}

In 2013, Sen. Mike Gravel claimed that the government was suppressing evidence of extraterrestrials.^[84]

Benjamin Radford has pointed out how unlikely such suppression of evidence is given that "[t]he UFO coverup conspiracy would have to span decades, cross international borders, and transcend political administrations" and that "all of the world's governments, in perpetuity, regardless of which political party is in power and even among enemies, [would] have colluded to continue the coverup."^[85]

In popular fiction

Popular fiction has often included scenarios where a government does not disclose the discovery of non-human intelligence to its populace.

In 1968, director Stanley Kubrick explored the idea in his film *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the accompanying novel by Arthur C. Clarke. In those works, the discovery of a non-human artifact prompts a government coverup, with secrecy extending even to the astronauts tasked with investigating the

discovery.^{[86][87]} In 1977, Steven Spielberg's film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* tells the story of Roy Neary, an everyday blue-collar worker in Indiana, whose UFO experience sets him on a quest to overcome government secrecy and disinformation.

In the 1980 film *Hangar 18*, the government recovers a crashed alien craft in the desert of the US Southwest and attempts to cover up the discovery. Like *2001*, it is learned that the aliens have affected the course of human evolution. In the 1982 film *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, government scientists hide the discovery of an alien being. In the 1990 film *Total Recall*, government forces cover-up the discovery of ancient alien artifacts on Mars.

Beginning in 1993, the television series *The X-Files* followed FBI Agent Fox Mulder as he attempted to overcome a government effort to hide the truth about UFOs. Conversely the 1997 sci-fi/comedy film *Men in Black* followed government agents tasked with maintaining the coverup to prevent a panic. A government coverup and reverse-engineering attempt after Roswell was a central element of the 1996 film *Independence Day*.

Other television programs and films *Stargate*, *Project Blue Book* and any number of novels have featured elements of UFO conspiracy theories. Fictionalized elements may include the government's sinister operatives from the men in black, the military bases known as Area 51, RAF Rudloe Manor or Porton Down, a rumored crash site in Roswell, New Mexico, the Rendlesham Forest Incident, a political committee dubbed "Majestic 12", or the successor of the UK Ministry of Defence's *Flying Saucer Working Party* (FSWP).^[88] The novel *The Doomsday Conspiracy* by Sidney Sheldon includes a UFO conspiracy in its plot.^[89]

See also

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- [Bielefeld Conspiracy](#)
 - [Brookings Report](#)
 - [Crop circle](#)
 - [Flying Saucers](#)
 - [Kecksburg UFO incident](#)
 - [List of major UFO sightings](#)
 - [Magazines of anomalous phenomena](#)
 - [New World Order \(conspiracy\)](#)
 - [Project Blue Book](#)
 - [Storm Area 51](#)
 - [The Disclosure Project](#)
 - [Ummo](#)
 - [United States gravity control propulsion research \(1955–1974\)](#)

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External links

- CIA's Role in the Study of UFOs, 1947–90 (<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/97unclass/ufo.html>)
 - National Security Agency UFO Documents Index (http://www.nsa.gov/public_info/declass/ufo/index.shtml)
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Roswell incident

The **Roswell incident** refers to the July 1947 crash of a United States Army Air Forces balloon at a ranch near Roswell, New Mexico, as well as the subsequent conspiracy theories that claim the crash was actually that of a flying saucer, and that the truth was covered up by the US government.^{[1][2]} On July 8, 1947, Roswell Army Air Field issued a press release stating that they had recovered a "flying disc" from a ranch near Roswell. The Army quickly retracted the statement and instead said that the crashed object was merely a conventional weather balloon.^[3]

The Roswell incident didn't surface again until the late 1970s, when a retired Lt. Colonel, in an interview with a UFO researcher, first admitted the weather balloon account had been a cover-story. Ufologists began promoting a variety of increasingly elaborate conspiracy theories, claiming that one or more alien spacecraft had crash-landed and that the extraterrestrial occupants had been recovered by the military, which then engaged in a cover-up.

In 1994, the US Air Force published a report identifying the crashed object as a nuclear test surveillance balloon from Project Mogul. A second Air Force report, published in 1997, concluded that stories of "aliens bodies" probably stemmed from test dummies being dropped from high altitude.

Nevertheless, conspiracy theories surrounding the event persist, and the Roswell incident continues to be of interest in popular media. The incident has been described as "the world's most famous, most exhaustively investigated, and most thoroughly debunked UFO claim".^[4]

Roswell incident



Roswell Daily Record, July 8, 1947, announcing the "capture" of a "flying saucer"

Date	1947
Location	 Lincoln County, New Mexico, United States
Coordinates	33°58.1′N 105°14.6′W﻿ / ﻿

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Events of July 1947

The Roswell incident occurred amid the flying saucer craze of 1947.^[5] On June 26, media nationwide had reported civilian pilot Kenneth Arnold's story of seeing what he labelled "Flying Saucers". Historians would later chronicle over 800 "copycat" sightings that were reported after the Arnold story was published.^[6]

Debris discovered

The sequence of events was triggered in late June or early July 1947, when William "Mac" Brazel, a ranch foreman, noticed clusters of debris on the Foster ranch, which was about 30 miles (50 km) outside of Roswell. Initial press coverage suggested Brazel first noticed the material in early July, though later reports suggested a June date for the discovery of debris.^[7]

Discovery reported to authorities (July 6)

On or around July 6, Brazel reported the discovery to Sheriff George Wilcox in Roswell.^[7] Wilcox, in turn, called RAAF intelligence officer Major Jesse Marcel, who assembled a detail to visit the Foster ranch. Around 4 PM that afternoon, Brazel left Roswell, followed by Marcel, Lt Colonel Sheridan Cavitt and Master Sergeant Bill Rickett.^[8]

The following morning, presumably July 7, the Army Air Force detail inspected the debris on the Foster ranch and transported some or all of it back to Roswell.^[9]

Public announcement of a recovered "flying disc" (July 8)

On July 8, 1947, RAAF public information officer Walter Haut issued a press release stating that personnel from the field's 509th Operations Group had recovered a "flying disc", which had landed on a ranch near Roswell. The report was immediately picked up by numerous news outlets:^[10]



A 1946 patch of the 509th Bomb Group.

The many rumors regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of the 509th Bomb group of the Eighth Air Force, Roswell Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff's office of Chaves County.

The flying object landed on a ranch near Roswell sometime last week. Not having phone facilities, the rancher stored the disc until such time as he was able to contact the sheriff's office, who in turn notified Maj. Jesse A. Marcel of the 509th Bomb Group Intelligence Office.

Action was immediately taken and the disc was picked up at the rancher's home. It was inspected at the Roswell Army Air Field and subsequently loaned by Major Marcel to higher headquarters.^{[11][12]}

Researcher Kendrick Frazier notes: "The idea of alien spacecraft hadn't gained hold yet. At best the concern was that if they were physical craft at all, they might be Soviet or even holdover Nazi aircraft."^[13]



The Sacramento Bee article detailing the RAAF statements

Weather balloon vs. nuclear test monitoring balloon (July 9)

Colonel William H. Blanchard, commanding officer of the 509th, contacted General Roger M. Ramey of the Eighth Air Force in Fort Worth, Texas, and Ramey ordered the object be flown to Fort Worth Army Air Field. At the base, Warrant Officer Irving Newton confirmed Ramey's preliminary opinion, identifying the object as being a weather balloon and its "kite",^[14] a nickname for a radar reflector used to track the balloons from the ground.

A telex sent to a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) office from the Fort Worth, Texas, office quoted a Major from the Eighth Air Force (also based in Fort Worth at Carswell Air Force Base) on July 8, 1947, as saying that "The disc is hexagonal in shape and was suspended from a balloon [*sic*] by cable, which balloon [*sic*] was approximately twenty feet (6 m) in diameter. Major Curtan further advises [*sic*] that the object found resembles a high altitude weather balloon with a radar reflector, but that telephonic conversation between their office and Wright field had not [UNINTELLIGIBLE] borne out this belief."^[15]

On July 9, the press reported that General Ramey had stated that a weather balloon was recovered by the RAAF personnel. A press conference was held, featuring debris (foil, rubber and wood) said to be from the crashed object, which matched the weather balloon description. Historian Robert Goldberg wrote that the intended effect was achieved: "the story died the next day".^[16]

As described in the July 9, 1947, edition of the *Roswell Daily Record*:

The balloon which held it up, if that was how it worked, must have been 12 feet [3.5 m] long, [Brazel] felt, measuring the distance by the size of the room in which he sat. The rubber was smoky gray in color and scattered over an area about 200 yards [180 m] in diameter. When the debris was gathered up, the tinfoil, paper, tape, and sticks made a bundle about three feet [1 m] long and 7 or 8 inches [18 or 20 cm] thick, while the rubber made a bundle about 18 or 20 inches [45 or 50 cm] long and about 8 inches [20 cm] thick. In all, he estimated, the entire lot would have weighed maybe five pounds [2 kg]. There was no sign of any metal in the area which might have been used for an engine, and no sign of any propellers of any kind, although at least one paper fin had been glued onto some of the tinfoil. There were no words to be found anywhere on the instrument, although there were letters on some of the parts. Considerable Scotch tape and some tape with flowers printed upon it had been used in the construction. No strings or wires were to be found but there were some eyelets in the paper to indicate that some sort of attachment may have been used.^[17]



On July 11, 1947, airmen at Fort Worth Army Air Field demonstrate for assembled press.

On July 9, Brazel told the *Roswell Daily Record* that the debris consisted of "large area of bright wreckage made up of rubber strips, tinfoil, a rather tough paper and sticks."^[18] He paid little attention to it but returned later with his wife and daughter to gather up some of the debris.^[18] Some accounts have described Brazel as having gathered some of the material earlier, rolling it together and stashing it under some brush.^[14]

On July 9, Marcel explained: "[We] spent a couple of hours Monday afternoon [July 7] looking for any more parts of the weather device", said Marcel. "We found a few more patches of tinfoil and rubber."^[9] That day it was reported that Brazel had reported the debris after hearing reports about "flying discs" and wondering if that was what he had picked up, then going to see Sheriff Wilcox where he "whispered kinda confidential like" that he may have found a flying disc.^[18]

The modern consensus is that the debris was that of a military balloon.^[1] The balloon had been launched from Alamogordo Army Air Field a month earlier. It carried a radar reflector and classified Project Mogul sensors for experimental monitoring of Soviet nuclear testing.^[19]

In the 1990s, a scholarly consensus emerged concluding that the military decided to conceal the true purpose of the crashed device—nuclear test monitoring—and instead inform the public that the crash was of a weather balloon.^[3] Subsequently, the Roswell incident faded from public attention for more than 30 years.^[20]

Subsequent publications and conspiracy claims

After 30 years, interest in the Roswell incident surged in the late 1970s. The Roswell incident was featured in films, TV shows, and books. By the 1990s, mainstream political interest resulted in an Air Force report that identified the debris as a Project Mogul balloon.

Amid increasingly complex conspiracy theories, multiple hoaxes and legends about "alien bodies" were incorporated into the Roswell mythos. The trend culminating in 1995's purported footage of an "Alien Autopsy", which filmmakers later revealed to be a hoax (though they preferred the term "reconstruction").

Renewed interest (1978)

In February 1978, UFO researcher Stanton Friedman interviewed Jesse Marcel, the only person known to have accompanied the Roswell debris from where it was recovered to Fort Worth where reporters saw material that was claimed to be part of the recovered object.



At Fort Worth Army Air Field, Major Jesse A. Marcel posing with debris on July 8, 1947.

In November 1979, Marcel's first filmed interview was featured in a documentary titled "UFO's Are Real" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGts5UH1BT4>), co-written by Friedman.^[21] The film had a limited release but was later syndicated for broadcasting. On February 28, 1980, sensationalist tabloid The National Enquirer brought large-scale attention to the Marcel story.^[22] On September 20, 1980, the TV series In Search of... aired an interview (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IWZdeDBOqo>) where Marcel described his participation in the 1947 press conference:

"They wanted some comments from me, but I wasn't at liberty to do that. So, all I could do is keep my mouth shut. And General Ramey is the one who discussed - told the newspapers, I mean the newsman, what it was, and to forget about it. It is nothing more than a weather observation balloon. Of course, we both knew differently."^{[23][24]}

The accounts given by Friedman and others in the following years elevated Roswell from a forgotten incident to perhaps the most famous UFO case of all time.^[4] Marcel gave a final interview to HBO's America Undercover which aired in August 1985.^[25] In all his statements, Marcel consistently denied the presence of bodies.^[26] Between 1978 and the early 1990s, UFO researchers such as Stanton T. Friedman, William Moore, Karl T. Pflock, and the team of Kevin D. Randle and Donald R. Schmitt interviewed several hundred people who claimed to have had a connection with the events at Roswell in 1947.^[27] Their conclusions were that at least one alien spacecraft crashed near Roswell and a government cover-up of the incident had taken place.^[4]

The Roswell Incident (1980)

In October 1980, Marcel's story was featured in the book *The Roswell Incident* by Charles Berlitz and William Moore. The authors had previously written popular books on such fringe topics as the Philadelphia Experiment and on the Bermuda Triangle.^[3] Though he was uncredited, Friedman carried out some research for the book.^[29]

The book's narrative holds that an alien craft was flying over the New Mexico desert observing US nuclear weapons activity, but crashed after being hit by lightning, killing the aliens on board; a government cover-up duly followed.^[3] Historian Kathy Olmsted writes that book's narrative has come to be known as "version 1" of the Roswell myth. Berlitz and Moore's narrative was dominant until the late 1980s when other authors, attracted by the commercial potential of writing about Roswell, started producing rival accounts.^[30]

Debris and cover-up

The Roswell Incident featured accounts of debris described by Marcel as "nothing made on this earth."^[31] Additional accounts by Bill Brazel,^[32] son of rancher Mac Brazel, neighbor Floyd Proctor^[33] and Walt Whitman Jr.,^[34] son of newsman W. E. Whitman who had interviewed Mac Brazel, suggested the material Marcel recovered had super-strength not associated with a weather balloon.

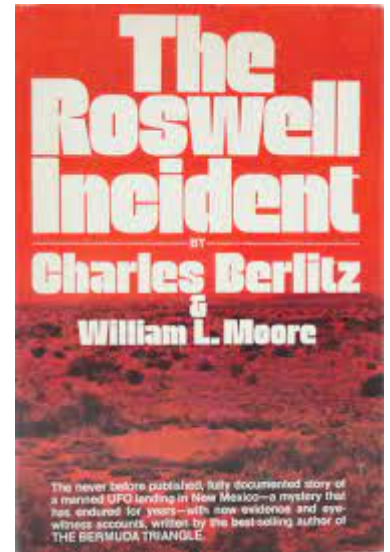
The book introduced the contention that debris which was recovered by Marcel at the Foster ranch, visible in photographs showing Marcel posing with the debris, was substituted for debris from a weather device as part of a cover-up.^{[35][36]} The book also claimed that the debris recovered from the ranch was not permitted a close inspection by the press. The efforts by the military were described as being intended to discredit and "counteract the growing hysteria towards flying saucers".^[37] Two accounts of witness intimidation were included in the book, including the incarceration of Mac Brazel.^{[38][39]}

The authors claimed to have interviewed over 90 witnesses, though the testimony of only 25 appears in the book. Only seven of these people claimed to have seen the debris. Of these, five claimed to have handled it.^[40]

First mention of alien bodies

The Roswell Incident (1980) was the first book to introduce the controversial second-hand stories of civil engineer Grady "Barney" Barnett and a group of archaeology students from an unidentified university encountering wreckage and "alien bodies" while on the Plains of San Agustin before being escorted away by the Army.^[28] The second-hand Barnett stories were described by ufologists as the "one aspect of the account that seemed to conflict with the basic story about the retrieval of highly unusual debris from a sheep ranch outside Corona, New Mexico, in July 1947".^[42]

Many alleged first-hand accounts of the Roswell incident actually contain information from the Aztec, New Mexico, UFO incident,^[43] a hoaxed flying saucer crash which gained national notoriety after being promoted by journalist Frank Scully in his articles and a 1950 book *Behind the Flying Saucers*. The hoax included stories of humanoid bodies and metals with unusual properties.^{[44][43][45]}



The 1980 publication of *The Roswell Incident* included more witnesses to debris marked the first time stories of "alien bodies" were associated with Roswell.^[28]

UFO Crash at Roswell (1991)



Brig. General Roger Ramey, left, and Col. Thomas J. DuBose pose with debris.

In 1991, Kevin Randle and Donald Schmitt published *UFO Crash at Roswell*. They added testimony from 100 new witnesses,^[30] including those who reported an elaborate military cordon and debris recovery operation at the Foster ranch. The book included the new claims of a "gouge ... that extended four or five hundred feet [120 or 150 m]" at the ranch.^[46]

Randle and Schmitt reported Gen. Arthur Exon had been directly aware of debris and bodies, but Exon disputed his depiction,

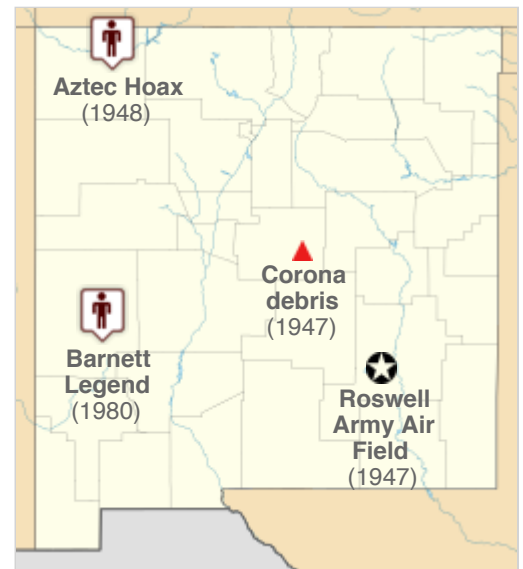
saying his comments had been based exclusively on second-hand rumors.^[47] The 1991 book sold 160,000 copies and served as the basis for the 1994 television film *Roswell*.^{[48][49]} Also in 1991, retired USAF Brigadier General Thomas DuBose, who had posed with debris for press photographs in 1947, publicly acknowledged the weather balloon cover story, corroborating Marcel's previous admissions.^{[50][51][52]}

The Barnett "alien body" accounts were mentioned in the 1991 book, though the dates and locations were changed from the accounts found in 1980's *The Roswell Incident*. In this new account, Brazel was described as leading the Army to a second crash site on the ranch, at which point the Army personnel were supposedly "horrified to find civilians [including Barnett] there already."^[53]

Mortician's purported eyewitness account

UFO Crash at Roswell (1991) prominently featured the stories of mortician Glenn Dennis. On September 20, 1989, an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* had included second-hand stories of "Barney" Barnett seeing alien bodies captured by the Army. Mortician Dennis had called the show's hotline claiming to have knowledge of the events. Dennis claimed to have received "four or five calls" from Air Base with questions about body preservation and inquiries about small or hermetically-sealed caskets; he further claimed that a local nurse told him she had witnessed an "alien autopsy". Dennis's stories of Roswell alien autopsies were the first account to allege alien corpses at the Roswell Army Air Base.^[4] Pflock observed that Dennis's story "sounds like a B-grade thriller conceived by Oliver Stone."^[54]

In September 1991, Dennis co-founded a UFO museum in Roswell along with former RAAF public affairs officer Walter Haut and Max Littell, a real estate salesman.^[55] Dennis appeared in multiple documentaries repeating his story.^{[56][57]}



In 1947, officers from Roswell Army Air Field investigated a debris field near Corona. By the 1980s, popular accounts conflated the debris investigation with two separate myths of humanoid bodies over 300 miles away from Roswell.^[41]

Randle deemed Glenn Dennis one of the "least credible" Roswell witnesses. Randle said Dennis was not credible "for changing the name of the nurse once we had proved she didn't exist."^[58] Scientific skeptic author Brian Dunning concurs that Dennis cannot be regarded as a reliable witness, considering that he had seemingly waited over 40 years before he started recounting a series of unconnected events. Such events, Dunning argues, were then arbitrarily joined together to form what has become the most popular narrative of the alleged alien crash.^[59] Some prominent UFOlogists including Karl T. Pflock,^[60] Kent Jeffrey,^[60] and William L. Moore^[60] have become convinced that there were no aliens or alien spacecraft involved in the Roswell crash.

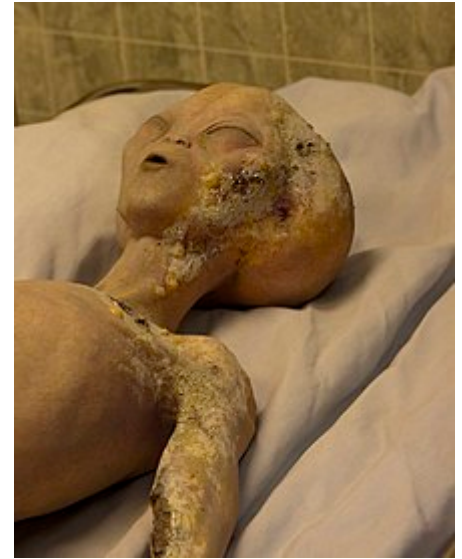
Competing accounts and schism (1992)

In 1992, Stanton Friedman released *Crash at Corona*, co-authored with Don Berliner.^[49] The book introduced new "witnesses" and added to the narrative by doubling the number of flying saucers to two, and the number of aliens to eight – two of which were said to have survived and been taken into custody by the government.^[49] In 1994, Randle and Schmitt authored another book, *The Truth about the UFO Crash at Roswell* which included a claim that alien bodies were taken by cargo plane to be viewed by Dwight D. Eisenhower.^[49]

The existence of so many differing accounts led to a schism among ufologists about the events at Roswell.^[61] The Center for UFO Studies (CUFOS) and the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), two leading UFO societies, disagreed in their views of the various scenarios presented by Randle–Schmitt and Friedman–Berliner; several conferences were held to try to resolve the differences. One issue under discussion was where Barnett was when he saw the alien craft he was said to have encountered. A 1992 UFO conference attempted to achieve a consensus among the various scenarios portrayed in *Crash at Corona* and *UFO Crash at Roswell*; however, the publication of *The Truth About the UFO Crash at Roswell* "resolved" the Barnett problem by simply ignoring Barnett and citing a new location for the alien craft recovery, including a new group of archaeologists not connected to the ones the Barnett story cited.^[61]

Air Force response (1994-1997)

After United States congressional inquiries, the General Accounting Office launched an inquiry and directed the Office of the United States Secretary of the Air Force to conduct an internal investigation. The result was summarized in two reports. The first, released in 1994, concluded that the material recovered in 1947 was likely debris from Project Mogul, a military surveillance program employing high-altitude balloons (and classified portion of an unclassified New York University project by atmospheric researchers^[62]). The second report, released in 1997, concluded that reports of recovered alien bodies were likely a combination of innocently transformed memories of accidents involving military casualties with memories of the recovery of anthropomorphic dummies in military programs such as the 1950s



Gray alien body at Glenn Dennis's UFO museum in Roswell



Alien body exhibit at Glenn Dennis's UFO Museum in Roswell

Operation High Dive, mixed with hoaxes perpetrated by various witnesses and UFO proponents. The psychological effects of time compression and confusion about when events occurred explained the discrepancy with the years in question.^{[63][64][1]}

The Air Force reports were dismissed by UFO proponents as being either disinformation or simply implausible, though skeptical researchers such as Philip J. Klass^[65] and Robert Todd, who had been expressing doubts regarding accounts of aliens for several years, used the reports as the basis for skeptical responses to claims by UFO proponents. After the release of the Air Force reports, several books, such as Kal Korff's *The Roswell UFO Crash: What They Don't Want You To Know* (1997), built on the evidence presented in the reports to conclude "there is no credible evidence that the remains of an extraterrestrial spacecraft was [sic] involved."^[27]

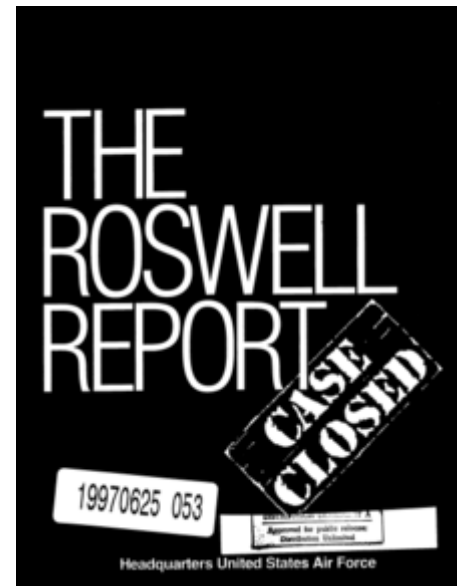
Alien autopsy footage (1995)

In 1995, film footage purporting to show an alien autopsy and claimed to have been taken by a US military official shortly after the Roswell incident was released by Ray Santilli, a London-based video entrepreneur. The footage caused an international sensation when it aired on television networks around the world.^[65] Santilli admitted in 2006 that the film was mostly a reconstruction, but continued to claim it was based on genuine footage now lost, and some original frames that had supposedly survived. A fictionalized version of the creation of the footage and its release was retold in the comedy film *Alien Autopsy* (2006).^{[66][67]}

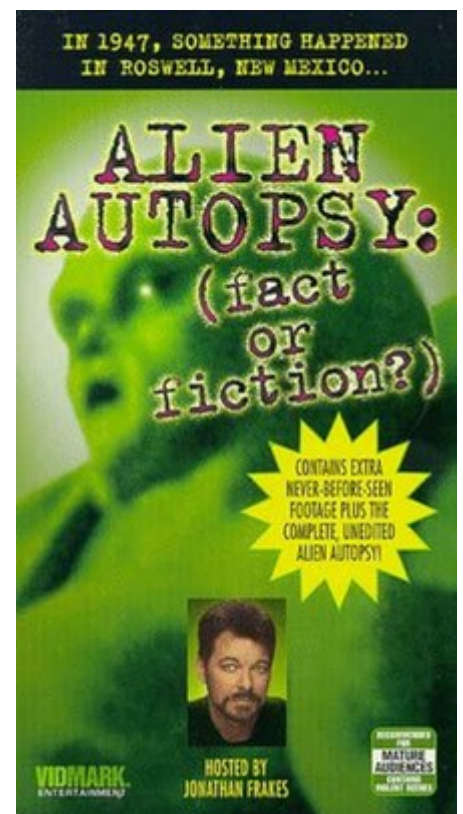
The Day After Roswell (1997)

In 1997, former Lt. Col. Philip J. Corso reported in his autobiographical book *The Day After Roswell* that the Roswell Crash did happen and that when he was assigned to Fort Riley (Kansas) in July 1947, a Sergeant showed him purportedly-nonhuman bodies that were from an "air crash".^[68] Corso further claimed that years later, he helped oversee a project to reverse engineer recovered crash debris. Philip Klass analyzed his claims line by line and exposed many inconsistencies and factual errors.^[69] Corso's story was noted for its similarities to the film "Terminator 2" which had been released six years prior; In that film, civilians secretly attempt to reverse-engineer extraordinary technology of unknown origin.^[70]

Haut document (2007)



In 1997, the US Government released a report concluding that the Roswell Incident stemmed from a Project MOGUL balloon and anthropomorphic test dummies.



VHS cover of *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction*

In 2007 Donald Schmitt and Tom Carey published the book *Witness to Roswell*, which prominently featured a document said to be a sworn affidavit by Walter Haut, who had written the first Army press release about the Roswell crash in 1947.^[71] The document, alleged to have been left by Haut and opened only after his death in 2005, includes a description of the 1947 crash debris having been discussed by high-ranking staff and how Haut had seen alien bodies.^{[71][72]} The claims, however, drew an unimpressed response even from ufologists: Dennis Balthaser said that the document was not written by Haut, and that by 2000 Haut's mental state was such he could not recall basic details about his past, making the detail contained in the affidavit seem dubious.^[71] Physicist and skeptic Dave Thomas commented: "Is Roswell still the 'best' UFO incident? If it is, UFO proponents should be very, very worried."^[71]



In 1991, Glenn Dennis and Walter Haute opened a UFO museum in Roswell.

On October 26, 2007, Bill Richardson (who at the time was a candidate for the Democratic Party nomination for U.S. President) was asked about releasing government files on Roswell. Richardson responded that when he was a Congressman, he attempted to get information on behalf of his New Mexico constituents, but was told by both the Department of Defense and Los Alamos Labs that the information was classified. "That ticked me off", he said, "the government doesn't tell the truth as much as it should on a lot of issues." He promised to work on opening the files if he were elected president.^[73]

Stalin-Mengele conspiracy theory (2011)

In 2011, American journalist Annie Jacobsen's *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America's Top Secret Military Base* featured a claim that Josef Mengele, a German SS officer and a doctor in Auschwitz, was recruited by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin to produce "grotesque, child-size aviators" to be remotely piloted and landed in America in order to cause hysteria similar to Orson Welles' The War of the Worlds (1938).^[74]



Joseph Stalin in 1943.

The book was criticized for extensive errors by scientists from the Federation of American Scientists.^[75] Historian Richard Rhodes, writing in *The Washington Post*, also criticized the book's sensationalistic reporting of "old news" and its "error-ridden" reporting. He wrote: "All of [her main source's] claims appear in one or another of the various publicly available Roswell/UFO/Area 51 books and documents churned out by believers, charlatans and scholars over the past 60 years. In attributing the stories she reports to an unnamed engineer and Manhattan Project veteran while seemingly failing to conduct even minimal research into the man's sources, Jacobsen shows herself at a minimum extraordinarily gullible or journalistically incompetent."^[76]

Continued debunking (2017-2020)

In September 2017, UK newspaper *The Guardian* reported on Kodachrome slides which some had claimed showed a dead space alien.^[77] First presented at a BeWitness event in Mexico, organised by Jaime Maussan and attended by almost 7,000 people, days afterwards it was revealed that the slides were in fact of a mummified Native American child discovered in 1896 and which had been on display at the Chapin Mesa Archeological Museum in Mesa Verde, Colorado, for many decades.^[77]

In February 2020, an Air Force historian revealed a recently-declassified report of a circa-1951 incident in which two Roswell personnel donned poorly fitting radioactive suits, complete with oxygen masks, while retrieving a weather balloon after an atomic test. On one occasion, they encountered a lone woman in the desert, who fainted when she saw them. The personnel could have appeared, to someone unaccustomed to then-modern gear, to be alien.^[78]

Evidence

Although there is no evidence that a UFO crashed at Roswell, believers firmly hold to the belief that one did, and that the truth has been concealed as a result of a government conspiracy.^[79] B. D. Gildenberg has called the Roswell incident "the world's most famous, most exhaustively investigated, and most thoroughly debunked UFO claim".^[4]

Pflock said, "[T]he case for Roswell is a classic example of the triumph of quantity over quality. The advocates of the crashed-saucer tale ... simply shovel everything that seems to support their view into the box marked 'Evidence' and say, 'See? Look at all this stuff. We must be right.' Never mind the contradictions. Never mind the lack of independent supporting fact. Never mind the blatant absurdities."^[80] Korff suggests there are clear incentives for some people to promote the idea of aliens at Roswell, and that many researchers were not doing competent work: "[The] UFO field is comprised of people who are willing to take advantage of the gullibility of others, especially the paying public. Let's not pull any punches here: The Roswell UFO myth has been very good business for UFO groups, publishers, for Hollywood, the town of Roswell, the media, and UFOlogy ... [The] number of researchers who employ science and its disciplined methodology is appallingly small."^[81]

B. D. Gildenberg wrote there were as many as 11 reported alien recovery sites^[4] and these recoveries bore only a marginal resemblance to the event as initially reported in 1947, or as recounted later by the initial witnesses. Some of these new accounts could have been confused accounts of the several known recoveries of injured and dead servicemen from four military plane crashes that occurred in the area from 1948 to 1950.^[82] Other accounts could have been based on memories of recoveries of test dummies, as suggested by the Air Force in their reports. Charles Ziegler argued that the Roswell story has all the hallmarks of a traditional folk narrative. He identified six distinct narratives, and a process of transmission via storytellers with a core story that was created from various witness accounts and was then shaped and molded by those who carry on the UFO community's tradition. Other "witnesses" were then sought out to expand the core narrative, with those giving accounts not in line with the core beliefs being repudiated or simply omitted by the "gatekeepers".^{[83][84]} Others then retold the narrative in its new form. This whole process would repeat over time.

Problems with witness accounts

Though hundreds of people were interviewed by various researchers, only a few of these people claimed to have seen debris or aliens. Most witnesses were just repeating the claims of others. Pflock notes that of these 300-plus individuals reportedly interviewed for *UFO Crash at Roswell* (1991) , only 41 can be

"considered genuine first- or second-hand witnesses" and only 23 can be "reasonably thought to have seen physical evidence, debris". Of these, only seven have asserted anything suggestive of otherworldly origins for the debris.^[85]

In *The Roswell Incident*, Marcel stated, "Actually, this material may have *looked* like tinfoil and balsa wood, but the resemblance ended there ... They took one picture of me on the floor holding up some of the less-interesting metallic debris ... The stuff in that one photo was pieces of the actual stuff we found. It was not a staged photo."^[86] Timothy Printy points out that the material Marcel positively identified as being part of what he recovered is material that skeptics and UFO advocates agree is debris from a balloon device.^[15] After that fact was pointed out to him, Marcel changed his story to say that that material was not what he recovered.^[15] Skeptics like Robert Todd argued that Marcel had a history of embellishment and exaggeration, such as claiming to have been a pilot and having received five Air Medals for shooting down enemy planes, claims that were all found to be false, and skeptics feel that his evolving Roswell story was simply another instance of this tendency to fabricate.^[87]

Problems with alien body witnesses

As for the accounts from those who claimed to have seen aliens, critics identified problems ranging from the reliability of second-hand accounts to credibility problems with witnesses making demonstrably false claims, or multiple, contradictory accounts, to dubious death-bed confessions or accounts from elderly and easily confused witnesses.^{[88][89][90]} Pflock noted that only four people with supposed firsthand knowledge of alien bodies were interviewed by Roswell authors.^[91] All reports of bodies came about a minimum of 31 years after the fact.^[4]

Greys and False Memory Syndrome

In popular lore, "grays" are said to be the creatures whose flying saucer crashed near Roswell in 1947. Various claims have the grays' bodies found among the wreckage while others assert that some survived". However, no mention of alien bodies related to the Roswell incident occurs until 1980.^[28]

In the interval between 1947 and 1980, the idea of Grey aliens had entered the public consciousness beginning with the Betty and Barney Hill incident. In December 1963, Betty Hill and her husband Barney sought out a psychiatrist after Betty experienced recurring nightmares. On February 10, 1964, the ABC Network broadcast an episode of the science fiction television show *The Outer Limits* that featured an extraterrestrial with large, wrap-around eyes. Twelve days later, during a hypnosis session, Barney Hill told his psychiatrist a story about a being with wrap-around eyes.^[92] Modern psychiatric consensus is that Hill experienced false memory syndrome, in which therapy methods such as hypnosis lead to confabulations.^[93]



A classic "Grey Alien" as depicted at Dennis & Haute's museum in Roswell

On October 20, 1975, the NBC network aired a made-for-TV movie inspired by the Hills starring James Earl Jones. Depictions of Grey aliens would go on to appear in a number of books, films, and television shows, such as the 1977 film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.^[94] Greys would later be incorporated into the Roswell legend.^[95]

Presidential comments

In a 2012 visit to Roswell, Obama joked "I come in peace", while in December 2020, Obama joked with Stephen Colbert: "It used to be that UFOs and Roswell was the biggest conspiracy. And now that seems so tame, the idea that the government might have an alien spaceship."^{[96][97][98]}

In a 2014 interview, former President Bill Clinton reported that his administration had investigated the incident, saying "When the Roswell thing came up, I knew we'd get gazillions of letters. So I had all the Roswell papers reviewed, everything".^[99]

When asked during a 2015 interview with *GQ* magazine about whether he had looked at top-secret classified information, President Barack Obama replied, "I gotta tell you, it's a little disappointing. People always ask me about Roswell and the aliens and UFOs, and it turns out the stuff going on that's top secret isn't nearly as exciting as you expect. In this day and age, it's not as top secret as you'd think."^[100] In June 2020, then-President Donald Trump, when asked if he would consider releasing more information about the Roswell incident, said "I won't talk to you about what I know about it, but it's very interesting."^[101]

Roswell as myth

A June 1997 *CNN/Time* poll revealed that the majority of people interviewed believed that aliens had indeed visited Earth, and that aliens had landed at Roswell, but that all the relevant information was being kept secret by the US government.^[102] According to anthropologists Susan Harding and Kathleen Stewart, the Roswell Story was a prime example of how a discourse moved from the fringes to the mainstream according to the prevailing *zeitgeist*: public preoccupation in the 1980s with "conspiracy, cover-up and repression" aligned well with the Roswell narratives as told in the "sensational books" which were being published.^[103] Additionally, skeptics and some social anthropologists^[104] saw the increasingly elaborate accounts of alien crash landings and government cover-ups as evidence of a myth being constructed.

Prominent skeptics Joe Nickell and co-author James McGaha identified a myth-making process, which they called the "Roswellian syndrome".^[105] In this syndrome, a myth is proposed to have five distinct stages of development: *incident*, *debunking*, *submergence*, *mythologizing*, and *reemergence and media bandwagon effect*. The authors predicted that the Roswellian syndrome would "play out again and again",^[105] in other UFO and conspiracy-theory stories.

In popular fiction

- In the 1980 film *Hangar 18*, an alien ship crashes in the desert of the US Southwest. Debris and bodies are recovered, but their existence is covered up by the government.^{[106][107]} Filmmaker James L. Conway summarized the film as "a modern-day dramatization of the Roswell incident".^[107]
- The 1993-2002 TV series *The X-Files* included the Roswell Incident as a recurring motif, most prominently in "My Struggle".^[108] The 1996 episode "Jose Chung's From Outer Space" satirized the Santelli *Alien Autopsy* film.^[109]
- In the 1995 *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode "Little Green Men", protagonists from the 24th century travel back in time and cause the Roswell incident.^[110]
- In the 1996 film *Independence Day*, an alien invasion prompts the revelation of a Roswell crash and cover-up extending even to the President of the United States.^[111]

- The 1996-97 series *Dark Skies* featured a shadowy conspiracy to cover up the Roswell Incident. The show's tagline was "History as we know it is a lie."^[112]
- The 1996 comic series *Roswell, Little Green Man* was inspired by the story of the Roswell Incident.
- The 1998-2001 TV series *Seven Days* features time-travel technology developed after a crash at Roswell.
- The 1999 made-for-TV movie *Roswell: The Aliens Attack* features survivors of Roswell bent on destroying the Earth.
- The 1999-2002 TV series *Roswell* aired based on the *Roswell High* series of books.
- In the 2001 *Futurama* episode "Roswell That Ends Well", protagonists from the 31st century travel back in time and cause the Roswell incident.^[113]
- The 2002 miniseries *Taken* depicts the aftermath of the Roswell Incident.
- The 2006 comedy *Alien Autopsy* revolves around the 1990s-creation of the Santilli film.^[114]
- The 2006-08 online graphic novel *Roswell, Texas* references the Roswell Incident.
- The 2008 film *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* sees the protagonist on a quest for an alien body from the Roswell Incident.
- The 2011 film *Paul* tells the story of Roswell tourists who rescue a grey alien.

See also

- Kecksburg UFO incident
- List of conspiracy theories
- List of reported UFO sightings
- Nazi UFOs
- UFO conspiracy theory
- Storm Area 51

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Lost Cosmonauts

The **Lost Cosmonauts** or **Phantom Cosmonauts** are subjects of a conspiracy theory alleging that some Soviet cosmonauts went to outer space, but their existence has never been publicly acknowledged by either the Soviet or Russian space authorities. Proponents of the Lost Cosmonauts theory argue that the Soviet Union attempted to launch human spaceflights before Yuri Gagarin's first spaceflight, and the cosmonauts onboard died in those attempts. Another cosmonaut, Vladimir Ilyushin, has been the subject of allegations to have landed off course and been held by the Chinese government. The Government of the Soviet Union supposedly suppressed this information, to prevent bad publicity during the height of the Cold War.

The evidence cited to support Lost Cosmonaut theories is generally regarded as inconclusive, and several cases have been confirmed as hoaxes. In the 1980s, American journalist James Oberg researched space-related disasters in the Soviet Union, but found no evidence of these Lost Cosmonauts.^[1] Since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, much previously restricted information has been made available, including information on Valentin Bondarenko, a would-be cosmonaut, whose death during training on Earth was covered up by the Soviet government. Even with the availability of published Soviet archival material and memoirs of Russian space pioneers, no evidence has emerged to support the Lost Cosmonaut theories.

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Allegations

Purported Czech information leak

In December 1959, an alleged high-ranking Czech Communist leaked information about many purported unofficial space shots. Alexei Ledovsky was mentioned as being launched inside a converted R-5A rocket. Three more names of alleged cosmonauts claimed to have perished under similar circumstances were Andrei Mitkov, Sergei Shiborin and Maria Gromova.^[2] In December 1959, the Italian news agency Continendale repeated the claims that a series of cosmonaut deaths on suborbital flights had been revealed by a high-ranking Czech communist. Continendale identified the cosmonauts as Alexei Ledowsky, Serenty Schriborin, Andrei Mitkow, and Maria Gromova.^[3] No other evidence of Soviet sub-orbital crewed flights ever came to light.^[2]

High-altitude equipment tests

A 1959 edition of Ogoniok published an article and photos of three high-altitude parachutists: Colonel Pyotr Dolgov, Ivan Kachur, and Alexey Grachov. Official records state that Dolgov was killed on November 1, 1962, while carrying out a high-altitude parachute jump from a Volga balloon gondola. Dolgov jumped at an altitude of 28,640 metres (93,960 ft). The helmet visor of Dolgov's Sokol space suit hit part of the gondola as he exited, depressurizing the suit and killing him.^[4] Kachur is known to have disappeared around this time; his name has become linked to this equipment.^[4] Grachov is thought to have been involved, with Dolgov and Kachur, in testing the high-altitude equipment. Russian journalist Yaroslav Golovanov suggested that high-altitude testing was exaggerated into a story that those parachutists died on a space flight.^[4] In late 1959, Ogoniok carried pictures of a man identified as Gennady Zavadovsky testing high-altitude equipment (perhaps with Grachov and others). Zavadovsky would later appear on lists of dead cosmonauts, without a date of death or accident description.^[4]

Golovanov, who researched the lost cosmonaut claims in his book, "Cosmonaut #1", found and interviewed the real Alexey Timofeyevich Belokonov, a retired high-altitude parachutist. In this interview, Belokonov revealed more about his colleagues Dolgov, Kachur, Mikhailov, Grachov, Zavadovsky and Ilyushin, and confirmed they never flew to space. According to Belokonov, in 1963, after New York Journal American published an article on lost cosmonauts, listing the parachutists among them, Soviet newspapers Izvestia and Krasnaya Zvezda published a refutation that included testimonies and photographs of the actual parachutists Belokonov, Kachur, Grachov and Zavadovsky. The parachutists also wrote an angry letter to New York Journal American editor William Randolph Hearst, Jr., which he ignored.^[4]

Robert Heinlein

In 1960, science fiction author Robert A. Heinlein wrote in his article *Pravda means 'Truth'* (reprinted in Expanded Universe) that on May 15, 1960, while traveling in Vilnius, in the Soviet Lithuania, he was told by Red Army cadets that the Soviet Union had launched a human into orbit that day, but later the same day, it was denied by officials. Heinlein speculated that Korabl-Sputnik 1 was an orbital launch, later said to be uncrewed, and that the retro-rockets had fired in the wrong attitude, making recovery efforts unsuccessful.^[5]

According to Gagarin's biography, these rumours were likely started as a result of two Vostok missions equipped with dummies (Ivan Ivanovich) and human voice tape recordings (to test if the radio worked) that were made just prior to Gagarin's flight.^[6]

In a U.S. press conference on February 23, 1962, colonel Barney Oldfield revealed that an uncrewed space capsule had indeed been orbiting the Earth since 1960, as it had become jammed into its booster rocket.^[7] According to the NASA NSSDC Master Catalog, Korabl Sputnik 1, designated at the time 1KP or Vostok 1P, did launch on May 15, 1960 (one year before Gagarin).^[8] It was a prototype of the later Zenit and Vostok launch vehicles. The onboard TDU (Braking Engine Unit) had ordered the retro-rockets to fire to recover, but due to a malfunction of the attitude control system, the spacecraft was oriented upside-down, and the firing put the craft into a higher orbit. The re-entry capsule lacked a heat shield as there were no plans to recover it. Engineers had planned to use the vessel's telemetry data to determine if the guidance system had functioned correctly, so recovery was unnecessary.^[9]

The Torre Bert recordings

The Judica-Cordiglia brothers are two Italian former amateur radio operators who made audio recordings that allegedly support the conspiracy theory that the Soviet space program covered up cosmonaut deaths in the 1960s. The pair claimed to have acquired recordings of several secret Soviet space missions that ended in tragedy and mystery. This has generated public interest for more than 50 years,^[10] despite there being a large number of detailed rebuttals to the brothers' claims.^[11]



The two brothers

Vladimir Ilyushin

Major General Vladimir Sergeyevich Ilyushin (Russian: Владимир Сергеевич Ильюшин; 31 March 1927 – 1 March 2010) was a Soviet general and test pilot, and the son of aerospace engineer Sergei Ilyushin.^[12] He spent most of his career as a test pilot for the Sukhoi OKB (a rival of Ilyushin OKB.) Ilyushin was also a rugby union administrator who was inducted into the World Rugby Hall of Fame (then known as the IRB Hall of Fame) in 2013.^[13]



The brothers claimed to have recorded messages from secret missions during the Soviet Vostok program in the early 1960s.

Two days before Gagarin's launch on 12 April 1961, Dennis Ogden wrote in the Western Communist newspaper the Daily Worker that the Soviet Union's announcement that Ilyushin had been involved in a serious car crash was really a cover story for an 7 April 1961 orbital spaceflight gone wrong.^[14] A similar story was told by French broadcaster Eduard Bobrovsky, but his version had the launch occurring in March, resulting in Ilyushin slipping into a coma.^[14] NORAD tracking stations, however, had no record of any such launch.^[14] Later that year, U.S. News & World Report transmitted the rumor by claiming that Gagarin had never flown, and was merely a stand-in for the sickened Ilyushin.^[15] The 1999 film *The Cosmonaut Cover-Up* takes the position that Ilyushin was the first man in space and discusses the alleged cover-up in detail. They claim, "According to recently declassified documents, Ilyushin was placed in a capsule named Rossiya, and the secret flight took place in the early hours of the morning, on Friday April 7th 1961". After a guidance malfunction, the cosmonaut is reported to have made an unguided crash landing in China, too critically injured to announce the mission a complete success.^[16] The 2009 film *Fallen Idol: The Yuri Gagarin Conspiracy* also takes the same position and further discusses US efforts to continue the allegation, even citing national security not to release information under the Freedom of Information Act. The data sought was from the CIA tracking station at Tern Island that supposedly covered and recorded Ilyushin's failed mission.

According to Mark Wade, editor of the space history web site *Encyclopedia Astronautica*, "The entire early history of the Soviet manned space program has been declassified and we have piles of memoirs of cosmonauts, engineers, etc., who participated. We know who was in the original cosmonaut team, who never flew, was dismissed, or was killed in ground tests. Ilyushin is not one of them."^[17]

Moon-shot allegations

The Soviet Union lost the crewed Moon-landing phase of the space race to the United States. However, some sources claim that just before the historic Apollo 11 flight to the Moon, the Soviets undertook an adventurous attempt to beat the Americans. Despite the unsuccessful first test launch of the new Soviet N1 rocket on 20 January 1969, it is alleged that a decision was made to send a crewed Soyuz 7K-L3 craft to the Moon using an N1. This attempt is alleged to have occurred on 3 July 1969, when it ended in an explosion, destroying the launch pad and killing the cosmonauts on board. Official sources state that the L3 was not ready for crewed missions. Its lunar lander, the LK, had been tested a few times but its orbiter, the 7K-LOK, had not been successfully tested by the closing of the Moon-landing program at the end of 1974. The closing of the program was officially denied and maintained top secret until 1990 when the government allowed them to be published under the policy of *glasnost*.

This claim correlates with the late hoax about the unsuccessful Moon-shot flight of Andrei Mikoyan. However, in reality, the second launch, like the first, was a test of the booster and was therefore uncrewed. Even if cosmonauts had been on board, they would have been rescued by its launch escape system, which carried the dummy payload to safety 2 km (1.2 mi) from the pad.^[18]

Other allegations

In 1959, pioneering space theoretician Hermann Oberth claimed that a pilot had been killed on a sub-orbital ballistic flight from Kapustin Yar in early 1958. He provided no source for the story.^[3]

There are also rumors, which appeared later in *Omon Ra*, a novel by Russian fiction writer Pelevin, that the Soviet automatic sample-return craft Luna and remote-controlled automatic Moon rover Lunokhod, were, due to failures in automation, crewed by cosmonauts who had agreed to take part in suicide missions. However, there is not enough space in either the Luna or Lunokhod for a single cosmonaut, even excluding any life support systems. There had been a plan to develop modified Lunokhods with additional controls for use as a transport in crewed Moon-landing missions but this plan ended with the Soviet crewed lunar programs.

Confirmed hoaxes

Ivan Istochnikov

Officially Soyuz 2 was an uncrewed spacecraft that was the docking target for Soyuz 3. However, Mike Arena, an American journalist, allegedly found in 1993 that an 'Ivan Istochnikov' and his dog 'Kloka', who were manning Soyuz 2, disappeared on October 26, 1968, with signs of having been hit by a meteorite. They had been "erased" from history by the Soviet authorities, who could not tolerate such a failure.^[19]

The entire story was found to be a hoax perpetrated by Joan Fontcuberta^[20] as a 'modern art exercise' that included falsified mission artifacts, various digitally manipulated images, and immensely detailed feature-length biographies that turned out to be riddled with hundreds of historical as well as technical errors. The exhibit was shown in Madrid in 1997 and the National Museum of Catalan Art in 1998. Brown University later purchased several articles, and put them on display themselves.

Mexico's *Luna Cornea* magazine however, failed to notice this, and ran issue number 14 (January/April 1998) with photos, and a story explaining the "truth".^[21]

Several lines of evidence available since the first exhibition of "Sputnik" in 1997 in Madrid suggested that the story and artifacts form an elaborate hoax:

- The name "Ivan Istochnikov" is a Russian translation of Joan Fontcuberta's name; in specific, "Joan" and "Ivan" both translate to "John"^{[22][23]} and "Fontcuberta" and "Istochnikov" both mean "hidden fountain".
- The photographs of Istochnikov show Fontcuberta's face.
- Pages of the official website of the Madrid exhibition contain the words "PURE FICTION" toward the top of each page in light red text on a dark red background ^[24] or light pink text on a white background.^[25]
- The front and rear endpapers of the catalog accompanying the Madrid exhibition have the words "it's all fiction" in Russian and Spanish printed on them using glow-in-the-dark ink.^[26]
- At the website of Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*, the third of three pages concerning the Madrid exhibition states that "the report which we published on the previous pages is a product of his [Fontcuberta's] imagination".^[27]

Andrei Mikoyan

Andrei Mikoyan was reportedly killed together with a second crew member in an attempt to reach the Moon ahead of the Americans in early 1969. Due to system malfunction, they failed to get into lunar orbit and shot past the Moon.^[28]

This story, which circulated in 2000, may have been based on the plot of an episode of the television series *The Cape*. The episode "Buried in Peace" first aired on October 28, 1996. In it, a Space Shuttle crew on a mission to repair a communications satellite encounters a derelict Soviet spacecraft with a dead crew—the result of a secret attempt to beat the United States to the Moon in the 1960s. Tom Nowicki played Major Andrei Mikoyan, a Russian member of the Space Shuttle crew in the story.^[28]

In popular culture

- The May 1987 issue #121 (page 74-79) of *Dragon Magazine* features "Operation: Zodiac", an article by Merle M. Rasmussen, creator of the *Top Secret* role-playing game, Jackie Rasmussen & Roger E. Moore, a follow on to "Operation: Zenith" which appeared in issue 120, this includes the scenario "Code Name: Cancer", wherein a space shuttle crew is sent to rendezvous with a Soviet Cosmos satellite launched in 1963, they discover that the satellite was in fact a modified Vostok designed to deliver a nuclear payload; the cosmonaut aboard died when his life support system was exhausted following a launch into a higher than planned orbit.
- The July 1987 issue #123 (pp. 82–86) of *Dragon Magazine* features the article "Operation: Zondraker, Part 2", also by Rasmussen, which includes the scenario "Code Name: Starfall", wherein

a team of agents explores the site of the failed *Luna 15* lander, discovering that it was a crewed mission, with two cosmonauts; one died instantly in the crash (identified as Nikolai L. Kuzmin), while the other, unidentified, cosmonaut died later as his oxygen supply ran out.

- A 1989 installment of Philip Bond's "Wired World", published in the UK comics anthology *Deadline magazine*, features a cosmonaut who crash-lands in a London park where the main characters are picnicking.
- Victor Pelevin's anti-Soviet 1992 novel *Omon Ra* is based on depictions of Soviet space flights as a planned homicide. Some of these "flights" are also not really flights, but fakes for the sake of Soviet propaganda.
- On page 7 of the September 21, 1993 issue of the US tabloid *Sun*, Mike Jones authored an article titled "LOST IN SPACE" describing several cosmonaut deaths in space according to government spokesman Igor Ivanov: In 1988 (5 years earlier) Cosmonaut Nikolai Gogolansky died in his failed space suit during an EVA in which his mooring line failed, which sparked 8 unsuccessful attempts to retrieve the body, nearly causing Vasily Bordonsky to perish also due to a mooring line break, while an unnamed NASA spokesman states US shuttle mission astronauts have noticed Gogolansky's body during several missions with no attempt to recover it due to risks and cost; two cosmonauts died during a 1968 launch; another cosmonaut died when their capsule "exploded on impact as it was returning to Earth"; three cosmonauts were killed in 1981 when their spacesuits were pierced by space debris during space walks; and four cosmonauts died due to a faulty air lock in 1984, prompting a second docking mission two months later to recover the dead.
- The 2004 video game *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* has a boss known as The Fury who was a cosmonaut sent into space before Gagarin, and whose shuttle was engulfed in flames upon re-entry. He survived with severe burns and a newly-found sense of pyromania; his boss fight consequently involves the use of fire.
- The 2005 mockumentary *First on the Moon* describes the preparations and training for a Soviet moonshot in 1938, as well as the following cover-up.
- The 2007 Jed Mercurio novel *Ascent* features a cosmonaut who makes a successful – albeit suicidal – moon landing ahead of the Apollo landings.
- In 2010 the Canadian band *Wolf Parade* released a song titled "Yulia", which lead singer Dan Boeckner confirmed in an interview as recounting a lost cosmonaut.^[29]
- The 2011 science fiction / horror film *Apollo 18*, which depicts a secret lunar mission by NASA in 1974, depicts astronauts discovering a Soviet cosmonaut who was killed by spider-like aliens hidden on the Moon along with an LK lander.
- Michael Cassutt's book *Red Moon* features a cosmonaut named Shiborin who flew on two space flights; one of the early Lost Cosmonaut stories was of an ill-fated suborbital mission in 1958 prior to Gagarin's flight supposedly crewed by a Serenti Shiborin.

See also

- List of spaceflight-related accidents and incidents

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Moon landing conspiracy theories

Moon landing conspiracy theories claim that some or all elements of the Apollo program and the associated Moon landings were hoaxes staged by NASA, possibly with the aid of other organizations. The most notable claim is that the six crewed landings (1969–1972) were faked and that twelve Apollo astronauts did not actually walk on the Moon. Various groups and individuals have made claims since the mid-1970s that NASA and others knowingly misled the public into believing the landings happened, by manufacturing, tampering with, or destroying evidence including photos, telemetry tapes, radio and TV transmissions, and Moon rock samples.

Much third-party evidence for the landings exists, and detailed rebuttals to the hoax claims have been made.^[1] Since the late 2000s, high-definition photos taken by the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) of the Apollo landing sites have captured the Lunar Module descent stages and the tracks left by the astronauts.^{[2][3]} In 2012, images were released showing five of the six Apollo missions' American flags erected on the Moon still standing. The exception is that of Apollo 11, which has lain on the lunar surface since being blown over by the Lunar Module Ascent Propulsion System.^{[4][5]}

Conspiracists have managed to sustain public interest in their theories for more than 40 years, despite the rebuttals and third-party evidence. Opinion polls taken in various locations have shown that between 6% and 20% of Americans, 25% of Britons, and 28% of Russians surveyed believe that the crewed landings were faked. Even as late as 2001, the Fox television network documentary *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* claimed NASA faked the first landing in 1969 to win the Space Race.^[6]



Astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong in NASA's training mockup of the Moon and the Apollo Lunar Module. Conspiracy theorists say that the films of the missions were made using sets similar to this training mockup.

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Origins

An early and influential book about the subject of a Moon-landing conspiracy, *We Never Went to the Moon: America's Thirty Billion Dollar Swindle*, was self-published in 1976 by [Bill Kaysing](#), a former [US Navy](#) officer with a [Bachelor of Arts in English](#).^[7] Despite having no knowledge of rockets or technical writing,^[8] Kaysing was hired as a senior technical writer in 1956 by [Rocketdyne](#), the company that built the [F-1](#) engines used on the [Saturn V](#) rocket.^{[9][10]} He served as head of the technical publications unit at the company's [Propulsion Field Laboratory](#) until 1963. The many allegations in Kaysing's book effectively began discussion of the Moon landings being faked.^{[11][12]} The book claims that the chance of a successful crewed landing on the Moon was calculated to be 0.0017%, and that despite close monitoring by the [USSR](#), it would have been easier for NASA to fake the Moon landings than to really go there.^{[13][14]}

In 1980, the [Flat Earth Society](#) accused NASA of faking the landings, arguing that they were staged by Hollywood with [Walt Disney](#) sponsorship, based on a script by [Arthur C. Clarke](#) and directed by [Stanley Kubrick](#).^{[a][15]} Folklorist [Linda Dégh](#) suggests that writer-director [Peter Hyams](#)' film *Capricorn One* (1978), which shows a hoaxed journey to [Mars](#) in a spacecraft that looks identical to the Apollo craft, might have given a boost to the hoax theory's popularity in the post-Vietnam War era. Dégh sees a parallel with other attitudes during the post-[Watergate](#) era, when the American public were inclined to distrust official accounts. Dégh writes: "The mass media catapult these half-truths into a kind of twilight

zone where people can make their guesses sound as truths. Mass media have a terrible impact on people who lack guidance."^[16] In *A Man on the Moon*,^[17] first published in 1994, Andrew Chaikin mentions that at the time of Apollo 8's lunar-orbit mission in December 1968,^[18] similar conspiracy ideas were already in circulation.^[19]

Claimed motives of the United States and NASA

Those who believe the Moon landings were faked give several theories about the motives of NASA and the United States government. The three main theories are below.

Space Race

Motivation for the United States to engage the Soviet Union in a Space Race can be traced to the then on-going Cold War. Landing on the Moon was viewed as a national and technological accomplishment that would generate world-wide acclaim. But going to the Moon would be risky and expensive, as exemplified by President John F. Kennedy famously stating in a 1962 speech that the United States chose to go *because it was hard*.^[20]

Hoax theory debunker Phil Plait says in his 2002 book *Bad Astronomy*,^[b] that the Soviets – with their own competing Moon program, an extensive intelligence network and a formidable scientific community able to analyze NASA data – would have 'cried foul' if the United States tried to fake a Moon landing,^[21] especially since their own program had failed. Proving a hoax would have been a huge propaganda win for the Soviets. Instead, far from calling the landings a hoax, the third edition (1970-1979) of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (which was translated into English between 1974 and 1983 by Macmillan Publishers, and was later made available online by TheFreeDictionary.com^[22]) contained many articles reporting the landings as factual, such as this article on Neil Armstrong.^[23] Indeed their article on space exploration describes the Apollo 11 landing as "the third historic event" of the space age, following the launch of Sputnik in 1957, and Yuri Gagarin's flight in 1961.^[24]

Conspiracist Bart Sibrel responded, incorrectly asserting that, "the Soviets did not have the capability to track deep space craft until late in 1972, immediately after which, the last three Apollo missions were abruptly canceled."^[25]

In fact, the Soviets had been sending uncrewed spacecraft to the Moon since 1959,^[26] and "during 1962, deep space tracking facilities were introduced at IP-15 in Ussuriisk and IP-16 in Evpatoria (Crimean Peninsula), while Saturn communication stations were added to IP-3, 4 and 14,"^[27] the latter having a 100 million km (62 million mi) range.^[28] The Soviet Union tracked the Apollo missions at the Space Transmissions Corps, which was "fully equipped with the latest intelligence-gathering and surveillance equipment."^[29] Vasily Mishin, in an interview for the article "The Moon Programme That Faltered," describes how the Soviet Moon program dwindled after the Apollo landings.^[30]

Also, there was nothing "abrupt" about the Apollo cancellations, which were made for cost-cutting reasons. These were announced in January and September 1970,^[31] two full years before the "late 1972" claimed by Sibrel.^[32] (See **Vietnam War** below.)

NASA funding and prestige

Conspiracy theorists claim that NASA faked the landings to avoid humiliation and to ensure that it continued to get funding. NASA raised "about US\$30 billion" to go to the Moon, and Kaysing claimed in his book that this could have been used to "pay off" many people.^[33] Since most conspiracists believe that sending men to the Moon was impossible at the time,^[34] they argue that landings had to be faked to fulfill Kennedy's 1961 goal, "before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth."^[35] In fact, NASA accounted for the cost of Apollo to the US Congress in 1973, totaling US\$25.4 billion.^[36]

Mary Bennett and David Percy have claimed in the 2001 book *Dark Moon: Apollo and the Whistle-Blowers*, that, with all the known and unknown hazards,^[37] NASA would not risk broadcasting an astronaut getting sick or dying on live television.^[38] The counter-argument generally given is that NASA in fact *did* incur a great deal of public humiliation and potential political opposition to the program by losing an entire crew in the Apollo 1 fire during a ground test, leading to its upper management team being questioned by Senate and House of Representatives space oversight committees.^[39] There was in fact no video broadcast during either the landing or takeoff because of technological limitations.^[40]

Vietnam War

The American Patriot Friends Network claimed in 2009 that the landings helped the United States government distract public attention from the unpopular Vietnam War, and so crewed landings suddenly ended about the same time that the United States ended its involvement in the war.^[41] In fact, the ending of the landings was not "sudden" (see **The Space Race** above). The war was one of several federal budget items with which NASA had to compete; NASA's budget peaked in 1966, and fell by 42.3% by 1972.^[42] This was the reason the final flights were cut, along with plans for even more ambitious follow-on programs such as a permanent space station and crewed flight to Mars.^[43]

Hoax claims and rebuttals

Many Moon-landing conspiracy theories have been put forward, claiming either that the landings did not happen and that NASA employees have lied, or that the landings did happen but not in the way that has been told. Conspiracists have focused on perceived gaps or inconsistencies in the historical record of the missions. The foremost idea is that the whole crewed landing program was a hoax from start to end. Some claim that the technology to send men to the Moon was lacking or that the Van Allen radiation belts, solar flares, solar wind, coronal mass ejections and cosmic rays made such a trip impossible.^[11]

Vince Calder and Andrew Johnson, scientists from Argonne National Laboratory, have given detailed answers to conspiracists' claims on the laboratory's website.^[44] They show that NASA's portrayal of the Moon landing is fundamentally accurate, allowing for such common mistakes as mislabeled photos and imperfect personal recollections. Using the scientific process, any hypothesis that is contradicted by the observable facts may be rejected. The 'real landing' hypothesis is a single story since it comes from a single source, but there is no unity in the hoax hypothesis because hoax accounts vary between conspiracists.^[45]

Number of conspirators involved

According to James Longuski, the conspiracy theories are impossible because of their size and complexity. The conspiracy would have to involve more than 400,000 people who worked on the Apollo project for nearly ten years, the 12 men who walked on the Moon, the six others who flew with them as

command module pilots, and another six astronauts who orbited the Moon.^[c] Hundreds of thousands of people—including astronauts, scientists, engineers, technicians, and skilled laborers—would have had to keep the secret. Longuski argues that it would have been much easier to really land on the Moon than to generate such a huge conspiracy to fake the landings.^{[46][47]} To date, nobody from the United States government or NASA linked to the Apollo program has said the Moon landings were hoaxes. Penn Jillette made note of this in the "Conspiracy Theories" episode of his television show *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!* in 2005.^[48] With the number of people involved, and noting the Watergate scandal, Jillette noted that *someone* would have outed the hoax by now.

One rebuttal by Sibrel to this claim is that NASA had compartmentalized all of the work on the Apollo program. This would have allowed for only a small number of people to actually know the truth about faking the Moon landings.^[49]

Photographic and film oddities

Moon-landing conspiracists focus heavily on NASA photos. They point to oddities in photos and films taken on the Moon. Photography experts (including those unrelated to NASA) have replied that the oddities are consistent with what should be expected from a real Moon landing, and are not consistent with tweaked or studio imagery. Some main arguments and counter-arguments are listed below.

1. In some photos, the crosshairs appear to be behind objects. The cameras were fitted with a Réseau plate (a clear glass plate with a reticle etched on), making it impossible for any photographed object to appear "in front" of the grid. Conspiracists often use this evidence to suggest that objects were "pasted" over the photographs, and hence obscure the reticle.

- *This effect only appears in copied and scanned photos, not any originals. It is caused by overexposure: the bright white areas of the emulsion "bleed" over the thin black crosshairs. The crosshairs are only about 0.004 inches thick (0.1 mm) and emulsion would only have to bleed about half that much to fully obscure it. Furthermore, there are many photos where the middle of the crosshair is "washed-out" but the rest is intact. In some photos of the American flag, parts of one crosshair appear on the red stripes, but parts of the same crosshair are faded or invisible on the white stripes. There would have been no reason to "paste" white stripes onto the flag.^[50]*



Enlargement of a poor-quality 1998 scan – both the crosshair and part of the red stripe have "bled out"



Enlargement of a higher-quality 2004 scan – crosshair and red stripe visible



David Scott salutes the American flag during the Apollo 15 mission. The arms of the crosshair are washed-out on the white stripes of the flag (Photo ID: AS15-88-11863)



Close-up of the flag, showing washed-out crosshairs

2. Crosshairs are sometimes rotated or in the wrong place.

- *This is a result of popular photos being cropped and/or rotated for aesthetic impact.*^[50]

3. The quality of the photographs is implausibly high.

- *There are many poor-quality photos taken by the Apollo astronauts. NASA chose to publish only the best examples.*^{[50][51]}
- *The Apollo astronauts used high-resolution Hasselblad 500 EL cameras with Carl Zeiss optics and a 70 mm medium format film magazine.*^{[52][53]}

4. There are no stars in any of the photos; the Apollo 11 astronauts also stated in post-mission press conferences that they did not remember seeing any stars during EVA.^[54] Conspiracists contend that NASA chose not to put the stars into the photos because astronomers would have been able to use them

to determine whether the photos were taken from the Earth or the Moon, by means of identifying them and comparing their celestial position and parallax to what would be expected for either observation site.

- *The astronauts were talking about naked-eye sightings of stars during the lunar daytime. They regularly sighted stars through the spacecraft navigation optics while aligning their inertial reference platforms, the Apollo PGNCs.^[55]*
- *Stars are rarely seen in Space Shuttle, Mir, Earth observation photos, or even photos taken at sporting events held at night. The light from the Sun in outer space in the Earth-Moon system is at least as bright as the sunlight that reaches the Earth's surface on a clear day at noon, so cameras used for imaging subjects illuminated by sunlight are set for a daylight exposure. The dim light of the stars simply does not provide enough exposure to record visible images. All crewed landings happened during the lunar daytime. Thus, the stars were outshone by the sun and by sunlight reflected off the Moon's surface. The astronauts' eyes were adapted to the sunlit landscape around them so that they could not see the relatively faint stars.^{[56][57]} The astronauts could see stars with the naked eye only when they were in the shadow of the Moon.^{[58][59]}*
- *Camera settings can turn a well-lit background to black when the foreground object is brightly lit, forcing the camera to increase shutter speed so that the foreground light does not wash out the image. A demonstration of this effect is here.^[60] The effect is similar to not being able to see stars from a brightly lit car park at night – the stars only become visible when the lights are turned off.*
- *A special far ultraviolet camera, the Far Ultraviolet Camera/Spectrograph, was taken to the lunar surface on Apollo 16 and operated in the shadow of the Apollo Lunar Module (LM). It took photos of Earth and of many stars, some of which are dim in visible light but bright in the ultraviolet. These observations were later matched with observations taken by orbiting ultraviolet telescopes. Furthermore, the positions of those stars with respect to Earth are correct for the time and location of the Apollo 16 photos.^{[61][62]}*
- *Photos of the solar corona that included the planet Mercury and some background stars were taken from lunar orbit by Apollo 15 Command Module Pilot Al Worden.^[63]*
- *Photos of the planet Venus (which is much brighter than any of the stars) were taken from the Moon's surface by astronaut Alan Shepard during the Apollo 14 mission.^[64]*



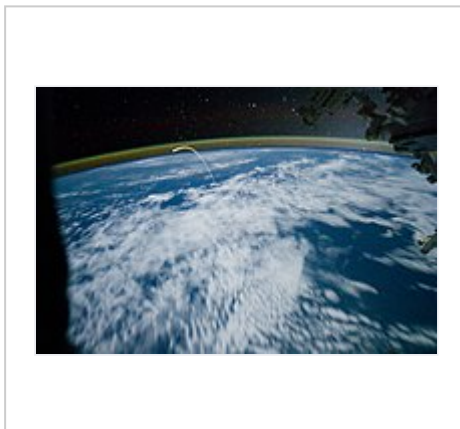
Short-exposure photo of the International Space Station (ISS) taken from Space Shuttle *Atlantis* in February 2008 during STS-122 – one of many photos taken in space where no stars are visible



Earth and *Mir* in June 1995 – an example of how sunlight can outshine the stars, making them invisible



Long-exposure photo taken from the Moon's surface by Apollo 16 astronauts using the Far Ultraviolet Camera/Spectrograph. It shows the Earth with the correct background of stars



Long-exposure photo (1.6 seconds at $f/2.8$, ISO 10000) from the ISS in July 2011 of Space Shuttle *Atlantis* re-entry in which some stars are visible. In this image, the Earth is lit by moonlight, not sunlight

5. The angle and color of shadows are inconsistent. This suggests that artificial lights were used.

- *Shadows on the Moon are complicated by reflected light, uneven ground, wide-angle lens distortion, and lunar dust. There are several light sources: the Sun, sunlight reflected from the Earth, sunlight reflected from the Moon's surface, and sunlight reflected from the astronauts and the Lunar Module. Light from these sources is scattered by lunar dust in many directions, including into shadows. Shadows falling into craters and hills may appear longer, shorter and distorted.^[65] Furthermore, shadows display the properties of vanishing point perspective, leading them to converge to a point on the horizon.*

- This theory was further debunked on the MythBusters episode "NASA Moon Landing".

6. There are identical backgrounds in photos which, according to their captions, were taken miles apart. This suggests that a painted background was used.

- *Backgrounds were not identical, just similar. What appear as nearby hills in some photos are actually mountains many miles away. On Earth, objects that are further away will appear fainter and less detailed. On the Moon, there is no atmosphere or haze to obscure faraway objects, thus they appear clearer and nearer.^[66] Furthermore, there are very few objects (such as trees) to help judge distance. One such case is debunked in "Who Mourns For Apollo?" by Mike Bara.^[67]*

7. The number of photos taken is implausibly high. Up to one photo per 50 seconds.^[68]

- *Simplified gear with fixed settings allowed two photos a second. Many were taken immediately after each other as stereo pairs or panorama sequences. The calculation (one per 50 seconds) was based on a lone astronaut on the surface, and does not take into account that there were two astronauts sharing the workload and simultaneously taking photographs during an Extra-vehicular activity (EVA).*

8. The photos contain artifacts like the two seemingly matching 'C's on a rock and on the ground. These may be labeled studio props.

- *The "C"-shaped objects are most likely printing imperfections and do not appear in the original film from the camera. It has been suggested that the "C" is a coiled hair.^{[67][69]}*



Original
photograph

AS16-107-17445



Original
photograph

AS16-107-17446



Close-up of later generation
prints of AS16-107-17446

9. A resident of Perth, Western Australia, a woman named Una Ronald (a pseudonym created by the authors of the source^[70]), said that for two or three seconds she saw a Coca-Cola bottle roll across the lower right quadrant of her television screen that was displaying the live broadcast of the Apollo 11 EVA. She also said that several letters appeared in The West Australian discussing the Coca-Cola bottle incident within ten days of the lunar landing.^[71]

- *No such newspaper reports or recordings have been found.^[72] Ronald's claims have only been relayed by one source.^[73] There are also flaws in the story, e.g. the statement that she had to*

stay up late to watch the Moon landing live is easily discounted by many witnesses in Australia who watched the landing in the middle of their daytime.^{[74][75]}

10. The 1994 book *Moon Shot*^[76] contains an obviously fake composite photo of Alan Shepard hitting a golf ball on the Moon with another astronaut.

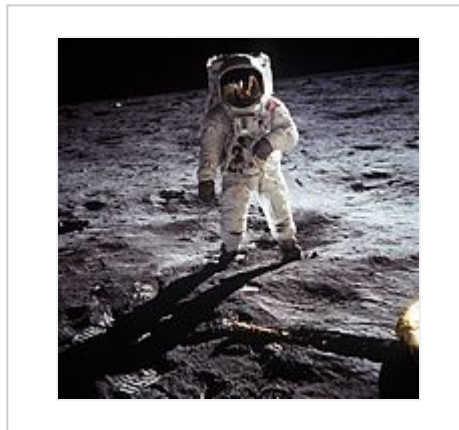
- *It was used instead of the only existing real images, from the TV monitor, which the editors seemingly felt were too grainy for their book. The book publishers did not work for NASA, although the authors were retired NASA astronauts.*

11. There appear to be "hot spots" in some photos that look like a large spotlight was used in place of the Sun.

- *Pits on the Moon's surface focus and reflect light like the tiny glass spheres used in the coating of street signs, or dewdrops on wet grass. This creates a glow around the photographer's own shadow when it appears in a photograph (see *Heiligenschein*).*
- *If the astronaut is standing in sunlight while photographing into shade, light reflected off his white spacesuit yields a similar effect to a spotlight.*^[77]
- *Some widely published Apollo photos were high-contrast copies. Scans of the original transparencies are generally much more evenly lit. An example is shown below:*



Original photo of Buzz Aldrin during Apollo 11



The more famous edited version. The contrast has been tweaked (yielding the "spotlight effect") and a black band has been pasted at the top

12. Who filmed Neil Armstrong stepping onto the Moon?

- *Cameras on the Lunar Module did. The Apollo TV camera mounted in the Modularized Equipment Stowage Assembly (MESA) of the Apollo Lunar Module gave a view from the exterior. While still on the Module's ladder steps, Armstrong deployed the MESA from the side of the Lunar Module, unpacking, amongst other things, the TV camera. The TV camera was then powered on and a signal transmitted back to Earth. This meant that upwards of 600 million people on Earth could watch the live feed with only a very slight delay. Similar technology was also used on subsequent Apollo missions.*^{[78][79][80][81]} *It was also filmed from an automatic 16mm movie camera mounted in a window of the Lunar Module.*

Environment

1. The astronauts could not have survived the trip because of exposure to radiation from the Van Allen radiation belt and galactic ambient radiation (see radiation poisoning and health threat from cosmic rays). Some conspiracists have suggested that Starfish Prime (a high-altitude nuclear test in 1962) formed another intense layer on the Van Allen belt.^[82]



The Apollo TV camera as it was mounted on the side of the Lunar Module

- *There are two main Van Allen belts – the inner belt and the outer belt – and a transient third belt.^[83] The inner belt is the more dangerous one, containing energetic protons. The outer one has less-dangerous low-energy electrons (Beta particles).^{[84][85]} The Apollo spacecraft passed through the inner belt in a matter of minutes and the outer belt in about 1½ hours.^[85] The astronauts were shielded from the ionizing radiation by the aluminum hulls of the spacecraft.^{[85][86]} Furthermore, the orbital transfer trajectory from Earth to the Moon through the belts was chosen to lessen radiation exposure.^[86] Even James Van Allen, the discoverer of the Van Allen belt, rebutted the claims that radiation levels were too harmful for the Apollo missions.^[82] Phil Plait cited an average dose of less than 1 rem (10 mSv), which is equivalent to the ambient radiation received by living at sea level for three years.^[87] The total radiation received on the trip was about the same as allowed for workers in the nuclear energy field for a year^{[85][88]} and not much more than what Space Shuttle astronauts received.^[84]*

2. Film in the cameras would have been fogged by this radiation.

- *The film was kept in metal containers that stopped radiation from fogging the film's emulsion.^[89] Furthermore, film carried by uncrewed lunar probes such as the Lunar Orbiter and Luna 3 (which used on-board film development processes) was not fogged.*

3. The Moon's surface during the daytime is so hot that camera film would have melted.

- *There is no atmosphere to efficiently bind lunar surface heat to devices (such as cameras) that are not in direct contact with it. In a vacuum, only radiation remains as a heat transfer mechanism. The physics of radiative heat transfer are thoroughly understood, and the proper use of passive optical coatings and paints was enough to control the temperature of the film within the cameras; Lunar Module temperatures were controlled with similar coatings that gave them a gold color. Also, while the Moon's surface does get very hot at lunar noon, every Apollo landing was made shortly after lunar sunrise at the landing site; the Moon's day is about 29½ Earth days long, meaning that one Moon day (dawn to dusk) lasts nearly fifteen Earth days. During the longer stays, the astronauts did notice increased cooling loads on their spacesuits as the sun and surface temperature continued to rise, but the effect was easily countered by the passive and active cooling systems.^[90] The film was not in direct sunlight, so it was not overheated.^[91]*

4. The Apollo 16 crew could not have survived a big solar flare firing out when they were on their way to the Moon.

- *No large solar flare occurred during the flight of Apollo 16. There were large solar flares in August 1972, after Apollo 16 returned to Earth and before the flight of Apollo 17.^{[92][93]}*

5. The flag placed on the surface by the astronauts fluttered despite there being no wind on the Moon. This suggests that it was filmed on Earth and a breeze caused the flag to flutter. Sibrel said that it may have been caused by indoor fans used to cool the astronauts since their spacesuit cooling systems would

have been too heavy on Earth.

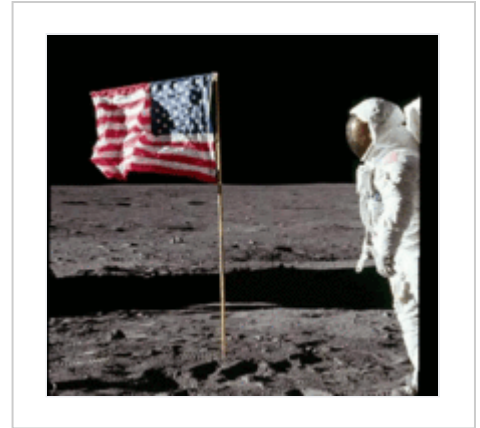
- *The flag was fastened to a Γ-shaped rod (see [Lunar Flag Assembly](#)) so that it did not hang down. The flag only seemed to flutter when the astronauts were moving it into position. Without air drag, these movements caused the free corner of the flag to swing like a pendulum for some time. The flag was rippled because it had been folded during storage – the ripples could be mistaken for movement in a still photo. Videos show that when the astronauts let go of the flagpole it vibrates briefly but then remains still.*^{[94][95][96]}
- This theory was further debunked on the *MythBusters* episode "[NASA Moon Landing](#)".



Cropped photo of Buzz Aldrin saluting the flag (the fingers of Aldrin's right hand can be seen behind his helmet)



Cropped photo taken a few seconds later, Buzz Aldrin's hand is down, head turned toward the camera, the flag is unchanged



Animation of the two photos, showing that though Armstrong's camera moved between exposures, the flag is not waving

6. Footprints in the Moondust are unexpectedly well preserved, despite the lack of moisture.

- *Moondust has not been weathered like Earth sand and has sharp edges. This allows the dust particles to stick together and hold their shape in the vacuum. The astronauts likened it to "talcum powder or wet sand".*^[67]
- This theory was further debunked on the *MythBusters* episode "[NASA Moon Landing](#)".

7. The alleged Moon landings used either a sound stage or were filmed outside in a remote desert with the astronauts either using harnesses or slow-motion photography to make it look like they were on the Moon.

- *While the HBO miniseries "[From the Earth to the Moon](#)", and a scene from the movie "[Apollo 13](#)" used the sound-stage and harness setup, it is clearly seen from those films that when dust rose it did not quickly settle; some dust briefly formed clouds. In the film footage from the Apollo missions, dust kicked up by the astronauts' boots and the wheels of the Lunar Roving Vehicles rose quite high due to the lower lunar gravity, and settled quickly to the ground in an uninterrupted parabolic arc since there was no air to suspend the dust. Even if there had been a sound stage for hoax Moon landings that had the air pumped out, the dust would have reached nowhere near the height and trajectory as in the Apollo film footage because of Earth's greater gravity.*

- *During the Apollo 15 mission, David Scott did an experiment by dropping a hammer and a falcon feather at the same time. Both fell at the same rate and hit the ground at the same time. This proved that he was in a vacuum.*^[97]
- *If the landings were filmed outside in a desert, heat waves would be present on the surface in mission videos, but no such heat waves exist in the footage. If the landings were filmed in a sound stage, several anomalies would occur, including a lack of parallax, and an increase or decrease in the size of the backdrop if the camera moved (footage was filmed while the rover was in motion, and yet no evidence of any change in the size of the background is present).*
- This theory was further debunked on the *MythBusters* episode "NASA Moon Landing".



David Scott drops a hammer and feather on the Moon

Mechanical issues

1. The Lunar Modules made no blast craters or any sign of dust scatter.^[98]

- *No crater should be expected. The 4,500 kg (10,000 lb) thrust Descent Propulsion System was throttled very far down during the final landing.^[99] The Lunar Module was no longer quickly decelerating, so the descent engine only had to support the lander's own weight, which was lessened by the Moon's gravity and by the near exhaustion of the descent propellants. At landing, the engine thrust divided by the nozzle exit area is only about 10 kPa (1.5 psi).^{[100][101]}*

Beyond the engine nozzle, the plume spreads, and the pressure drops very quickly. Rocket exhaust gasses expand much more quickly after leaving the engine nozzle in a vacuum than in an atmosphere. The effect of an atmosphere on rocket plumes can be easily seen in launches from Earth; as the rocket rises through the thinning atmosphere, the exhaust plumes broaden very noticeably. To lessen this, rocket engines made for vacuums have longer bells than those made for use on Earth, but they still cannot

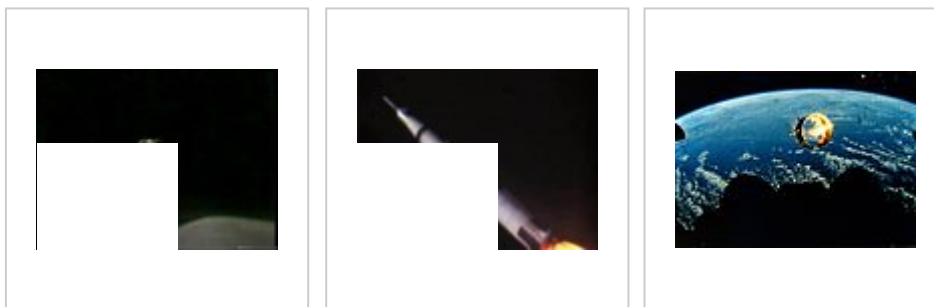


Lunar surface under the Lunar Module Eagle

stop this spreading. The lander's exhaust gasses, therefore, expanded quickly well beyond the landing site. The descent engines did scatter a lot of very fine surface dust as seen in 16mm movies of each landing, and many mission commanders spoke of its effect on visibility. The landers were generally moving horizontally as well as vertically, and photos do show scouring of the surface along the final descent path. Finally, the lunar regolith is very compact below its surface dust layer, making it impossible for the descent engine to blast out a "crater".^[102] A blast crater was measured under the Apollo 11 lander using shadow lengths of the descent engine bell and estimates of the amount that the landing gear had compressed and how deep the lander footpads had pressed into the lunar surface and it was found that the engine had eroded between 100 and 150 mm (4 and 6 in) of regolith out from underneath the engine bell during the final descent and landing.^[103]

2. The second stage of the launch rocket or the Lunar Module ascent stage or both made no visible flame.

- The Lunar Modules used Aerozine 50 (fuel) and dinitrogen tetroxide (oxidizer) propellants, chosen for simplicity and reliability; they ignite hypergolically – upon contact – without the need for a spark. These propellants produce a nearly transparent exhaust.^[104] The same fuel was used by the core of the American Titan II rocket. The transparency of their plumes is apparent in many launch photos. The plumes of rocket engines fired in a vacuum spread out very quickly as they leave the engine nozzle (see above), further lessening their visibility. Finally, rocket engines often run "rich" to slow internal corrosion. On Earth, the excess fuel burns in contact with atmospheric oxygen, enhancing the visible flame. This cannot happen in a vacuum.



Apollo 17 LM leaving the Moon; rocket exhaust visible only briefly

Apollo 8 launch through the first stage separation

Exhaust flame may not be visible outside the atmosphere, as in this photo. Rocket engines are the dark structures at the bottom center



The launch of a Titan II, burning hypergolic Aerozine-50/N₂O₄, 1.9 MN (430,000 lbf) of thrust. Note the near-transparency of the exhaust, even in air (water is being sprayed up from below)

Atlas uses non-hypergolic kerosene (RP-1) fuel which gives a bright and very visible exhaust, 1.5 MN (340,000 lbf) of thrust

Bright flame from first stage of the Saturn V, burning RP-1

3. The Lunar Modules weighed 17 tons and made no mark on the Moondust, yet footprints can be seen beside them.^[105]

- *On the surface of the Earth, Apollo 11's fueled and crewed Lunar Module, Eagle, would have weighed approximately 17 short tons (15,000 kg). On the surface of the Moon, however, after expending fuel and oxidizer on its descent from lunar orbit, the lander weighed about 1,200 kg (2,700 pounds).^[106] The astronauts were much lighter than the lander, but their boots were much smaller than the lander's approximately 91 cm (3 ft) diameter footpads.^[107] Pressure (or force per unit area) rather than mass determines the amount of regolith compression. In some photos, the footpads did press into the regolith, especially when they moved sideways at touchdown. (The bearing pressure under Apollo 11's footpads, with the lander being about 44 times the weight of an EVA-configured astronaut, would have been of similar magnitude to the bearing pressure exerted by the astronauts' boots.)^[108]*

4. The air conditioning units that were part of the astronauts' spacesuits could not have worked in an environment of no atmosphere.^[109]

- *The cooling units could only work in a vacuum. Water from a tank in the backpack flowed out through tiny pores in a metal sublimator plate where it quickly vaporized into space. The loss of the heat of vaporization froze the remaining water, forming a layer of ice on the outside of the plate that also sublimated into space (turning from a solid directly into a gas). A separate water loop flowed through the LCG (Liquid Cooling Garment) worn by the astronaut, carrying his metabolic waste heat through the sublimator plate where it was cooled and returned to the LCG. Five point four kg (12 lb) of feedwater gave about eight hours of cooling; because of its bulk, it was often the limiting consumable on the length of an EVA.*

Transmissions

1. There should have been more than a two-second delay in communications between Earth and the Moon, at a distance of 400,000 km (250,000 miles).

- *The round trip light travel time of more than two seconds is apparent in all the real-time recordings of the lunar audio, but this does not always appear as expected. There may also be some documentary films where the delay has been edited out. Reasons for editing the audio may be time constraints or in the interest of clarity.*^[110]



Surveyor 3 with Apollo 12 lander in background

2. Typical delays in communication were about 0.5 seconds.

- *Claims that the delays were only half a second are untrue, as examination of the original recordings shows. Also, there should not be a consistent time delay between every response, as the conversation is being recorded at one end – Mission Control. Responses from Mission Control could be heard without any delay, as the recording is being made at the same time that Houston receives the transmission from the Moon.*

3. The Parkes Observatory in Australia was billed to the world for weeks as the site that would be relaying communications from the first moonwalk. However, five hours before transmission they were told to stand down.

- *The timing of the first moonwalk was changed after the landing. In fact, delays in getting the moonwalk started meant that Parkes did cover almost the entire Apollo 11 moonwalk.*^[111]

4. Parkes supposedly had the clearest video feed from the Moon, but Australian media and all other known sources ran a live feed from the United States.

- *While that was the original plan, and, according to some sources, the official policy, the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) did take the transmission direct from the Parkes and Honeysuckle Creek radio telescopes. These were converted to NTSC television at Paddington, in Sydney. This meant that Australian viewers saw the moonwalk several seconds before the rest of the world.*^[112] *See also Parkes radio astronomer John Sarkissian's article, "On Eagle's Wings: The Parkes Observatory's Support of the Apollo 11 Mission" (http://www.parkes.atnf.csiro.au/news_events/apollo11/).*^[113] *The events surrounding the Parkes Observatory's role in relaying the live television of the moonwalk were portrayed in a slightly fictionalized Australian film comedy "The Dish" (2000).*

5. Better signal was supposedly received at Parkes Observatory when the Moon was on the opposite side of the planet.

- *This is not supported by the detailed evidence and logs from the missions.*^[114]

Missing data

Blueprints and design and development drawings of the machines involved are missing.^{[115][116]} Apollo 11 data tapes containing telemetry and the high-quality video (before scan conversion from slow-scan TV to standard TV) of the first moonwalk are also missing.^{[117][118]}

Tapes

Dr. David R. Williams (NASA archivist at Goddard Space Flight Center) and Apollo 11 flight director Eugene F. Kranz both acknowledged that the original high-quality Apollo 11 telemetry data tapes are missing. Conspiracists see this as evidence that they never existed.^[117] The Apollo 11 telemetry tapes were different from the telemetry tapes of the other Moon landings because they contained the raw television broadcast. For technical reasons, the Apollo 11 lander carried a slow-scan television (SSTV) camera (see Apollo TV camera). To broadcast the pictures to regular television, a scan conversion had to be done. The radio telescope at Parkes Observatory in Australia was able to receive the telemetry from the Moon at the time of the Apollo 11 moonwalk.^[113] Parkes had a bigger antenna than NASA's antenna in Australia at the Honeysuckle Creek Tracking Station, so it received a better picture. It also received a better picture than NASA's antenna at Goldstone Deep Space Communications Complex. This direct TV signal, along with telemetry data, was recorded onto one-inch fourteen-track analog tape at Parkes. The original SSTV transmission had better detail and contrast than the scan-converted pictures, and it is this original tape that is missing.^[119] A crude, real-time scan conversion of the SSTV signal was done in Australia before it was broadcast worldwide. However, still photos of the original SSTV image are available (see photos). About fifteen minutes of it were filmed by an amateur 8 mm film camera and these are also available. Later Apollo missions did not use SSTV. At least some of the telemetry tapes from the ALSEP scientific experiments left on the Moon (which ran until 1977) still exist, according to Dr. Williams. Copies of those tapes have been found.^[120]



Photo of the high-quality SSTV image before the scan conversion



Photo of the degraded image after the SSTV scan conversion

Others are looking for the missing telemetry tapes for different reasons. The tapes contain the original and highest quality video feed from the Apollo 11 landing. Some former Apollo personnel want to find the tapes for posterity while NASA engineers looking towards future Moon missions believe the tapes may be useful for their design studies. They have found that the Apollo 11 tapes were sent for storage at the U.S. National Archives in 1970, but by 1984, all the Apollo 11 tapes had been returned to the Goddard Space Flight Center at their request. The tapes are believed to have been stored rather than re-used.^[121] Goddard was storing 35,000 new tapes per year in 1967,^[122] even before the Moon landings.

In November 2006, COSMOS Online reported that about 100 data tapes recorded in Australia during the Apollo 11 mission had been found in a small marine science laboratory in the main physics building at the Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Australia. One of the old tapes has been sent to NASA for analysis. The slow-scan television images were not on the tape.^[120]

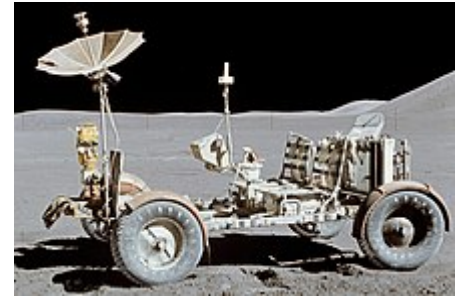
In July 2009, NASA indicated that it must have erased the original Apollo 11 Moon footage years ago so that it could re-use the tape. In December 2009 NASA issued a final report on the Apollo 11 telemetry tapes.^[123] Senior engineer Dick Nafzger, who was in charge of the live TV recordings during the Apollo missions, was put in charge of the restoration project. After a three-year search, the "inescapable conclusion" was that about 45 tapes (estimated 15 tapes recorded at each of the three tracking stations) of Apollo 11 video were erased and re-used, said Nafzger.^[124] In time for the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing, Lowry Digital had been tasked with restoring the surviving footage. Lowry Digital president Mike Inchalik said that, "this is by far and away the lowest quality" video the company has

dealt with. Nafzger praised Lowry for restoring "crispness" to the Apollo video, which will remain in black and white and contains conservative digital enhancements. The US\$230,000 restoration project took months to complete and did not include sound quality improvements. Some selections of restored footage in high-definition have been made available on the NASA website.^[125]

Blueprints

Grumman appears to have destroyed most of their LM documentation,^{[116][126]} but copies of the blueprints for the Saturn V exist on microfilm.^[127]

Four mission-worthy Lunar Roving Vehicles (LRV) were built by Boeing.^[128] Three of them were carried to the Moon on Apollos 15, 16, and 17, used by the astronauts for transportation once on the Moon, and left there. After Apollo 18 was canceled, the other LRV was used for spare parts for the Apollos 15 to 17 missions. The 221-page operation manual for the LRV contains some detailed drawings,^[129] although not the blueprints.



Lunar Roving Vehicle flown on Apollo 15

NASA technology compared to USSR

Bart Sibrel cites the relative level of the United States and USSR space technology as evidence that the Moon landings could not have happened. For much of the early stages of the Space Race, the USSR was ahead of the United States, yet in the end, the USSR was never able to fly a crewed spacecraft to the Moon, let alone land one on the surface. It is argued that, because the USSR was unable to do this, the United States should have also been unable to develop the technology to do so.

For example, he claims that, during the Apollo program, the USSR had five times more crewed hours in space than the United States, and notes that the USSR was the first to achieve many of the early milestones in space: the first artificial satellite in orbit (October 1957, Sputnik 1);^[d] the first living creature in orbit (a dog named Laika, November 1957, Sputnik 2); the first man in space and in orbit (Yuri Gagarin, April 1961, Vostok 1); the first woman in space (Valentina Tereshkova, June 1963, Vostok 6); and the first spacewalk (Alexei Leonov in March 1965, Voskhod 2).

However, most of the Soviet gains listed above were matched by the United States within a year, and sometimes within weeks. In 1965, the United States started to achieve many firsts (such as the first successful space rendezvous), which were important steps in a mission to the Moon. Furthermore, NASA and others say that these gains by the Soviets are not as impressive as they seem; that a number of these firsts were mere stunts that did not advance the technology greatly, or at all, *e.g.*, the first woman in space.^{[130][131]} In fact, by the time of the launch of the first crewed Earth-orbiting Apollo flight (Apollo 7), the USSR had made only nine spaceflights (seven with one cosmonaut, one with two, one with three) compared to 16 by the United States. In terms of spacecraft hours, the USSR had 460 hours of spaceflight; the United States had 1,024 hours. In terms of astronaut/cosmonaut time, the USSR had 534 hours of crewed spaceflight whereas the United States had 1,992 hours. By the time of Apollo 11, the United States had a lead much wider than that. (See List of human spaceflights, 1961–1970, and refer to individual flights for the length of time.)

Moreover, the USSR did not develop a successful rocket capable of a crewed lunar mission until the 1980s – their N1 rocket failed on all four launch attempts between 1969 and 1972.^[132] The Soviet LK lunar lander was tested in uncrewed low-Earth-orbit flights three times in 1970 and 1971.

Technology used by NASA

The digital technology on Earth during the time of the Moon landings was just in its infancy. The astronauts had relied on computers to aid in the Moon missions. The Apollo Guidance Computer was on the Lunar Module and the command and service module. Many computers at the time were very large despite poor specs.^{[133][134]} For example, in 1973, one year after the final Moon landing, the Xerox Alto was released.^[135] This computer had 96kB of memory.^[136] Most personal computers as of 2019, use 50,000 - 100,000 times this amount of RAM.^[137] Conspiracy theorists claim that the computers during the time of the Moon landings would not have been advanced enough to allow for human space travel to the Moon and back;^[138] they similarly claim that other contemporary technology (radio transmission, radar, and other instrumentation) was likewise insufficient for the task.^[139]

Deaths of NASA personnel

In a televised program about the Moon-landing hoax allegations, Fox Entertainment Group listed the deaths of ten astronauts and two civilians related to the crewed spaceflight program as part of an alleged cover-up.

- Theodore Freeman (killed ejecting from a T-38 which had suffered a bird strike, October 1964)
- Elliot See and Charlie Bassett (T-38 crash in bad weather, February 1966)
- Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Ed White, and Roger B. Chaffee (killed in a fire during the "plugs-out test" preceding Apollo 1, January 1967)
- Edward "Ed" Givens (killed in a car accident, June 1967)
- Clifton "C. C." Williams (killed ejecting from a T-38, October 1967)
- Michael J. "Mike" Adams (died in an X-15 crash, November 1967. Adams was the only pilot killed during the X-15 flight test program. He was a test pilot, not a NASA astronaut, but had flown the X-15 above 80 kilometres or 50 miles)
- Robert Henry Lawrence Jr. (killed in an F-104 crash, December 1967, shortly after being selected as a pilot with the United States Air Force's Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL) program, which was canceled in 1969)
- Thomas Ronald Baron (North American Aviation employee. Baron died in an automobile collision with a train, April 27, 1967, six days after testifying before Rep. Olin E. Teague's House Subcommittee on NASA Oversight hearings held following the Apollo 1 fire, after which he was fired)

Two of the above, X-15 pilot Mike Adams and MOL pilot Robert Lawrence, had no connection with the civilian crewed space program that oversaw the Apollo missions. Baron was a quality control inspector who wrote a report critical of the Apollo program and was an outspoken critic of NASA's safety record after the Apollo 1 fire. Baron and his family were killed as their car was struck by a train at a train crossing. The deaths were an accident.^{[140][141]} All of the deaths occurred at least 20 months *before* Apollo 11 and subsequent flights.

As of November 2018, four of the twelve Apollo astronauts who landed on the Moon between 1969 and 1972 are still alive, including Buzz Aldrin. Also, six of the twelve Apollo astronauts who flew to the Moon without landing between 1968 and 1972 are still alive.

The number of deaths within the American astronaut corps during the run-up to Apollo and during the Apollo missions is similar to the number of deaths incurred by the Soviets. During the period 1961 to 1972, at least eight Soviet serving and former cosmonauts died:

- Valentin Bondarenko (ground training accident, March 1961)

- Grigori Nelyubov (suicide, February 1966)
- Vladimir Komarov (Soyuz 1 accident, April 1967)
- Yuri Gagarin (MiG-15 crash, March 1968)
- Pavel Belyayev (complications following surgery, January 1970)
- Georgi Dobrovolski, Vladislav Volkov, and Viktor Patsayev (Soyuz 11 accident, June 1971)

Additionally, the overall chief of their crewed-spaceflight program, Sergei Korolev, died while undergoing surgery in January 1966.

NASA response

In June 1977, NASA issued a fact sheet responding to recent claims that the Apollo Moon landings had been hoaxed.^[142] The fact sheet is particularly blunt and regards the idea of faking the Moon landings to be preposterous and outlandish. NASA refers to the rocks and particles collected from the Moon as being evidence of the program's legitimacy, as they claim that these rocks could not have been formed under conditions on earth. NASA also notes that all of the operations and phases of the Apollo program were closely followed and under the scrutiny of the news media, from liftoff to splashdown. NASA responds to Bill Kaysing's book, *We Never Went to the Moon*, by identifying one of his claims of fraud regarding the lack of a crater left on the Moon's surface by the landing of the lunar module, and refuting it with facts about the soil and cohesive nature of the surface of the Moon.

The fact sheet was reissued on February 14, 2001, the day before Fox television's broadcast of *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* The documentary reinvigorated the public's interest in conspiracy theories and the possibility that the Moon landings were faked, which has provoked NASA to once again defend its name.

Alleged Stanley Kubrick involvement

Filmmaker Stanley Kubrick is accused of having produced much of the footage for Apollos 11 and 12, presumably because he had just directed *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which is partly set on the Moon and featured advanced special effects.^[143] It has been claimed that when *2001* was in post-production in early 1968, NASA secretly approached Kubrick to direct the first three Moon landings. The launch and splashdown would be real but the spacecraft would stay in Earth orbit and fake footage broadcast as "live from the Moon." No evidence was offered for this theory, which overlooks many facts. For example, *2001* was released before the first Apollo landing and Kubrick's depiction of the Moon's surface differs greatly from its appearance in the Apollo footage. The movement of characters on the Moon in *2001* differs from that of the filmed movement of Apollo astronauts, and does not resemble an environment with 1/6 the gravity of Earth. Several scenes in *2001* show dust billowing as spacecraft landed, something that would not happen in the vacuum environment of the Moon. Kubrick did hire Frederick Ordway and Harry Lange, both of whom had worked for NASA and major aerospace contractors, to work with him on *2001*. Kubrick also used some 50 mm f/0.7 lenses that were left over from a batch made by Zeiss for NASA. However, Kubrick only got this lens for Barry Lyndon (1975). The lens was originally a still photo lens and needed changes to be used for motion filming.

The mockumentary based on this idea, *Dark Side of the Moon*, could have fueled the conspiracy theory. This French mockumentary, directed by William Karel, was originally aired on Arte channel in 2002 with the title *Opération Lune*. It parodies conspiracy theories with faked interviews, stories of assassinations

of Stanley Kubrick's assistants by the CIA, and a variety of conspicuous mistakes, puns, and references to old movie characters, inserted through the film as clues for the viewer. Nevertheless, *Opération Lune* is still taken at face value by some conspiracy believers.

An article titled "Stanley Kubrick and the Moon Hoax" appeared on Usenet in 1995, in the newsgroup "alt.humor.best-of-usenet". One passage – on how Kubrick was supposedly coerced into the conspiracy – reads:

NASA further leveraged their position by threatening to publicly reveal the heavy involvement of Mr. Kubrick's younger brother, Raul, with the American Communist Party. This would have been an intolerable embarrassment to Mr. Kubrick, especially since the release of Dr. Strangelove.

Kubrick had no such brother – the article was a spoof, complete with a giveaway sentence describing Kubrick shooting the moonwalk "on location" on the Moon. Nevertheless, the claim was taken up in earnest;^[144] Clyde Lewis used it almost word-for-word,^[143] whereas Jay Weidner gave the brother a more senior status within the party:

No one knows how the powers-that-be convinced Kubrick to direct the Apollo landings. Maybe they had compromised Kubrick in some way. The fact that his brother, Raul Kubrick, was the head of the American Communist Party may have been one of the avenues pursued by the government to get Stanley to cooperate.^[145]

In July 2009, Weidner posted on his webpage "Secrets of the Shining", where he states that Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) is a veiled confession of his role in the scam project.^{[146][147]} This thesis was the subject of refutation in an article published on Seeker nearly half a year later.^[148]

The 2015 movie *Moonwalkers* is a fictional account of a CIA agent's claim of Kubrick's involvement.

In December 2015, a video surfaced which allegedly shows Kubrick being interviewed shortly before his 1999 death; the video purportedly shows the director confessing to T. Patrick Murray that the Apollo Moon landings had been faked.^[149] Research quickly found, however, that the video was a hoax.^[150]

Academic work

In 2002, NASA granted US\$15,000 to James Oberg for a commission to write a point-by-point rebuttal of the hoax claims. However, NASA canceled the commission later that year, after complaints that the book would dignify the accusations.^[151] Oberg said that he meant to finish the book.^{[151][152]} In November 2002, Peter Jennings said "NASA is going to spend a few thousand dollars trying to prove to some people that the United States did indeed land men on the Moon," and "NASA had been so rattled, [they] hired [somebody] to write a book refuting the conspiracy theorists." Oberg says that belief in the hoax theories is not the fault of the conspiracists, but rather that of teachers and people (including NASA) who should provide information to the public.^[151]

In 2004, Martin Hendry and Ken Skeldon of the University of Glasgow were awarded a grant by the UK-based Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council to investigate Moon landing conspiracy theories.^[153] In November 2004, they gave a lecture at the Glasgow Science Centre where the top ten claims by conspiracists were individually addressed and refuted.^[154]

MythBusters special

An episode of *MythBusters* in August 2008 was dedicated to the Moon landings. The *MythBusters* crew tested many of the conspiracists' claims. Some of the testings were done in a NASA training facility. All of the conspiracists' claims examined on the show were labeled as having been "Busted", meaning that the conspiracists' claims were not true.

Third-party evidence of Moon landings

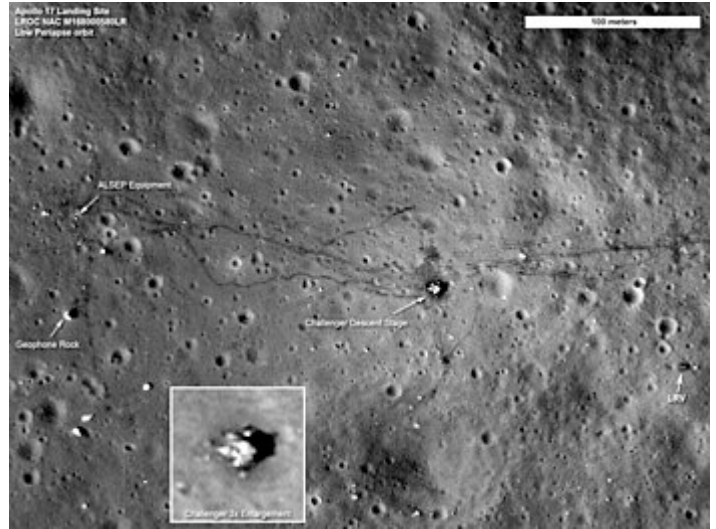
Imaging the landing sites

Moon-landing conspiracists claim that observatories and the Hubble Space Telescope should be able to photograph the landing sites. This implies that the world's major observatories (as well as the Hubble Program) are complicit in the hoax by refusing to take photos of the landing sites. Photos of the Moon have been taken by Hubble, including at least two Apollo landing sites, but the Hubble resolution limits viewing of lunar objects to sizes no smaller than 55–69 m (60–75 yd), which is insufficient resolution to see any landing site features.^[156]

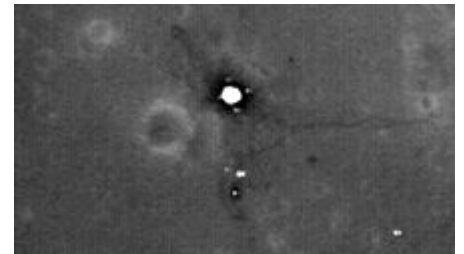
In April 2001, Leonard David published an article on [space.com](#),^{[157][158]} which showed a photo taken by the Clementine mission showing a diffuse dark spot at the site NASA says is the Apollo 15 lander. The evidence was noticed by Misha Kreslavsky, of the Department of Geological Sciences at [Brown University](#), and Yuri Shkuratov of the [Kharkiv Astronomical Observatory](#) in [Ukraine](#). The European Space Agency's SMART-1 uncrewed probe sent back photos of the landing sites, according to [Bernard Foing](#), Chief Scientist of the ESA Science Program.^[159] "Given SMART-1's initial high orbit, however, it may prove difficult to see artifacts," said Foing in an interview on [space.com](#).

In 2002, Alex R. Blackwell of the University of Hawaii pointed out that some photos taken by Apollo astronauts^[158] while in orbit around the Moon show the landing sites.

The Daily Telegraph published a story in 2002 saying that European astronomers at the [Very Large Telescope](#) (VLT) would use it to view the landing sites. According to the article, Dr. [Richard West](#) said that his team would take "a high-resolution image of one of the Apollo landing sites." Marcus Allen, a conspiracist, answered that no photos of hardware on the Moon would convince him that human landings had happened.^[160] The telescope was used to image the Moon and provided a resolution of 130 meters (430 ft), which was not good enough to resolve the 4.2 meters (14 ft) wide lunar landers or their long shadows.^[161]



Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter photo of Apollo 17 landing site (click to enlarge)^[2]



Apollo 11 landing site – "There the lunar module sits, parked just where it landed 40 years ago, as if it still really were 40 years ago and all the time since merely imaginary." – *The New York Times*^[155]

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) launched their SELENE Moon orbiter on September 14, 2007 (JST), from Tanegashima Space Center. SELENE orbited the Moon at about 100 km (62 miles) altitude. In May 2008, JAXA reported detecting the "halo" generated by the Apollo 15 Lunar Module engine exhaust from a Terrain Camera image.^[162] A three-dimensional reconstructed photo also matched the terrain of an Apollo 15 photo taken from the surface.

On July 17, 2009, NASA released low-resolution engineering test photos of the Apollo 11, Apollo 14, Apollo 15, Apollo 16 and Apollo 17 landing sites that have been photographed by the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter as part of the process of starting its primary mission.^[163] The photos show the descent stage of the landers from each mission on the Moon's surface. The photo of the Apollo 14 landing site also shows tracks made by an astronaut between a science experiment (ALSEP) and the lander.^[163] Photos of the Apollo 12 landing site were released by NASA on September 3, 2009.^[164] The *Intrepid* lander descent stage, experiment package (ALSEP), Surveyor 3 spacecraft, and astronaut footpaths are all visible. While the LRO images have been enjoyed by the scientific community as a whole, they have not done anything to convince conspiracists that the landings happened.^[165]

On September 1, 2009, India's lunar mission Chandrayaan-1 took photos of the Apollo 15 landing site and tracks of the lunar rovers.^{[166][167]} The Indian Space Research Organisation launched their uncrewed lunar probe on September 8, 2008 (IST), from Satish Dhawan Space Centre. The photos were taken by a hyperspectral camera fitted as part of the mission's image payload.^[166]

China's second lunar probe, Chang'e 2, which was launched in 2010, can photograph the lunar surface with a resolution of up to 1.3 m (4.3 ft). It spotted traces of the Apollo landings.^[168]

Moon rocks

The Apollo program collected 380 kg (838 lb) of Moon rocks during the six crewed missions. Analyses by scientists worldwide all agree that these rocks came from the Moon – no published accounts in peer-reviewed scientific journals exist that dispute this claim. The Apollo samples are easily distinguishable from both meteorites and Earth rocks^[6] in that they show a lack of hydrous alteration products, they show evidence of having undergone impact events on an airless body, and they have unique geochemical traits. Furthermore, most are more than 200 million years older than the oldest Earth rocks. The Moon rocks also share the same traits as Soviet samples.^[169]

Conspiracists argue that Marshall Space Flight Center Director Wernher von Braun's trip to Antarctica in 1967 (about two years before the Apollo 11 launch) was to gather lunar meteorites to be used as fake Moon rocks. Because von Braun was a former SS officer (though one who had been detained by the Gestapo),^[170] the documentary film *Did We Go?*^[117] suggests that he could have been pressured to agree to the conspiracy to protect himself from recriminations over his past. NASA said that von Braun's mission was "to look into environmental and logistic factors that might relate to the planning of future space missions, and hardware."^[171] NASA continues to send teams to work in Antarctica to mimic the conditions on other planets.



Genesis Rock brought back by Apollo 15 – older than any rocks on Earth

It is now accepted by the scientific community that rocks have been blasted from both the Martian and lunar surface during impact events, and that some of these have landed on the Earth as meteorites.^{[172][173]} However, the first Antarctic lunar meteorite was found in 1979, and its lunar origin was not recognized until 1982.^[174] Furthermore, lunar meteorites are so rare that it is unlikely that they could account for the 380 kg (840 lb) of Moon rocks that NASA gathered between 1969 and 1972. Only about 30 kg (66 lb) of lunar meteorites have been found on Earth thus far, despite private collectors and governmental agencies worldwide searching for more than 20 years.^[174]

While the Apollo missions gathered 380 kg (840 lb) of Moon rocks, the Soviet Luna 16, Luna 20 and Luna 24 robots gathered only 326 g (11.5 oz) combined (that is, less than one-thousandth as much). Indeed, current plans for a Martian sample return would only gather about 500 g (18 oz) of soil,^[175] and a recently proposed South Pole-Aitken basin robot mission would only gather about 1 kg (2.2 lb) of Moon rock.^{[176][177][178]} If NASA had used similar robot technology, then between 300 and 2,000 robot missions would have been needed to collect the current amount of Moon rocks that is held by NASA.

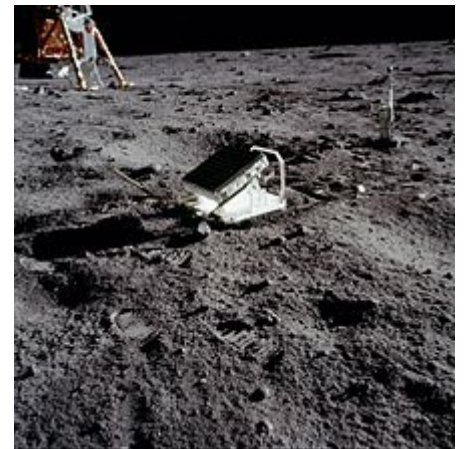
On the makeup of the Moon rocks, Kaysing asked: "Why was there never a mention of gold, silver, diamonds or other precious metals on the moon? Wasn't this a viable consideration? Why was this fact never dicussed [*sic*] in the press or by the astronauts?"^[179] Geologists realize that gold and silver deposits on Earth are the result of the action of hydrothermal fluids concentrating the precious metals into veins of ore. Since in 1969 water was believed to be absent on the Moon, no geologist discussed finding these on the Moon in any great amount.

Missions tracked by independent parties

Aside from NASA, a number of groups and individuals tracked the Apollo missions as they happened. On later missions, NASA released information to the public explaining where and when the spacecraft could be sighted. Their flight paths were tracked using radar and they were sighted and photographed using telescopes. Also, radio transmissions between the astronauts on the surface and in orbit were independently recorded.

Retroreflectors

The presence of retroreflectors (mirrors used as targets for Earth-based tracking lasers) from the Laser Ranging Retroreflector Experiment (LRRR) is evidence that there were landings.^[180] Lick Observatory attempted to detect from Apollo 11's retroreflector while Armstrong and Aldrin were still on the Moon but did not succeed until August 1, 1969.^[181] The Apollo 14 astronauts deployed a retroreflector on February 5, 1971, and McDonald Observatory detected it the same day. The Apollo 15 retroreflector was deployed on July 31, 1971, and was detected by McDonald Observatory within a few days.^[182] Smaller retroreflectors were also put on the Moon by the Russians; they were attached to the uncrewed lunar rovers Lunokhod 1 and Lunokhod 2.^[183]



Apollo 11 retroreflector, still with its protective cover

Public opinion

In a 1994 poll by *The Washington Post*, 9% of the respondents said that it was possible that astronauts did not go to the Moon and another 5% were unsure.^[184] A 1999 Gallup Poll found that 6% of the Americans surveyed doubted that the Moon landings happened and that 5% of those surveyed had no opinion,^{[185][186][187][188]} which roughly matches the findings of a similar 1995 *Time/CNN* poll.^[185] Officials of the Fox network said that such skepticism rose to about 20% after the February 2001 airing of their network's television special, *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?*, seen by about 15 million viewers.^[186] This Fox special is seen as having promoted the hoax claims.^{[189][190]}

A 2000 poll conducted by the *Public Opinion Foundation* (*ΦΟΜ*) in Russia found that 28% of those surveyed did not believe that American astronauts landed on the Moon, and this percentage is roughly equal in all social-demographic groups.^{[191][192][193]} In 2009, a poll held by the *United Kingdom's Engineering & Technology* magazine found that 25% of those surveyed did not believe that men landed on the Moon.^[194] Another poll gives that 25% of 18- to 25-year-olds surveyed were unsure that the landings happened.^[195]

There are subcultures worldwide which advocate the belief that the Moon landings were faked. By 1977 the *Hare Krishna* magazine *Back to Godhead* called the landings a hoax, claiming that, since the Sun is 150 million km (93 million mi) away, and "according to Hindu mythology the Moon is 800,000 miles [1,300,000 km] farther away than that", the Moon would be nearly 151 million km (94 million mi) away; to travel that span in 91 hours would require a speed of more than a million miles per hour, "a patently impossible feat even by the scientists' calculations."^{[196][197]}

James Oberg of *ABC News* said that the conspiracy theory is taught in Cuban schools and wherever Cuban teachers are sent.^{[151][198]} A poll conducted in the 1970s by the *United States Information Agency* in several countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa found that most respondents were unaware of the Moon landings, many of the others dismissed them as propaganda or science fiction, and many thought that it had been the Russians that landed on the Moon.^[199]

In 2019, Ipsos conducted a study for C-Span to assess the level of belief that the 1969 Moon landing was faked. Six percent of respondents believed it was not real, but 11% of millennials (reached adulthood in the early 21st Century) were the most likely to believe it was not factual.^[200]

See also

- Astronauts Gone Wild* – 2004 conspiracy theory film by Bart Sibrel
- In the Shadow of the Moon* – 2007 film by Christopher Riley, David Sington
- Lost Cosmonauts* – Conspiracy theory about Soviet cosmonauts
- List of topics characterized as pseudoscience – Wikipedia list article
- Stolen and missing Moon rocks* – Summary of lunar material samples stolen or misplaced

Notes

- In 1968, Clarke and Kubrick had collaborated on the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which realistically portrayed a Moon mission.
- He does this in his site (<http://www.badastronomy.com/bad/tv/foxapollo.html>) as well
- This number includes the crews of Apollos 8, 10, and 13, though the latter technically only performed a fly-by. These three missions account for only six additional astronauts because James Lovell orbited the Moon twice (Apollos 8 and 13) and John Young and Gene Cernan orbited on Apollo 10 both later landed on the Moon.

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External links

- Moon Base Clavius (<http://www.clavius.org/index.html>) is devoted to analyzing and debunking the conspiracists' claims.
- Apollo Lunar Surface Journal (<https://history.nasa.gov/alsj/frame.html>) Photos, audio, video and complete communication transcriptions of the six successful landings and Apollo 13

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Cattle mutilation

Cattle mutilation (also known as **bovine excision**^[1] and **unexplained livestock death**^[2]) is the killing and mutilation of cattle under unusual, usually bloodless, and anomalous circumstances. Worldwide, sheep, horses, goats, pigs, rabbits, cats, dogs, bison, deer and elk have been reported mutilated with similar bloodless excisions; often an ear, eyeball, jaw flesh, tongue, lymph nodes, genitals and rectum are removed.

Since the first reports of animal mutilations, various explanations have been offered, ranging from natural decomposition and normal predation to cults and secretive governmental and military agencies, to a range of speculations, including cryptid predators (like the *chupacabra*) and extraterrestrials. Mutilations have been the subject of two independent federal investigations in the United States.^[3]

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History

The earliest known documented outbreak of unexplained livestock deaths occurred in early 1606 "...about the city of London and some of the shires adjoining. Whole slaughters of sheep have been made, in some places to number 100, in others less, where nothing is taken from the sheep but their tallow and

some inward parts, the whole carcasses, and fleece remaining still behind. Of this sundry conjectures, but most agree that it tendeth towards some fireworks." The outbreak was noted in the official records of the Court of James I of England.^[4] Charles Fort collected many accounts of cattle mutilations that occurred in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. John Keel mentioned investigating animal mutilation cases in 1966 (while with Ivan T. Sanderson) that were being reported in the Upper Ohio River Valley, around Gallipolis, Ohio.^[5] The phenomenon remained largely unknown outside cattle-raising communities until 1967, when the *Pueblo Chieftain* in Pueblo, Colorado, published a story about a horse named Lady near Alamosa, Colorado, that was mysteriously killed and mutilated. The story was republished by the wider press and distributed nationwide; this case was the first to feature speculation that extraterrestrial beings and unidentified flying objects were associated with mutilation.^[6]

The Snippy (Lady) mutilation

On September 9, 1967, Agnes King and her son Harry found the dead body of their three-year-old horse, Lady. Lady's head and neck had been skinned and defleshed, and the body displayed cuts that, to King, looked very precise. No blood was at the scene, according to Harry, and a strong medicinal odor was in the air. A subsequent investigation by Wadsworth Ayer for the Condon Committee (Case #32) concluded that "There was no evidence to support the assertion that the horse's death was associated in any way to abnormal causes".^[7] When the Lewises phoned Alamosa County Sheriff Ben Phillips, he told them that the death was probably due to "a lightning strike" and never bothered to visit the site. Early press coverage of the case misnamed Lady as Snippy. Snippy was Lady's sire and belonged to Nellie's husband, Berle Lewis.^[4] Later press coverage mentions that the horse had been shot "in the rump".^[8] However, two students from Alamosa State College confessed to sneaking out into the pasture and shooting the horse several weeks after the case was publicized.^[9]

Later developments

Senator Floyd K. Haskell contacted the FBI asking for help in 1975 due to public concern regarding the issue. He claimed there had been 130 mutilations in Colorado alone, and further reports across nine states.^[10] A 1979 FBI report indicated that, according to investigations by the New Mexico State Police, there had been an estimated 8,000 mutilations in Colorado, causing approximately \$1,000,000 damage.^[11]

In May 2001, 200 goats were mutilated in Panggang District of Gunung Kidul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.^[12]

Many cases of mutilation have been reported worldwide since the 1967 Snippy incident, chiefly in the Americas and Australia. In South America, an estimated 3,500 incidents have occurred since 2002, when around 400 cases were reported.^[13] Mutilation investigators assert that a large number of cases are never reported to authorities, perhaps no more than one in ten.^[14]

In the summer of 2019, five bulls were mutilated at the Silvie's Valley Ranch in Oregon. It is estimated that each 2,000 pound bull was worth US\$6,000. The FBI has made no comment on if there is an investigation or not on this particular event but the Silvie's Valley Ranch offered a \$25,000 reward for information on the topic.^[15]

Characteristics

Physical characteristics

In most cases, mutilation wounds appear to be clean and carried out surgically. Mutilated animals are sometimes, though not always,^[16] reported to have been drained of blood and show no sign of blood in the immediate area or around their wounds.

According to Howard Burgess, nearly 90 percent of mutilated cattle are between four and five years old.^[17]

In some cases, strange marks or imprints near the site have been found. In the famous "Snippy" case, there was an absolute absence of tracks in a 100 ft (30 m) radius of the carcass (even the horse's own tracks disappeared within 100 ft (30 m) of the body.) But within this radius, several small holes were found seemingly "punched" in the ground and two bushes were absolutely flattened.^[18] In Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, June 1976, a "trail of suction cup-like impressions" was found leading from a mutilated three-year-old cow. The indentations were in a tripod form, 4 inches (10 cm) in diameter, 28 inches (70 cm) apart, and disappeared 500 feet (150 m) from the dead cow. Similar incidents were reported in the area in 1978.^{[19][20]}

Laboratory reports

Laboratory reports carried out on some mutilated animals have shown unusually high or low levels of vitamins or minerals in tissue samples, and the presence of chemicals not normally found in animals. However, not all mutilated animals display these anomalies, and those that do have slightly different anomalies from one another. On account of the time between death and necropsy, and a lack of background information on specific cattle, investigators have often found it impossible to determine if these variations are connected to the animals' deaths or not.^[11]

In one case documented by New Mexico police and the FBI,^[11] an 11-month-old cross Hereford-Charolais bull, belonging to a Mr. Manuel Gomez of Dulce, New Mexico, was found mutilated on March 24, 1978. It displayed "classic" mutilation signs, including the removal of the rectum and sex organs with what appeared to be "a sharp and precise instrument" and its internal organs were found to be inconsistent with a normal case of death followed by predation.

"Both the liver and the heart were white and mushy. Both organs had the texture and consistency of peanut butter"

Gabriel L Valdez, New Mexico Police

The animal's heart as well as bone and muscle samples were sent to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory for microscopic and bacteriological studies, while samples from the animal's liver were sent to two separate private laboratories.

Los Alamos detected the presence of naturally occurring Clostridium bacteria in the heart, but was unable to reach any conclusions because of the possibility that the bacteria represented postmortem contamination. No microscopic changes of pathological significance were found in the heart tissue.^[11]

Samples from the animal's liver were found to be completely devoid of copper and to contain 4 times the normal level of zinc, potassium and phosphorus. The scientists performing the analysis were unable to explain these anomalies.^[11]

Blood samples taken at the scene were reported to be "light pink in color" and "Did not clot after several days" while the animal's hide was found to be unusually brittle for a fresh death (the animal was estimated to have been dead for 5 hours) and the flesh underneath was found to be discolored.^[11]

None of the laboratories were able to report any firm conclusions on the cause of the blood or tissue damage. At the time, it was suggested that a burst of radiation may have been used to kill the animal, blowing apart its red blood cells in the process. This hypothesis was later discarded as subsequent reports from the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory later confirmed the presence of anti-coagulants in samples^[11] taken from other cows mutilated in the region.

Conventional explanations

As with most disputed phenomena, there are a number of potential explanations for the causes of cattle mutilations, ranging from death by natural causes to purposeful acts by unknown individuals.

U.S. governmental explanation

After coming under increasing public pressure, Federal authorities launched a comprehensive investigation of the mutilation phenomenon.^[21]

In May 1979, the case was passed on to the FBI, which granted jurisdiction under Title 18.^[22] The investigation was dubbed "Operation Animal Mutilation".

The investigation was funded by a US\$44,170 grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, and was headed by FBI agent Kenneth Rommel. It had five key objectives:

1. To determine the reliability of the information on which the grant was based, which entailed gathering as much information as possible about the cases reported in New Mexico prior to May 1979
2. To determine the cause of as many mutilations as possible, especially those reported in New Mexico
3. To determine if livestock mutilations as described constitute a major law enforcement problem
4. If these mutilations do constitute a major law enforcement problem, to determine the scope of the problem and to offer recommendations on how to deal with it
5. If it is shown that the mutilation phenomenon is not a law enforcement problem, to recommend that no further law enforcement investigations be funded.

Rommel's final report, released in June 1980, was 297 pages long; in the report's introduction, Rommel stated: "According to some estimates, by 1979 10,000 head of cattle have been mysteriously mutilated". However, the report concluded that the mutilations were predominantly the result of natural predation, but did acknowledge that some cases contained anomalies that could not be accounted for by conventional wisdom. The FBI was unable to identify any individuals responsible for the mutilations. Details of the investigation are now available under the Freedom of Information Act. The released material includes correspondence from Rommel where he states that "most credible sources have attributed this damage to normal predator and scavenger activity".^[23]

New Mexico State patrolman Gabe Valdez, who by the time of the Rommel report had investigated dozens of mutilation cases, told investigator Christopher O'Brien that "during the six to eight months when Rommel was actively investigating the mutilations in New Mexico, the state (especially the northern tier) became suddenly quiet with very few (if any) true mutilations being reported to officials". Valdez was convinced that Rommel never was able to investigate a single high-strange case, because the

mutilators moved their operations to other parts of the west. Rommel (a former FBI bank robbery expert) was disgusted by dead necrotic cows and chose to let others do the actual investigations while he waited upwind in the car.^[24]

Western Canada, during this period, was especially hard hit. During the six to eight months of Rommel's investigation, RCMP investigator Corporal Lyn Lauber of the Calgary detachment (who was in charge of the Canadian mutilation probe) investigated numerous high-strange cases. When Rommel's final report was released to the public. Lauber answered an inquiry by investigator Tommy Bland: "I find it difficult to understand how Rommel could make a statement such as this, without ever having personally witnessed a [real] mutilation firsthand". He also stated that "I would like to see Rommel write off our confirmed cases as due to predators".^[25]

Prior to the involvement of the FBI, the ATF launched their own investigation into the phenomenon.^[26]

Both federal investigations were preceded (and followed, to some extent) by a state-level investigation carried out by law enforcement officials in New Mexico. This investigation reported finding evidence that some mutilated animals had been tranquilized and treated with an anti-coagulant prior to their mutilation. It also contended that alleged surgical techniques performed during mutilations had become "more professional" over time.^{[11]:13} However, officers in charge were unable to determine responsibility or motive.

The ATF investigation was headed by ATF Agent Donald Flickinger. The New Mexico investigation was headed by Officer Gabe Veldez of the New Mexico State Patrol, with the assistance of Cattle Inspector Jim Dyad and Officer Howard Johnston of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Natural causes

While many unconventional explanations have been put forward to explain cattle mutilations, a variety of scientists, veterinary workers, and knowledgeable observers (including farmers and other agricultural workers) have suggested more conventional ideas, most of which revolve around the hypothesis that "mutilated" animals died of natural causes and were subjected to known terrestrial phenomena – including the action of predators, parasites, and scavengers.^[27]

Missing or mutilated mouth, lips, anus, and genitalia are explained as:

- Contraction of missing/damaged areas due to dehydration.
- The actions of small scavengers and burrowing parasites seeking to enter or consume the body in areas where skin is at its thinnest.

Missing/mutilated eyes and soft internal organs are explained as:

- The action of carrion feeding insects such as blowflies, and opportunistic or carrion birds such as vultures, which are known to direct themselves toward an animal's eyes, and to enter the body through the openings of the mouth and anus in order to feed on soft internal organs.

Absence of blood is explained as:

- Blood pooling in the lowest points in the body where it will break down into its basic organic components.



Blowflies have been implicated as possible scavengers involved in making livestock carcasses look "mutilated."

- Blood that is external to the body, or in the area of a wound being consumed by insects or reduced by solar desiccation.

Surgical incisions in the skin are explained as:

- Tears in the skin created when it is stretched by postmortem bloat and/or as dehydration causes the animal's hide to shrink and split, often in linear cuts.
- Incisions caused by scavengers or predators, possibly exacerbated by the above.

The hypothesis that natural phenomena account for most mutilation characteristics has been validated by a number of experiments, including one cited by long-time scientific skeptic Robert T. Carroll, conducted by Washington County (Arkansas) Sheriff's Department. In the experiment, the body of a recently deceased cow was left in a field and observed for 48 hours. During the 48 hours, postmortem bloating was reported to have caused incision-like tears in the cow's skin that matched the "surgical" cuts reported on mutilated cows, while the action of blowflies and maggots reportedly matched the soft tissue damage observed on mutilated cows.

Experiments have also been conducted to compare the different reactions of surgically cut hide/flesh and predated hide/flesh to natural exposure.^[28] They demonstrated pronounced differences between surgical cuts and non surgical cuts over time.

Some ranchers have disputed the scientific "natural causes hypothesis" on the grounds that the mutilated animals often fall outside of the normal categories of natural deaths by predation or disease. One reason cited is that the animals were healthy and showed no sign of disease prior to death, and were large and strong enough not to be a likely target for a predator. In some cases, ranchers have reported that the mutilated cattle were among the healthiest and strongest animals in their herd.^[29]

Human intervention

Animal cruelty and human activity

It is alternatively hypothesised that cattle mutilations are the result of two unrelated deviant phenomena. The bulk of mutilations are the result of predation and other natural processes, and those with anomalies that cannot be explained in this way are the work of humans who derive pleasure or sexual stimulation from mutilating animals.

Human attacks against animals are a recognized phenomenon. There have been many recorded cases around the world, and many convictions. Typically the victims of such attacks are cats, dogs, and other family pets,^[30] and the actions of humans are usually limited to acts of cruelty such as striking, burning, or beating animals. However, attacks have also been recorded against larger animals, including sheep, cows, and horses.^[31] Humans, particularly those with sociopathic disorders, have been found to have mutilated animals in elaborate ways^[30] using knives or surgical instruments.

On April 20, 1979, C Hibbs of the New Mexico State Veterinary diagnostics Laboratory spoke before a hearing chaired by Senator Harrison Schmitt. Hibbs testified that mutilation fell into three categories, one of which was animals mutilated by humans^[11] (page 25). FBI records did not record the percentage of mutilated animals that fell into this category.

Cults

Closely related to the deviant hypothesis is the hypothesis that cattle mutilations are the result of cult activity.^[32] However, contrary to the deviancy hypothesis, which holds that cattle are mutilated at random by individual deviants, the cult hypothesis holds that cattle mutilations are coordinated acts of ritual sacrifice carried out by organized groups.

Beliefs held by proponents of the cult hypothesis vary, but may include:

- That the apparent absence of blood at mutilation sites may indicate cult members would harvest it^[33]
- That organs have been removed from cattle for use in rituals^[27]
- That unborn calves have been harvested from mutilated cattle.

The hypothesis that cults were responsible for cattle mutilation was developed in the U.S. during the 1970s and 1980s, a time of growing national concern over cults (such as the Peoples Temple and Jonestown) and ritual satanic abuse ("Satanic panic").^{[34][35]}

In 1975, the US Treasury Department assigned Donald Flickinger to investigate the existence of connections between cults and the mutilation of cattle.^{[26][36]:23} The operation came under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Flickinger recorded a number of 'unusual' incidents and circumstantial evidence, but was unable to find sufficient evidence of cult involvement for the ATF to take further action.^{[26][36]} Media reports of the time reported his investigation was dropped when it was determined cattle deaths were not a prelude to a co-ordinated campaign against elected officials by cult members.^{[36]:23}

However, there were various reports during the time of menacing groups prowling around mutilation sites. In September 1975, a forestry service employee in Blaine County, Idaho, reported seeing a group of people in black hooded robes. Several cattle were found mutilated in the area the following day. On October 9, 1975, a motorist on U.S Highway 95 in northern Idaho, in an area of frequent cattle mutilation, reported to police that some 15 masked individuals formed a roadblock with linked arms, forcing him to turn around.^[37]

Since the beginning of the cult hypothesis, law enforcement agents in several states and provinces, including Alberta, Idaho, Montana, and Iowa have reported evidence implicating cults in several instances of cattle mutilations.^[38]

During their investigations, the FBI and the ATF were unable to find appropriate evidence, including signs of consistency between mutilations, to substantiate that the animals had been the victims of any form of ritual sacrifice or organized mutilation effort. They were also unable to determine how or why a cult would perform procedures that would result in the anomalies reported in some necropsies,^{[11]:3} or to verify that the anomalies were 1) connected to the mutilations themselves 2) the result of human intervention.^[21]

In most cases, mutilations were either ruled due to natural causes, or the cattle were too far decayed for any useful conclusions to be drawn. Some cases of cult hysteria were traced back to fabrication by individuals unrelated to the incident. In one case it was concluded that claims had been falsified by a convict seeking favorable terms on his sentence in exchange for information.^{[33]:14–15[36]:23–24} In another case, claims were traced back to local high school students who had circulated rumors as a joke.^{[33]:21}

Government or military experimentation

In his 1997 article “Dead Cows I've Known”,^[39] cattle mutilation researcher Charles T. Oliphant speculates cattle mutilation to be the result of covert research into emerging cattle diseases, and the possibility they could be transmitted to humans.

Additionally, a 2002 National Institute for Discovery Science report^[40] relates the eyewitness testimony of two Cache County, Utah, police officers. The area had seen many unusual cattle deaths, and ranchers had organized armed patrols to surveil the unmarked aircraft which they claimed were associated with the livestock deaths. The police witnesses claim to have encountered several men in an unmarked U.S. Army helicopter in 1976 at a small community airport in Cache County. The witnesses asserted that after this heated encounter, cattle mutilations in the region ceased for about five years.

Biochemist Colm Kelleher,^[41] who has investigated several purported mutilations first-hand, argues that the mutilations are most likely a clandestine U.S. government effort to track the spread of Bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("mad cow disease") and related diseases, such as scrapie.

A brief sampling of cases: On April 8, 1979, three police officers in Dulce, New Mexico, reported a mysterious aircraft which resembled a U.S. military helicopter hovering around a site following a wave of alleged mutilation which claimed 16 cows. On July 15, 1974, two unregistered helicopters, a white helicopter and a black twin-engine aircraft were reported to have opened fire on Robert Smith Jr. while he was driving his tractor on his farm in Honey Creek, Iowa. This attack followed a rash of alleged mutilations in the area and across the nearby border in Nebraska.^{[42][43][44]} The reports of "helicopter" involvement have been used to explain why some cattle appear to have been "dropped" from considerable heights.

Other explanations

Aliens and UFOs

In 1974, a few months after the first spate of alleged mutilations in the US, multiple farmers in Nebraska claimed to witness UFOs on the nights their cattle were harmed. One claimed he saw an object which "looked as if it had a little bluish-green light on each side with a glow surrounding it." The sightings were hailed by UFO researchers as the first physical evidence of extraterrestrial life.^[45]

Government interference

At the same time that UFO reports were being filed with law enforcement, larger number of ranchers claimed to see black helicopters around their fields, coinciding with the cattle mutilations. Although some initially thought these were used by cattle rustlers, suspicion soon pointed toward a military operation running out of Fort Riley, Kansas.

By 1975, the problem was so prevalent, that some ranchers formed armed vigilante groups to patrol their fields at night. Authorities ran ads in Colorado urging ranchers to not shoot at their survey helicopters.^{[46][45]}

In July 1975, reporter Dane Edwards of the *Brush Banner* published a cattle mutilation story and began investigating a theory that a cult was responsible. When the origin of the cult theory was traced to a federal inmate and no cult members were ever identified, ranchers and law enforcement started looking for other explanations.

Edwards reported his theory that the government was testing cattle parts to develop biological weapons to use in Vietnam, going so far as to write to Colorado Senator Floyd K. Haskell during Haskell's investigation to accuse agents of threatening him into silence.^[45]

In October, Edwards gave an interview to the *Gazette* (*Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*), announcing a theory that a government project was behind the mutilations. He expressed frustration that the FBI would not get involved and said he would be writing a book explaining "how the project was conceived". Shortly after, he was fired by the *Gazette* and then disappeared. On December 5th 1975, Edwards' wife reported him as a missing person.^[47]

Edwards reemerged in the 1990s. He had adopted a new name, Dr. David Ellsworth, and founded an English-language instruction program that was adopted by many federal universities in Mexico.^[48]

Unknown creatures explanation

Local folklore has attributed the mutilations to chupacabras or similar creatures.^[49]

See also

- Horse ripping
- Black helicopters
- Linda Moulton Howe
- List of mutilatory procedures on animals
- List of topics characterized as pseudoscience
- Surplus killing
- Croydon Cat Killer

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External links

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John F. Kennedy assassination conspiracy theories

The assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, and the subsequent murder of prime suspect Lee Harvey Oswald by night club owner Jack Ruby have spurred numerous conspiracy theories.^[1] These include alleged involvement of the CIA, the Mafia, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro, the KGB, or some combination of these entities. The original FBI investigation and Warren Commission report, as well as an alleged "benign CIA cover-up", have led to the claim that the federal government deliberately covered up crucial information in the aftermath of the assassination.^{[2][3][4]} Former Los Angeles District Attorney Vincent Bugliosi estimated that a total of 42 groups, 82 assassins, and 214 people had been accused at one time or another in various conspiracy scenarios.^[5]



President John F. Kennedy, Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Connally, and Texas Governor John Connally minutes before the assassination.

In 1964, the Warren Commission concluded that Oswald was the only person responsible for assassinating Kennedy.^[a] In 1979, the United States House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) concluded that Kennedy was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.^{[7][8][9]} The HSCA concluded that a second gunman besides Oswald probably also fired at Kennedy, based on acoustic evidence that was later discredited.^{[10][11][12][13][14][15]} (See section below.) In 1998, the JFK Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) unearthed inconsistencies in the prior investigations, and the Board's chief analyst for military records contended that the brain photographs in the Kennedy records were probably not of Kennedy's brain.^{[16][17][18][19]}

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Background

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by gunshot while traveling in a motorcade in an open-top limousine in Dallas, Texas at 12:30 pm CST on Friday, November 22, 1963; Texas Governor John Connally was wounded, but he survived. Within two hours, Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested for killing Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit and arraigned that evening. Shortly after 1:30 am on Saturday, November 23, Oswald was arraigned for murdering President Kennedy as well.^{[20][21]} On Sunday, November 24, at 11:21 a.m, Mafia associated nightclub owner Jack Ruby fatally shot Oswald as he was being transferred from the city jail to the county jail.

Immediately after the shooting, many people suspected that the assassination was part of a larger plot,^[22] and broadcasters speculated that Dallas right-wingers were involved.^[23] Ruby's shooting of Oswald compounded initial suspicions.^[22] Among conspiracy theorists, author Mark Lane has been described as firing "the first literary shot" with his article, "Defense Brief for Oswald", in the *National Guardian's* December 19, 1963 issue.^{[24][25]} Thomas Buchanan's book *Who Killed Kennedy?*, published in May 1964, has been credited as the first book to allege a conspiracy.^[26]

In 1964, the Warren Commission concluded that Oswald had acted alone and that no credible evidence supported the contention that he was involved in a conspiracy to assassinate the president.^[27] The Commission also indicated that then-Secretary of State Dean Rusk, then-Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, then-Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon, then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, then-FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, then-CIA director John A. McCone, and then-Secret Service Chief James J. Rowley, each individually reached the same conclusion on the basis of information available to them.^[27] During the trial of Clay Shaw in 1969, however, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison challenged the single-bullet theory with evidence from the Zapruder film, which he claimed indicated that a fourth shot from the grassy knoll had caused the fatal shot to Kennedy's head.

In 1979, the United States House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) agreed with the Warren Commission that Oswald did, in fact, assassinate Kennedy, but concluded that the Commission's report and the original FBI investigation were seriously flawed. The HSCA concluded that at least four shots were fired with a "high probability" that two gunmen fired at the President, and that a conspiracy was probable.^[9] The HSCA stated that the Warren Commission had "failed to investigate adequately the possibility of a conspiracy to assassinate the President".^[28] The Ramsey Clark Panel and the Rockefeller Commission both supported the Warren Commission's conclusions.



Handbill circulated on November 21, 1963, one day before the assassination.

Most of the documents under Section 5 of the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 were released on October 26, 2017, while the remaining documents that are still classified will be analyzed for redactions.^[29] A deadline for the remaining documents to be released has been set for October 26, 2021.^{[30][31]}

Public opinion

According to author John C. McAdams, "[t]he greatest and grandest of all conspiracy theories is the Kennedy assassination conspiracy theory."^[32] Others have often referred to it as "the mother of all conspiracies".^{[33][34]} The number of books written about the assassination of Kennedy has been estimated to be between 1,000^{[35][36]} and 2,000.^[22] According to Vincent Bugliosi, 95% of those books are "pro-conspiracy and anti-Warren Commission".^[35]

Author David Krajicek describes Kennedy assassination enthusiasts as people belonging to "conspiracy theorists" on one side and "debunkers" on the other.^[32] The great amount of controversy surrounding the event has resulted in bitter disputes between those who support the conclusion of the Warren Commission and those who reject it, or are critical of the official explanation, with each side levelling accusations toward the other of "naivete, cynicism, and selective interpretation of the evidence".^[34]

Public opinion polls have consistently shown that most Americans believe there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. These same polls also show no agreement on who else may have been involved in the shooting. A 2003 Gallup Poll reported that 75% of Americans do not believe that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone.^[37] That same year, an ABC News poll found that 70% of respondents suspected that the assassination involved more than one person.^[38] A 2004 Fox News poll noted that 66% of Americans thought there had been a conspiracy while 74% believed that there was a cover-up.^[39] In 2009, 76% of people polled for CBS News said they believed the President had been killed as the result of a conspiracy.^[40] A 2013 Gallup Poll found that 61% of Americans, the lowest figure in nearly 50 years, believed other people besides Oswald were involved.^[41]

Circumstantial evidence of a cover-up

Background

After Oswald was shot dead by Ruby, FBI Director Hoover wrote a memo detailing that the Dallas Police would not have had enough evidence against Oswald without the FBI's information. He then wrote: "The thing I am concerned about, and so is [Deputy Attorney General] Mr. Katzenbach, is having something issued so we can convince the public that Oswald is the real assassin."^{[42][43][44]} Top government and intelligence officials were also finding that, according to CIA intercepts, someone had impersonated Oswald in phone calls and visits made to the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Mexico City several weeks before the assassination.^[45] Over the next 40 years this became one of the CIA's most closely guarded secrets on the Oswald case.^[46] A CIA career agency officer, Anne Goodpasture, admitted in sworn testimony that she had disseminated the tapes of these phone calls herself. She had earlier denied to congressional investigators in 1970 that she had any knowledge of recordings of Oswald's phone calls.^[47]

On November 23, 1963, the day after the assassination, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's preliminary analysis of the assassination included the following:

The Central Intelligence Agency advised that on October 1st, 1963, an extremely sensitive source had reported that an individual identifying himself as Lee Oswald contacted the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City inquiring as to any messages. Special agents of this Bureau, who have conversed with Oswald in Dallas, Texas, have observed photographs of the individual referred to above and have listened to a recording of his voice. These special agents are of the opinion that the referred-to individual was not Lee Harvey Oswald.^{[48][49]}

That same day, Hoover had this conversation with President Johnson:

Johnson: "Have you established any more about the [Oswald] visit to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico in September?"

Hoover: "No, there's one angle that's very confusing for this reason. We have up here the tape and the photograph of the man at the Soviet Embassy, using Oswald's name. That picture and the tape do not correspond to this man's voice, nor to his appearance. In other words, it appears that there was a second person who was at the Soviet Embassy."^{[45][49]}

With the information that someone had been impersonating Oswald, President Johnson expressed concern that the public might come to believe that Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and/or Cuban leader Fidel Castro was implicated in the assassination — a situation that Johnson said might lead to "... a war that [could] kill 40 million Americans in an hour". Johnson relayed his concern to both Chief Justice Earl Warren and Senator Richard Russell, telling them that they could "serve America" by joining the commission Johnson had established to investigate the assassination, which would later become known unofficially as the Warren Commission.^{[46][50]} In turn, Katzenbach wrote a memorandum to Lyndon Johnson aide Bill Moyers that said, among other things, that the results of the FBI's investigation should be made public.^[51] Katzenbach also suggested that a commission be formed, composed of people with "impeccable integrity", to conduct a complete investigation of the assassination.^[52] Katzenbach wrote: "Speculation about Oswald's motivation ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting thought that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists." He also wrote: "The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial".^[51] Four days after Katzenbach's memo, Johnson formed the Warren Commission with Earl Warren as chairman and Senator Richard Russell as a member.^[53]

Alleged inconsistencies

Numerous researchers, author Mark Lane,^[54] Henry Hurt,^[55] Michael L. Kurtz,^[56] Gerald D. McKnight,^[57] Anthony Summers,^[58] and Harold Weisberg,^[59] have referred to what they see as inconsistencies, oversights, exclusions of evidence, errors, changing stories, or changes made to witness testimony in the official Warren Commission investigation, which they say could suggest a cover-up.

Michael Benson wrote that the Warren Commission received only information supplied to it by the FBI, and that its purpose was to rubber stamp the lone gunman theory.^[60]

Walter Cronkite, CBS News anchor, said, "Although the Warren Commission had full power to conduct its own independent investigation, it permitted the FBI and the CIA to investigate themselves — and so cast a permanent shadow on the answers."^[61]

United States Senator and U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence member Richard Schweiker said, "The fatal mistake the Warren Commission made was to not use its own investigators, but instead to rely on the CIA and FBI personnel, which played directly into the hands of senior intelligence officials who directed the cover-up."^[62] Schweiker also told author Anthony Summers in 1978 that he "believe[d] that the Warren Commission was set up at the time to feed pabulum to the American public for reasons not yet known, and that one of the biggest cover-ups in the history of our country occurred at that time".^[63]

James H. Fetzer took issue with a 1998 statement from Federal Judge and Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) Chairman John R. Tunheim, who stated that no "smoking guns" indicating a conspiracy or cover-up were discovered during their efforts to declassify documents related to the assassination in the early 1990s. Fetzer identified 16 "smoking guns" that he claims prove the official narrative is impossible, and therefore a conspiracy and cover-up occurred. He also claims that evidence released by the ARRB substantiates these concerns. These include problems with bullet trajectories; the murder weapon; the ammunition used; inconsistencies between the Warren Commission's account and the autopsy findings; inconsistencies between the autopsy findings and what was reported by witnesses at the scene of the murder; eyewitness accounts that conflict with x-rays taken of the President's body; indications that the diagrams and photos of the President's brain in the National Archives are not the President's; testimony by those who took and processed the autopsy photos that the photos were altered, created, or destroyed; indications that the Zapruder film had been tampered with; allegations that the Warren Commission's version of events conflicts with news reports from the scene of the murder; an alleged change to the motorcade route that facilitated the assassination; alleged lax Secret Service and local law enforcement security; and statements made by people who claim that they had knowledge of, or participated in, a conspiracy to kill the President.^[64]

In 1966, Roscoe Drummond voiced skepticism about a cover-up in his syndicated column, saying, "If there were a conspiracy to cover up the truth about the assassination, it would have to involve the Chief Justice, the Republican, Democratic, and non-party members of the commission, the FBI, the CIA, the Secret Service, the distinguished doctors of the armed services — and the White House — a conspiracy so multiple and complex that it would have fallen of its own weight."^[65]

Allegations of witness tampering, intimidation, and foul play

Alleged witness intimidation

Richard Buyer wrote that many witnesses whose statements pointed to a conspiracy were either ignored or intimidated by the Warren Commission.^[66] In *JFK: The Last Dissenting Witness*, a 1992 biography of Jean Hill, Bill Sloan wrote that Warren Commission assistant counsel Arlen Specter attempted to humiliate, discredit, and intimidate Hill into changing her story. Hill also told Sloan that she was abused by Secret Service agents, harassed by the FBI, and received death threats.^[67]

A later book by Sloan, entitled *JFK: Breaking the Silence*, quotes several assassination eyewitnesses as saying that Warren Commission interviewers repeatedly cut short or stifled any comments casting doubt on the conclusion that Oswald had acted alone.

In his book *Crossfire*, Jim Marrs gives accounts of several people who said they were intimidated by either FBI agents or anonymous individuals into altering or suppressing what they knew regarding the assassination. Some of those individuals include Richard Carr, Acquilla Clemmons, Sandy Speaker, and

A. J. Millican.^[68] Marrs also wrote that Texas School Book Depository employee Joe Molina was "intimidated by authorities and lost his job soon after the assassination",^[69] and that witness Ed Hoffman was warned by an FBI agent that he "might get killed" if he revealed what he observed in Dealey Plaza on the day of the assassination.^[70]

Warren Reynolds, who claimed that he saw the shooter of Police Officer J. D. Tippit and chased him, was shot in the head in January 1964, two days after first talking to the FBI. He survived. Reynolds later testified to the Warren Commission that, in February 1964, someone attempted to kidnap his 10-year-old daughter.^{[71][72][b][73]}

Witness deaths

Allegations of mysterious or suspicious deaths of witnesses connected with the Kennedy assassination originated with journalist Penn Jones Jr.,^{[74][75]} and were covered by *Ramparts* magazine in October 1966 (the story was picked up by Reuters, and multiple newspapers reported on it at the time). The *Ramparts* article cited 10 people^[c] who died within 3 years of the assassination, including:

- Jim Koethe (d. September 21, 1964), one of two reporters^[d] who, thanks to Koethe being acquainted with lawyers who had worked for Jack Ruby, was allowed in Ruby's apartment the night after Ruby shot Oswald. Koethe was killed with a "karate chop on the neck" in his own apartment by an intruder (or intruders).
- Bill Hunter (d. April 23, 1964), the other of the two reporters who went to Ruby's apartment the night after Ruby shot Oswald. Killed by a policeman with a gunshot at a police station; the gunshot was deemed accidental.
- William Whaley (d. December 1965), the taxi driver who took Oswald from the scene of the assassination. Died in a car crash, alongside the driver of the car which crashed into his cab. Described by Jones Jr. as the "first Dallas cab driver to die on duty since 1937".
- Earline Roberts (or Earlene Roberts, d. January 1966), Oswald's landlady (owner of the rooming house where Oswald lived). Died of a heart attack, aged 60 (no autopsy performed).
- Tom Howard (d. March 1965), one of Ruby's lawyers (the lead lawyer, according to Jones Jr.). Howard also went to Ruby's apartment with Koethe and Hunter the night after Ruby shot Oswald. Died of a heart attack, age 48, after behaving strangely for a few days and not recognizing his friends (no autopsy performed).
- Lee Bowers (d. August 1966), a witness who was in a railway interlocking tower that overlooked Dealey Plaza at the time of the assassination. Died after his car crashed into a bridge abutment.
- Hank Killam (d. March 1964), whose wife was a "cigarette girl" (or a dancer) at Ruby's club. Killam later moved to Florida, and died there; he received a phone call at 4 am, after which he went to a building in downtown Pensacola and "jumped or fell" out of a first floor window, and bled to death amid pieces of broken glass because his throat was cut.^[76]
- Edward Benavidez (d. February 1965), brother of Domingo Benavides, a key witness in the J. D. Tippit shooting (Domingo Benavides saw the shooter, and entered Tippit's car to radio for help^[e]). Died of a gunshot to the head in a bar; no one else was killed in the bar shooting. Jones Jr. implied it was a case of mistaken identity and that Domingo Benavides was the intended victim.
- Nancy Jane Mooney, aka Betty McDonald (d. February 1964), a stripper at Jack Ruby's club. Mooney was arrested for fighting with her roommate and reportedly hanged herself in her Dallas jail cell.^[77] Mooney had provided an alibi to the suspected shooter of Warren Reynolds, after Reynolds, who said he saw the killer of J. D. Tippit and reported this to the FBI, was shot in the head in January 1964.^[78]

The tenth death listed was that of Dorothy Kilgallen (see below). The *Ramparts* article also referenced witnesses who said that Ruby and Oswald knew each other^[78] and that Ruby had "gangland" connections.

Later, similar claims about suspicious deaths of witnesses were brought to national attention by the 1973 film *Executive Action*.^{[74][79]} Jim Marrs later presented a list of 103 people he believed had died "convenient deaths" under suspicious circumstances. He noted that the deaths were grouped around investigations conducted by the Warren Commission, New Orleans D.A. Jim Garrison, the Senate Intelligence Committee, and the House Select Committee on Assassinations.^[80] Marrs pointed out that "these deaths certainly would have been convenient for anyone not wishing the truth of the JFK assassination to become public."^[81] In 2013, Richard Belzer published *Hit List: An In-Depth Investigation into the Mysterious Deaths of Witnesses to the JFK Assassination* that examines the deaths of 50 people linked to the assassination and claims most of them were murdered as part of a cover-up.^[82]

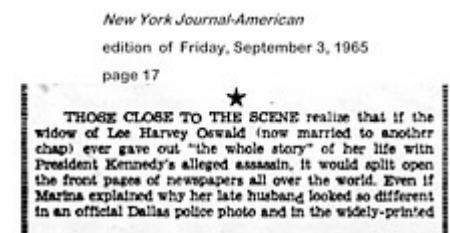
Vincent Bugliosi devoted two pages of his book *Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy* to journalist Dorothy Kilgallen. Kilgallen was publicly skeptical of the official version of the assassination of President Kennedy and Jack Ruby's shooting of Lee Oswald. During 1964 and 1965, she wrote several newspaper articles on the subject and many relevant short items in her daily column.^{[83][84][85]} On February 23, 1964, the New York City newspaper *New York Journal-American*, where Kilgallen had worked since its formation in 1937, published her article about a conversation she had had with Jack Ruby, when he was seated at his defense table during a recess in his murder trial.

Whether Kilgallen and Ruby had a second conversation in a private room in the Dallas County, Texas courthouse several days later has been disputed. If they did, she never wrote about it for publication.^[86] One of Kilgallen's biographers, Mark Shaw, contends that even if Ruby did not reveal sensitive information to Kilgallen about the assassination, she still could have learned sensitive information during a trip she made to New Orleans several weeks before she died.^[87]

Kilgallen's last brief item about the Kennedy assassination, published on September 3, 1965, ended with these words: "That story isn't going to die as long as there's a real reporter alive — and there are a lot of them alive."^{[88][89]}

Two months later, on November 8, 1965, Kilgallen was found dead in her Manhattan townhouse. Her death was determined to have been caused by a fatal combination of alcohol and barbiturates.^[90] Bugliosi referred to Kilgallen's 1965 death as "perhaps the most prominent mysterious death" cited by assassination researchers.^[91] He added that the presence of Kilgallen's husband and son in their five-story townhouse throughout the night when she died proves she could not have been murdered. Bugliosi said an intruder would have awakened her husband or her eleven-year-old son and then the husband would have called the police.^[92]

According to author Jerome Kroth, Mafia figures Sam Giancana, John Roselli, Carlos Prio, Jimmy Hoffa, Charles Nicoletti, Leo Mocer, Richard Cain, Salvatore Granello, and Dave Yaras were likely murdered to prevent them from revealing their knowledge.^[93] According to author Matthew Smith, others with some tie to the case who have died suspicious deaths include Lee Bowers, Gary Underhill, William Sullivan, David Ferrie, Clay Shaw, George de Mohrenschildt, four showgirls who worked for Jack Ruby, and Ruby himself.^[94]



full-length picture featured on the cover of Life magazine. It would cause a sensation. That story isn't going to die as long as there's a real reporter alive—and there are a lot of them alive.

Judy Garland, who announced during a California

Columnist Dorothy Kilgallen's last brief item related to the JFK assassination. She died two months later.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations investigated another alleged "mysterious death" — that of Rose Cheramie (sometimes spelled Cherami), whose real name was Melba Christine Mercades.^{[95][96]} The Committee reported that Louisiana State Police Lieutenant Francis Fruge traveled to Eunice, Louisiana, on November 20, 1963 — two days before the assassination — to pick up Cheramie, who had sustained minor injuries when she was hit by a car.^{[97][98]} Fruge drove Cheramie to the hospital and said that on the way there, she "... related to [him] that she was coming from Florida to Dallas with two men who were Italians or resembled Italians." Fruge asked her what she planned to do in Dallas, to which she replied: "... number one, pick up some money, pick up [my] baby, and ... kill Kennedy."^[98] Cheramie was admitted and treated at State Hospital in Jackson, Louisiana for alcohol and heroin addiction. After the assassination, Lt. Fruge contacted Dallas Police Captain Will Fritz regarding what he had learned from Cheramie, but Fritz told him he "wasn't interested".^[99]

State Hospital physician Dr. Victor Weiss later told a House Select Committee investigator that on November 25 — three days after the assassination — one of his fellow physicians told him that Cheramie had "stated before the assassination that President Kennedy was going to be killed".^[100] Dr. Weiss further reported that Cheramie told him after the assassination that she had worked for Jack Ruby and that her knowledge of the assassination originated from "word in the underworld".^[98] Cheramie was found dead by a highway near Big Sandy, Texas, on September 4, 1965; she had been run over by a car.^[101]

Another "suspicious death" cited by Jim Marrs was that of Joseph Milteer, director of the Dixie Klan of Georgia. Milteer was secretly tape-recorded thirteen days before the assassination telling Miami police informant William Somersett that the murder of Kennedy was "in the working". Milteer died in 1974 when a heater exploded in his house.^{[102][103][104]} The House Select Committee on Assassinations reported in 1979 that Milteer's information on the threat to the President "was furnished [to] the agents making the advance arrangements before the visit of the President" to Miami, but that "the Milteer threat was ignored by Secret Service personnel in planning the trip to Dallas." Robert Bouck, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Secret Service's Protective Research Section, testified that "threat information was transmitted from one region of the country to another if there was specific evidence it was relevant to the receiving region."^[105]

Concerning the Tippit shooting, the Warren Commission names 12 witnesses to the shooting and its aftermath.^[106] One of these witnesses, Warren Reynolds, was shot in the head 2 months after the Tippit shooting, but survived. Another witness, Domingo Benavides, who was close to the shooting and saw Tippit fall after being shot, lost his brother 15 months after the Tippit shooting; Benavides' brother was shot in the head in a bar and died.^[78]

The House Select Committee on Assassinations investigated the allegation "that a statistically improbable number of individuals with some direct or peripheral association with the Kennedy assassination died as a result of that assassination, thereby raising the specter of conspiracy".^[74] The committee's chief of research testified: "Our final conclusion on the issue is that the available evidence does not establish anything about the nature of these deaths which would indicate that the deaths were in some manner, either direct or peripheral, caused by the assassination of President Kennedy or by any aspect of the subsequent investigation."^[74]

Author Gerald Posner said that Marrs's list was taken from the group of about 10,000 people connected even in the most tenuous way to the assassination, including people identified in the official investigations, as well as the research of conspiracy theorists. Posner also said that it would be surprising if a hundred people out of ten thousand did not die in "unnatural ways". He noted that over half of the people on Marrs's list did not die mysteriously, but of natural causes, such as Secret Service agent Roy

Kellerman, who died of heart failure at age 69 in 1984, long after the Kennedy assassination, but is on Marrs's list as someone whose cause of death is "unknown". Posner also pointed out that many prominent witnesses and conspiracy researchers continue to live long lives.^[107]

Allegations of evidence suppression, tampering, and fabrication

Many of those who believe in a JFK assassination conspiracy also believe that evidence against Oswald was either planted, forged, or tampered with.^[108]

Suppression of evidence

Ignored testimony

Some assassination researchers assert that witness statements indicating a conspiracy were ignored by the Warren Commission. Josiah Thompson stated that the Commission ignored the testimony of seven eyewitnesses who said they saw smoke in the vicinity of the grassy knoll at the time of the assassination, as well as an eighth witness who said he smelled gunpowder.^[109] Jim Marrs wrote that the Commission did not seek the testimony of eyewitnesses on the triple underpass whose statements pointed to a shooter on the grassy knoll.^[69]

Confiscated film and photographs

Other researchers reported that witnesses who captured the assassination via photographs or film had their cameras confiscated by police or other authorities. Author Jim Marrs and documentary producer Nigel Turner both presented the account of Gordon Arnold who said that his film of the motorcade was taken by two policemen shortly after the assassination.^{[70][110]} Another witness, identified as Beverly Oliver, came forward in 1970 and said she was the "Babushka Lady" who is seen, in the Zapruder film, filming the motorcade. She also said that after the assassination, she was contacted at work by two men who she thought "... were either FBI or Secret Service agents". According to Oliver, the men told her that they wanted to develop her film and return it to her within ten days, but they never did so.^{[111][110]}

Withheld documents

Richard Buyer and others have complained that many documents pertaining to the assassination have been withheld over the years, including documents from investigations made by the Warren Commission, the House Select Committee on Assassinations, and the Church Committee.^[66] These documents individually included the President's autopsy records. Some documents still are not scheduled for release until 2029. Many documents were released during the mid-to-late 1990s by the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) under the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992. However, some of the material released contains redacted sections. Tax return information, which identified employers and sources of income, has not yet been released.^[112]

The existence of several secret documents related to the assassination, as well as the long period of secrecy, suggests to some the possibility of a cover-up. One historian noted, "There exists widespread suspicion about the government's disposition of the Kennedy assassination records stemming from the beliefs that Federal officials (1) have not made available all Government assassination records (even to

the Warren Commission, Church Committee, House Assassination Committee) and (2) have heavily redacted the records released under FOIA in order to cover up sinister conspiracies."^[113] According to the ARRB, "All Warren Commission records, except those records that contain tax return information, are (now) available to the public with only minor redactions."^[114] In response to a Freedom of Information Act request filed by journalist Jefferson Morley, the CIA stated in 2010 that it had over 1,100 documents in relation to the assassination, about 2,000 pages in total, that have not been released due to national security-related concerns.^[115]

Tampering with evidence

Some researchers have alleged that various items of physical evidence have been tampered with, including the "single bullet" (also known as the "magic bullet" by some critics of official explanations), various bullet cartridges and fragments, the presidential limousine's windshield, the paper bag in which the Warren Commission said Oswald hid the rifle, the so-called "backyard" photos depicting Oswald holding the rifle, the Zapruder film, the photographs and radiographs obtained at Kennedy's autopsy, and the president's dead body itself.^[116]

Photographs

Among the evidence against Oswald are photographs of him holding a Carcano rifle in his back yard, the weapon identified by the Warren Commission as the assassination weapon. The House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that the Oswald photos are genuine^[117] and Oswald's wife Marina said that she took them.^[118] In 2009, the journal *Perception* published the findings of Hany Farid, a professor in the Department of Computer Science at Dartmouth College who used 3D modeling software to analyze one of the photographs.^{[119][120]} He demonstrated that a single light source could create seemingly incongruent shadows and concluded that the photograph revealed no evidence of tampering.^{[119][120]} Many researchers, including Robert Groden, assert that these photos are fake.^[121]



Oswald, carrying a rifle in his backyard

Groden said in 1979 that four autopsy photographs showing the back of Kennedy's head were forged to hide a wound fired from a second gunman.^[122] According to Groden, a photograph of a cadaver's head was inserted over another depicting a large exit wound in the back of the president's head.^[122] HSCA chief counsel G. Robert Blakey stated that the "suggestion that the committee would participate in a cover-up is absurd"^[123] and that Groden was "not competent to make a judgment on whether a photograph has been altered".^[124] Blakey stated that the photographic analysis panel for the Committee had examined the photographs and that they "considered everything" that Groden had to say "and rejected it."^{[123][124]}

Zapruder film

The House Select Committee on Assassinations described the Zapruder film as "the best available photographic evidence of the number and timing of the shots that struck the occupants of the presidential limousine".^[125] The Assassination Records Review Board said it "is perhaps the single most important assassination record."^[126] According to Vincent Bugliosi, the film was "originally touted by the vast majority of conspiracy theorists as incontrovertible proof" of a conspiracy, but is now believed by

many conspiracy theorists to be a "sophisticated forgery".^{[127][f]} In 1996, the Assassination Records Review Board asked Kodak product engineer Roland Zavada to undertake a thorough technical study of the Zapruder Film.^[129] Zavada concluded that there was no detectable evidence of manipulation or image alteration on the film's original version.^[130]

David Lifton wrote that the Zapruder film was in the possession of the CIA's National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) by the night of the assassination.^{[131][132]} Jack White was a researcher and photographic consultant to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, and he claimed that there were anomalies in the Zapruder film, including an "unnatural jerkiness of movement or change of focus... in certain frame sequences".^{[133][134]}

Former senior official at the CIA's National Photographic Interpretation Center, Dino Brugioni said that he and his team examined the 8mm Zapruder film of the John F. Kennedy assassination the evening of Saturday 23 November 1963 and into the morning of Sunday 24 November 1963. In a 2011 interview with Douglas Horne of the Assassination Record Review Board, Brugioni said the Zapruder film in the National Archives today, and available to the public, has been altered from the version of the film he saw and worked with on November 23–24. Brugioni recalls seeing a "white cloud" of brain matter, three or four feet above Kennedy's head, and says that this "spray" lasted for more than one frame of the film. The version of the Zapruder film available to the public depicts the fatal head shot on only one frame of the film, frame 313. Additionally, Brugioni is certain that the set of briefing boards available to the public in the National Archives is not the set that he and his team produced on November 23–24, 1963.^{[135][136]}

Kennedy's body

In his 1981 book *Best Evidence*, author David Lifton presented the thesis that President Kennedy's dead body had been altered between the Dallas hospital and the autopsy site at Bethesda for the purposes of creating erroneous conclusions about the number and direction of the shots.^[137] (See section below.)

Fabrication of evidence

Murder weapon

The Warren Commission found that the shots that killed Kennedy and wounded Connally were fired from an Italian 6.5mm Manlicher Carcano rifle owned by Oswald.^[138] Deputy Sheriff Eugene Boone and Deputy Constable Seymour Weitzman both initially identified the rifle found in the Texas School Book Depository as a 7.65 German Mauser. Weitzman signed an affidavit the following day describing the weapon as a "7.65 Mauser bolt action equipped with a 4/18 scope, a thick leather brownish-black sling on it".^{[139][140]} Deputy Sheriff Roger Craig claimed that he saw "7.65 Mauser" stamped on the barrel of the weapon.^[141] When interviewed in 1968 by researcher Barry Ernest, Craig said: "I felt then and I still feel now that the weapon was a 7.65 German Mauser I was there. I saw it when it was first pulled from its hiding place, and I am not alone in describing it as a Mauser."^[142]

Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade told the press that the weapon found in the book depository was a 7.65 Mauser, and the media reported this.^{[27][143]} But investigators later identified the rifle as a 6.5mm Carcano.^{[144][145]} In *Matrix for Assassination*, author Richard Gilbride suggested that both weapons were involved in the assassination and that Dallas Police Captain Will Fritz and Lieutenant J. Carl Day both might have been conspirators.^[146]

Addressing "speculation and rumors", the Warren Commission identified Weitzman as "the original source of the speculation that the rifle was a Mauser" and stated that "police laboratory technicians subsequently arrived and correctly identified the [murder] weapon as a 6.5 Italian rifle."^[147]

Bullets and cartridges

The Warren Commission determined that three bullets were fired at the presidential motorcade. One of the three bullets missed the vehicle entirely; another bullet hit President Kennedy and passed through his body before striking Governor Connally; and the third bullet was the fatal head shot to the President. Some claim that the bullet that passed through President Kennedy's body and hit Governor Connally — dubbed by critics of the Commission as the "magic bullet" — was missing too little mass to account for the total weight of bullet fragments later found by the doctors who operated on Connally at Parkland Hospital. Those making this claim included the governor's chief surgeon, Dr. Robert Shaw,^[148] as well as two of Kennedy's autopsy surgeons, Commander James Humes^[149] and Lt. Colonel Pierre Finck.^[150] However, in his book *Six Seconds in Dallas*, author Josiah Thompson took issue with this claim. Thompson added up the weight of the bullet fragments listed in the doctor reports and concluded that their total weight "could" have been less than the mass missing from the bullet.^[151]

With Connally's death in 1993, forensic pathologist Dr. Cyril Wecht and the Assassination Archives and Research Center petitioned Attorney General Janet Reno to recover the remaining bullet fragments from Connally's body, contending that the fragments would disprove the Warren Commission's single-bullet, single-gunman conclusion. The Justice Department replied that it "... would have [had] no legal authority to recover the fragments unless Connally's family gave [it] permission [to do so]." Connally's family refused permission.^[152]

Allegations of multiple gunmen

The Warren Commission concluded that "three shots were fired from the Texas School Book Depository in a time period ranging from approximately 4.8 to in excess of 7 seconds."^[153] Some assassination researchers, including Josiah Thompson and Anthony Summers, dispute the Commission's findings. They point to evidence that brings into question the number of shots fired, the origin of the shots, and Oswald's ability to accurately fire three shots in such a short amount of time from such a rifle.^{[154][155]} These researchers suggest that multiple gunmen were involved.^[156]



Dealey Plaza in 2003.

Number of shots

Based on the "consensus among the witnesses at the scene" and "in particular the three spent cartridges" found near an open window on the sixth-floor of the Book Depository, the Warren Commission determined that "the preponderance of the evidence indicated that three shots were fired".^[153] In 1979, the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that there were four shots, one coming from the grassy knoll.^{[9][157]}

The Warren Commission, and later the House Select Committee on Assassinations, concluded that one of the shots hit President Kennedy in "the back of his neck", exited his throat, and struck Governor Connally in the back, exited the Governor's chest, shattered his right wrist, and implanted itself in his left thigh.^[158] This conclusion became known as the "single-bullet theory".^[159]

Mary Moorman said in a TV interview immediately after the assassination that there were either three or four shots close together, that shots were still being fired after the fatal head shot, and that she was in the line of fire.^[160] In 1967, Josiah Thompson concluded from a close study of the Zapruder film and other forensic evidence, corroborated by the eyewitnesses, that four shots were fired in Dealey Plaza, with one wounding Connally and three hitting Kennedy.^[109]

On the day of the assassination, Nellie Connally was seated in the presidential car next to Governor Connally, who was her husband. In her book *From Love Field: Our Final Hours*, she said she believed that her husband was hit by a bullet separate from the two that hit Kennedy.^[161]

Origin of the shots

The Warren Commission concluded that all of the shots fired at President Kennedy came from the sixth-floor window at the southeast corner of the Texas School Book Depository. The Commission based its conclusion on the "cumulative evidence of eyewitnesses, firearms and ballistic experts and medical authorities", including onsite testing, as well as analysis of films and photographs conducted by the FBI and the US Secret Service.^[153]

In 1979, the House Select Committee on Assassinations agreed to publish a report from Warren Commission critic Robert Groden, in which he named "nearly [two] dozen suspected firing points in Dealey Plaza".^[162] These sites included multiple locations in or on the roof of the Texas School Book Depository, the Dal-Tex Building, the Dallas County Records Building, the triple overpass, a storm drain located along the north curb of Elm Street, and the Grassy Knoll.^[162] Josiah Thompson concluded that the shots fired at the motorcade came from three locations: the Texas School Book Depository, the Grassy Knoll, and the Dal-Tex Building.^[109]



The wooden fence on the grassy knoll, where many conspiracy theorists believe another gunman stood.

Testimony of eyewitnesses

According to some assassination researchers, the grassy knoll was identified by most witnesses as the area from where shots were fired.^{[70][163]} In March 1965, Harold Feldman wrote that there were 121 witnesses to the assassination listed in the Warren Report, 51 of whom indicated that the shots that killed Kennedy came from the grassy knoll, while 32 said the shots originated from the Texas School Book Depository.^[163] In 1967, Josiah Thompson examined the statements of 64 witnesses and concluded that 33 of them thought that the shots emanated from the grassy knoll.^[164]

In 1966, *Esquire* magazine credited Feldman with "advanc[ing] the theory that there were two assassins: one on the grassy knoll and one in the Book Depository".^[165] Jim Marrs also wrote that the weight of evidence suggested shots came from both the grassy knoll and the Texas School Book Depository.^[70]

Lee Bowers operated a railroad tower that overlooked the parking lot on the north side of the grassy knoll. He reported that he saw two men behind the grassy knoll's stockyard fence before the shooting took place. The men did not appear to be acting together or doing anything suspicious. After the shooting, Bowers said that one of the men remained behind the fence and lost track of the second man whose clothing blended into the foliage. When interviewed by Mark Lane, Bowers noted that he saw something that attracted his attention, either a flash of light or smoke from the knoll, allowing him to believe "something out of the ordinary" had occurred there. Bowers told Lane that he heard three shots,

the last two in quick succession. He stated that there was no way they could have been fired from the same rifle.^[166] Bowers later purportedly said to his supervisor, Olan Degaugh, that he saw a man in the parking lot throw what looked like a rifle into one of the cars.^[167] However, in that same 1966 interview, Bowers clarified that the two men he saw were standing in the opening between the pergola and the fence, and that "no one" was behind the fence once the shots were fired.^{[168][169]}

Jesse Price was the building engineer for the Terminal Annex Building, which is located across from the Texas School Book Depository on the opposite side of Dealey Plaza. He viewed the presidential motorcade from the Terminal Annex Building's roof. In an interview with Mark Lane, Price said that he believed the shots came from "just behind the picket fence where it joins the [triple] underpass".^[171]

Physical evidence

Several conspiracy theories posit that at least one shooter was located in the Dal-Tex Building, located across the street from the Texas School Book Depository.^[172] According to L. Fletcher Prouty, the physical location of James Tague when he was injured by a bullet fragment is not consistent with the trajectory of a missed shot from the Texas School Book Depository, leading Prouty to theorize that Tague was instead wounded by a missed shot from the second floor of the Dal-Tex Building.^[173]



Bill and Gayle Newman drop to the grass and cover their children. The Newmans said that they thought the fatal shot came from "the garden" behind them.^[9]

Some assassination researchers claim that FBI photographs of the presidential limousine show a bullet hole in its windshield above the rear-view mirror, and a crack in the windshield itself. When Robert Groden, author of *The Killing of a President*, asked for an explanation, the FBI responded that what Groden thought was a bullet hole "occurred prior to Dallas".^{[174][175]} In 1993, George Whitaker, a manager at the Ford Motor Company's Rouge Plant in Detroit, told attorney and criminal justice professor Doug Weldon that after reporting to work on November 25, 1963, he discovered the presidential limousine in the Rouge Plant's B building with its windshield removed. Whitaker said that the limousine's removed windshield had a through-and-through bullet hole from the front. He said that he was directed by one of Ford's vice presidents to use the windshield as a template to fabricate a new windshield for installation in the limousine. Whitaker also said he was told to destroy the old one.^{[176][177]}

Film and photographic evidence

Film and photographic evidence of the assassination have led viewers to different conclusions regarding the origin of the shots. When the fatal shot was fired, the President's head and upper torso moved backwards — indicating, to many observers, a shot from the right front. Sherry Gutierrez, a certified crime scene and bloodstain pattern analyst, concluded that "the [fatal] head injury to President Kennedy was the result of a single gunshot fired from the right front of the President."^[178] Paul Chambers believes that the fatal head shot is consistent with a high velocity (approx. 1,200 m/s; 4,000 ft/sec) rifle rather than the medium-velocity (600 m/s; 2,000 ft/sec) Mannlicher–Carcano.^[179] Although it has been thought^[180] that Zapruder film frames 312 and 313 show Kennedy's head moving forward before moving backwards, that close inspection of the frames show Kennedy's head actually pivoted both forward and downwards; Anthony Marsh claims that it was the deceleration of the car by driver William Greer that

allowed the President's head to move in that direction.^[181] Some, including Josiah Thompson, Robert Groden, and Cyril Wecht, state that the film shows that his head was hit by two near-simultaneous bullets: one from the rear and the other from the right front.^{[182][183][184]}

Acoustical evidence

In 1979, the House Select Committee on Assassinations analyzed a Dictabelt recording of the Dallas Police Department radio dispatch transmissions from the day of the assassination to "resolve questions concerning the number, timing, and origin of the shots fired in Dealey Plaza".^[185] The Committee concluded that the source of the recording was from an open microphone on the motorcycle of Dallas police officer H.B. McLain escorting the motorcade^[186] and that "the scientific acoustical evidence established a high probability that two gunmen fired at President John F. Kennedy."^[187]

However, the acoustical analysis that the HSCA presented as evidence for two gunmen has since been discredited.^{[10][11][12][13][14][15]} The HSCA acoustic experts said the Dictabelt evidence came from police officer McLain.^{[188][189]} However, McLain stated that he was not yet in Dealey Plaza when the assassination occurred.^[190] A skeptical McLain asked the Committee, "If it was my radio on my motorcycle, why did it not record the revving up at high speed plus my siren when we immediately took off for Parkland Hospital?"^[191]

Also, in 1982, a panel of 12 scientists appointed by the National Academy of Sciences, including Nobel laureates Norman Ramsey and Luis Alvarez, unanimously concluded that the HSCA's acoustic evidence was "seriously flawed". They concluded that the recording was made after the President had already been shot and that the recording did not indicate any additional gunshots.^[192] Their conclusions were later published in the journal *Science*.^[193]

In a 2001 article in *Science & Justice*, a publication of Britain's Forensic Science Society, D.B. Thomas wrote that the NAS investigation was itself flawed. Thomas analyzed audio recordings made during the assassination and concluded with a 96% certainty that a shot was fired from the grassy knoll in front of and to the right of the President's limousine.^{[194][195][196]} In 2005, Thomas's conclusions were rebutted in the same journal. Ralph Linsker and several members of the original NAS team reanalyzed the recordings and reaffirmed the earlier conclusion of the NAS report that the alleged shot sounds were recorded approximately one minute after the assassination.^[197] In a 2010 book, D.B. Thomas challenged the 2005 *Science & Justice* article and restated his conclusion that there actually were two gunmen.^[198]

Medical evidence

Some researchers have pointed to the large number of doctors and nurses at Parkland Memorial Hospital who reported that a major part of the back of the President's head was blown out.^{[156][199]} In 1979, the HSCA noted: "The various accounts of the nature of the wounds to the President ... as described by the staff at Parkland Memorial Hospital, differed from those in the [Bethesda] autopsy report, as well as from what appears in the autopsy photographs and X-rays". The HSCA concluded that the most probable explanation for the discrepancy between the Parkland doctors' testimony and the Bethesda autopsy witnesses was "that the observations of the Parkland doctors [were] incorrect".^[200] However, when researcher and ophthalmologist Gary Aguilar, examined the interviews of the Bethesda witnesses, which were declassified in the 1990s, he found that these witnesses also agreed that there was a large, avulsive hole in the rear of Kennedy's skull, suggesting an exit wound and that Kennedy was hit from the front.^{[201][202][203][19]}

Some critics skeptical of the official "single bullet theory" have stated that the bullet's trajectory, which hit Kennedy above the right shoulder blade and passed through his neck (according to the autopsy), would have had to change course to pass through Connally's rib cage and fracture his wrist.^{[204][205]} Kennedy's death certificate, which was signed by his personal physician George Burkley, locates the bullet at "about the level of the third thoracic vertebra" — which some claim was not high enough to exit his throat.^{[206][207]} Furthermore, since the shooter was in a sixth floor window of the Book Depository building, the bullet traveled downward. The autopsy descriptive sheet displays a diagram of the President's body with the same low placement at the third thoracic vertebra.^[208] The holes in the back of his shirt and jacket are also claimed to support a wound too low to be consistent with the "single bullet theory".^[209]

There is a conflicting testimony regarding the autopsy performed on Kennedy's body, particularly during the examination on his brain and whether or not the photos submitted as evidence are the same as those taken during the examination.^[16] Douglas Horne, the Assassination Record Review Board's chief analyst for military records, said he was "90 to 95% certain" that the photographs in the National Archives are not really of Kennedy's brain.^[18] Supporting Horne was Aguilar, who stated, "According to Horne's findings, the second brain — which showed an exit wound in the front — allegedly replaced Kennedy's real brain — which revealed much greater damage to the rear, consistent with an exit wound and thus evidence of a shot from the front."^[19]

Paul O'Connor, a laboratory technologist who assisted in the President's autopsy, claimed that the autopsy at Bethesda Naval Hospital was conducted in obedience to a high command^{[210][103]} and that nearly all the brain matter in Kennedy's skull was already missing before the autopsy at Bethesda hospital.^{[211][212]}

In his book *JFK and the Unspeakable*, James Douglass cites autopsy doctor Pierre Finck's testimony at the trial of Clay Shaw as evidence that Finck was "... a reluctant witness to the military control over the doctors' examination of the president's body".^{[213][214]}

A bone fragment found in Dealey Plaza by William Harper the day following the assassination was reported by the HSCA's Forensic Pathology Panel to have been from Kennedy's skull, a part of his parietal bone.^[215] Some critics of the lone gunman theory, including James Douglass, David Lifton, and David Mantick, contend that the bone fragment that Harper found is not parietal bone, but is actually a piece of Kennedy's occipital bone ejected from an exit wound in the back of his head.^[216] They allege this finding is evidence of a cover-up, as it proves that the skull radiographs taken during the autopsy, which do not show significant bone loss in the occipital area, are not authentic.^[216]

Oswald's marksmanship

The Warren Commission examined the capabilities of the Carcano rifle and ammunition, as well as Oswald's military training and post-military experience, and determined that Oswald had the ability to fire three shots within a time span of 4.8 to 5.6 seconds.^[217] According to their report, an army specialist using Oswald's rifle was able to duplicate the feat and even improved on the time. The report also states that the Army Infantry Weapons Evaluation Branch test fired Oswald's rifle 47 times and found that it was "quite accurate", comparing it to the accuracy of an M14 rifle. Also contained in the Commission report is testimony by Marine Corps Major Eugene Anderson confirming that Oswald's military records show that he qualified as "sharpshooter" in 1956.

According to official Marine Corps records, Oswald was tested in shooting in December 1956, scoring 212 (slightly above the minimum for qualification as a sharpshooter — the intermediate category), but in May 1959, he scored 191 (earning the lower designation of marksman).^[218] The highest marksmanship category in the Marine Corps is 'Expert' (220).^[219]

Despite Oswald's confirmed marksmanship in the USMC, conspiracy theorists like Walt Brown and authors such as Richard H. Popkin contend that Oswald was a notoriously poor shot, that his rifle was inaccurate, and that no reconstruction of the event has ever been able to duplicate his ability to fire three shots within the time frame given by the Warren Commission.^{[220][221]}

Role of Oswald

The Warren Commission concluded that "there is no evidence that [Oswald] was involved in any conspiracy directed to the assassination of the President."^[222] The Commission came to this conclusion after examining Oswald's Marxist and pro-Communist background, including his defection to Russia, the New Orleans branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee he had organized, and the various public and private statements made by him espousing Marxism.

Some conspiracy theorists have argued that Oswald's pro-Communist behavior was in fact a carefully planned ruse and part of an effort by U.S. intelligence agencies to infiltrate left-wing groups and conduct counterintelligence operations in communist countries. Others speculate that Oswald was either an agent or an informant of the U.S. government and that Oswald may have been trying to expose the plot behind the assassination.^{[223][224][225][226][227]}

Oswald himself claimed to be innocent, denying all charges and even declaring to reporters that he was "just a patsy". He also insisted that the photos of him holding a rifle had been faked, an assertion contradicted by statements made by his wife, Marina, and the analysis of photographic experts such as Lyndal L. Shaneyfelt of the FBI.

Oswald's role as FBI informant was investigated by Lee Rankin and others of the Warren Commission, but their findings were inconclusive. Several FBI employees had made statements indicating that Oswald was indeed a paid informant, but the Commission was nonetheless unable to verify the veracity of those claims.^{[228][229]} FBI agent James Hosty reported that his office's interactions with Oswald were limited to dealing with his complaints about being harassed by the Bureau for being a communist sympathizer. In the weeks before the assassination, Oswald made a personal visit to the FBI's Dallas branch office with a hand-delivered letter which purportedly contained a threat of some sort but, controversially, Hosty destroyed the letter by order of J. Gordon Shanklin, his supervisor.^{[230][231][232]}

Some researchers suggest that Oswald served as an active agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, often pointing to how he attempted to defect to Russia but was, however, able to return without difficulty (even receiving a repatriation loan from the State Department^{[233][234]}) as evidence of such. A former roommate of Oswald, James Botelho (who would later become a California judge) stated in an interview with Mark Lane that he believed Oswald was involved in an intelligence assignment in Russia,^{[235][236]} although Botelho did not mention this suspicion in his testimony to the Warren Commission years earlier. Oswald's mother, Marguerite, often insisted that her son was recruited by an agency of the U.S. Government and sent to Russia.^[223] New Orleans District Attorney (and later judge) Jim Garrison, who in 1967 brought Clay Shaw to trial for the assassination of President Kennedy, also held the opinion that Oswald was most likely a CIA agent drawn into the plot to be used as a scapegoat, even going as far as to say that Oswald "genuinely was probably a hero".^[237] Senator Richard Schweiker, a member of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence remarked that "everywhere you look with [Oswald], there're fingerprints of intelligence".^[238] Schweiker also told author David Talbot that Oswald "was the product

of a fake defector program run by the CIA."^[239] Richard Sprague, interim staff director and chief counsel to the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations, stated that if he "had to do it over again", he would have investigated the Kennedy assassination by probing Oswald's ties to the Central Intelligence Agency.^[240] In 1978, former CIA paymaster and accountant James Wilcott testified before the HSCA, stating that Lee Harvey Oswald was a "known agent" of the Central Intelligence Agency.^[241] Wilcott and his wife, Elsie (also a former employee of the CIA) later repeated those claims in an article in the San Francisco Chronicle.^[242]

Despite its official policy of neither confirming nor denying the status of agents, both the CIA itself and many officers working in the region at the time (including David Atlee Phillips) have "unofficially" dismissed the plausibility of any possible ties of Oswald to the agency. Robert Blakey, staff director and chief counsel for the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations, supported that assessment in his conclusions as well.^[243]

Alternative gunmen

In addition to Oswald, Jerome Kroth has named 26 people as "Possible Assassins In Dealey Plaza".^[93] They include: Orlando Bosch,^[93] James Files,^{[93][244]} Desmond Fitzgerald,^[93] Charles Harrelson,^{[93][245]} Gerry Hemming,^[93] Chauncey Holt,^[93] Howard Hunt,^[93] Charles Nicoletti,^{[93][245]} Charles Rogers,^[93] Johnny Roselli,^[93] Lucien Sarti,^{[93][245]} and Frank Sturgis.^[93]

Three tramps

Vincent Bugliosi provides a "partial list of assassins ... whom one or more conspiracy theorists have actually named and identified as having fired a weapon at Kennedy" in his book *Reclaiming History*.^[246] He also mentions the three tramps, men photographed by several Dallas-area newspapers under police escort near the Texas School Book Depository shortly after the assassination. Since the mid-1960s, various allegations have been made about the identities of the men and their involvement in a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. Records released by the Dallas Police Department in 1989 identified the men as Gus Abrams, Harold Doyle, and John Gedney.^[247]



The Three Tramps

Allegations of other conspirators

E. Howard Hunt

The theory that former CIA agent and Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt was a participant in the assassination of Kennedy garnered much publicity from 1978 to 2000.^[248] In 1981, Hunt won a libel judgment against Liberty Lobby's paper *The Spotlight*, which in 1978 printed an allegation by Victor Marchetti stating that Hunt was in Dallas on the day of the assassination and suggesting Hunt's involvement in a conspiracy; the libel award was thrown out on appeal and the newspaper was successfully defended by Mark Lane in a second trial.^[249] After Hunt's death in 2007, an audio-taped "deathbed confession" in which Hunt claimed first-hand knowledge of a conspiracy, as a co-conspirator, was released by his son Saint John Hunt.^[250] In the confession, Hunt claimed to have been a "bench warmer" in Dallas during the events, and he named several high-level CIA operatives as those who likely

carried out the logistics of the assassination. Hunt named Vice President Lyndon Johnson as the most likely figure behind the main impetus of the conspiracy.^[250] The authenticity of the confession was met with some skepticism.^{[248][251][252]}

J. D. Tippit

Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippit has been named in some conspiracy theories as a renegade CIA operative sent to silence Oswald^{[253][254]} and as the "badge man" assassin on the grassy knoll.^[254] According to some Warren Commission critics, Oswald was set up to be killed by Tippit, but Tippit was killed by Oswald before he could carry out his assignment.^[255] Other critics doubt that Tippit was killed by Oswald and assert he was shot by other conspirators.^{[253][255]} (See section below.) Some critics have alleged that Tippit was associated with organized crime or right-wing politics.^[253]

Bernard Weissman

According to the Warren Commission, the publication of a full-page, paid advertisement critical of Kennedy in the November 22, 1963, *Dallas Morning News*, which was signed by "The American Fact-Finding Committee" and noted Bernard Weissman as its chairman, was investigated to determine whether any members of the group claiming responsibility for it were connected to Oswald or to the assassination.^[256] The Commission stated that "The American Fact-Finding Committee" was a fictitious sponsoring organization and that there was no evidence linking the four men responsible for the genesis of the ad with either Oswald or Ruby, or to a conspiracy to assassinate Kennedy.^[256]

Related to the advertisement, Mark Lane testified during the Warren Commission's hearings that an informant whom he refused to name told him that Weismann had met with Tippit and Ruby eight days before the assassination at Ruby's Carousel Club.^[256] The Commission reported that they "found no evidence that such a meeting took place anywhere at any time"^[257] and that there was no "credible evidence that any of the three men knew each other".^[258]

Lane later stated that he initially learned of the meeting through reporter Thayer Waldo of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.^[259] According to Lane, a "prominent Dallas figure" who frequented Ruby's Carousel Club told Waldo, and later Lane, that he observed the meeting of the three men at the club.^[259] He said, "I had promised the man he would not be involved; he was a leading Dallas citizen; he was married, and the stripper he was going with had become pregnant."^[259] Despite not having revealed to the Warren Commission that Waldo was his original source of the alleged meeting, Lane disputed their findings and complained that they failed to ask Waldo about it.^[260] According to Hugh Aynesworth, the source of the allegation whose identity Lane promised not to reveal was Carroll Jarnagin,^[261] a Dallas attorney who had also claimed to have overheard a meeting between Oswald and Ruby.^[262] Aynesworth wrote: "Several people in Dallas were well aware of Jarnagin's tale, and that he later admitted making it all up."^[261]

Unnamed accomplice(s) in the murder of J. D. Tippit



Advertisement in the November 22, 1963, *Dallas Morning News*, placed by Bernard Weissman and three others.

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald killed President Kennedy and then "killed Dallas Police Officer J. D. Tippit in an apparent attempt to escape."^[217] Regarding the evidence against Oswald in the shooting of Tippit, the Commission cited: "(1) two eyewitnesses who heard the shots and saw the shooting of Dallas Police Patrolman J. D. Tippit and seven eyewitnesses who saw the flight of the gunman with revolver in hand positively identified Lee Harvey Oswald as the man they saw fire the shots or flee from the scene, (2) the cartridge cases found near the scene of the shooting were fired from the revolver in the possession of Oswald at the time of his arrest, to the exclusion of all other weapons, (3) the revolver in Oswald's possession at the time of his arrest was purchased by and belonged to Oswald, and (4) Oswald's jacket was found along the path of flight taken by the gunman as he fled from the scene of the killing."^[263]

Some researchers have alleged that the murder of Officer Tippit was part of a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. Jim Marrs hypothesized that "the slaying of Officer J. D. Tippit may have played some part in [a] scheme to have Oswald killed, perhaps to eliminate co-conspirator Tippit or simply to anger Dallas police and cause itchy trigger fingers."^[264] Researcher James Douglass said that "... the killing of [Tippit] helped motivate the Dallas police to kill an armed Oswald in the Texas Theater [where Oswald was arrested], which would have disposed of the scapegoat before he could protest his being framed."^[265] Harold Weisberg offered a simpler explanation: "Immediately, the [flimsy] police case [against Oswald] required a willingness to believe. This was proved by affixing to Oswald the opprobrious epithet of 'cop-killer.'"^[265] Jim Garrison alleged that evidence was altered to frame Oswald, stating: "If Oswald was innocent of the Tippit murder the foundation of the government's case against him collapsed."^[266]

Some critics doubt that Tippit was killed by Oswald and assert he was shot by other conspirators.^{[253][255]} They allege discrepancies in witness testimony and physical evidence that they think call into question the Commission's conclusions regarding the murder of Tippit. According to Jim Marrs, Oswald's guilt in the assassination of Kennedy is placed in question by the presence of "a growing body of evidence to suggest that [he] did not kill Tippit".^[267] Others say that multiple men were directly involved in Tippit's killing. Conspiracy researcher Kenn Thomas has alleged that the Warren Commission omitted testimony and evidence that two men shot Tippit and that one left the scene in a car.^[268]

William Alexander — the Dallas assistant district attorney who recommended that Oswald be charged with the Kennedy and Tippit murders — later became skeptical of the Warren Commission's version of the Tippit murder. He stated that the Commission's conclusions on Oswald's movements "don't add up", and that "certainly [Oswald] may have had accomplices."^[269]

According to Brian McKenna's review of Henry Hurt's book, *Reasonable Doubt*, Hurt reported that "Tippit may have been killed because he impregnated the wife of another man" and that Dallas police officers lied and altered evidence to set up Oswald to save Tippit's reputation.^[270]

In the documentary *JFK to 9/11*, Francis Conolly claims that Tippit was shot because his looks resembled Kennedy's. Conolly speculates that the assassination plot did not go as planned, and that the conspirators needed a second body. He further theorizes that Tippit's body and JFK's body were switched on Air Force Two.^[271]

Allegations about witness testimony and physical evidence

The Warren Commission identified Helen Markham and Domingo Benavides as two witnesses who actually saw the shooting of Officer Tippit.^[272] Conspiracy theorist Richard Belzer criticized the Commission for, in his description, "relying" on the testimony of Markham whom he described as "imaginative".^[273] Jim Marrs also took issue with Markham's testimony, stating that her "credibility ...

was strained to the breaking point".^[267] Joseph Ball, senior counsel to the Commission, referred to Markham's testimony as "full of mistakes", characterizing her as an "utter screwball".^[274] The Warren Commission addressed concerns regarding Markham's reliability as a witness and concluded: "However, even in the absence of Mrs. Markham's testimony, there is ample evidence to identify Oswald as the killer of Tippit."^[272]

Domingo Benavides initially said that he did not think he could identify Tippit's assailant and was never asked to view a police lineup,^[275] even though he was the person closest to the killing.^[276] Benavides later testified that the killer resembled pictures he had seen of Oswald.^[277] Other witnesses were taken to police lineups. However, critics have questioned these lineups as they consisted of people who looked very different from Oswald.^{[276][278]}

Witnesses who did not appear before the Commission identified an assailant who was not Oswald. Aquilla Clemons said she saw two men near Tippit's car just before the shooting.^[237] She said that after the shooting, she ran outside of her house and saw a man with a gun whom she described as "kind of heavy". She said he waved to the second man, urging him to "go on".^[279] Frank Wright said he emerged from his home and observed the scene seconds after the shooting. He described a man standing by Tippit's body who had on a long coat and said the man ran to a parked car and drove away.^{[73][280]}

Critics have questioned whether the cartridge cases recovered from the scene were the same as those that were subsequently entered into evidence. Two of the cases were recovered by witness Domingo Benavides and turned over to police officer J. M. Poe. Poe told the FBI that he marked the shells with his own initials, "J.M.P." to identify them.^[281] Sergeant Gerald Hill later testified to the Warren Commission that it was he who had ordered police officer Poe to mark the shells.^[282] However, Poe's initials were not found on the shells produced by the FBI six months later.^{[281][283]} Testifying before the Warren Commission, Poe said that although he recalled marking the cases, he "couldn't swear to it".^{[283][284]} The identification of the cases at the crime scene raises more questions. Sergeant Gerald Hill examined one of the shells and radioed the police dispatcher, saying: "The shell at the scene indicates that the suspect is armed with an automatic .38 rather than a pistol."^[285] However, Oswald was reportedly arrested carrying a *non*-automatic .38 Special revolver.^{[73][286]}

Allegations about timeline

The Warren Commission investigated Oswald's movements between the time of the assassination and the shooting of Tippit, to ascertain whether Oswald might have had an accomplice who helped him flee the Book Depository. The Commission concluded "... through the testimony of seven witnesses [that] Oswald was always alone."^[287] According to their final report, Oswald was seen by his housekeeper, Earlene Roberts, leaving his rooming house shortly after 1:00 pm and had enough time to travel nine-tenths of a mile (1.4 km) to the scene where Tippit was killed at 1:16 pm.^{[288][289][h]}

Some Warren Commission critics believe that Oswald did not have enough time to get from his house to the scene where Tippit was killed.^[253] The Commission's own test and estimation of Oswald's walking speed demonstrated that one of the longer routes to the Tippit shooting scene took 17 minutes and 45 seconds to walk.^[291] No witness ever surfaced who saw Oswald walk from his rooming house to the murder scene.^[292]

Conspiracy researcher Robert Groden believes that Tippit's murder may have occurred earlier than the time given in the Warren Report.^[293] He notes that the Commission established the time of the shooting as 1:16 pm from police tapes that logged Domingo Benavides's use of the radio in Tippit's car.^[290] However, Benavides testified that he did not approach the car until "a few minutes" after the shooting,

because he was afraid that the gunman might return.^[294] He was assisted in using the radio by witness T. F. Bowley who testified to Dallas police that at the time he arrived to help, "several people were at the scene", and that the time was 1:10 pm.^[295]

Witness Helen Markham stated in her affidavit to the Dallas Sheriff's department that Tippit was killed at "approximately 1:06 pm."^[296] She later affirmed the time in testimony before the Warren Commission, saying: "I wouldn't be afraid to bet it wasn't 6 or 7 minutes after 1."^{[297][298]} She initially told the FBI that the shooting occurred "possibly around 1:30 pm."^[299] In an unpublished manuscript titled *When They Kill a President*, Deputy Sheriff Roger Craig stated that when he heard the news that Tippit had been shot, he noted that the time was 1:06 pm.^[300] However, in a later statement to the press, Craig seemed confused about the time of the shooting.^[301]

Warren Burroughs, who ran the concession stand at the Texas Theater where Oswald was arrested, said that Oswald came into the theater between 1:00 and 1:07 pm; he also claimed he sold Oswald popcorn at 1:15 p.m. — the "official" time of Officer Tippit's murder.^{[302][237]} Julia Postal told the Warren Commission that Burroughs initially told her the same thing, although when she later discussed the event with him, she became skeptical about his version.^[303] A theatre patron, Jack Davis, also corroborated Burroughs's time, claiming he observed Oswald in the theatre prior to 1:20 pm.^[304]

Unidentified witnesses

Some conspiracy theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination have focused on witnesses to the assassination who have not been identified, or who have not identified themselves, despite the media attention that the Kennedy assassination has received.

Umbrella man

The so-called "umbrella man" was one of the closest bystanders to the president when he was first struck by a bullet. The "umbrella man" has become the subject of conspiracy theories after footage of the assassination showed him holding an open umbrella as the Kennedy motorcade passed, despite the fact that it was not raining at the time. One conspiracy theory, proposed by assassination researcher Robert Cutler, suggests that a dart with a paralyzing agent could have been fired from the umbrella, disabling Kennedy and making him a "sitting duck" for an assassination.^[305] (In 1975, CIA weapons developer Charles Senseney told the Senate Intelligence Committee that such an umbrella weapon was in the hands of the CIA in 1963.)^[306] A more prevalent conspiracy theory holds that the umbrella could have been used to provide visual signals to hidden gunmen.^[307]



Following the assassination of President Kennedy the "umbrella man" can be seen sitting on the sidewalk next to the "dark complected man" on the right side of the photograph.

In 1978, Louie Steven Witt came forward and identified himself as the "umbrella man". Testifying before the United States House Select Committee on Assassinations, Witt stated he brought the umbrella to heckle Kennedy and protest the appeasement policies of the president's father, Joseph Kennedy. He added: "I think if the *Guinness Book of World Records* had a category for people who were at the wrong place at the wrong time, doing the wrong thing, I would be No. 1 in that position, without even a close runner-up."^[308] Some researchers have noted a number of inconsistencies with Witt's story, however, and do not believe him to be the true "umbrella man".^[309]

The "umbrella man" is the subject of a 2011 documentary short by Errol Morris, for *The New York Times*.^[310]

Dark complected man

An unidentified individual who is referred to by some conspiracy theorists as the "dark complected man" can be seen in several photographs, taken seconds after the assassination, sitting on the sidewalk next to the "umbrella man" on the north side of Elm Street. Louie Steven Witt, who identified himself as the "umbrella man", said he was unable to identify the other individual, whose dark complexion has led some conspiracy theorists to speculate Cuban government involvement, or Cuban exile involvement, in the assassination of Kennedy.^[307]

Badge man

"Badge man" and "tin hat man" are figures on the grassy knoll who it is alleged can be seen in the Mary Moorman photo, taken approximately one-sixth of a second after President Kennedy was struck with the fatal head wound. The figures were first discovered by researchers Jack White and Gary Mack and are discussed in a 1988 documentary called *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, where it is alleged a third figure can also be seen on the grassy knoll, possibly the eyewitness Gordon Arnold. The "badge man" figure — so called as he appears to be wearing a uniform similar to that worn by a policeman, with a badge prominent — helped fuel conspiracy theories linking Dallas Police officers, or someone impersonating a police officer, to the assassination.^[70]



Some conspiracy theorists believe that "badge man" could have fired the fatal shot that killed President Kennedy.

Black dog man

Another "figure" that has been the subject of conspiracy is the so-called "black dog man" figure who can be seen at the corner of a retaining wall in the Willis and Betzner photo of the assassination. In an interview, Marilyn Sitzman told Josiah Thompson that she saw a young black couple who were eating lunch and drinking Cokes on a bench behind the retaining wall and, therefore, it is possible that the "black dog man" figure is actually the black woman and her child.^[311] If so, the woman has never come forward to identify herself.

In *The Killing of A President*, Robert Groden argues that the "black dog man" figure can be seen in a pyracantha bush in frame 413 of the Zapruder film. The United States House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that a head of an individual could be seen but that this individual was situated in front of, rather than behind the bushes.^[312] Bill Miller argues that this individual is actually the eyewitness Emmett Hudson.^[313]



"Black Dog Man"

Conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theorists consider four or five groups, alone or in combination, to be the primary suspects in the assassination of Kennedy: the CIA,^{[314][315]} the military-industrial complex,^{[314][315]} organized crime,^{[314][315][316]} the government of Cuba led by Fidel Castro,^{[315][316][317]} and Cuban exiles.^[315] Other domestic individuals, groups, or organizations implicated in various conspiracy theories include Lyndon Johnson,^{[317][315][316]} George H. W. Bush,^{[315][316]} Sam Giancana,^[317] Carlos Marcello,^[318] J. Edgar Hoover,^[316] Earl Warren,^[317] the Federal Bureau of Investigation,^[315] the United States Secret Service,^{[315][316]} the John Birch Society,^{[315][316]} and far-right wealthy Texans.^[315] Some other alleged foreign conspirators includes, the KGB and Nikita Khrushchev,^{[317][315]} Aristotle Onassis,^[316] the government of South Vietnam,^[319] and international drug lords,^[315] including a French heroin syndicate.^[319]

New Orleans conspiracy

Soon after the assassination of President Kennedy, Oswald's activities in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the spring and summer of 1963, came under scrutiny. Three days after the assassination, on November 25, 1963, New Orleans attorney Dean Andrews told the FBI that he received a telephone call from a man named Clay Bertrand, on the day of the assassination, asking him to defend Oswald.^{[320][321]} Andrews would later repeat this claim in testimony to the Warren Commission.^[322]

Also, in late November 1963, an employee of New Orleans private investigator Guy Banister named Jack Martin began making accusations that fellow Banister employee David Ferrie was involved in the JFK assassination. Martin told police that Ferrie "was supposed to have been the getaway pilot in the assassination."^[323] He said that Ferrie had outlined plans to kill Kennedy and that Ferrie might have taught Oswald how to use a rifle with a telescopic sight. Martin claimed that Ferrie had known Oswald from their days in the New Orleans Civil Air Patrol, and that he had seen a photograph, at Ferrie's home, of Oswald in a Civil Air Patrol group.^[324] Ferrie denied any association with Oswald.^[325]

It was later discovered that Ferrie had attended Civil Air Patrol meetings in New Orleans in the 1950s that were also attended by a teenage Lee Harvey Oswald.^[326] In 1993, the PBS television program *Frontline* obtained a photograph taken in 1955 (eight years before the assassination) showing Oswald and Ferrie at a Civil Air Patrol cookout with other C.A.P. cadets.^[326] Whether Oswald's and Ferrie's association in the Civil Air Patrol in 1955 is relevant to their later possible association in 1963 is a subject of debate.^{[326][327]}



David Ferrie (second from left) with Lee Harvey Oswald (far right) in the New Orleans Civil Air Patrol in 1955.

According to several witnesses, in 1963, both Ferrie and Banister were working for lawyer G. Wray Gill on behalf of Gill's client, New Orleans Mafia boss Carlos Marcello, in an attempt to block Marcello's deportation to Guatemala.^{[328][329]} On the afternoon of November 22, 1963 — the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated and the day Marcello was acquitted in his deportation case — New Orleans private investigator Guy Banister and his employee, Jack Martin, were drinking together at a local bar. On their return to Banister's office, the two men got into a heated argument. According to Martin, Banister said something to which Martin replied, "What are you going to do — kill me like you all did Kennedy?". Banister drew his .357 magnum revolver and pistol-whipped Martin several times. Martin, badly injured, went by ambulance to Charity Hospital.^[330]

Earlier, in the spring of 1963, Oswald had written to the New York City headquarters of the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee, proposing to rent "a small office at my own expense for the purpose of forming a FPCC branch here in New Orleans".^[331] As the sole member of the New Orleans chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, Oswald ordered 1,000 leaflets with the heading, "Hands Off Cuba" from a local printer.^[332] On August 16, 1963, Oswald passed out Fair Play for Cuba leaflets in front of the International Trade Mart in New Orleans.^[333]

One of Oswald's leaflets had the address "544 Camp Street" hand-stamped on it, apparently by Oswald himself.^[334] The address was in the "Newman Building", which from October 1961 to February 1962 housed the Cuban Revolutionary Council, a militant anti-Castro group.^{[335][336]} Around the corner but located in the same building, with a different entrance, was the address 531 Lafayette Street — the address of "Guy Banister Associates", the private detective agency run by Guy Banister. Banister's office was involved in anti-Castro and private investigative activities in the New Orleans area. (A CIA file indicated that in September 1960, the CIA had considered "using Guy Banister Associates for the collection of foreign intelligence, but ultimately decided against it".)^{[337][338][339]}

In the late 1970s, the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) investigated the possible relationship of Oswald to Banister's office. While the committee was unable to interview Guy Banister (who died in 1964), the committee did interview his brother Ross Banister. Ross "told the committee that his brother had mentioned seeing Oswald hand out Fair Play for Cuba literature on one occasion. Ross theorized that Oswald had used the 544 Camp Street address on his literature to embarrass Guy."^[340]

Guy Banister's secretary, Delphine Roberts, would later tell author Anthony Summers that she saw Oswald at Banister's office, and that he filled out one of Banister's "agent" application forms. She said, "Oswald came back a number of times. He seemed to be on familiar terms with Banister and with the office."^[341] The House Select Committee on Assassinations investigated Roberts's claims and said that "because of contradictions in Roberts' statements to the committee and lack of independent corroboration of many of her statements, the reliability of her statements could not be determined."^[342]

In 1966, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison began an investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy. Garrison's investigation led him to conclude that a group of right-wing extremists, including David Ferrie and Guy Banister, were involved with elements of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. Garrison would later claim that the motive for the assassination was anger over Kennedy's attempts to obtain a peace settlement in both Cuba and Vietnam.^{[343][344]} Garrison also came to believe that New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw was part of the conspiracy and that Clay Shaw used the pseudonym "Clay Bertrand".^[345] Garrison further believed that Shaw, Banister, and Ferrie conspired to set up Oswald as a patsy in the JFK assassination.^[346] On March 1, 1967, Garrison arrested and charged Shaw with conspiring to assassinate President Kennedy. On January 29, 1969, Clay Shaw was brought to trial on these charges, and the jury found him not guilty.

In 2003, Judyth Baker — whose employment records show that she worked at the Reily Coffee Company in New Orleans at the same time Oswald did — appeared in an episode of the television documentary series, *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*.^[347] Baker claimed that in 1963 she was recruited by Dr. Canute Michaelson to work with Dr. Alton Ochsner and Dr. Mary Sherman on a clandestine CIA project to develop a biological weapon that could be used to assassinate Fidel Castro. According to Baker, she and Oswald were hired by Reily in the spring of 1963 as a "cover" for the operation.^[348] Baker further claimed that she and Oswald began an affair, and that later Oswald told her about Merida, Mexico — a city where he suggested they might begin their lives over again.^{[347][349]} According to John McAdams, Baker presents a "classic case of pushing the limits of plausibility too far".^[350] Others on both sides of the research community have widely dismissed her claims.^[i] However, other researchers, including James Fetzer, have concluded that Baker's claims are credible.

CIA conspiracy

Addressing speculation that Oswald was a CIA agent or had some relationship with the Agency, the Warren Commission stated in 1964 that their investigation "revealed no evidence that Oswald was ever employed [by the] CIA in any capacity."^[351] The House Select Committee on Assassinations reported similarly in 1979 that "there was no indication in Oswald's CIA file that he had ever had contact with the Agency" and concluded that the CIA was not involved in the assassination of Kennedy.^[352]

Gaeton Fonzi, an investigator for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, wrote that investigators were pressured not to look into the relationship between Lee Harvey Oswald and the CIA. He stated that CIA agent David Atlee Phillips, using the pseudonym "Maurice Bishop", was involved with Oswald prior to the Kennedy assassination in connection with anti-Castro Cuban groups.^[353]

In 1995, former U.S. Army Intelligence officer and National Security Agency executive assistant John M. Newman published evidence that both the CIA and FBI deliberately tampered with their files on Lee Harvey Oswald both before and after the assassination. Furthermore, he found that both agencies withheld information that might have alerted authorities in Dallas that Oswald posed a potential threat to the President. Subsequently, Newman expressed the belief that CIA chief of counter-intelligence James Angleton was probably the key figure in the assassination. According to Newman, only Angleton "had the access, the authority, and the diabolically ingenious mind to manage this sophisticated plot." However, Newman surmised that the cover operation was not under James Angleton, but under Allen Dulles (the former CIA director, and later Warren Commission member, who had been dismissed by Kennedy after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion).^[354]

In 1977, the FBI released 40,000 files pertaining to the assassination of Kennedy, including an April 3, 1967 memorandum from Deputy Director Cartha DeLoach to Associate Director Clyde Tolson that was written less than a month after President Johnson learned from J. Edgar Hoover about CIA plots to kill Fidel Castro.^{[355][356]} The memorandum reads: "Marvin Watson [adviser to President Johnson] called me late last night and stated that the president had told him, in an off moment, that he was now convinced that there was a plot in connection with the [JFK] assassination. Watson stated the president felt that [the] CIA had had something to do with plot."^{[355][357][358][359][360]} Later, Cartha DeLoach testified to the Church Committee that he "felt this to be sheer speculation".^[361]

Shadow government conspiracy

One conspiracy theory suggests that a secret or shadow government including wealthy industrialists and right-wing politicians ordered the assassination of Kennedy.^[362] Peter Dale Scott has indicated that Kennedy's death allowed for policy reversals desired by the secret government to escalate the United States' military involvement in Vietnam.^[363]

Military-industrial complex

In the farewell speech given by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower before he left office on January 17, 1961, warned the nation about the power of the military establishment and the arms industry. "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist."^[364] Some conspiracy theorists have argued that Kennedy planned to end the involvement of the United States in Vietnam, and was therefore targeted by those who had an interest in sustained military conflict, including the Pentagon and defense contractors.^[365]

Former Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough in 1991 stated: "Had Kennedy lived, I think we would have had no Vietnam War, with all of its traumatic and divisive influences in America. I think we would have escaped that."^[366]

According to author James W. Douglass, Kennedy was assassinated because he was turning away from the Cold War and seeking a negotiated peace with the Soviet Union.^[367] Douglass argued that this "was not the kind of leadership the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the military-industrial complex wanted in the White House."^{[368][369]}

Oliver Stone's film, *JFK*, explored the possibility that Kennedy was killed by a conspiracy involving the military-industrial complex.^[370] L. Fletcher Prouty, Chief of Special Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Kennedy, and the person who inspired the character "Mr. X" in Stone's film, wrote that Kennedy's assassination was actually a coup d'état.^[371]

Secret Service conspiracy

The House Select Committee on Assassinations reported that it investigated "alleged Secret Service complicity in the assassination" and concluded that the Secret Service was not involved.^[352] However, the HSCA declared that "the Secret Service was deficient in the performance of its duties."^[372] Among its findings, the HSCA noted: (1) that President Kennedy had not received adequate protection in Dallas, (2) that the Secret Service possessed information that was not properly analyzed, investigated, or used by the Secret Service in connection with the President's trip to Dallas, and (3) that the Secret Service agents in the motorcade were inadequately prepared to protect the President from a sniper.^[373] The HSCA specifically noted:

No actions were taken by the agent in the right front seat of the presidential limousine Roy Kellerman to cover the President with his body, although it would have been consistent with Secret Service procedure for him to have done so. The primary function of the agent was to remain at all times in close proximity to the President in the event of such emergencies.^[374]

Some argue that the lack of Secret Service protection occurred because Kennedy himself had asked that the Secret Service make itself discreet during the Dallas visit.^[375] However, Vince Palamara, who interviewed several Secret Service agents assigned to the Kennedy detail, disputes this. Palamara reports that Secret Service driver Sam Kinney told him that requests — such as removing the bubble top from the limousine in Dallas, not having agents positioned beside the limousine's rear bumper, and reducing the number of Dallas police motorcycle outriders near the limousine's rear bumper — were not made by Kennedy.^{[376][177][377][378]}

In *The Echo from Dealey Plaza*, Abraham Bolden — the first African American on the White House Secret Service detail — claimed to have overheard agents say that they would not protect Kennedy from would-be assassins.^[379]

Questions regarding the forthrightness of the Secret Service increased in the 1990s when the Assassination Records Review Board — which was created when Congress passed the JFK Records Act — requested access to Secret Service records. The Review Board was told by the Secret Service that in January 1995, in violation of the JFK Records Act, the Secret Service destroyed protective survey reports that covered JFK's trips from September 24 through November 8, 1963.^{[380][381][382]}

Cuban exiles

The House Select Committee on Assassinations wrote: "The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that anti-Castro Cuban groups, as groups, were not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy, but that the available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved".^[352]

With the 1959 Cuban Revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power, many Cubans left Cuba to live in the United States. Many of these exiles hoped to overthrow Castro and return to Cuba. Their hopes were dashed with the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961, and many blamed President Kennedy for the failure.^[383]

The House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that some militant Cuban exiles might have participated in Kennedy's murder. These exiles worked closely with CIA operatives in violent activities against Castro's Cuba. In 1979, the committee reported:

President Kennedy's popularity among the Cuban exiles had plunged deeply by 1963. Their bitterness is illustrated in a tape recording of a meeting of anti-Castro Cubans and right-wing Americans in the Dallas suburb of Farmer's Branch on October 1, 1963.^[384]

Author Joan Didion explored the Miami anti-Castro Cuban theory in her 1987 book *Miami*.^{[385][386]} She discussed Marita Lorenz's testimony regarding Guillermo Novo, a Cuban exile who, in 1964, was involved in shooting a bazooka at the headquarters of the United Nations building from the East River during a speech by Che Guevara. Allegedly, Novo was affiliated with Lee Harvey Oswald, and Frank Sturgis. Lorenz claimed that she, Oswald, and seven anti-Castro Cubans transported weapons from Miami to Dallas in two cars just prior to the assassination.^{[387][388]} These claims, though put forth to the House Assassinations Committee by Lorenz, have never been substantiated. Don DeLillo dramatized the Cuban theory in his 1988 novel *Libra*.

Organized crime conspiracy

In 1964, the Warren Commission found no evidence linking Ruby's killing of Oswald with any broader conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy.^[27] The Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald was the only person responsible for assassinating the President, asserting: "Based on its evaluation of the record, the Commission believes that the evidence does not establish a significant link between Ruby and organized crime. Both State and Federal officials have indicated that Ruby was not affiliated with organized criminal activity."^[389]

However, in 1979, the House Select Committee on Assassinations wrote: "The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that the national syndicate of organized crime, as a group, was not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy, but that the available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved".^[352] Robert Blakey, who was chief counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, would later conclude in his book, *The Plot to Kill the President*, that New Orleans Mafia boss Carlos Marcello was likely part of a Mafia conspiracy behind the assassination, and that the Mafia had the means and the opportunity required to carry it out.^{[390][391]}

In a 1993 *Washington Post* article, Blakey added: "It is difficult to dispute the underworld pedigree of Jack Ruby, though the Warren Commission did it in 1964. Author Gerald Posner similarly ignores Ruby's ties to Joseph Civello, the organized crime boss in Dallas. His relationship with Joseph Campisi, the No.

2 man in the mob in Dallas, is even more difficult to ignore. In fact, Campisi and Ruby were close friends; they had dinner together at Campisi's restaurant, the Egyptian Lounge, on the night before the assassination. After Ruby was jailed for killing Oswald, Campisi regularly visited him. The select committee thought Campisi's connection to Marcello was telling; he told us, for example, that every year at Christmas he sent 260 pounds of Italian sausage to Marcello, a sort of Mafia tribute. We also learned that he called New Orleans up to 20 times a day."^[392]

Government documents have revealed that some members of the Mafia worked with the Central Intelligence Agency on assassination attempts against Cuban leader Fidel Castro.^[393] In summer 1960, the CIA recruited ex-FBI agent Robert Maheu to approach the West Coast representative of the Chicago mob, Johnny Roselli.^[394] When Maheu contacted Roselli, Maheu hid the fact that he was sent by the CIA, instead portraying himself as an advocate for international corporations. He offered to pay \$150,000 to have Castro killed, but Roselli declined any pay. Roselli introduced Maheu to two men he referred to as "Sam Gold" and "Joe". "Sam Gold" was Sam Giancana; "Joe" was Santo Trafficante, Jr., the Tampa, Florida, boss and one of the most powerful mobsters in pre-revolution Cuba.^{[395][396]} Glenn Kessler of *The Washington Post* explained: "After Fidel Castro led a revolution that toppled a friendly government in 1959, the CIA was desperate to eliminate him. So the agency sought out a partner equally worried about Castro — the Mafia, which had lucrative investments in Cuban casinos."^[397]

In his memoir, *Bound by Honor*, Bill Bonanno, son of New York Mafia boss Joseph Bonanno, disclosed that several Mafia families had long-standing ties with the anti-Castro Cubans through the Havana casinos operated by the Mafia before the Cuban Revolution. Many Cuban exiles and Mafia bosses disliked President Kennedy, blaming him for the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion.^[398] They also disliked his brother, then United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, who had conducted an unprecedented legal assault on organized crime.^{[399][400]} This was especially provocative because several Mafia "families" had allegedly worked with JFK's father, Joseph Kennedy, to get JFK elected.^[401] Both the Mafia and the anti-Castro Cubans were experts in assassination — the Cubans having been trained by the CIA.^[402] Bonanno reported that he recognized the high degree of involvement of other Mafia families when Jack Ruby killed Oswald, since Bonanno was aware that Ruby was an associate of Chicago mobster Sam Giancana.^[403]

Some conspiracy researchers have alleged a plot involving elements of the Mafia, the CIA, and the anti-Castro Cubans, including Anthony Summers, who stated: "Sometimes people sort of glaze over about the notion that the Mafia and U.S. intelligence and the anti-Castro activists were involved together in the assassination of President Kennedy. In fact, there's no contradiction there. Those three groups were all in bed together at the time and had been for several years in the fight to topple Fidel Castro."^[404] News reporter Ruben Castaneda wrote in 2012: "Based on the evidence, it is likely that JFK was killed by a coalition of anti-Castro Cubans, the Mob, and elements of the CIA."^[405] In his book, *They Killed Our President*, former Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura concluded: "John F. Kennedy was murdered by a conspiracy involving disgruntled CIA agents, anti-Castro Cubans, and members of the Mafia, all of whom were extremely angry at what they viewed as Kennedy's appeasement policies toward Communist Cuba and the Soviet Union."^[406]

Carlos Marcello allegedly threatened to assassinate the President to short-circuit his younger brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who was leading the administration's anti-Mafia crusade.^{[407][408]} Information released in 2006 by the FBI has led some to conclude that Carlos Marcello confessed to his cellmate in Texas, Jack Van Lanningham, an FBI informant, using a transistor radio that was bugged by the FBI, to having organized Kennedy's assassination, and that the FBI covered up this information that it had in its possession.^[409]

In his book, *Contract on America*,^[410] David Scheim provided evidence that Mafia leaders Carlos Marcello, Santo Trafficante, Jr., and Jimmy Hoffa ordered the assassination of President Kennedy. Scheim cited in particular a 25-fold increase in the number of out-of-state telephone calls from Jack Ruby to associates of these crime bosses in the months before the assassination, and to an attempted confession by Jack Ruby while in prison. David E. Kaiser has also suggested mob involvement in his book, *The Road to Dallas*.^[411]

Investigative reporter Jack Anderson concluded that Fidel Castro worked with organized crime figures to arrange the JFK assassination. In his book *Peace, War, and Politics*, Anderson claimed that Mafia member Johnny Roselli gave him extensive details of the plot. Anderson said that although he was never able to independently confirm Roselli's entire story, many of Roselli's details checked out. Anderson said that Oswald may have played a role in the assassination, but that more than one gunman was involved. Johnny Roselli, as previously noted, had worked with the CIA on assassination attempts against Castro.

The History Channel program *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* presented additional claims of organized crime involvement.^[412] Christian David was a Corsican Mafia member interviewed in prison. He said that he was offered the assassination contract on President Kennedy, but that he did not accept it. However, he said that he knew the men who did accept the contract. According to David, there were three shooters. He provided the name of one — Lucien Sarti. David said that since the other two shooters were still alive, it would break a code of conduct for him to identify them. When asked what the shooters were wearing, David noted their *modus operandi* was to dress in costumes such as official uniforms. Much of Christian David's testimony was confirmed by former Corsican member Michelle Nicole, who was part of the DEA witness protection program.^[412]

The book *Ultimate Sacrifice*, by Lamar Waldron and Thom Hartmann, attempted to synthesize these theories with new evidence. The authors argued that government officials felt obliged to help the assassins cover up the truth because the assassination conspiracy had direct ties to American government plots to assassinate Castro. Outraged at Robert Kennedy's attack on organized crime, mob leaders had President Kennedy killed to remove Robert from power. A government investigation of the plot was thwarted, the authors allege, because it would have revealed embarrassing evidence of American government involvement with organized crime in plots to kill Castro.^[413]

Lyndon B. Johnson conspiracy

A 2003 Gallup poll indicated that nearly 20% of Americans suspected Lyndon B. Johnson of being involved in the assassination of Kennedy.^[414] Critics of the Warren Commission have accused Johnson of plotting the assassination because he "disliked" the Kennedys and feared that he would be dropped from the Democratic ticket for the 1964 election.^{[415][416]}

According to journalist Max Holland, the first published allegation that Johnson perpetrated the assassination of Kennedy appeared in Penn Jones, Jr.'s book *Forgive My Grief*, self-published in May 1966.^[417] In the book, Jones provided excerpts of a letter purported to have been authored by Jack Ruby charging LBJ with the murder of the President.^[417] With his 1968 book, *The Dark Side of Lyndon Baines Johnson*, Joachim Joesten is credited by Bugliosi as being the first conspiracy author to accuse Johnson of having a role in the assassination.^[418] According to Joesten, Johnson "played the leading part" in a conspiracy that involved



Johnson is sworn in on *Air Force One* by Judge Hughes. Mrs. Kennedy is to the right and Mrs. Johnson to the left.

"the Dallas oligarchy and ... local branches of the CIA, the FBI, and the Secret Service".^[418] Others who have indicated there was complicity on the part of Johnson include Jim Marrs,^[418] Ralph D. Thomas,^[418] J. Gary Shaw,^[418] Larry Harris,^[418] Walt Brown,^[418] Noel Twyman,^[418] Barr McClellan,^[418] Craig Zirbel,^[419] Phillip F. Nelson,^[420] and Madeleine Brown.^[421]

The fact that JFK was seriously considering dropping Johnson from the ticket in favor of NC Governor Terry Sanford should Kennedy run in 1964 has been cited as a possible motive for Johnson's complicity in the assassination. In 1968, Kennedy's personal secretary Evelyn Lincoln wrote in her book, "*Kennedy and Johnson*" that President Kennedy had told her that Lyndon B. Johnson would be replaced as Vice President of the United States. That conversation took place on November 19, 1963, just three days before the assassination of President Kennedy and was recorded that evening in her diary and reads as follows:

As Mr. Kennedy sat in the rocker in my office, his head resting on its back he placed his left leg across his right knee. He rocked slightly as he talked. In a slow pensive voice he said to me, 'You know if I am re-elected in sixty-four, I am going to spend more and more time toward making government service an honorable career. I would like to tailor the executive and legislative branches of government so that they can keep up with the tremendous strides and progress being made in other fields.' 'I am going to advocate changing some of the outmoded rules and regulations in the Congress, such as the seniority rule. To do this I will need as a running mate in sixty-four a man who believes as I do.' Mrs. Lincoln went on to write "I was fascinated by this conversation and wrote it down verbatim in my diary. Now I asked, 'Who is your choice as a running-mate?' 'He looked straight ahead, and without hesitating he replied, 'at this time I am thinking about Governor Terry Sanford of North Carolina. But it will not be Lyndon.'^[422]

In 2003, researcher Barr McClellan published the book *Blood, Money & Power*.^[423] McClellan claims that Johnson, motivated by the fear of being dropped from the Kennedy ticket in 1964 and the need to cover up various scandals, masterminded Kennedy's assassination with the help of his friend, Austin attorney Edward A. Clark. The book suggests that a smudged partial fingerprint from the sniper's nest likely belonged to Johnson's associate Malcolm "Mac" Wallace, and that Mac Wallace was, therefore, on the sixth floor of the Depository at the time of the shooting. The book further claims that the killing of Kennedy was paid for by oil magnates, including Clint Murchison and H. L. Hunt. McClellan states that the assassination of Kennedy allowed the oil depletion allowance to be kept at 27.5 percent. It remained unchanged during the Johnson presidency. According to McClellan, this resulted in a saving of over \$100 million to the American oil industry. McClellan's book subsequently became the subject of an episode of Nigel Turner's ongoing documentary television series, *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*. The episode, "The Guilty Men", drew angry condemnation from the Johnson family, Johnson's former aides, and former Presidents Gerald Ford (who was a member of the Warren Commission^[424]) and Jimmy Carter following its airing on The History Channel. The History Channel assembled a committee of historians who concluded the accusations in the documentary were without merit, and The History Channel apologized to the Johnson family and agreed not to air the series in the future.^[425]

Madeleine Brown, who alleged she was the mistress of Johnson, also implicated him in a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. In 1997, Brown said that Johnson, along with H. L. Hunt, had begun planning Kennedy's demise as early as 1960. Brown claimed that by its fruition in 1963, the conspiracy involved dozens of persons, including the leadership of the FBI and the Mafia, as well as prominent politicians and journalists.^[426] In the documentary *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*, Madeleine Brown and May Newman (an employee of Texas oilman Clint Murchison) both placed FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover at a social gathering at Murchison's mansion the night before the assassination.^[427] Also in attendance, according

to Brown, were John McCloy, Richard Nixon, George Brown, R. L. Thornton, and H. L. Hunt.^[428] Madeleine Brown claimed that Johnson arrived at the gathering late in the evening and, in a "grating whisper", told her that the "... Kennedys will never embarrass me again — that's no threat — that's a promise."^{[428][429][430]} In addition, Brown said that on New Year's Eve 1963, she met Johnson at the Driskill Hotel in Austin, Texas and that he confirmed the conspiracy to kill Kennedy, insisting that "the fat cats of Texas and [U.S.] intelligence" had been responsible.^[427] Brown reiterated her allegations against Johnson in the 2006 documentary *Evidence of Revision*. In the same documentary, several other Johnson associates also voiced their suspicions of Johnson.

Dr. Charles Crenshaw authored the 1992 book *JFK: Conspiracy of Silence*, along with conspiracy theorists Jens Hansen and J. Gary Shaw. Crenshaw was a third-year surgical resident on the trauma team at Parkland Hospital that attended to President Kennedy. He also treated Oswald after he was shot by Jack Ruby.^[431] While attending to Oswald, Crenshaw said that he answered a telephone call from Lyndon Johnson. Crenshaw said that Johnson inquired about Oswald's status, and that Johnson demanded a "death-bed confession from the accused assassin [Oswald]".^[431] Crenshaw said that he relayed Johnson's message to Dr. Shires, but that Oswald was in no condition to give any statement.^{[427][432]} Critics of Crenshaw's allegation state that Johnson was in his limousine at the moment the call would have been made, that no one in his car corroborated that the call was made, and that there is no record of such a call being routed through the White House switchboard.^{[433][434]}

Former CIA agent and Watergate figure E. Howard Hunt accused Johnson (along with several CIA agents whom he named) of complicity in the assassination in his posthumously released autobiography *American Spy: My Secret History in the CIA, Watergate, and Beyond*.^[435] Referencing that section of the book, Tim Weiner of *The New York Times* and Joseph C. Goulden of *The Washington Times* called into question the sincerity of the charges, and William F. Buckley, Jr., who wrote the foreword, said material "was clearly ghostwritten".^{[436][437][438]} Shortly afterwards, an audio-taped "deathbed confession" in which Hunt claimed first-hand knowledge of a conspiracy, as a co-conspirator, was released by his sons;^[250] the authenticity of the confession was also met with some skepticism.^{[248][251][252]}

In 1984, convicted swindler Billie Sol Estes made statements to a Grand Jury in Texas indicating that he had "inside knowledge" that implicated Johnson in the death of Kennedy and others.^{[439][440]}

Historian Michael L. Kurtz wrote that there is no evidence suggesting that Johnson ordered the assassination of Kennedy.^[441] According to Kurtz, Johnson believed Fidel Castro was responsible for the assassination and that Johnson covered up the truth because he feared the possibility that retaliatory measures against Cuba might escalate to nuclear war with the Soviet Union.^[441] In 2012, biographer Robert Caro published his fourth volume on Johnson's career, *The Passage of Power*, which chronicles Johnson's communications and actions as Vice President, and describes the events leading up to the assassination.^[442] Caro wrote that "nothing that I have found in my research" points to involvement by Johnson.^[443]

Political consultant and convicted felon Roger Stone believes that Johnson orchestrated Kennedy's assassination. He also claims that Rafael Cruz, father of Texas Senator and Republican presidential candidate for the 2016 elections Ted Cruz, is tied to Lee Harvey Oswald.^{[444][445][446]}

George H. W. Bush conspiracy

On November 29, 1963, exactly one week after the assassination, an employee of the FBI wrote in a memo that "Mr. George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency" was given a briefing on the reaction to the assassination by Cuban exiles living in Miami. Some have alleged that the "George Bush" cited in this memo is the future U.S. president George H. W. Bush, who was appointed head of the CIA by president Gerald Ford in 1976, 13 years after the assassination. During Bush's presidential campaign in 1988, the memo resurfaced, prompting the CIA to claim that the memo was referring to an employee named George Williams Bush.^[447] However, George Williams Bush disputed this suggestion, declaring under oath that "I am not the George Bush of the Central Intelligence Agency referred to in the memorandum."^[448] On the website JFK Facts, author Jefferson Morley writes that any communication by Bush with the FBI or CIA in November 1963 does not necessarily demonstrate culpability in the assassination, and that it is unclear whether Bush had any affiliation with the CIA prior to his appointment to head the agency in 1976.^[449]

Bush biographer Kitty Kelley alleges that Bush was unable to remember his whereabouts on the day of Kennedy's assassination, despite the fact that this information is known. The day of the assassination, Bush flew to Tyler, Texas, to make an appearance ahead of his upcoming campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1964, and spoke to the FBI about a local who had threatened Kennedy. The previous day, Bush had been in Dallas to speak at an oil industry meeting. Morley has suggested the possibility that Bush's report to the FBI was a cover story, but cautioned that "speculation, however plausible, isn't evidence," and that Kelley is "not the most reliable of sources."^[449]

Those who believe that Bush may have been involved in the assassination have presented photographic evidence of a man resembling Bush in Dealey Plaza at the time of the assassination. However, Morley argues this evidence is weak, as no comparative measurements of the two men's facial features has been made. Bush was already an announced Senate candidate for several months by the time of the assassination and thus had received much press attention. No eyewitnesses have publicly recalled seeing Bush at the scene, though his opponent, incumbent Senator Ralph Yarborough, passed by in the presidential motorcade.^[449]

In September 1976, George de Mohrenschildt, a Dallas petroleum geologist and a friend of both Bush and Lee Harvey Oswald,^{[450][451][452][453]} wrote a letter to Bush, then director of the CIA, asking for his assistance.^{[454][455]} Mohrenschildt was being pressured by House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) investigators to testify on the assassination, causing him to write the letter in distress. Bush responded to Mohrenschildt's letter, but said he would be unable to help.^{[CIA Exec Reg. # 76,51571 9.28.76]^[j]} Mohrenschildt committed suicide six months later, before testifying to the HSCA.^{[456][457][458]} Morley argues that the letter's existence, and Bush's response, does not demonstrate guilt for either man, but merely that Bush was uninterested in questioning the CIA's account of the assassination.^[449]

Cuban government conspiracy

In its report, the Warren Commission stated that it had investigated "dozens of allegations of a conspiratorial contact between Oswald and agents of the Cuban Government" and had found no evidence of Cuban involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy.^[459] The House Select Committee on Assassinations also wrote: "The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that the Cuban Government was not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy".^[352] However, some conspiracy theorists continue to allege that Fidel Castro ordered the assassination of Kennedy in retaliation for the CIA's previous attempts to assassinate him.^[400]

In the early 1960s, Clare Boothe Luce, wife of Time-Life publisher Henry Luce, was one of a number of prominent Americans who sponsored anti-Castro groups. This support included funding exiles in commando speedboat raids against Cuba. In 1975, Clare Luce said that on the night of the assassination, she received a call from a member of a commando group she had sponsored. According to Luce, the caller's name was "something like" Julio Fernandez and he claimed he was calling her from New Orleans.^{[460][461]}

According to Luce, Fernandez told her that Oswald had approached his group with an offer to help assassinate Castro. Fernandez further claimed that he and his associates eventually found out that Oswald was a communist and supporter of Castro. He said that with this new-found knowledge, his group kept a close watch on Oswald until Oswald suddenly came into money and went to Mexico City and then Dallas.^[462] Finally, according to Luce, Fernandez told her, "There is a Cuban Communist assassination team at large and Oswald was their hired gun."^[463]

Luce said that she told the caller to give his information to the FBI. Subsequently, Luce would reveal the details of the incident to both the Church Committee and the HSCA. Both committees investigated the incident, but were unable to uncover any evidence to corroborate the allegations.^[464]

In May 1967, CIA Director Richard Helms told President Lyndon Johnson that the CIA had tried to assassinate Castro. Helms further stated that the CIA had employed members of the Mafia in this effort, and "... that CIA plots to assassinate Fidel Castro dated back to August of 1960 — to the Eisenhower Administration." Helms also said that the plots against Castro continued into the Kennedy Administration and that Attorney General Robert Kennedy had known about both the plots and the Mafia's involvement.^[465]

On separate occasions, Johnson told two prominent television newsmen that he believed that JFK's assassination had been organized by Castro as retaliation for the CIA's efforts to kill Castro. In October 1968, Johnson told veteran newsman Howard K. Smith of ABC that "Kennedy was trying to get to Castro, but Castro got to him first." In September 1969, in an interview with Walter Cronkite of CBS, Johnson said in regard to the assassination, "[I could not] honestly say that I've ever been completely relieved of the fact that there might have been international connections", and referenced unnamed "others". Finally, in 1971, Johnson told his former speechwriter Leo Janos of Time magazine that he "never believed that Oswald acted alone".^[465]

In 1977, Castro was interviewed by newsman Bill Moyers. Castro denied any involvement in Kennedy's death, saying:

It would have been absolute insanity by Cuba. ... It would have been a provocation. Needless to say, it would have been to run the risk that our country would have been destroyed by the United States. Nobody who's not insane could have thought about [killing Kennedy in retaliation].^{[402][466]}

When Castro was interviewed later in 2013 by Atlantic editor, Jeffrey Goldberg, Castro said:

There were people in the American government who thought Kennedy was a traitor because he didn't invade Cuba when he had the chance, when they were asking him. He was never forgiven for that.^[467]

Soviet government conspiracy

The Warren Commission reported that they found no evidence that the Soviet Union was involved in the assassination of President Kennedy.^[27] The House Select Committee on Assassinations also wrote: "The committee believes, on the basis of the evidence available to it, that the Soviet Government was not involved in the assassination of President Kennedy".^[352]

According to some conspiracy theorists, the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, was responsible for the assassination, motivated by the humiliation of having to back down during the Cuban Missile Crisis.^[400]

According to a 1966 FBI document, Colonel Boris Ivanov — chief of the KGB Residency in New York City at the time of the assassination — stated that it was his personal opinion that the assassination had been planned by an organized group, rather than a lone individual. The same document stated, "... officials of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union believed there was some well-organized conspiracy on the part of the 'ultraright' in the United States to effect a 'coup.'"^[468]

Much later, the high-ranking Soviet Bloc intelligence defector, Lt. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa, said that he had a conversation with Nicolae Ceaușescu who told him about "ten international leaders the Kremlin killed or tried to kill", including Kennedy. He claimed that "among the leaders of Moscow's satellite intelligence services there was unanimous agreement that the KGB had been involved in the assassination of President Kennedy."^[469] Pacepa later released a book, *Programmed to Kill: Lee Harvey Oswald, the Soviet KGB, and the Kennedy Assassination*, in 2007. Similar views on the JFK assassination were expressed by Robert Holmes, former First Secretary at the British Embassy in Moscow, in his 2012 book *Spy Like No Other*.

Decoy hearse and wound alteration

David Lifton presented a scenario in which conspirators on Air Force One removed Kennedy's body from its original bronze casket and placed it in a shipping casket, while en route from Dallas to Washington. Once the presidential plane arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, the shipping casket with the President's body in it was surreptitiously taken by helicopter from the side of the plane that was out of the television camera's view. Kennedy's body was then taken to an unknown location — most likely Walter Reed Army Medical Center^[470] — to surgically alter the body to make it appear that he was shot only from the rear.^{[471][472][473][103]}

Part of Lifton's theory comes from a House Select Committee on Assassinations report of an interview of Lt. Richard Lipsey on January 18, 1978, by committee staff members Donald Purdy and Mark Flanagan. According to the report, Lt. Richard Lipsey said that he and General Wehle had met President Kennedy's body at Andrews Air Force Base. Lipsey "... placed [the casket] in a hearse to be transported to Bethesda Naval Hospital. Lipsey mentioned that he and Wehle then flew by helicopter to Bethesda and took [the body of] JFK into the back of Bethesda." Lipsey said that "a decoy hearse had been driven to the front [of Bethesda]".^[474] With Lipsey's mention of a "decoy hearse" at Bethesda, Lifton theorized that the casket removed by Lipsey from Air Force One — from the side of the plane exposed to television — was probably also a decoy and was likely empty.^{[475][476]}

Laboratory technologist Paul O'Connor was one of the major witnesses supporting another part of David Lifton's theory that somewhere between Parkland and Bethesda the President's body was made to appear as if it had been shot only from the rear. O'Connor said that President Kennedy's body arrived at Bethesda inside a body bag in "a cheap, shipping-type of casket", which differed from the description of

the ornamental bronze casket and sheet that the body had been wrapped in at Parkland Hospital.^[477] O'Connor said that the brain had already been removed by the time it got to Bethesda,^[477] and that there were "just little pieces" of brain matter left inside the skull.^[212]

Researcher David Wrone dismissed the theory that Kennedy's body was surreptitiously removed from the presidential plane, stating that as is done with all cargo on airplanes for safety precautions, the coffin and lid were held by steel wrapping cables to prevent shifting during takeoff and landing and in case of air disturbances in flight.^[473] According to Wrone, the side of the plane away from the television camera "was bathed in klieg lights, and thousands of persons watched along the fence that bent backward along that side, providing, in effect, a well-lit and very public stage for any would-be body snatchers".^[473]

Federal Reserve conspiracy

Jim Marrs, in his book *Crossfire*, presented the theory that Kennedy was trying to rein in the power of the Federal Reserve, and that forces opposed to such action might have played at least some part in the assassination.^{[478][479][480]} According to Marrs, the issuance of Executive Order 11110 was an effort by Kennedy to transfer power from the Federal Reserve to the United States Department of the Treasury by replacing Federal Reserve Notes with silver certificates.^[479] Actor and author Richard Belzer named the responsible parties in this theory as American "billionaires, power brokers, and bankers ... working in tandem with the CIA and other sympathetic agents of the government".^[481]

A 2010 article in *Research* magazine discussing various controversies surrounding the Federal Reserve stated that "the wildest accusation against the Fed is that it was involved in Kennedy's assassination."^[479] Critics of the theory note that Kennedy called for and signed legislation phasing out Silver Certificates in favor of Federal Reserve Notes, thereby enhancing the power of the Federal Reserve; and that Executive Order 11110 was a technicality that only delegated existing presidential powers to the Secretary of the Treasury for administrative convenience during a period of transition.^{[479][480]}

Israeli government conspiracy

Immediately following Kennedy's death, speculation that he was assassinated by a "Zionist conspiracy" was prevalent in much of the Muslim world.^[482] Among these views were that Zionists were motivated to kill Kennedy due to his opposition to an Israeli nuclear program, that Lyndon B. Johnson received orders from Zionists to have Kennedy killed, and that the assassin was a Zionist agent.^[482]

According to Michael Collins Piper in *Final Judgment: The Missing Link in the JFK Assassination Controversy*, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion orchestrated the assassination after learning that Kennedy planned to keep Israel from obtaining nuclear weapons.^[483] Piper said that the assassination "was a joint enterprise conducted on the highest levels of the American CIA, in collaboration with organized crime — and most specifically, with direct and profound involvement by the Israeli intelligence service, the Mossad."^[484] The theory also alleges involvement of Meyer Lansky and the Anti-Defamation League.^[483] In 2004, Mordechai Vanunu stated that the assassination was Israel's response to "pressure [Kennedy] exerted on ... Ben-Gurion, to shed light on Dimona's nuclear reactor in Israel".^[485] In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly in 2009, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi also alleged that Kennedy was killed for wanting to investigate Dimona.^[486]

Other published theories

- *Reasonable Doubt* (1985) by Henry Hurt, who writes about his Warren Commission doubts. Hurt pins the plot on professional crook Robert Easterling, along with Texas oilmen and the supposed Ferrie/Shaw alliance. ISBN 0-03-004059-0.
- *Behold a Pale Horse* (1991) by William Cooper alleges that Kennedy was shot by the presidential limousine's driver, Secret Service agent William Greer. In the Zapruder film, Greer can be seen turning to his right and looking backwards just before speeding away from Dealey Plaza. This theory has come under severe criticism from others in the research community.^[487] ISBN 0-929385-22-5.
- Former Secret Service agent Abraham Bolden's *The Echo from Dealey Plaza* (2008) (ISBN 978-0-307-38201-6) and Kevin James Shay's *Death of the Rising Sun* (2017) (ISBN 978-1-881-36556-3) detail plots that occurred shortly before Kennedy's trip to Dallas in 1963, in Chicago and Florida. Within the Secret Service during those chaotic months, "rumors were flying" about Cuban dissidents and right-wing southerners who were stalking Kennedy for a chance to kill him, Bolden wrote. The security threat in Chicago in early November 1963 involved former Marine Thomas Arthur Vallee, who was arrested after police found an M-1 rifle, handgun, and 3,000 rounds of ammunition in his vehicle. A high-powered rifle was confiscated from another suspected conspirator in Chicago shortly before Kennedy's trip there was canceled, Bolden said. Authorities also cited similar threats in Tampa, Fla., and Miami about a week later.
- Mark North's *Act of Treason: The Role of J. Edgar Hoover in the Assassination of President Kennedy*, (1991) implicates the FBI Director. North documents that Hoover was aware of threats against Kennedy by organized crime before 1963, and suggests that he failed to take proper action to prevent the assassination. North also charges Hoover with failure to work adequately to uncover the truth behind Kennedy's murder, ISBN 0-88184-877-8.
- *Mortal Error: The Shot That Killed JFK* (1992) by Bonar Menninger (ISBN 0-312-08074-3) alleges that while Oswald did attempt to assassinate JFK and did succeed in wounding him, the shot that struck him in the head was accidentally fired by Secret Service agent George Hickey, who was riding in the Secret Service follow-up car directly behind the presidential limousine. The theory alleges that after the first two shots were fired the motorcade sped up while Hickey was attempting to respond to Oswald's shots and he lost his balance and accidentally pulled the trigger of his AR-15 and shot JFK. Hickey's testimony says otherwise: "*At the end of the last report (shot) I reached to the bottom of the car and picked up the AR 15 rifle, cocked and loaded it, and turned to the rear.*" (italics added).^[488] George Hickey sued Menninger in April 1995 for what he had written in *Mortal Error*. The case was dismissed as its statute of limitations had run out. The theory received public attention in 2013 when it was supported by Colin McLaren's book and documentary titled *JFK: The Smoking Gun* (ISBN 978-0-7336-3044-6).
- *Who Shot JFK? : A Guide to the Major Conspiracy Theories* (1993) by Bob Callahan and Mark Zingarelli explores some of the more obscure theories regarding JFK's murder, such as "The Coca-Cola Theory". According to this theory, suggested by the editor of an organic gardening magazine, Oswald killed JFK due to mental impairment stemming from an addiction to refined sugar, as evidenced by his need for his favorite beverage immediately after the assassination. ISBN 0-671-79494-9.
- *Passport to Assassination* (1993) by Oleg M. Nechiporenko, the Soviet consular official (and highly placed KGB officer) who met with Oswald in Mexico City in 1963. He was afforded the unique opportunity to interview Oswald about his goals including his genuine desire for a Cuban visa. His conclusions were: (1) that Oswald killed Kennedy due to extreme feelings of inadequacy versus his wife's professed admiration for JFK, and (2) that the KGB never sought intelligence information from Oswald during his time in the USSR as they did not trust his motivations. ISBN 1-55972-210-X.



Photo showing Secret Service Agent George Hickey shortly after JFK was killed holding the AR-15 rifle that accidental-shooting theorists say killed Kennedy.

- Norman Mailer's *Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery* (1995) concludes that Oswald was guilty, but holds that the evidence may point to a second gunman on the grassy knoll, who, purely by coincidence, was attempting to kill JFK at the same time as Oswald. "If there was indeed another shot, it was not necessarily fired by a conspirator of Oswald's. Such a gun could have belonged to another lone killer or to a conspirator working for some other group altogether."^[489] ISBN 0-679-42535-7.
- *The Kennedy Mutiny* (2002) by Will Fritz (not the same as police captain J. Will Fritz), claims that the assassination plot was orchestrated by General Edwin Walker, and that he framed Oswald for the crime. ISBN 0-9721635-0-6.
- *JFK: The Second Plot* (2002) by Matthew Smith explores the strange case of Roscoe White. In 1990, Roscoe's son Ricky made public a claim that his father, who had been a Dallas police officer in 1963, was involved in killing the president. Roscoe's widow Geneva also claimed that before her husband's death in 1971 he left a diary in which he claims he was one of the marksmen who shot the President, and that he also killed Officer J. D. Tippit. ISBN 1-84018-501-5.
- David Wrone's *The Zapruder Film* (2003) concludes that the shot that killed JFK came from in front of the limousine, and that JFK's throat and back wounds were caused by an in-and-through shot originating from the grassy knoll. Three shots were fired from three different angles, none of them from Lee Harvey Oswald's window at the Texas School Book Depository. Wrone is a professor of history (emeritus) at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. ISBN 0-7006-1291-2.
- *The Gemstone File: A Memoir* (2006), by Stephanie Caruana, posits that Oswald was part of a 28-man assassination team that included three U.S. Mafia hitmen (Jimmy Fratianno, John Roselli, and Eugene Brading). Oswald's role was to shoot John Connally. Bruce Roberts, author of the Gemstone File papers, claimed that the JFK assassination scenario was modeled after a supposed attempted assassination of President F.D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt was riding in an open car with Mayor Anton Cermak of Chicago. Cermak was shot and killed by Giuseppe Zangara. In Dallas, JFK was the real target, and Connally was a secondary target. The JFK assassination is only a small part of the Gemstone File's account. ISBN 1-4120-6137-7.
- Joseph P. Farrell's *LBJ and the Conspiracy to Kill Kennedy* (2011) attempts to show multiple interests had reasons to remove President Kennedy: The military, CIA, NASA, anti-Castro factions, Hoover's FBI and others. He concludes that the person that allowed all of these groups to form a "coalescence of interests" was Vice President Lyndon Johnson. ISBN 978-1-935487-18-0
- In "Allegations of PFC Eugene Dinkin",^[490] the Mary Farrell Foundation summarizes and archives documents related to Private First Class Eugene B. Dinkin, a cryptographic code operator stationed in Metz, France, who went AWOL in early November 1963, entered Switzerland using a false ID, and visited the United Nations' press office and declared that officials in the U.S. government were planning to assassinate President Kennedy, adding that "something" might happen to the Commander in Chief in Texas. Dinkin was arrested nine days before Kennedy was killed, placed in psychiatric care (deemed a mad man?), and released shortly thereafter. His allegations eventually made their way to the Warren Commission, but, according to the Ferrell Foundation account, the Commission "took no interest in the matter, and indeed omitted any mention of Dinkin from its purportedly encyclopedic 26 volumes of evidence."^[491]
- Described by the Associated Press as "one of the strangest theories",^[492] Hugh McDonald's *Appointment in Dallas* stated that the Soviet government contracted with a rogue CIA agent named "Saul" to have Kennedy killed.^[493] McDonald said he worked for the CIA "on assignment for \$100 a day" and met "Saul" at the Agency's headquarters after the Bay of Pigs Invasion.^[494] According to McDonald, his CIA mentor told him that "Saul" was the world's best assassin.^[495] McDonald stated that after the assassination, he recognized the man's photo in the Warren Commission report and eventually tracked him to a London hotel in 1972.^{[494][495]} McDonald stated that "Saul" assumed he, too, was a CIA agent and confided to him that he shot Kennedy from a building on the other side of the street from the Texas School Book Depository.^[492]

- *Nomenclature On An Assassination Cabal* (1970) by William Torbitt. The pseudonymous author claimed to be a lawyer with investigative skills working in the South. "Torbitt" was one of the earliest writers to publicly criticize the official Warren Commission report, and his book claimed that the Warren Commission report covered up the fact that the U.S government was aware of a plot to kill Kennedy and failed to take action against the plot. Despite the work's obscurity, the claim of government awareness and negligence regarding a plot to kill Kennedy has since become a key framework surrounding discussion about the Kennedy assassination. See [The Internet Archive website \(https://archive.org/details/nsia-NomenclatureoftheAssassinationCabal-TorbittDocument/page/n0\)](https://archive.org/details/nsia-NomenclatureoftheAssassinationCabal-TorbittDocument/page/n0)

Notes

- a. Two years after the publication of the Warren Report, Commission member Senator Richard Russell expressed doubt concerning parts of the Report. In a November 20, 1966 interview with *The Atlanta Constitution*, Russell said that he harbored a "lingering dissatisfaction" with the Commission's work and that he disagreed with the single bullet theory. On January 19, 1970, Russell again proclaimed his doubts in a television interview, saying that he "never believed that Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy without at least some encouragement from others." Russell added: "I think someone else worked with him."^[6]
- b. The Warren Commission never asked Reynolds what the man he saw was wearing, despite Reynolds saying he later learned that the man left his "coat" in a parking lot (in fact, a zipper jacket was found there).
- c. Jones Jr. named 10 specific people whose deaths he said he researched, but said at the time that there were 16 or 17 suspicious deaths in total.
- d. These two reporters, who were killed in 1964, were assisted by a photographer, William "Willie" Allen, who was still alive decades later.
- e. Benavides later testified the following about the shooter's hairstyle: *I remember the back of his head seemed like his hairline was sort of - looked like his hairline sort of went square instead of tapered off, and he looked like he needed a haircut for about 2 weeks, but his hair didn't taper off, it kind of went down and squared off and made his head look flat in back.*
- f. Among those who believe that the Zapruder film has been altered are John Costella,^[127] James H. Fetzer,^[127] David Lifton,^[127] David Mantik,^[127] Jack White,^[127] Noel Twyman,^[128] and Harrison Livingstone, who has called it "the biggest hoax of the 20th century".^[127]
- g. In Bill Newman's voluntary statement to the Sheriff's Department, signed and notarized on November 22, 1963, he wrote that the gunshot "had come from the garden directly behind me, that was on an elevation from where I was as I was right on the curb. I do not recall looking toward the Texas School Book Depository. I looked back in the vicinity [*sic*] of the garden."^[170]
- h. According to the Warren Commission, after Earlene Roberts saw Oswald standing near the bus stop outside his rooming house, "[he] was next seen about nine-tenths of a mile (1.4 km) away at the southeast corner of 10th Street and Patton Avenue, moments before the Tippit shooting."^[290]
- i. A partial list of those who consider Judyth Baker's claims to be a hoax includes: Attorney and author Vincent Bugliosi, researcher Mary Ferrell, researcher Barb Junkkarinen, Professor John McAdams of Marquette University and David A. Reitzes of *jfk-online.com*.
- j. Response of George H. W. Bush to the letter addressed to him by George de Mohrenschildt: "Let me say first that I know it must have been difficult for you to seek my help in the situation outlined in your letter. I believe I can appreciate your state of mind in view of your daughter's tragic death a few years ago, and the current poor state of your wife's health. I was extremely sorry to hear of these circumstances. In your situation I can well imagine how the attentions you described in your letter affect both you and your wife. However, my staff has been unable to find any indication of interest in your activities on the part of Federal authorities in recent years. The flurry of interest that attended

your testimony before the Warren Commission has long subsided. I can only speculate that you may have become 'newsworthy' again in view of the renewed interest in the Kennedy assassination, and thus may be attracting the attention of people in the media. I hope this letter had been of some comfort to you, George, although I realize I am unable to answer your question completely." George H. W. Bush recalled, "I first met De Mohrenschildt in the early 1940s. He was an uncle to my Andover roommate." (The relationship would technically be "step-uncle" as the roommate, Edward G. Hooker, was actually Dimitri von Mohrenschildt's stepson).

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 - "Chapter 7: Lee Harvey Oswald: Background and Possible Motives" (<https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/warren-commission-report/chapter-7.html>) – via National Archives.
 - "Appendix 12: Speculations and Rumors" (<https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/warren-commission-report/appendix-12.html>) – via National Archives.
 - "Appendix 16: A Biography of Jack Ruby" (<https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/warren-commission-report/appendix-16.html>) – via National Archives.

External links

- Frontline: Who was L.H. Oswald (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/oswald/view/>) — PBS documentary on the man and his life
 - PBS News 2003 (https://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/white_house/july-dec03/jfk_11-20.html) — The public's belief that a conspiracy existed
 - "Oswald's Ghost" (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/oswald/>) — An episode of PBS series *American Experience*, which aired January 14, 2008
 - Tech Puts JFK Conspiracy Theories to Rest (<https://web.archive.org/web/20081225054037/http://ds.c.discovery.com/news/2008/11/13/jfk-forensics-tech-02.html>) — Discovery article on a simulation that partially discredits some conspiracy theories
 - *JFK Lancer* (<http://www.jfklancer.com/>)
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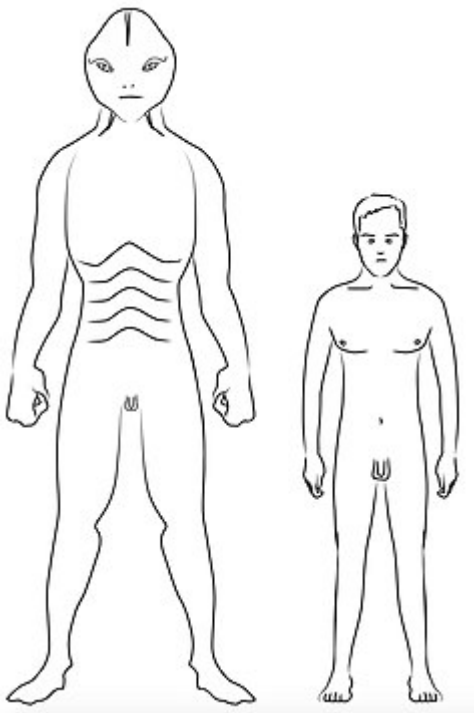
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Reptilian conspiracy theory

Reptilians – also called **reptoids**,^[1] **lizard people**,^[2] **reptiloids**, **saurians**, or **draconians**^{[3][4][5]} – are supposed reptilian humanoids, which play a prominent role in fantasy, science fiction, ufology, and conspiracy theories.^{[6][7]} The idea of reptilians was popularised by David Icke, a conspiracy theorist who claims shapeshifting reptilian aliens control Earth by taking on human form and gaining political power to manipulate human societies. Icke has stated on multiple occasions that many world leaders are, or are possessed by, so-called reptilians.



An artist's conception comparing reptilians to humans

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Origins

Michael Barkun, professor of political science at Syracuse University, posits that the idea of a reptilian conspiracy originated in the fiction of Conan the Barbarian creator Robert E. Howard.^[8] The first appearance of "serpent men" in literature was in Howard's story "The Shadow Kingdom", published in *Weird Tales* in August 1929. This story drew on theosophical ideas of the "lost worlds" of Atlantis and Lemuria, particularly Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* written in 1888, with its reference to "'dragon-men' who once had a mighty civilization on a Lemurian continent".^{[9][8]}

Howard's "serpent men" were described as humanoids (with human bodies and snake heads) who were able to imitate humans at will, and who lived in underground passages and used their shapechanging and mind-control abilities to infiltrate humanity.^[10] Clark Ashton Smith used Howard's "serpent men" in his stories, as well as themes from H. P. Lovecraft, and he, Howard and Lovecraft together laid the basis for the Cthulhu Mythos.^[11]

In the 1940s, Maurice Doreal (also known as Claude Doggins)^[12] wrote a pamphlet entitled "Mysteries of the Gobi" that described a "serpent race" with "bodies like man but...heads...like a great snake" and an ability to take human form.^[13] These creatures also appeared in Doreal's poem "The Emerald Tablets", in

which he referred to Emerald Tablets written by "Thoth, an Atlantean Priest king". Barkun asserts that "in all likelihood", Doreal's ideas came from "The Shadow Kingdom", and that in turn, "The Emerald Tablets" formed the basis for David Icke's book, *Children of the Matrix*.^[14]

Historian Edward Guimont has argued that the reptilian conspiracy theory, particularly as expounded by Icke, drew from earlier pseudohistorical legends developed during the colonisation of Africa, particularly surrounding Great Zimbabwe and the mokele-mbembe.^[15]

Alien abduction

Alien abduction narratives sometimes allege contact with reptilian creatures.^[16] One of the earliest reports was that of Ashland, Nebraska police officer Herbert Schirmer, who under hypnosis recalled being taken aboard a UFO in 1967 by humanoid beings with a slightly reptilian appearance, who wore a "winged serpent" emblem on the left side of their chests.^{[17][18]} Skeptics consider his claims to be a hoax.^[19]

David Icke

According to British conspiracy theorist David Icke, who first published on this theme in his 1999 work *The Biggest Secret*, tall, blood-drinking, shape-shifting reptilian humanoids from the Alpha Draconis star system, now hiding in underground bases, are the force behind a worldwide conspiracy against humanity.^[20] He contends that most of the world's ancient and modern leaders are related to these reptilians, including the Merovingian dynasty, the Rothschilds, the Bush family and the British Royal family.^[21] Icke's conspiracy theories now have supporters in up to 47 countries and he has given lectures to crowds of up to 6,000 people.^{[22][23]}

American writer Vicki Santillano included Icke's conspiracy theory in her list of the 10 most popular conspiracy theories.^[24] A poll of Americans in 2013 by Public Policy Polling indicated that 4% of registered voters ($\pm 2.8\%$) believed in David Icke's ideas.^[25]

Politics

"Evil reptilian kitten-eater from another planet" was a pejorative used to refer to then Ontario Liberal Party opposition leader Dalton McGuinty in a press release disseminated by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario on September 12, 2003, during the provincial election campaign in Ontario, Canada.

In the closely fought 2008 U.S. Senate election in Minnesota between comedian and commentator Al Franken and incumbent Senator Norm Coleman, one of the ballots challenged by Coleman included a vote for Franken with "Lizard People" written in the space provided for write-in candidates.^[26] Lucas Davenport, who later claimed to have written the gag ballot, said, "I don't know if you've heard the conspiracy theory about the Lizard Men; a friend of mine, we didn't like the candidates, so we were at first going to write in 'revolution', because we thought that was good and to the point. And then, we thought 'the Lizard People' would be even funnier."^[27]

In February 2011, on the *Opie and Anthony* radio show, the comedian Louis C.K. jokingly asked former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld a number of times if he and Dick Cheney were lizard people who enjoyed the taste of human flesh. Amused by Rumsfeld's refusal to directly answer the question, C.K. suggested it as a possible admission of guilt. He went on to further muse that perhaps those who are lizard people cannot lie about it; when asked if they are lizards, they either have to avoid answering the

question or say yes.^[28]

On March 4, 2013, a video depicting a security agent with unusual features guarding a speech by U.S. President Barack Obama was spotlighted in a *Wired* report about shapeshifting reptilian humanoids. This led to a tongue-in-cheek response from chief National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden who said "any alleged program to guard the president with aliens or robots would likely have to be scaled back or eliminated in the sequester".^[29]

See also

- Ancient astronauts
- Demon
- Dinosauroid
- *Iron Sky: The Coming Race*
- Gamehendge
- List of alleged UFO-related extraterrestrials
- List of conspiracy theories
- List of reptilian humanoids
- Lizard Man of Scape Ore Swamp
- Men in black
- Narn
- Silurians
- Sleestak
- *They Live*
- V
- *Worldwar*



A protest sign referring to reptilian politicians

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9/11 conspiracy theories

There are many conspiracy theories that attribute the planning and execution of the September 11 attacks against the United States to parties other than, or in addition to, al-Qaeda,^[1] including that there was advance knowledge of the attacks among high-level government officials. Government investigations and independent reviews have rejected these theories.^{[2][3]} Proponents of these theories assert that there are inconsistencies in the commonly accepted version, or that there exists evidence that was ignored, concealed, or overlooked.^[4]

The most prominent conspiracy theory is that the collapse of the Twin Towers and 7 World Trade Center were the result of controlled demolitions rather than structural failure due to impact and fire.^{[5][6]} Another prominent belief is that the Pentagon was hit by a missile launched by elements from inside the U.S. government^{[7][8]} or that a commercial airliner was allowed to do so via an effective stand-down of the American military. Possible motives claimed by conspiracy theorists for such actions include justifying the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (even though the U.S. government concluded Iraq was not involved in the attacks)^[9] to advance their geostrategic interests, such as plans to construct a natural gas pipeline through Afghanistan.^[10] Other conspiracy theories revolve around authorities having advance knowledge of the attacks and deliberately ignoring or assisting the attackers.^{[4][11][12]}

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the technology magazine *Popular Mechanics* have investigated and rejected the claims made by 9/11 conspiracy theorists.^{[13][14][15]} The 9/11 Commission and most of the civil engineering community accept that the impacts of jet aircraft at high speeds in combination with subsequent fires, not controlled demolition, led to the collapse of the Twin Towers,^{[16][17]} but some conspiracy theory groups, including Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth, disagree with the arguments made by NIST and *Popular Mechanics*.^{[18][19]}



The nature of the collapse of the two World Trade Center towers and the nearby WTC7 (in this photo, the brown building to the left of the towers) is a major focus of 9/11 conspiracy theories.

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Background

9/11 conspiracy theorists reject one or both of the following facts about the 9/11 attacks:

- Al-Qaeda suicide operatives hijacked and crashed United Airlines Flight 175 and American Airlines Flight 11 into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, and crashed American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon. The impact and resulting fires caused the collapse of the Twin Towers and the destruction and damage of other buildings in the World Trade Center complex. The Pentagon was severely damaged by the impact of the airliner and the resulting fire. The hijackers also crashed a fourth plane into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania after the passengers and flight crew attempted to regain control of the aircraft.^[22]
- Pre-attack warnings of varying detail of the planned attacks against the United States by al-Qaeda were ignored due to a lack of communication between various law enforcement and intelligence personnel. For the lack of interagency communication, the 9/11 report cited bureaucratic inertia and

laws passed in the 1970s to prevent abuses that caused scandals during that era, most notably the Watergate scandal. The report faulted both the Clinton and the Bush administrations with "failure of imagination".^[23]

This consensus view is backed by various sources, including:

- The reports from government investigations – the 9/11 Commission Report (that incorporated intelligence information from the earlier FBI investigation (PENTTBOM) and the Joint Inquiry of 2002), and the studies into building performance carried out by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)^[24] and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)^[13]
- Investigations by non-government organizations that support the accepted account – such as those by scientists at Purdue University.^{[3][25]}
- Articles supporting these facts and theories appearing in magazines such as Popular Mechanics, Scientific American, and Time.^[15]
- Similar articles in news media throughout the world, including The Times of India,^[26] the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC),^[27] the BBC,^[28] Le Monde,^[29] Deutsche Welle,^[30] the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC),^[31] and The Chosun Ilbo of South Korea.^[32]

History

Since the attacks, a variety of conspiracy theories have been put forward in Web sites, books, and films. Many groups and individuals advocating 9/11 conspiracy theories identify as part of the 9/11 Truth movement.^{[33][34][35]} Within six hours of the attack, a suggestion appeared on an Internet chat room suggesting that the collapse of the towers looked like an act of controlled demolition. "If, in a few days, not one official has mentioned anything about the controlled demolition part," the author wrote, "I think we have a REALLY serious problem."^[36] The first theories that emerged focused primarily on various perceived anomalies in the publicly available evidence, and proponents later developed more specific theories about an alleged plot.^[10] One false allegation that was widely circulated by e-mail and on the Web is that not a single Jew had been killed in the attack and that therefore the attacks must have been the work of the Mossad, not Islamic terrorists.^[10]

The first elaborated theories appeared in Europe. One week after the attacks, the "inside job" theory was the subject of a thesis by a researcher from the French National Centre for Scientific Research published in Le Monde. Other theories sprang from the far corners of the globe within weeks.^[37] Six months after the attacks, Thierry Meyssan's piece on 9/11, *L'Effroyable Imposture*, topped the French bestseller list. Its publication in English (as *9/11: The Big Lie*) received little attention, but it remains one of the principal sources for "trutherism".^[38] 2003 saw the publication of *The CIA and September 11* by former German state minister Andreas von Bülow and *Operation 9/11* by the German journalist Gerhard Wisnewski; both books are published by Mathias Bröckers, who was at the time an editor at the German newspaper Die Tageszeitung.^[10]

While these theories were popular in Europe, they were treated by the U.S. media with either bafflement or amusement, and they were dismissed by the U.S. government as the product of anti-Americanism.^{[39][40]} In an address to the United Nations on November 10, 2001, President George W. Bush denounced the emergence of "outrageous conspiracy theories [...]" that attempt to shift the blame away from the terrorists, themselves, away from the guilty."^[41]

The 9/11 conspiracy theories started out mostly in the political left but have broadened into what New York magazine describes as "terra incognita where left and right meet, fusing sixties countercultural distrust with the don't-tread-on-me variety".^[42]

By 2004, conspiracy theories about the September 11 attacks began to gain ground in the United States. One explanation is that the rise in popularity stemmed more from growing criticism of the Iraq War and the newly re-elected President George W. Bush than from any discovery of new or more compelling evidence or an improvement in the technical quality of the presentation of the theories.^[10] Knight Ridder news theorized that revelations that weapons of mass destruction did not exist in Iraq, the belated release of the President's Daily Brief of August 6, 2001, and reports that NORAD had lied to the 9/11 Commission, may have fueled the conspiracy theories.^[10]

Between 2004 and the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks in 2006, mainstream coverage of the conspiracy theories increased.^[10] The U.S. government issued a formal analysis by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) of the collapse of the World Trade Center.^[43] To address the growing publicity of the theories, the State Department revised a webpage in 2006 to debunk them.^[44] A 2006 national security strategy paper declared that terrorism springs from "subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation," and that "terrorists recruit more effectively from populations whose information about the world is contaminated by falsehoods and corrupted by conspiracy theories. The distortions keep alive grievances and filter out facts that would challenge popular prejudices and self-serving propaganda."^[45] Al-Qaeda has repeatedly claimed responsibility for the attacks, with chief deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri accusing Shia Iran and Hezbollah of denigrating Sunni successes in hurting America by intentionally starting rumors that Israel carried out the attacks.^{[46][47][48][49][50][51]}

Some of the conspiracy theories about the September 11 attacks do not involve representational strategies typical of many conspiracy theories that establish a clear dichotomy between good and evil, or guilty and innocent; instead, they call up gradations of negligence and complicity. Matthias Bröckers, an early proponent of such theories, dismisses the commonly accepted account of the September 11 attacks as being itself a conspiracy theory that seeks "to reduce complexity, disentangle what is confusing," and "explain the inexplicable".^[10]

Just before the fifth anniversary of the attacks, mainstream news outlets released a flurry of articles on the growth of 9/11 conspiracy theories,^[52] with an article in Time stating that "[t]his is not a fringe phenomenon. It is a mainstream political reality."^{[11][53]} Several surveys have included questions about beliefs related to the September 11 attacks. In 2008, 9/11 conspiracy theories topped a "greatest conspiracy theory" list compiled by The Daily Telegraph. The list was ranked by following and traction.^{[54][55]}

In 2010, the "International Center for 9/11 Studies," a private organization that is said to be sympathetic to conspiracy theories,^[56] successfully sued for the release of videos collected by NIST of the attacks and aftermath.^{[56][57][58]} According to the German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, the videos that were published shortly before the ninth anniversary of the attacks provide "new food for conspiracy theorists." Many of the videos show images of 7 World Trade Center, a skyscraper in the vicinity of the WTC towers that also collapsed on September 11, 2001.^[57] Eyewitnesses have repeatedly reported explosions happening before the collapse of both of the towers, while experts consider these theories to be unreasonable.^[56]

9/11 truth figures Steven E. Jones and Mike Berger have further added that the death of Osama bin Laden^[59] did not change their questions about the attacks, nor provide closure.^[60]

According to writer Jeremy Stahl, since Bush left office, the overall number of believers in 9/11 conspiracy theories has dipped, while the number of people who believe in the most "radical" theories has held fairly steady.^[61]

Types

The most prominent conspiracy theories can be broadly divided into three main forms:

- LIHOP ("Let it happen on purpose") – suggests that key individuals within the government had at least some foreknowledge of the attacks and deliberately ignored it or actively weakened United States' defenses to ensure the hijacked flights were not intercepted.^{[4][11][12]} Similar allegations were made about Pearl Harbor.
- MIHOP ("Make/Made it happen on purpose") – that key individuals within the government planned the attacks and collaborated with, or framed, al-Qaeda in carrying them out. There is a range of opinions about how this might have been achieved.^{[4][11][12]}
- Others – who reject the accepted account of the September 11 attacks are not proposing specific theories, but try to demonstrate that the U.S. government's account of the events is wrong. This, according to them, would lead to a general call for a new official investigation into the events of September 11, 2001. According to Jonathan Kay, managing editor for comment at the Canadian newspaper *National Post*,^[62] and author of the *Among the Truthers: A Journey Through America's Growing Conspiracist Underground*,^[63] "They feel their job is to show everybody that the official theory of 9/11 is wrong. And then, when everybody is convinced, then the population will rise up and demand a new investigation with government resources, and that investigation will tell us what actually happened."^[64]

Theories

Foreknowledge

Conspiracy theorists claim that action or inaction by U.S. officials with foreknowledge was intended to ensure that the attacks took place successfully. For example, Michael Meacher, former British environment minister and member of Tony Blair's government, said that the United States knowingly failed to prevent the attacks.^{[65][66]}

Suspected insider trading

Some conspiracy theorists maintain that just before 9/11, an "extraordinary" amount of put options were placed on United Airlines and American Airlines stocks and speculate that insiders may have known in advance of the coming events of 9/11 and placed their bets accordingly. An analysis into the possibility of insider trading on 9/11 concludes that:

A measure of abnormal long put volume was also examined and seen to be at abnormally high levels in the days leading up to the attacks. Consequently, the paper concludes that there is evidence of unusual option market activity in the days leading up to September 11 that is consistent with investors trading on advance knowledge of the attacks.^[67] —Allen M. Poteshman, *The Journal of Business*

This study was intended to address the "great deal of speculation about whether option market activity indicated that the terrorists or their associates had traded in the days leading up to September 11 on advance knowledge of the impending attacks."^[68]

In the days leading up to 9/11, analysis shows a rise in the put to call ratio for United Airlines and American Airlines, the two airlines from which planes were hijacked on 9/11. Between September 6 and 7, the Chicago Board Options Exchange recorded purchases of 4,744 "put" option contracts in UAL and 396 call options. On September 10, more trading in Chicago saw the purchase of 4,516 put options in American Airlines, the other airline involved in the hijackings, with a mere 748 call options in American purchased that day. No other airline companies had an unusual put to call ratio in the days leading up to the attacks.^[69] The 9/11 Commission concluded that all these abnormal patterns in trading were coincidental.^[70]

Insurance companies saw anomalous trading activities as well. Citigroup Inc., which has estimated that its Travelers Insurance unit may pay \$500 million in claims from the World Trade Center attack, had about 45 times the normal volume during three trading days before the attack for options that profit, if the stock falls below \$40. Citigroup shares fell \$1.25 in late trading to \$38.09. Morgan Stanley, which occupied 22 floors at the World Trade Center, experienced bigger-than-normal pre-attack trading of options that profited when stock prices fell. Other companies directly affected by the tragedy had similar jumps.^[71]

Raytheon, a defense contractor, had an anomalously high number of call options trading on September 10. A Raytheon option that makes money, if shares are more than \$25 each had 232 options contracts traded on the day before the attacks, almost six times the total number of trades that had occurred before that day.

The initial options were bought through at least two brokerage firms, including NFS, a subsidiary of Fidelity Investments, and TD Waterhouse. It was estimated that the trader or traders would have realized a five million dollar profit. The Securities and Exchange Commission launched an insider trading investigation in which Osama bin Laden was a suspect after receiving information from at least one Wall Street Firm.^[72]

The 9/11 Commission Report concluded that "Exhaustive investigations by the Securities and Exchange Commission, FBI, and other agencies have uncovered no evidence that anyone with advance knowledge of the attacks profited through securities transactions."^[73] The report further stated:

Highly publicized allegations of insider trading in advance of 9/11 generally rest on reports of unusual pre-9/11 trading activity in companies whose stock plummeted after the attacks. Some unusual trading did in fact occur, but each such trade proved to have an innocuous explanation. For example, the volume of put options — investments that pay off only when a stock drops in price — surged in the parent companies of United Airlines on September 6 and American Airlines on September 10 — highly suspicious trading on its face. Yet, further investigation has revealed that the trading had no connection with 9/11. A single U.S.-based institutional investor with no conceivable ties to al Qaeda purchased 95 percent of the UAL puts on September 6 as part of a trading strategy that also included *buying* 115,000 shares of American on September 10. Similarly, much of the seemingly suspicious trading in American on September 10 was traced to a specific U.S.-based options trading newsletter, faxed to its subscribers on Sunday, September 9, which recommended these trades. These examples typify the evidence examined by the investigation. The SEC and the FBI, aided by other agencies and the securities industry, devoted enormous resources to investigating this issue, including securing the cooperation of many foreign governments. These investigators have found that the apparently suspicious consistently proved innocuous.^[74]

Air defense stand down theory

A common claim among conspiracy theorists is that the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) issued a stand down order or deliberately scrambled fighters late to allow the hijacked airplanes to reach their targets without interference. According to this theory, NORAD had the capability of locating and intercepting planes on 9/11, and its failure to do so indicates a government conspiracy to allow the attacks to occur.^[75] Conspiracy theorist Mark R. Elsis says: "There is only one explanation for this ... Our Air Force was ordered to Stand Down on 9/11."^{[2][76]}

One of the first actions taken by the hijackers on 9/11 was to turn off or disable each of the four aircraft's on board transponders. Without these transponder signals to identify the airplane's tail number, altitude, and speed, the hijacked airplanes would have been only blips among 4,500 other blips on NORAD's radar screens, making them very difficult to track.^{[75][77]}

On 9/11, only 14 fighter jets were on alert in the contiguous 48 states. There was no automated method for the civilian air traffic controllers to alert NORAD.^[78] A passenger airline had not been hijacked in the U.S. since 1979.^[79] "They had to pick up the phone and literally dial us," says Maj. Douglas Martin, public affairs officer for NORAD. Only one civilian plane—a chartered Learjet 35 with golfer Payne Stewart and five others on board—was intercepted by NORAD over North America in the decade prior to 9/11, which took one hour and 19 minutes.^[80]

Rules in effect at that time, and on 9/11, barred supersonic flight on intercepts. Before 9/11, all other NORAD interceptions were limited to offshore Air Defense Identification Zones (ADIZ). "Until 9/11 there was no domestic ADIZ," says FAA spokesman Bill Schumann. After 9/11, the FAA and NORAD increased cooperation. They set up hotlines between command centers while NORAD increased its fighter coverage and installed radar to watch airspace over the continent.^[2]

The longest warning NORAD received of the hijackings was some eight minutes for American Airlines Flight 11, the first flight hijacked. The FAA alerted NORAD to the hijacked Flight 175 at just about the same time it was crashing into the World Trade Center's South Tower. The FAA notified NORAD of the missing – not hijacked – Flight 77 three minutes before it struck the Pentagon. NORAD received no warning of the hijack of United Flight 93 until three minutes after it had crashed in Pennsylvania.^[81]

Israeli agents

It has been claimed that Israeli agents may have had foreknowledge of the attacks, and a persistent theory claimed Israeli and/or Jewish involvement.^[82] Four hours after the attack, the FBI arrested five Israelis who had been filming the smoking skyline from the roof of a white van in the parking lot of an apartment building, for "puzzling behavior." The Israelis were videotaping the events, and one bystander said they acted in a suspicious manner: "They were like happy, you know ... They didn't look shocked to me. I thought it was very strange." The van was found to be owned by an Israeli-owned company called Urban Moving, which the FBI believed was providing cover for an Israeli intelligence operation. The case was then moved to the FBI's Foreign Counterintelligence Section. According to a former CIA operations chief, "many people in the U.S. intelligence community believed that some of the men arrested were working for Israeli intelligence." A spokesperson for the Israeli Embassy in the United States said the men had not been involved in any intelligence operation in the United States. The FBI eventually concluded that the five Israelis probably had no foreknowledge of the attacks.^[83]

World Trade Center

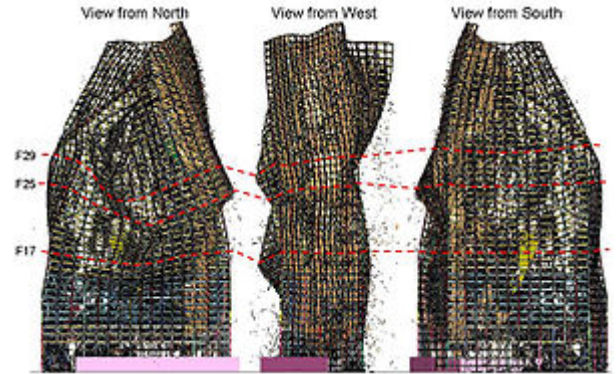
The plane crashes and resulting fires caused the collapse of the World Trade Center. Controlled demolition conspiracy theories say the collapse of the North Tower, South Tower, or of 7 World Trade Center was caused by explosives installed in the buildings in advance.

Demolition theory proponents, such as Brigham Young University physicist Steven E. Jones, architect Richard Gage, software engineer Jim Hoffman, and theologian David Ray Griffin, argue that the aircraft impacts and resulting fires could not have weakened the buildings sufficiently to initiate a catastrophic collapse, and that the buildings would not have collapsed completely, nor at the speeds that they did, without additional factors weakening the structures.

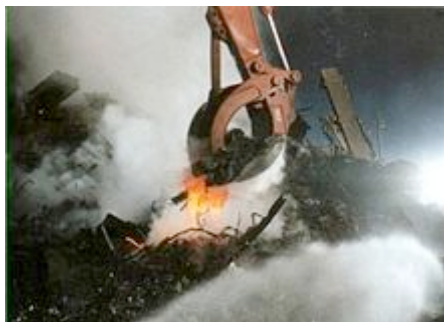
In the article "Active Thermotic Material Discovered in Dust from the 9/11 World Trade Center Catastrophe", which appeared in the *Open Chemical Physics Journal*, authors Niels Harrit of the University of Copenhagen's Department of Chemistry, Jeffrey Farrer of Brigham Young University's Department of Physics and Astronomy, Steven E. Jones, and others state that thermite and nano-thermite composites in the dust and debris were found following the collapse of the three buildings. The article contained no scientific rebuttal and the editor in chief of the publication subsequently resigned.^{[84][85][86]}

Jones has not explained how the amount of explosive needed to bring down the buildings could have been positioned in the two buildings without drawing attention, but mentioned efforts to research the buildings' maintenance activity in the weeks prior to the event. Federal investigators at the National Institute of Standards and Technology state that enormous quantities of thermite would have to be applied to the structural columns to damage them, but Jones disputed this, saying that he and others were investigating "superthermite".^[84] Brent Blanchard, author of "A History of Explosive Demolition in America",^[87] who corresponded with Jones, states that questions about the viability of Jones' theories remain unanswered, such as the fact that no demolition personnel noticed any telltale signs of thermite during the eight months of debris removal following the towers' collapse. Blanchard also said that a verifiable chain of possession needs to be established for the tested beams, which did not occur with the beams Jones tested, raising questions of whether the metal pieces tested could have been cut away from the debris pile with acetylene torches, shears, or other potentially contaminated equipment while on site, or exposed to trace amounts of thermite or other compounds while being handled, while in storage, or while being transferred from Ground Zero to memorial sites.

Jones also said that molten steel found in the rubble was evidence of explosives, as an ordinary airplane fire would not generate enough heat to produce this, citing photographs of red debris being removed by construction equipment, but Blanchard said that if there had been any molten steel in the rubble any excavation equipment encountering it would have been immediately damaged.^[84] Other sampling of the pulverized dust by United States Geological Survey and RJ Lee did not report any evidence of thermite or explosives. It has been theorized the "thermite material" found was primer paint.^[88] Dave Thomas of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, noting that the residue in question was claimed to be thermotic because of its iron oxide and aluminum composition, pointed out that these substances are found in many items common to the towers. Thomas said that in order to cut through a vertical steel beam, special high-temperature containment must be added to prevent the molten iron from dropping down, and that the thermite reaction is too slow for it to be practically used in building demolition. Thomas pointed out that when Jesse Ventura hired New Mexico Tech to conduct a demonstration showing nanothermite slicing



Criticism of the reports published by NIST on the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings plays a central role in theories about an alleged controlled demolition. The picture shows the simulated exterior buckling of 7 WTC during the collapse.



Excavating equipment was cooled by water spray due to concerns about melting from underground fires.

through a large steel beam, the nanothermite produced copious flame and smoke but no damage to the beam, even though it was in a horizontal, and therefore optimal, position.^[89]

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) concluded the accepted version was more than sufficient to explain the collapse of the buildings. NIST and many scientists refuse to debate conspiracy theorists because they feel it would give those theories unwarranted credibility.^[90] Specialists in structural mechanics and structural engineering accept the model of a fire-induced, gravity-driven collapse of the World Trade Center buildings without the use of explosives.^{[91][92][93]} As a result, NIST said that it did not perform any test for the residue of explosive compounds of any kind in the debris.^[43]

Soon after the day of the attacks, major media sources published that the towers had collapsed due to heat melting the steel.^{[94][95]} Knowledge that the burning temperatures of jet fuel would not melt the steel support structure of the WTC contributed to the belief among skeptics that the towers would not have collapsed without external interference (something other than the planes). NIST does not claim that the steel was melted, but rather that the weakened steel, together with the damage caused by the planes' impacts, caused the collapses.^[43] NIST reported that a simulation model based on the assumption that combustible vapors burned immediately upon mixing with the incoming oxygen showed that "at any given location, the duration of [gas] temperatures near 1,000 °C was about 15 to 20 [minutes]. The rest of the time, the calculated temperatures were 500 °C or below."^[96]

Since 9/11, at least two steel-framed high-rise buildings have collapsed solely due to fires — the Plasco Building in Tehran, Iran on January 19, 2017,^{[97][98]} and the Wilton Paes de Almeida Building in São Paulo, Brazil, on May 1, 2018.^{[99][100][101][102][103]}

The Pentagon

Political activist Thierry Meyssan and filmmaker Dylan Avery claim that American Airlines Flight 77 did not crash into the Pentagon. Instead, they argue that the Pentagon was hit by a missile launched by elements from inside the U.S. government. Some claim that the holes in the Pentagon walls were far too small to have been made by a Boeing 757: "How does a plane 125 ft. wide and 155 ft. long fit into a hole which is only 60 ft. across?" Meyssan's book, *L'Effroyable Imposture* (published in English as *9/11: The Big Lie*) became available in more than a dozen languages. When released, the book was heavily criticized by both the mainstream French and American press, and later, from within the 9/11 Truth movement. The French newspaper *Liberation* called the book "a tissue of wild and irresponsible allegations, entirely without foundation."^{[104][105][106]}



Security camera footage of Flight 77 hitting the Pentagon (at 1:26 in the video)

In response to the conspiracy theorists' claim of a missile hitting the Pentagon, Mete Sozen, a professor of civil engineering at Purdue University argues that: "A crashing jet doesn't punch a cartoon-like outline of itself into a reinforced concrete building. When Flight 77 hit the Pentagon, one wing hit the ground and the other was sheared off by the Pentagon's load-bearing columns."^{[104][107]} According to ArchitectureWeek, the reason the Pentagon took relatively little damage from the impact was because

Wedge One had recently been renovated.^[108] (This was part of a renovation program which had been begun in the 1980s, and Wedge One was the first of five to be renovated.^[109])

Evidence contradicting some conspiracy theorists' claim of a missile hitting the Pentagon have been described by researchers within the 9/11 Truth Movement, such as Jim Hoffman, in his essay "The Pentagon Attack: What the Physical Evidence Shows", and by others broadly refuting the role of other conspiracies in the attacks. The evidence refuting missile claims includes airplane debris including Flight 77's black boxes,^[110] the nose cone, landing gear,^[111] an airplane tire,^[112] and an intact cockpit seat^[113] were observed at the crash site. The remains of passengers from Flight 77 were indeed found at the Pentagon crash site and their identities confirmed by DNA analysis.^[114] Many eyewitnesses saw the plane strike the Pentagon. Further, Flight 77 passengers made phone calls reporting that their airplane had been hijacked. For example, passenger Renee May called her mother to tell her that the plane had been hijacked and that the passengers had been herded to the back of the plane. Another passenger named Barbara Olson called her husband (U.S. Solicitor General Theodore Olson) and said that the flight had been hijacked, and that the hijackers had knives and box cutters.^{[8][104][115][116]} Some conspiracy theories say the phone calls the passengers made were fabricated by voice morphing, the passengers' bodies disposed of, and a missile fired at the Pentagon.^{[117][118][119]}



The Pentagon, after collapse of the damaged section



Airplane debris scattered near the Pentagon on the day of the attack

The pressure group Judicial Watch filed a Freedom of Information Act request on December 15, 2004, to force the government to release video recordings from the Sheraton National Hotel, the Nexcomm/Citgo gas station, Pentagon security cameras and the Virginia Department of Transportation. On May 16, 2006, the government released the Pentagon security camera videos to Judicial Watch.^[120] The image of American Airlines Flight 77 which appears in the videos has been described as "[a] white blob" and "a white streak" (by the BBC),^[121] "a thin white blur" (by The Associated Press),^[122] and "a silver speck low to the ground" (in *The Washington Post*).^[123] A sequence of five frames from one of the videos already appeared in the media in 2002.^[124] Some conspiracy theorists believe the new video does not answer their questions.^[125]

Flight 93



Flight 93 crash site

The fourth plane hijacked on 9/11, United Airlines Flight 93, crashed in an open field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after the passengers revolted. Out of the four planes hijacked on that day, Flight 93 was the only one not to reach its target.^[126]

One conspiracy theory surrounding this event is claim Flight 93 was shot down by a U.S. fighter jet. David Ray Griffin and Alex Jones have asserted that large parts of the plane, including the main body of the engine, landed miles away from the main wreckage site, too far away for an ordinary plane crash. Jones says that planes usually leave a small debris field when they crash, and that this is not

compatible with reports of wreckage found farther away from the main crash site. One person claimed that the main body of the engine was found miles away from the main wreckage site with damage comparable to that which a heat-seeking missile would do to an airliner.^{[104][126]}

According to some theories, the plane had to be shot down by the government because passengers had found out about the alleged plot.^[76]

According to Phil Molé of *Skeptic* magazine, "[this] claim rests largely on unsupported assertions that the main body of the engine and other large parts of the plane turned up miles from the main wreckage site, too far away to have resulted from an ordinary crash. This claim is incorrect, because the engine was found only 300 yards from the main crash site, and its location was consistent with the direction in which the plane had been traveling."^[75] Michael K. Hynes, an airline accident expert who investigated the crash of TWA Flight 800 in 1996, says that, at very high velocities of 500 mph or more, it would only take a few seconds to move or tumble across the ground for 300 yards.^{[75][104]}

Reports of wreckage discovered at Indian Lake by local residents are accurate. CNN reported that investigators found debris from the crash at least eight miles away from the crash site, including in New Baltimore.^[127] However, according to CNN, this debris was all very light material that the wind would have easily blown away, and a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article from September 14, 2001, describes the material as "mostly papers", "strands of charred insulation", and an "endorsed paycheck". The same article quotes FBI agent Bill Crowley that, "Lighter, smaller debris probably shot into the air on the heat of a fireball that witnesses said shot several hundred feet into the air after the jetliner crashed. Then, it probably rode a wind that was blowing southeast at about 9 m.p.h."^[128] Also, the distance between the crash site and Indian Lake was misreported in some accounts. According to the BBC, "In a straight line, Indian Lake is just over a mile from the crash site. The road between the two locations takes a roundabout route of 6.9 miles—accounting for the erroneous reports."^[126]

Some conspiracy theorists believe a small white jet seen flying over the crash area may have fired a missile to shoot down Flight 93.^[129] However, government agencies such as the FBI assert this small plane was a Dassault Falcon business jet asked to descend to an altitude of around 1,500 ft to survey the impact.^[130] Ben Sliney, who was the FAA operation manager on September 11, 2001, says no military aircraft were near Flight 93.^[131]

Some internet videos, such as *Loose Change*, speculate that Flight 93 safely landed in Ohio, and a substituted plane was involved in the crash in Pennsylvania. Often cited is a preliminary news report that Flight 93 landed at a Cleveland airport;^[132] it was later learned that Delta Flight 1989 was the plane confused with Flight 93, and the report was retracted as inaccurate. Several websites within the 9/11 Truth Movement dispute this claim, citing the wreckage at the scene, eyewitness testimony, and the difficulty of secretly substituting one plane for another, and claim that such "hoax theories ... appear calculated to alienate victims' survivors and the larger public from the 9/11 truth movement". The editor of the article has since written a rebuttal to the claims.^[133]

Valencia McClatchey, a local woman who took the only photograph of the mushroom cloud from the impact of Flight 93 seconds after it hit the ground, says she has been harassed over the telephone and in person by conspiracy theorists, who claim she faked the photo. The FBI, the Somerset County authorities, the Smithsonian, and the National Park Service's Flight 93 National Memorial staff have all individually examined the photograph as well as the film negatives and all four agencies consider the photo to be authentic.^[134]

While some conspiracy theorists have claimed that passengers of Flight 93 and/or Flight 77 were murdered or that they were relocated, with the intent that they never be found,^[76] others within the 9/11 Truth Movement, such as Jim Hoffman and Scholars for 9/11 Truth & Justice, repudiate such claims.

Hijackers

During the initial confusion surrounding the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the BBC published the names and identities of what they believed to be some of the hijackers.^[135] Some of the people named were later discovered to be alive, a fact that was seized upon by 9/11 conspiracy theorists as proof that the hijackings were faked.^{[135][136][137]} The BBC explained that the initial confusion may have arisen because the names they reported back in 2001 were common Arabic and Islamic names.^[135] In response to a request from the BBC, the FBI said that it was confident to have identified all nineteen hijackers, and that none of the other inquiries had raised the issue of doubt about their identities.^[135] The New York Times also acknowledged these as cases of mistaken identity.^[138]

According to John Bradley, the former managing editor of *Arab News* in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the only public information about the hijackers was a list of names issued by the FBI on September 14, 2001. When the FBI released photographs four days after the cited reports on September 27, the mistaken identities were quickly resolved. According to Bradley, "all of this is attributable to the chaos that prevailed during the first few days following the attack. What we're dealing with are coincidentally identical names." In Saudi Arabia, says Bradley, the names of two of the allegedly surviving attackers, Said al-Ghamdi and Walid al-Shari, are "as common as John Smith in the United States or Great Britain."^[136]

According to Thomas Kean, chair of the 9/11 Commission, "Sixteen of the nineteen shouldn't have gotten into the United States in any way at all because there was something wrong with their visas, something wrong with their passports. They should simply have been stopped at the border. That was sixteen of the nineteen. Obviously, if even half of those people had been stopped, there never would have been a plot."^[139]

Khalid al Mihdhar and Nawaf al Hazmi had both been identified as al-Qaeda agents by the CIA, but that information was not shared with the FBI or U.S. Immigration, so both men were able to legally enter the U.S. to prepare for the 9/11 attacks.^[140]

Foreign governments

There are allegations that individuals within the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) may have played an important role in financing the attacks. There are also claims that other foreign intelligence agencies, such as the Israeli Mossad, had foreknowledge of the attacks, and that Saudi Arabia may have played a role in financing the attacks. General Hamid Gul, a former head of ISI, believes the attacks were an "inside job" originating in the United States, perpetrated by Israel or neo-conservatives.^[141] Francesco Cossiga, former President of Italy from 1985 until his 1992 resignation over Operation Gladio, said that it is common knowledge among the Italian center-left that the 9/11 attacks were a joint operation of the CIA and the Mossad.^[142] Subsequent reports indicated that he did not actually believe this.^{[143][144]}

Israel

A conspiracy theory documented by the Anti-Defamation League, Thom Burnett and others is that the state of Israel was involved in the attacks, and may have planned them. A variety of motives are suggested, including: to cause the United States to attack enemies of Israel; to divert public attention away from Israel's treatment of Palestinians; to help Zionists take control of world affairs; and to persuade Americans to support Israel. Variants of the theory contend that the attack was organized by

Ariel Sharon, Mossad, or the government of Israel.^{[145][146]} Kevin Barrett, a former lecturer at the University of Wisconsin is, according to Slate website, a "leading advocate of theories that Israel's Mossad orchestrated the 9/11 attacks."^[147]

Some proponents of this believe that Jewish employees were forewarned by Israeli intelligence to skip work on September 11, resulting in no Jewish deaths at the World Trade Center. According to Cinnamon Stillwell, some 9/11 conspiracy theorists put this number as high as 4,000 Jewish people skipping work.^[148] This was first reported on September 17 by the Lebanese Hezbollah-owned satellite television channel Al-Manar and is believed to be based on the September 12 edition of The Jerusalem Post that said "The Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem has so far received the names of 4,000 Israelis believed to have been in the areas of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon at the time of the attacks."^[149]

The number of Jews who died in the attacks is variously estimated at between 270 and 400.^{[149][a][150][151]} The lower figure tracks closely with the percentage of Jews living in the New York area and partial surveys of the victims' listed religion. The U.S. State Department has published a partial list of 76 in response to claims that fewer Jews/Israelis died in the WTC attacks than should have been present at the time.^{[149][152]} Five Israeli citizens died in the attack.^[153]

Antisemitism in conspiracy theories

In 2003, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published a report attacking "hateful conspiracy theories" that the 9/11 attacks were carried about by Israelis and Jews, saying they had the potential to "rationalize and fuel global anti-Semitism." It found that such theories were widely accepted in the Arab and Muslim world, as well as in Europe and the United States.

The ADL's report found that "The Big Lie has united American far-right extremists and white supremacists and elements within the Arab and Muslim world". It asserted that many of the theories were modern manifestation of the 19th century Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which purported to map out a Jewish conspiracy for world domination.^{[146][154]} The ADL has characterized the Jeff Rense website as carrying anti-Semitic materials, such as "American Jews staged the 9/11 terrorist attacks for their own financial gain and to induce the American people to endorse wars of aggression and genocide on the nations of the Middle East and the theft of their resources for the benefit of Israel".^[155]

Pedro A. Sanjuan, a former United Nations diplomat, alleged that antisemitic 9/11 conspiracy theories were quite common at high levels of the organization following the attacks.^[156]

Saudi Arabia

British investigative journalists Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan claimed in their 2011 book *The Eleventh Day* that the Saudi Royal Family provided material and financial support to the hijackers and that the Bush Administration covered this up as well as their own alleged incompetence. The authors claim the 9/11 Truth movement helped this coverup by deflecting attention away from these actions.^[157] In September 2011 a "Lloyd's insurance syndicate" began legal action against Saudi Arabia demanding the repayment of £136m it paid out to victims of the 9/11 attacks. A number of prominent Saudi charities and banks as well as a leading member of the al-Saud royal family were accused of being "agents and alter egos" for the Saudi state that "knowingly" provided funding to al-Qaeda and encouraged anti Western sentiment.^[158]

Such theories have historically revolved around the putative content of the 28 pages of the 2002 report of the U.S. Congress Joint Inquiry^{[159][160]} that were withheld from publication until July 15, 2016.^[161]

Former Florida Senator Bob Graham, co-chairman of the Joint Inquiry, as well as other former officials who did read the entire version of the Joint Inquiry's report, still partly classified, believe there is a U.S. government's coverup on the Saudi government officials' substantial aid provided to the perpetrators of the 9/11 act,^[159] notably the role of Fahad al-Thumairy, a diplomat at the Saudi consulate in Los Angeles.^[162]

No-planes theory

Former chief economist within the Labor Department under the Bush administration, Morgan Reynolds, argues that no planes were used in the attacks. Reynolds claims it is physically impossible that the Boeing planes of Flights 11 and 175 could have penetrated the steel frames of the Towers, and that digital compositing was used to depict the plane crashes in both news reports and subsequent amateur video. "There were no planes, there were no hijackers", Reynolds insists. "I know, I know, I'm out of the mainstream, but that's the way it is". According to David Shayler, "the only explanation is that they were missiles surrounded by holograms made to look like planes", he says, which would be well beyond the capabilities of contemporaneous hologram technology. "Watch footage frame by frame and you will see a cigar-shaped missile hitting the World Trade Center". Most no-planes adherents, including Thierry Meyssan and Reynolds, assert that either CGI of a passenger plane was overlaid onto a winged cruise missile or military aircraft, or that computer-generated images of a passenger plane were inserted into the video footage and plane-shaped explosive cut-outs were planted in the buildings in order to create the impression of plane impact.^{[163][164][165]} Some truth movement veterans have repeatedly refuted the "no-plane" claims.^{[76][166]} In fact, discussion of no-plane theories has been banned from certain conspiracy theory websites and advocates have sometimes been threatened with violence by posters at other conspiracy theory websites.^[167]



The "no-plane theory", promoted via Internet videos, claims that this shot of the second impact, taken from a news helicopter, depicts a video composite of a Boeing 767 accidentally appearing from behind a Layer Mask.

Cover-up allegations

Paul Zarembka, in his book, *The Hidden History of 9/11*, states that the debris from ground zero was removed without a proper forensic investigation.^{[168][169]}

Cockpit recorders

According to the 9/11 Commission Report, both black boxes from Flight 77 and both black boxes from Flight 93 were recovered. However, the CVR from Flight 77 was said to be too damaged to yield any data. On April 18, 2002, the FBI allowed the families of victims from Flight 93 to listen to the voice recordings.^[170] In April 2006, a transcript of the CVR was released as part of the Zacarias Moussaoui trial.^[171]

Two men, Michael Bellone and Nicholas DeMasi, who worked extensively in the wreckage of the World Trade Center, said in the book *Behind-The-Scenes: Ground Zero* that they helped federal agents find three of the four "black boxes" from the jetliners:^[172]

At one point, I was assigned to take Federal Agents around the site to search for the black boxes from the planes. We were getting ready to go out. My ATV was parked at the top of the stairs at the Brooks Brothers entrance area. We loaded up about a million dollars worth of equipment and strapped it into the ATV. There were a total of four black boxes. We found three.^[173]



The cockpit voice recorder from Flight 77 was heavily damaged from the impact and resulting fire.

Bin Laden tapes

A series of interviews, audio and videotapes were released in the years following the 9/11 attacks that were reported to be from Osama bin Laden. In the first of these the speaker denied responsibility for the attacks. On September 17, 2001, in a statement issued to Al Jazeera, Bin Laden is quoted as saying: "The U.S. government has consistently blamed me for being behind every occasion its enemies attack it. I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seems to have been planned by people for personal reasons."^[174]

In a tape released in December 2001 known as 'the Jalalabad tape', the speaker is alleged to have foreknowledge of the attacks. The Central Intelligence Agency claimed the tape was probably from Osama bin Laden. Some observers, especially people in the Muslim world, doubted the authenticity of the tape.^[175] On December 20, 2001, German TV channel "Das Erste" broadcast an analysis of the White House's translation of the videotape. On the program *Monitor*, two independent translators and an expert on Oriental Studies found the White House's translation to be both inaccurate and manipulative, stating, "At the most important places where it is held to prove the guilt of bin Laden, it is not identical with the Arabic", and that the words used that indicate foreknowledge can not be heard at all in the original. Prof. Gernot Rotter, professor of Islamic and Arabic Studies at the Asia-Africa Institute at the University of Hamburg, said "The American translators who listened to the tapes and transcribed them apparently wrote a lot of things in that they wanted to hear but that cannot be heard on the tape no matter how many times you listen to it."^[176] Some members of Scholars for 9/11 Truth believe that the man in this videotape is not Osama bin Laden at all, citing differences in weight and facial features, along with his wearing of a gold ring, which is forbidden by Muslim law, and writing with his right hand although bin Laden was left-handed.^[177]

In an audiotape released in November 2007, Bin Laden claimed responsibility for the attacks and denied the Taliban and the Afghan government or people had any prior knowledge of the attacks.^{[178][179][180]} In an interview with al-Jazeera, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, two of al-Qaeda's alleged masterminds of the attacks, also confessed their involvement in the attacks.^[181]

Hiding of CIA recruitment efforts

Richard Clarke, who headed the government's anti-terrorism efforts in 2001, theorized CIA director George Tenet ordered the agency to withhold information about Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar from the rest of the government in an effort to cover up the agency's recruitment of the two. George Tenet released a statement denying the agency deliberately withheld information about the pair and noted Clarke himself said he had no proof.^[182]

Motives

Pax Americana

In September 2000 the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) released a strategic treatise entitled *Rebuilding America's Defences*. The Defense Planning Guidance of 1992, was drafted by Paul Wolfowitz on behalf of then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. This was described as "a blueprint for permanent American global hegemony" by Andrew Bacevich in his book *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*.^[183]

Matt Taibbi argued in his book *The Great Derangement* that conspiracy theorists have taken what is written in the paper "completely out of context", and that the "transformation" referenced in the paper is explicitly said to be a decades-long process to turn the Cold War-era military into a "new, modern military" which could deal with more localized conflicts.^[184] He said that, for this to be evidence of motive, either those responsible would have decided to openly state their objectives, or would have read the paper in 2000 and quickly laid the groundwork for the 9/11 attacks using it as inspiration.^[184]

Invasions

Conspiracy theorists have questioned whether *The Oil Factor* and 9/11 provided the United States and the United Kingdom with a reason to launch a war they had wanted for some time, and suggest that this gives them a strong motive for either carrying out the attacks, or allowing them to take place. For instance, Andreas von Bülow, a former research minister in the German government, has argued that 9/11 was staged to justify the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.^[185] Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad was quoted as saying that there was "strong evidence" that the attacks were faked so that the United States could go to war against Muslims.^[186] In spite of these allegations, the Bush administration specifically rejected proposals to immediately attack Iraq in response to 9/11,^[187] and acknowledged that there was no evidence of Iraqi involvement in the attacks.^[9]

New World Order

Alex Jones and other personalities hold that 9/11 was initiated by a disparate variety of banking, corporate, globalization, and military interests for the purpose of creating a globalist government. Such New World Order conspiracy theories predate 9/11.^[61]

Suggested historical precedents

Conspiracy theorists often point to Operation Northwoods as a model for the 9/11 attacks, theorizing the attacks were carried out by the U.S. government as a false flag operation and then blamed on Islamic extremists.^{[10][188]} Operation Northwoods was an unimplemented, apparently rejected, plan approved by the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962. One proposal in the plan suggested that covert operatives commit multiple acts of terrorism in U.S. cities and blame Cuba, thus providing a pretext for invasion.^[189]

Time magazine contrasted events which inspired past conspiracy theories with those that inspire 9/11 conspiracy theories such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy. *Time* called the public assassination of Kennedy a "private, intimate affair" when compared with the attack on the World Trade Center, which

was witnessed by millions of people and documented by hundreds of videographers; and said, "there is no event so plain and clear that a determined human being can't find ambiguity in it."^[53]

Proponents

Many individuals and organizations that support or discuss 9/11 conspiracy theories consider themselves to be part of the 9/11 Truth movement.

Prominent adherents of the movement include, among others, radio talk show host Alex Jones, theologian David Ray Griffin, physicist Steven E. Jones, software engineer Jim Hoffman, architect Richard Gage (of Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth), film producer Dylan Avery, former Governor of Minnesota Jesse Ventura, former member of the U.S. House of Representatives Cynthia McKinney,^[190] actors Daniel Sunjata, Ed Asner, and Charlie Sheen, political science professor Joseph Diaferia and journalist Thierry Meyssan.^{[191][192][193]} Adherents of the 9/11 Truth movement come from diverse social backgrounds.^{[194][195][196]} The movement draws adherents from people of diverse political beliefs including liberals, conservatives, and libertarians.^{[75][196][197]} The Anti-Defamation League has named Alan Sabrosky as a key figure in anti-Semitic 9/11 conspiracy theories.^{[198][199]}



Alex Jones at a 9/11 Truth Movement event in 2007

Among the organizations that actively discuss and promote such theories are Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth, a group that focuses on the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings; 9/11 Truth, founded in 2004; Scholars for 9/11 Truth, founded in 2005, and Scholars for 9/11 Truth & Justice, a group that split from Scholars for 9/11 Truth in 2007 and runs the online publication *Journal of 9/11 Studies*; 9/11 Citizens Watch, which was already formed in 2002; and the Hispanic Victims Group. Several of these groups have collected signatures on petitions asking for further investigation of the September 11 attacks.^{[200][201][202]}

In 2004, John Buchanan ran for president on a "9/11 Truth" platform.^[203]

9/11 Conspiracy theory critic Jonathan Kay asserts that for the most part proponents are not out for financial gain and in some cases have left lucrative careers to become activists.^[204]

Dr Michael Wood and Dr Karen Douglas University of Kent psychologists who specialize in conspiracy theories^[205] examined the comments sections of over 2000 news articles relating to the collapse of World Trade Center 7. They found that proponents of 9/11 conspiracy theories were more likely to try and debunk the mainstream account than promote their own theories and also were more likely to believe in other conspiracy theories. Proponents of the mainstream account tended to argue for that account and showed a greater hostility toward conspiracy theory proponents.^[206]

Dissecting the 9/11 Truth movement community

According to a 2011 analysis in a *Skeptical Inquirer* article, people involved in this movement, which seemingly is a disparate group with very diversified backgrounds, could be classified into three groups. They join the movement for different reasons, loosely self-assemble to fill different roles and are united by their shared mistrust in experts and the establishment (government and reputable sources of

knowledge), and conspiratorial stance. Through their engagement, they each find their own fulfillment and satisfaction. Together, they contribute to the persistence, resilience and exaggerated claims of acceptance (in general public) of the movement. These three groups are:^[207]

- **Hard Core:** The organizers and active members of the various 9/11 Truth Movement organizations. They produce the information, spot the anomalies and technical inconsistencies, provide the technical base and form the theories. While they claim to be only interested in facts and to use scientific method, they commit the logical fallacy of 'confirmation bias' by pre-determining the outcome, then searching for corroborating evidence while ignoring the vast body of peer-reviewed, independent, consensual research which contradict their theories. They supply the physical structure of the movement by organizing events, seminars, discussions, marches and distributing flyers and pamphlets. Their numbers are relatively small but they are tight-knit and highly connected. Their worldview favors 'super-conspiracy', a master plan that is behind conspiracies which they believe they are uncovering.^[207]
- **Critically turned:** They are the young students and political activists whose affiliation with the 9/11 Truth Movement often is rooted from their dissatisfaction and anger at the established political and social order. Their sense of justice and idealism propels them to activism against perceived oppression and social injustice. Their penchant to use Internet, especially social media, and tech savvy make them the propaganda machine for the movement. They produce YouTube videos and films with cool, countercultural content, make good use of pop culture parody and eye-catching graphics. The countercultural street cred of their productions buy them broad appeal and exposure to millions of people.^[207]
- **Illiterati:** They are the movement's mass membership backbone, a large, diffuse group which give the movement exaggerated claims of popularity and influence. Participation in the 9/11 Truth Movement, to this group of people, is as much a social and recreational pursuit as the quest for truth. Their partaking is mostly through web 2.0 social networking and YouTube. Their commentaries often are emotional and they make no pretense to be accurate, balanced or to show genuine intent to find truth. Involvement with the movement that fit their worldview gives them a sense of identity and belonging, which they find more appealing than the facts and evidences of the 9/11 terrorist attack itself.^[207]

Media reaction

While discussion and coverage of these theories is mainly confined to Internet pages, books, documentary films, and conversation, a number of mainstream news outlets around the world have covered the issue.

The Norwegian version of the July 2006 *Le Monde diplomatique* sparked interest when they ran, on their own initiative, a three-page main story on the 9/11 attacks and summarized the various types of 9/11 conspiracy theories (which were not specifically endorsed by the newspaper, only recensed).^[208] In December 2006, the French version published an article by Alexander Cockburn, co-editor of *CounterPunch*, which strongly criticized the alleged endorsement of conspiracy theories by the U.S. left-wing, alleging that it was a sign of "theoretical emptiness."^{[209][210]}

Also, on the Canadian website for *CBC News: The Fifth Estate*, a program titled, "Conspiracy Theories: uncovering the facts behind the myths of Sept. 11, 2001" was broadcast on October 29, 2003, stating that what they found may be more surprising than any theories.^[211] On November 27, 2009, *The Fifth Estate* aired a documentary entitled *The Unofficial Story* where several prominent members of the 9/11 Truth Movement made their case.^{[212][213]}

An article in the September 11, 2006, edition of *Time* magazine comments that the major 9/11 conspiracy theories "depend on circumstantial evidence, facts without analysis or documentation, quotes taken out of context and the scattered testimony of traumatized eyewitnesses", and enjoy continued popularity because "the idea that there is a malevolent controlling force orchestrating global events is, in a perverse way, comforting". It concludes that "conspiracy theories are part of the process by which Americans deal with traumatic public events" and constitute "an American form of national mourning."^[214]

Australian newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* published an article titled "The CIA couldn't have organised this ..." which said "The same people who are making a mess of Iraq were never so clever or devious that they could stage a complex assault on two narrow towers of steel and glass" and "if there is a nefarious plot in all this bad planning, it is one improvised by a confederacy of dunces". This article mainly attacked a group of scientists led by Professor Steven E. Jones, now called *Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice*. They said "most of them aren't scientists but instructors ... at second-rate colleges".^[215]

The Daily Telegraph also published an article in May 2007 that was highly critical of *Loose Change 2*, a movie which presents a 9/11 conspiracy theory.^[216]

Doug MacEachern in a May 2008 column for *The Arizona Republic* wrote that while many "9/11 truthers" are not crackpots that espouse "crackpot conspiracy theories", supporters of the theories fail to take into account both human nature and that nobody has come forward claiming they were participants in the alleged conspiracies.^[217] This view was seconded by Timothy Giannuzzi, a *Calgary Herald* op-ed columnist specializing in foreign policy.^[218]

On June 7, 2008, the *Financial Times* published a lengthy article on the *9/11 Truth Movement* and 9/11 conspiracy theories.^[219]

Charlie Brooker, a British comedian and multimedia personality, in a July 2008 column published by *The Guardian* as part of its "Comment is free" series agreed that 9/11 conspiracy theorists fail to take in account human fallacies and added that believing in these theories gives theorists a sense of belonging to a community that shares privileged information thus giving the theorists a delusional sense of power.^[220] The commentary generated over 1700 online responses, the largest in the history of the series.^[221] In a September 2009 piece, *The Guardian* were more supportive of 9/11 conspiracy theories however, asking, "when did it become uncool to ask questions? When did questioners become imbeciles?"^[222]

On September 12, 2008, Russian State Television broadcast in prime time a documentary made by Member of the European Parliament *Giulietto Chiesa* entitled *Zero*, sympathetic to those who question the accepted account of the attacks according to Chiesa. According to *Thierry Meyssan* in conjunction with the documentary, Russian State Television aired a debate on the subject. The panel consisted of members from several countries including 12 Russians who hold divergent views. The motive of Russian State Television in broadcasting the documentary was questioned by a commentator from *The Other Russia* who noted that Russian State Television had a history of broadcasting programs involving conspiracy theories involving the United States government.^[223]

Nasir Mahmood in a commentary printed by the *Pakistan Observer* wrote favorably about a 9/11 truth lecture and film festival held in California and quoted a Jewish speaker at that festival who said that none of the 19 suspected hijackers had been proven guilty of anything and compared racism against Muslims resulting from what he called false accusations to the racism against Jews in the Nazi era.^[224]

On November 10, 2008, *ITN* broadcast a story summarizing various 9/11 conspiracy theories.^[225]

The emergence of the birther movement in 2009 has led to comparisons between that movement and the 9/11 Truth movement, with both movements seen in a very negative light. Moon landing conspiracy theories have also been compared to the birther and 9/11 conspiracy theories. James Borne, a journalist for *The New York Times* who covered the September 11 attacks, described his assignment covering a 9/11 truth meeting as "[p]erhaps the most intellectually scary assignment I have had in recent years".^{[226][227][228][229]}

On August 31, 2009, the National Geographic Channel aired the program *9/11 Science and Conspiracy*, in which the Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center tested some of the claims frequently made by those who question the accepted 9/11 account. Specifically, the experiments concluded that burning jet fuel alone can sufficiently raise the temperature of a steel support column to the point of structural failure, that a controlled demolition using conventional techniques would leave clear evidence that was not found at Ground Zero, that using thermite is not an effective technique to melt a steel column, and that even if thermite chemical signatures were found, it would be impossible to tell if thermite was actually used or if the traces came from the reaction of aircraft aluminum with other substances in the fire. The testing also concluded that the type of hole found at the Pentagon was consistent with the standard scenario, and that damage from a bombing or missile attack would differ from the damage that occurred. In the program, several prominent 9/11 conspiracy theorists viewed rough edits of the experiments, and expressed their disagreement with the findings.^{[230][231]}

The British left wing magazine *New Statesman* listed David Ray Griffin as the 41st most important person who matters today. The magazine said that Griffin's "books on the subject have lent a sheen of respectability that appeals to people at the highest levels of government". The publication listed 9/11 conspiracy theories as "one of the most pernicious global myths".^[232] Griffin's book *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited* was chosen by Publishers Weekly as a "Pick of the Week" in November 2008.^[233]

Denver public television KBDI-TV has aired 9/11 truth documentaries several times. The stations spokesperson claimed airing these documentaries has been a boon for the stations fund raising efforts.^[234]

Glenn Beck, television and radio host, said of the allegations: "There are limits to debasement of this country, aren't there? I mean, it's one thing to believe that our politicians are capable of being Bernie Madoff. It's another to think that they are willing to kill 3,000 Americans. Once you cross that line, you're in a whole new territory."^[235]

In March 2010, *The Washington Post* editorialized against Yukihisa Fujita, a prominent Japanese politician who has espoused 9/11 conspiracy theories. They described Fujita as a man "susceptible to the imaginings of the lunatic fringe". It went on to say that the U.S.–Japan alliance would be "severely tested" if Fujita's party continued to tolerate these kinds of comments.^[236]

For the ninth anniversary of the attacks the Egyptian daily *Al-masry Al-youm* published an article questioning the U.S. Government story and promoting conspiracy theories. The senior analyst for the semi-official Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and a member of Parliament from the Muslim Brotherhood was quoted.

Gordon Farrer, the technology editor for *The Age*, theorized in a November 2010 column for the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the popularity of 9/11 conspiracy theories was a result of two main factors. One revolved around the personality traits of the theorists themselves (cynical, anxious, belief that they are freethinkers). The second revolved around the high internet search ranking 9/11 conspiracy theories receive, leading to a false air of authority to the theories. Speaking of the theorists. Farrer wrote that "when politicians and media don't give them voice they feel more threatened, more suspicious, cornered, helpless; and so they go on the attack".^[237]

Geraldo Rivera, the host of *Geraldo at Large*, a news magazine run by Fox News Channel, expressed openness towards claims that question the causes of the collapse of 7 World Trade Center.^[238] Andrew Napolitano, a legal analyst for Fox News and former judge at the New Jersey Superior Court, voiced support for skepticism about the collapse of the high-rise building, and for Rivera investigating the event.^[238]

Alex Jones syndicated radio program was dropped by 70 radio stations when he began espousing 9/11 conspiracy theories.^{[42][239]} On August 29, 2010, BBC Two broadcast a program entitled *The Conspiracy Files: 9/11 – Ten Years On*.^[88]

On September 5, 2011, *The Guardian* published an article entitled, "9/11 conspiracy theories debunked". The article noted that unlike the collapse of World Trade Centers 1 and 2 a controlled demolition collapses a building from the bottom and explains that the windows popped because of collapsing floors. The article also said there are conspiracy theories that claim that 7 World Trade Center was also downed by a controlled demolition, that the Pentagon being hit by a missile, that the hijacked planes were packed with explosives and flown by remote control, that Israel was behind the attacks, that a plane headed for the Pentagon was shot down by a missile, that there was insider trading by people who had foreknowledge of the attacks were all false.^[240]

Toure Neblett, who has Tweeted his suspicions about the attack on the Pentagon, is one of the hosts of the MSNBC program *The Cycle*, which debuted on June 25, 2012.^[241]

Criticism

Critics of these conspiracy theories say they are a form of conspiracism common throughout history after a traumatic event in which conspiracy theories emerge as a mythic form of explanation.^[242] A related criticism addresses the form of research on which the theories are based. Thomas W. Eagar, an engineering professor at MIT, suggested they "use the 'reverse scientific method'. They determine what happened, throw out all the data that doesn't fit their conclusion, and then hail their findings as the only possible conclusion." Eagar's criticisms also exemplify a common stance that the theories are best ignored. "I've told people that if the argument gets too mainstream, I'll engage in the debate." According to him, this happened when Steve Jones, a physics professor at Brigham Young University, took up the issue.^[243]

Michael Shermer, writing in *Scientific American*, said: "The mistaken belief that a handful of unexplained anomalies can undermine a well-established theory lies at the heart of all conspiratorial thinking. All the evidence for a 9/11 conspiracy falls under the rubric of this fallacy. Such notions are easily refuted by noting that scientific theories are not built on single facts alone but on a convergence of evidence assembled from multiple lines of inquiry."^[244]

Scientific American,^[244] *Popular Mechanics*,^[245] and *The Skeptic's Dictionary*^[246] have published articles that rebut various 9/11 conspiracy theories. *Popular Mechanics* has published a book entitled *Debunking 9/11 Myths* that expands upon the research first presented in the article.^[247] In the foreword for the book Senator John McCain wrote that blaming the U.S. government for the events "mars the memories of all those lost on that day" and "exploits the public's anger and sadness. It shakes Americans' faith in their government at a time when that faith is already near an all-time low. It trafficks in ugly, unfounded accusations of extraordinary evil against fellow Americans."^[248] *Der Spiegel* dismissed 9/11 conspiracy theories as a "panoply of the absurd", stating "as diverse as these theories and their adherents may be, they share a basic thought pattern: great tragedies must have great reasons."^[249]

Journalist Matt Taibbi, in his book *The Great Derangement*, discusses 9/11 conspiracy theories as symptomatic of what he calls the "derangement" of American society; a disconnection from reality due to widespread "disgust with our political system".^[184] Drawing a parallel with the Charismatic Movement, he argues that both "chose to battle bugbears that were completely idiotic, fanciful, and imaginary," instead of taking control of their own lives.^[184] While critical, Taibbi explains that 9/11 conspiracy theories are different from "Clinton-era black-helicopter paranoia", and constitute more than "a small, scattered group of nutcases [...] they really were, just as they claim to be, almost everyone you meet."^[184]

David Aaronovitch, a columnist for *The Times*, in his book entitled *Voodoo Histories: The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History* that was published in May 2009, claimed that the theories strain credulity.^[76] He charges that 9/11 conspiracy theorists have exaggerated the expertise of those supporting their theories, and says 9/11 conspiracy theorists, including David Ray Griffin, cross-cite each other.^[250] He also claims the popularity of 9/11 conspiracy theories has hurt the War on Terror. According to Aaronovitch, because a significant portion of educated Pakistanis believe that George W. Bush brought the towers down, dealing with the Taliban is difficult "because they actually don't believe the fundamental premise on which the war against terror was waged".^[251]

Harvard law professor Cass Sunstein co-authored a 2009 paper which used members of the 9/11 Truth movement and others as examples of people who suffer from "crippled epistemologies", to public trust and the political system. He wrote that "[t]hey do not merely undermine democratic debate [...] In extreme cases, they create or fuel violence. If government can dispel such theories, it should do so."^[42]

In June 2011, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) was criticized for hosting a lecture by Richard Gage, president of Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth. Rick Bell, the director of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) New York chapter, who was a witness to the 9/11 attacks, said that "no amount of money" would persuade him to allow the group to talk at his headquarters and said that Gage lacks credibility among the professional community. Eugene Kohn, former spokesperson for the AIA, said Gage's theories were "ridiculous", "[t]here were no explosives planted", and "[t]he buildings were definitely brought down by the planes". The decision to host the event was also criticized by the former president of RIBA and the founding president of the AIA's United Kingdom chapter. Gage has been warned by the AIA against giving a false impression that he has a relationship with it. A July 2012 article in the AIA's magazine criticized Gage for continuing to intimate that he has an association with the organization, and claimed that there were no architects at an Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth screening held in an AIA boardroom.^[252] RIBA released a statement saying the perception that it endorses events held in its buildings is "regrettable", and said it would review policy on "private hire" of its buildings.^[253] Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan offer scathing criticism of many of the above theories in *The Eleventh Day*, their 2011 investigation of the attacks.^[254]

U.S. representative Peter T. King, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said 9/11 conspiracy theorists "trivialize" the "most tragic event to affect the United States" and that "[p]eople making these claims are disgraceful, and they should be ashamed of themselves".^[255]

The hosts of "The Skeptics' Guide to the Universe" (the "SGU") have spoken repeatedly about the "absurdity of 9/11 conspiracy theories". In addition to critiquing the theories using the same or similar arguments as the above, the "SGU" hosts say that, like most conspiracy theories, this one collapses under its own weight and contradicts itself. In order for the 9/11 conspiracy theories to be correct, the U.S. government would not only have to orchestrate the claimed false flag operation regarding the airplanes that crashed into the World Trade Center, but they would also have to orchestrate a superfluous controlled demolition and cover their tracks so flawlessly that it becomes indistinguishable to physicists from the "official story", yet the plan would have to be flawed enough so that "losers in their mothers' basement" will discover the conspiracy.^[256]

In politics

Former Canadian Liberal Party leader Stéphane Dion forced a candidate from Winnipeg, Lesley Hughes, to terminate her campaign after earlier writings from Hughes surfaced in which Hughes wrote that U.S., German, Russian and Israeli intelligence officials knew about the 9/11 attacks in advance.^{[257][258]} Peter Kent, Deputy Editor of Global Television Network News and a Conservative Party candidate in the 2008 Canadian election, had earlier called for Hughes's resignation, saying that the 9/11 Truth movement is "one of Canada's most notorious hatemongering fringe movements" composed of "conspiracy theorists who are notorious for holding anti-Semitic views."^[259] On June 16, 2009, Hughes sued Kent, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the B'nai B'rith of Canada and four senior members of the two organizations, alleging the antisemitic allegations were untrue and defamatory and ruined her career.^[260] Later, another Conservative Party candidate called for the leader of the New Democratic Party to fire a candidate for her pro-9/11 truth views.^[261] Zijad Delic, head of the Canadian Islamic Congress, Canada's largest Muslim advocacy organization, is trying to remove 9/11 conspiracy theorists from its board, in an effort to what he describes as purifying within and totally canadianize the organization.^[262]

In 2008, calls for the resignation of Richard Falk, the special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories for the United Nations, were partially based on his support investigating the validity of 9/11 conspiracy theories.^[263] In 2011, Falk praised a book by David Ray Griffin. Falk was condemned for his remarks by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and United States ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice.^[264]

In February 2009, Aymeric Chauprade, a professor of geopolitics at CID military college in Paris, was fired by French Defence Minister Hervé Morin for writing a book entitled *Chronicle of the Clash of Civilizations* that espoused 9/11 conspiracy theories.^[265]

In September 2009, Van Jones, an adviser to US President Barack Obama, resigned after his signature on a 2004 petition calling for an investigation into whether government officials deliberately allowed the 9/11 attacks to occur and other controversial statements came to light drawing criticism. Van Jones said he was a victim of a smear campaign, adding that he does not currently, nor ever has agreed with that theory.^[266]

The 9/11 truth movement became an issue in the 2010 Texas Gubernatorial Republican primary when candidate Debra Medina replied when asked by Glenn Beck about US government involvement in the 9/11 attacks: "I think some very good questions have been raised in that regard, there are some very good arguments, and I think the American people have not seen all of the evidence there, so I have not taken a position on that." After being criticized for the remarks by opposing candidates, Medina said that she has never been a 9/11 truth movement member and believes the twin towers were attacked by Muslim terrorists.^{[267][268]}

On September 23, 2010, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a speech to the United Nations said that "[t]he majority of the American people, as well as other nations and politicians, believe [...] some segments within the U.S. government orchestrated the attack to reverse the declining American economy and its grips on the Middle East in order to save the Zionist regime", and that "the majority of the American people as well most nations and politicians around the world agree with this view".^[269] The remarks prompted the United States delegation as well as others to walk out.^[270] U.S. President Barack Obama criticized Ahmadinejad's remarks before the United Nations General Assembly on the following day, saying that "[f]or him to make a statement like that was inexcusable" and called the remarks "offensive" and "hateful".^[271] Previously Ahmadinejad had described the 9/11 attacks as a "suspect event"^[272] and suggested that the Bush Administration was involved in 9/11.^{[273][274]} The Iranian president repeated his claims in 2011 with another appearance at the UN and was thereafter



Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made statements that were skeptical of al-Qaeda executing the 9/11 attacks.

criticized in an article appearing in al-Qaeda's magazine, *Inspire*. The article claimed that Ahmadinejad was jealous of al-Qaeda because the stateless and under-fire Islamic terrorist organization did on 9/11 what Iran could not do.^[275]

In 2012, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi has called for a scientific conference to look into the events of 9/11 and speculated that the attacks were an inside job. According to an international poll that same year, huge majorities in Muslim countries prefer to believe baseless conspiracy theories rather than listen to the mainstream facts of what happened on September 11, 2001, in New York City and Washington. Although al-Qaeda occasionally brags about its "achievement," 75 percent of Egyptian citizens, for example, still deny that Arabs carried out the attacks, as a Pew study reported in July 2011.^[276]

Legal cases

Army specialist April Gallop filed suit claiming that Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and other Bush administration officials orchestrated the 9/11 attacks and that the

Pentagon was hit by an attack ordered by Cheney. The suit was dismissed in 2010 by Judge Denny Chin, who said the claim was "the product of cynical delusion and fantasy". Her lawyers filed an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals which in April 2010 issued a show cause order why the lawyers and Gallop should not be sanctioned for filing a frivolous lawsuit. Her lawyers asked that the judges on the Court of Appeals recuse themselves because their emotions made them prejudge the case and abuse their power. On October 14, 2011, the judges sanctioned her lawyers \$15,000 each for both the frivolous lawsuits and the accusations of prejudice. Gallop was not fined because of her unfamiliarity with the law.^[277]

See also

- Opinion polls about 9/11 conspiracy theories
- 1941 Pearl Harbor advance-knowledge conspiracy theory
- 2004 Madrid train bombings controversies
- 2005 London July bombings conspiracy theories

Notes

- A survey of the 1,700 victims whose religion was listed found approximately 10% were Jewish indicating around 270 in total. A survey based on the last names of victims found that around 400 (15½%) were possibly Jewish. A survey of 390 Cantor Fitzgerald employees who had public memorials (out of the 658 who died) found 49 were Jewish (12½%). According to the 2002 American Jewish Year Book, New York State's population was 9% Jewish. Sixty-four percent of the WTC victims lived in New York State.

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9/11 truth movement

The **9/11 Truth movement** supports a conspiracy theory that disputes the general consensus of the September 11 attacks in 2001. This theory disputes the consensus that Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four airliners, crashed them into the Pentagon and the original World Trade Center Twin Towers, where the crashes led to their collapse. The primary focus is on missed information that adherents allege is not adequately explained in the official National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) report, such as the collapse of 7 World Trade Center. They suggest a cover-up and, at the least, complicity by insiders.^{[1][2][3][4][5][6][7][8]}

They analyze evidence from the attacks, discuss different theories about how the attacks happened and call for a new investigation into the attacks.^{[9][10][11][12][13][14][15]} Some of the organizations assert that there is evidence that individuals within the United States government may have been either responsible for or knowingly complicit in the September 11 attacks. Motives suggested by the movement include the use of the attacks as a pretext to fight wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to create opportunities to curtail American civil liberties.^{[2][16]} Support for the movement is negligible from professionals in relevant fields, such as civil and aerospace engineering.^[17]



Supporters of the 9/11 Truth movement at an anti-war demonstration in Los Angeles, October 2007

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Characteristics

Name

"9/11 Truth movement" is a term that has been applied to loosely affiliated^{[16][18]} organizations and individuals that question whether the United States government, agencies of the United States or individuals within such agencies were either responsible for or purposefully complicit in the September 11 attacks.^{[3][4][5][6][7][19][20][21]} The term is also being used by the adherents of the movement,^{[22][23]} who call themselves "9/11 skeptics",^[24] "truth activists",^[25] or "9/11 Truthers",^[26] while generally rejecting the term "conspiracy theorists".^{[18][25]}



Truth movement sticker

Adherents

Adherents of the 9/11 Truth movement come from diverse social backgrounds.^{[1][23][25]} The movement draws adherents from people of diverse political beliefs including liberals, conservatives, and libertarians.^{[3][20][25]}

Lev Grossman of *Time* magazine has stated that support for the 9/11 Truth movement is not a "fringe phenomenon", but "a mainstream political reality."^[22] Others, such as Ben Smith of *Politico* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* have stated that the movement has been "relegated to the fringe".^{[27][28]} *The Washington Post* editorial staff went further describing the movement as "lunatic fringe."^[29] Mark Fenster, a University of Florida law professor and author of the book *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*,^[30] says that "the amount of organisation" of the movement is significantly stronger than the organization of the movement related to doubts about the official account of the assassination of John F. Kennedy,^[3] though this is likely the result of new media technologies, such as online social networks, blogs, etc.

The 9/11 Truth movement is active in the United States as well as in other countries.^[15]

In 2004, John Buchanan ran for president on a 9/11 Truth platform.^{[31][32]} Jeff Boss ran in the 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020 US presidential elections on a 9/11 Truth platform.^[33]

In a 2011 article in *Skeptical Inquirer*, Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller gave an overview and analyzed the members of the 9/11 Truth movement community. The authors found that people involved in this movement, which seemingly is a disparate group with very diversified backgrounds, could be classified into three groups. They join the movement for different reasons, loosely self-assemble to fill different roles, and are united by their shared mistrust in experts and the establishment (government and reputable sources of knowledge) and have a conspiratorial stance. Through their engagement, they each find their own fulfillment and satisfaction. Together, they contribute to the persistence, resilience, and exaggerated claims of acceptance (in general public) of the movement.^[34]

Views

Many adherents of the 9/11 Truth movement suspect that United States government insiders played a part in the attacks, or may have known the attacks were imminent, and did nothing to alert others or stop them.^[24] Some within the movement who argue that insiders within the United States government were directly responsible for the September 11 attacks often alleging that the attacks were planned and executed in order to provide the U.S. with a pretext for going to war in the Middle East, and, by extension, as a means of consolidating.^{[22][23]}

According to these allegations, this would have given the Bush administration the justification for more widespread abuses of civil liberties and to invade Afghanistan and Iraq to ensure future supplies of oil.^[24] In some cases, even in the mainstream media, "hawks" in the White House, especially then Vice-President Dick Cheney and members of the Project for the New American Century, the neoconservative think-tank, have been accused of either being aware of, or involved in, the alleged plot.^{[35][36][37]}

A relatively common, but not exclusive view within the 9/11 Truth movement alleges that the buildings of the World Trade Center were destroyed by controlled demolition.^{[1][20][38][39]}

Communication

The Internet plays a large role both in the communication between adherents and between local groups of the 9/11 Truth movement and in the dissemination of the views of the movement to the public at large.^{[2][3][6][22][36]} Colorado Public Television has aired several films produced by the movement such as *9/11 Explosive Evidence: Experts Speak Out*, a documentary produced by Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth, which once was one of the "most shared" and "most watched" programs on the national PBS site. The station's airing of such films has been controversial for the affiliate and PBS.^{[40][41]}

History

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, different interpretations of the events that questioned the account given by the U.S. government were published. Among others, Michael Ruppert^[42] and Canadian journalist Barrie Zwicker,^[43] published criticisms or pointed out purported anomalies of the accepted account of the attacks. French author Jean-Charles Brisard^[44] and German authors Mathias Bröckers^[45] and Andreas von Bülow^[46] published books critical of media reporting and advancing the controlled demolition thesis of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers. In September 2002, the first "Bush Did It!" rallies and marches were held in San Francisco and Oakland, California, organized by The All People's Coalition.^[47]

In October 2004, the organization 9/11 Truth released a statement, signed by nearly 200 people, including many relatives of people who perished on September 11, 2001, that calls for an investigation into the attacks. It also asserted that unanswered questions would suggest that people within the administration of President George W. Bush may have deliberately allowed the attacks to happen. Actor Edward Asner, former presidential candidate Ralph Nader, former congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, former assistant secretary of housing Catherine Austin Fitts, author Richard Heinberg, Enver Masud, founder of The Wisdom Fund, professors Richard Falk of the University of California, Mark Crispin Miller of New York University, Douglas Sturm of Bucknell University, Burns H. Weston of the University of Iowa College of Law and others signed the statement.

In 2009, Van Jones, a former advisor to President Obama, said he had not fully reviewed the statement before he signed and that the petition did not reflect his views "now or ever."^{[48][49][50]}



A 9/11 Truth movement protest sign, October 2009

In 2006, Steven E. Jones, who became a leading advocate of the demolition theory,^[2] published the paper "Why Indeed Did the WTC Buildings Completely Collapse?"^[51] He was placed on paid leave by Brigham Young University following what they described as Jones's "increasingly speculative and accusatory" statements in September 2006, pending a review of his statements and research. Six weeks later, Jones retired from the university.^[52] Skepticism arose as to the scientific claims made by Jones and the efficacy of the peer-review process involved in the publication of his hypotheses, and conspiracy theorists responded to criticism by positing still more elaborate ostensible cover-ups.^[53]

In the same year, 61 legislators in the U.S. state of Wisconsin signed a petition calling for the dismissal of a University of Wisconsin lecturer Kevin Barrett, after he joined the group Scholars for 9/11 Truth. Citing academic freedom, the university provost declined to take action against Barrett.^{[54][55][56]}

Several organizations of family members of people who have died in the attacks are calling for an independent investigation into the attacks.^[57] In 2009, a group of people, including 9/11 Truth movement activist Lorie Van Auken and others who have lost friends or relatives in the attack, appealed to the City of New York to investigate the disaster. The New York City Coalition for Accountability Now collected signatures to require the New York City Council to place the creation of an investigating commission on the November 2009 election ballot.^[58] The group collected more than enough signatures to put the proposal before the voters, but New York Supreme Court Justice Edward Lehner stated that the petition overstepped what is allowable by city law, and ruled that, despite wording in the petition to allow for elements ruled invalid to be stricken, it would not be allowed to appear on the ballot.^{[59][60]}

9/11 Commission Report reaction

According to some adherents of the 9/11 Truth movement, many of the questions that the 9/11 Family Steering Committee put to the 9/11 Commission, chaired by former New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean, were not asked in either the hearings nor in the Commission Report.^[61] Lorie Van Auken, one of the Jersey Girls, estimates that only 30% of their questions were answered in the final 9/11 Commission Report, published July 22, 2004.

The 9/11 Family Steering Committee produced a website summarizing the questions they had raised to the Commission, indicating which they believe had been answered satisfactorily, which they believe had been addressed but not answered satisfactorily, and which they believe had been generally ignored in or omitted from the Report.^[62]

In addition, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions* written by David Ray Griffin, claimed the report had either omitted information or distorted the truth, providing 115 examples of his allegations.^{[63][64][65]} Griffin has characterized the 9/11 Commission Report as "a 571-page lie".^[66]

On May 26, 2008, adjunct religious studies professor Blair Gadsby began a protest and a hunger strike outside the offices of Senator and Republican Party nominee for President John McCain's office requesting McCain meet with the principal scientists and leaders of the 9/11 Truth movement, specifically Richard Gage, Steven E. Jones, and David Ray Griffin. McCain had written the foreword to the book *Debunking 9/11 Myths: Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts*, published by the magazine *Popular Mechanics*.^[67]

Arizona Republican State Senator Karen Johnson joined the protest in support. On June 10, Johnson with Gadsby as her guest and other 9/11 Truth movement members in the audience, spoke before the Arizona State Senate espousing the controlled demolition theory and supporting a reopening of the 9/11 investigation.^{[14][67]}

NIST Report reaction

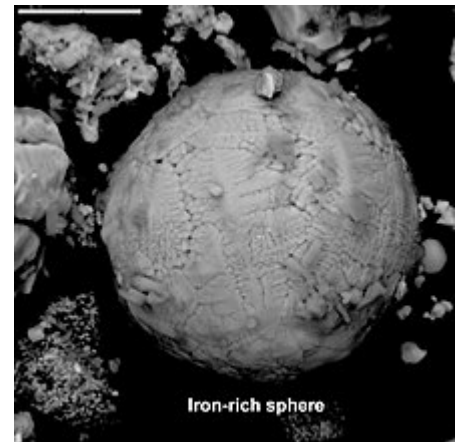
Following the initial government investigation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Report (May 2002) NIST Report, numerous responses were written by members of the 9/11 Truth movement. Many of these responses claimed that it ignored key evidence suggesting an explosive demolition, "distorted reality" by using deceptive language and diagrams, and attacked straw man arguments, such as the 2005 article by Jim Hoffman entitled *Building a better mirage: NIST's 3-year \$20,000,000 Cover Up of the Crime of the Century*.^[74]

In late 2005, Steven E. Jones, then a professor at Brigham Young University, announced a paper criticizing the NIST Report and describing his hypothesis that the WTC towers had been intentionally demolished by explosives. This paper garnered some mainstream media attention, including an appearance by Jones on MSNBC. This was the first such programming on a major cable news station. Jones was criticized by his university for making his claims public before vetting them through the approved peer review process. He was placed on paid leave and has since retired.^{[52][75][76]}

Accordingly, in April 2007, some 9/11 victims' family members and some members of the new *Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice* submitted an additional request for correction to NIST, containing their own views on the defects in the report.^[77] NIST responded to this request in September 2007 supporting their original conclusions;^[78] the originators of the request wrote back to them in October 2007, asking them to reconsider their response.

Pamphlets at National September 11 Museum

Members of the movement distributed pamphlets that they say told the "truth" about the attacks at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum when the Museum opened in May 2014.^[79]



An iron-rich sphere, found in the dust of the World Trade Center, as documented by the United States Geological Survey and RJ LeeGroup, Inc. RJ Lee's report states the spheres are indicative of molten iron.^{[68][69]} Members of the 9/11 Truth movement claim the spheres indicate the presence of temperatures much hotter than office fires, or the presence of thermite reactions.^{[70][71][72]} However, such spheres have been found to form when iron particles are affected by normal fuel fires.^[73]

Organizations

Since the publication of the official reports, a number of interconnected 9/11 Truth movement organizations have been formed.

Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth

Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth is an organization of architectural and engineering professionals^[80] who support the World Trade Center controlled demolition conspiracy theories and are calling for a new investigation into the destruction of the Twin Towers and WTC 7.^{[10][81]} The group is collecting signatures for a petition to the United States Congress that demands "a truly independent investigation with subpoena power" of the September 11 attacks, which, according to the organization, should include an inquiry into the possible use of explosives in the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings.^{[82][83]} Richard Gage, a San Francisco Bay area-based architect,^[84] founded *Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth* in 2006.^{[2][85]}



Two people holding a banner of Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth

Investigations by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have concluded that the buildings collapsed as a result of the impacts of the planes and of the fires that resulted from them.^{[51][86]} Gage criticized NIST for not having investigated the complete sequence of the collapse of the World Trade Center towers in its report,^[87] and claims "the official explanation of the total destruction of the World Trade Center skyscrapers has explicitly failed to address the massive evidence for explosive demolition."^[88] To support its position, the group Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth points to the "free fall" pace of the collapse of the buildings, the "lateral ejection of steel", and to the "mid-air pulverization of concrete", among other things.^[89]

9/11 Truth

9/11 Truth was launched in June 2004 and has become a central portal for many 9/11 Truth movement organizations. It is run by Janice Matthews (Executive Director),^{[90][91]} David Kubiak (International Campaign Advisor)^[92] and Mike Berger (Media Coordinator),^[93] among others, and its advisory board includes Steven E. Jones and Barrie Zwicker.^[94]

The organization co-sponsored opinion polls conducted by the U.S. market research and opinion polling firm Zogby International that have shown substantial numbers of people believing the government did not tell the full truth about the September 11 attacks.

Scholars for 9/11 Truth

The original Scholars for 9/11 Truth was founded by James H. Fetzer, a former philosophy professor, and physicist Steven E. Jones, in December 2005. It was a group of people of differing backgrounds and expertise who rejected the mainstream media and government account of the September 11 attacks.^{[3][95]} Initially the group invited many ideas and hypotheses to be considered. However, leading members soon came to feel that the inclusion of some theories advocated by Fetzer—such as the use of directed energy weapons or miniature nuclear bombs to destroy the Twin Towers—were insufficiently supported by

evidence and were exposing the group to ridicule. By December 2006, Jones and others set up a new scholars group, Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice, which described its focus as the use of scientific analysis.^[96] The original members took a vote on which group to join and the majority voted to move to the new group.^[97]

Scholars for 9/11 Truth & Justice

Scholars for 9/11 Truth & Justice (STJ) formed in January 2007 and is a self-described "group of scholars and supporters endeavoring to address the unanswered questions of the September 11, 2001 attack through scientific research and public education".^[98] The group is composed of more than 900 members,^[99] including Richard Gage, Steven E. Jones, Jim Hoffman, David Ray Griffin, and former Congressman Daniel Hamburg. Most members support the conspiracy theory that the World Trade Center Towers and the third skyscraper, WTC 7, were destroyed through explosive demolition.

In 2008 and 2009, several members of the Scholars for 9/11 Truth & Justice published essays in science and engineering journals. In April 2008, a letter by some of its members, was published in *The Open Civil Engineering Journal*.^[100] In July 2008, an article by Steven E. Jones and others was published in *The Environmentalist*.^[101]

In October 2008, a comment by STJ member James R. Gourley describing what he considers fundamental errors in a Bažant and Verdure paper was included in an issue of the *Journal of Engineering Mechanics*.^[102] In April 2009, Danish chemist and STJ member Niels H. Harrit, of the University of Copenhagen, and eight other authors, including some STJ members, published a paper in *The Open Chemical Physics Journal*, entitled *Active Thermitic Material Discovered in Dust from the 9/11 World Trade Center Catastrophe*. The paper, which caused the editor and only peer-reviewer, Professor Pileni, to resign, claiming it was published without her knowledge,^[103] concludes that chips consisting of unreacted and partially reacted nano-thermite ("super-thermite") appear to be present in samples of the dust.^{[71][104]}

9/11 Citizens Watch

9/11 Citizens Watch was formed in 2002 by John Judge and Kyle Hence and, along with the Family Steering Committee, played an active role in calling for the establishment of the 9/11 Commission, and monitoring the commission closely.^[105]

9/11 Commission Campaign

Founded in 2011 by Senator Mike Gravel, the 9/11 Commission Campaign's objective is to enact subpoena-capable, state-level commissions through state ballot initiatives, namely in Oregon, Alaska and California.^[106] These commissions are envisioned as citizen-driven, independent organizations that would form a semi-unified grassroots national presence by exercising joint powers authority.

Hispanic Victims Group

The Hispanic Victims Group is a group created after the 9/11 attacks, founded by William Rodriguez,^[107] a supporter of the 9/11 Truth movement. The group was one of the key forces behind the creation of the 9/11 Commission.^[105] William Rodriguez, as founder of the group, was a member of the Families Advisory Council for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC).^[108]

Conferences

Members of the 9/11 truth organizations, such as 911truth.org and Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice, held meetings and conferences to discuss ongoing research about 9/11 and to strategize about how best to achieve their goals during the early 2000s and 2010s. Many of these conferences are organized by 911truth.org, and some have been covered by the international media.^[109]

Opponents

Matt Taibbi of *Rolling Stone* assessed that the movement "gives supporters of Bush an excuse to dismiss critics of this administration", and expressed concerns about the number of people who believe in 9/11 conspiracy theories.^[110]

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) engineering professor Thomas W. Eagar was at first unwilling to acknowledge the concerns of the movement, saying that "if (the argument) gets too mainstream, I'll engage in the debate". In response to Steven E. Jones' publication of a hypothesis that the World Trade Center was destroyed by controlled demolition, Eagar said that adherents of the 9/11 Truth movement would use the reverse scientific method to arrive at their conclusions, as they "determine what happened, throw out all the data that doesn't fit their conclusion, and then hail their findings as the only possible conclusion".^[111]

Calling conspiracy theorists "the truthers", Bill Moyers has quoted journalist Robert Parry by stating that the theorists "...threw out all the evidence of al-Qaeda's involvement, from contemporaneous calls from hijack victims on the planes to confessions from al-Qaeda leaders both in and out of captivity that they had indeed done it. Then, recycling some of the right's sophistry techniques, such as using long lists of supposed evidence to overcome the lack of any real evidence, the 'truthers' cherry-picked a few supposed 'anomalies' to build an 'inside-job' story line".^[112]

Al-Qaeda has sharply criticized Iran's ex-president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, over his suggestions that the U.S. government was behind the September 11 attacks, dismissing his comments as "ridiculous".^[113]

Some skeptics^[114]—who oppose conspiracy as the *a priori* explanation to events, and who find most of the questions posed by the Truthers to be either easily answered^[115] or based on misleading or false ideas^[116]—have claimed that some of the Truthers are knowingly disseminating false information with no care for the grieving families, and have accordingly called them "disrespectful" or even "sickos".^[117]

In popular culture

In Louis CK's special 2017, he recounts a story in which his daughter, having heard the phrase "nine-eleven-deniers" on NPR, misunderstood the group's purpose. The bit goes on to describe a conspiracy group of nine people who deny the existence of the number 11.

Media

Books



William Rodriguez at American Scholars Symposium: 9/11 and the NeoCon Agenda in Los Angeles, California, June 24–25, 2006

In September 2004, the interactive "Complete 9/11 Timeline" website by Paul Thompson, a collection of mainstream media reports presented chronologically, was made into the book, entitled *The Terror Timeline*.^[118]

Films

Films made by people associated with the 9/11 Truth movement include:

- *The Great Conspiracy: The 9/11 News Special You Never Saw* (2005) by Barrie Zwicker^[119]
- *Martial Law 9/11: Rise of the Police State* (2005) by Alex Jones^[120]
- *9/11: Press for Truth* (2006) by Ray Nowosielski^{[121][122]}
- *911 Mysteries Part 1: Demolitions* (2006) by Sofia Shafquat^[123]
- *Zeitgeist: The Movie (part ii)* (2007) by Peter Joseph
- *9/11: Blueprint for Truth* (2007) and updated *9/11: Blueprint for Truth – The Architecture of Destruction* (2008)^[124] by Richard Gage
- *The New American Century* (2007) by Massimo Mazzucco^[125]
- *Loose Change: An American Coup* (2009) by Dylan Avery
- *New World Order* (2009) by Luke Meyer and Andrew Neel^{[126][127]}
- *9/11: Explosive Evidence – Experts Speak Out* (2012) by Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth^[128]
- *September 11: The New Pearl Harbor* (2013), a five-hour documentary by Massimo Mazzucco^[129]
- David Hooper's *The Anatomy of a Great Deception* (2014)^[130]

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Barack Obama citizenship conspiracy theories

During Barack Obama's campaign for president in 2008, throughout his presidency, and afterwards, "there was extensive news coverage of Obama's religious preference, birthplace, and of the individuals questioning his religious belief and citizenship – efforts eventually known as the **'birther movement'**",^[2] by which name it is widely referred to across media.^{[3][4][5][6][7][8][9]} The movement falsely asserted Obama was ineligible to be President of the United States because he was not a natural-born citizen of the U.S. as required by Article Two of the Constitution. Birther conspiracy theories were predominantly held by conservatives and Republicans, as well as individuals with anti-black attitudes.^{[10][11]}

Theories alleged that Obama's published birth certificate was a forgery – that his actual birthplace was not Hawaii but Kenya. Other theories alleged that Obama became a citizen of Indonesia in childhood, thereby losing his U.S. citizenship. Still others claimed that Obama was not a natural-born U.S. citizen because he was born a dual citizen (British and American). A number of political commentators have characterized these various claims as a racist reaction to Obama's status as the first African-American president of the United States.^[12]

These claims were promoted by fringe theorists (pejoratively referred to as "birthers"), the most prominent among whom was then-businessman-and-television-personality Donald Trump, who would later succeed Obama as president. Some theorists sought court rulings to declare Obama ineligible to take office, or to grant access to various documents which they claimed would support such ineligibility; none of these efforts succeeded. Some political opponents, especially in the Republican Party, expressed skepticism about Obama's citizenship or were unwilling to acknowledge it; some proposed legislation that would require presidential candidates to provide proof of eligibility.^[13]

Theories have persisted despite Obama's pre-election release of his official Hawaiian birth certificate in 2008,^[14] confirmation by the Hawaii Department of Health based on the original documents,^[15] the April 2011 release of a certified copy of Obama's original Certificate of Live Birth (or *long-form birth certificate*), and contemporaneous birth announcements published in Hawaii newspapers.^[16] Polls conducted in 2010 (before the April 2011 release) suggested that at least 25% of adult Americans said that they doubted Obama's U.S. birth,^{[17][18]} and a May 2011 Gallup poll found that the percentage had fallen to 13% of American adults (23% of Republicans).^[19] The fall has been attributed to Obama's release of the long form in April 2011.^{[20][21][22]}



A 2010 billboard displayed in South Gate, California, questioning the validity of Barack Obama's birth certificate and by extension his eligibility to serve as President of the U.S. The billboard was part of an advertising campaign by *WorldNetDaily*, whose web address appears on the billboard's bottom right corner.

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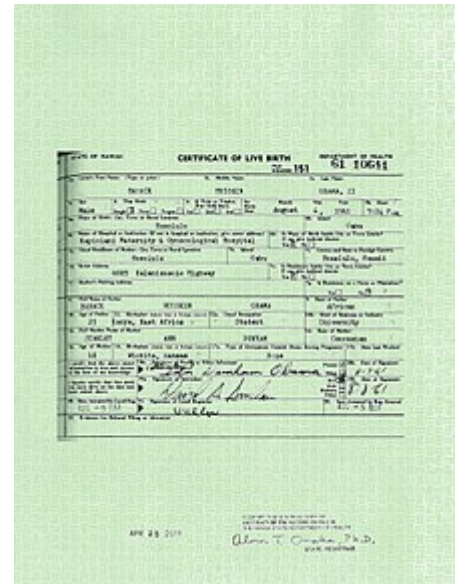
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In response to the conspiracy theories, the White House released copies of the President's long-form birth certificate on April 27, 2011, and posted an image of it to the White House website,^[1] reaffirming that he was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Background

Early life of Barack Obama

People who express doubts about Obama's eligibility or reject details about his early life are often informally called "birthers", a term that parallels^[23] the nickname "truthers" for adherents of 9/11 conspiracy theories.^{[24][25]} These conspiracy theorists reject at least some of the following facts about his early life:

Barack Obama was born on August 4, 1961, at Kapi'olani Maternity & Gynecological Hospital (now called Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children) in Honolulu, Hawaii,^{[26][27][28][29]} to Ann Dunham,^[30] from Wichita, Kansas,^[31] and her husband Barack Obama Sr., a Luo from Nyang'oma Kogelo, Nyanza Province (in what was then the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya), who was attending the University of Hawaii. Birth notices for Barack Obama were published in *The Honolulu Advertiser* on August 13 and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* on August 14, 1961.^{[26][31]} Obama's father's immigration file also clearly states Barack Obama was born in Hawaii.^[32] One of his high school teachers, who was acquainted with his mother at the time, remembered hearing about the day of his birth.^[30]

Obama's parents were divorced in 1964. He attended kindergarten in 1966–1967 at Noelani Elementary School in Honolulu.^{[26][33]} In 1967, his mother married Indonesian student Lolo Soetoro,^[26] who was also attending the University of Hawaii, and the family moved to Jakarta, Indonesia,^[34] where Obama attended the Catholic St. Francis of Assisi School before transferring to State Elementary School Menteng 01, an elite Indonesian public school in Menteng. As a child in Indonesia, Obama was called "Barry", sometimes Barry Soetoro, reflecting his stepfather's surname, and sometimes Barry Obama, using his father's surname.^{[35][36][37]} When he was ten years old, Obama returned to Honolulu to live with his maternal grandparents, Madelyn and Stanley Dunham, and has resided continuously in the United States since 1971.

Origins of the claims

Conspiracy theories about Obama's religion appeared at least as early as his 2004 U.S. Senate campaign in a press release by Illinois political candidate Andy Martin,^[38] and, according to a *Los Angeles Times* editorial, as Internet rumors.^[39]

From the start of March 2008, rumors that Obama was born in Kenya before being flown to Hawaii were spread on conservative websites, with the suggestion that this would disqualify Obama from the presidency.^[40] In April of that year, some supporters of Hillary Clinton circulated anonymous chain emails repeating the same rumor,^[41] among them was an Iowa campaign volunteer, who was fired when the story emerged.^{[42][43]} These and numerous other chain e-mails during the subsequent presidential election circulated false rumors about Obama's origin, religion, and birth certificate.^{[44][45]}

On June 9, 2008, Jim Geraghty of the conservative website *National Review Online* suggested that Obama release his birth certificate.^{[46][47]} Geraghty wrote that releasing his birth certificate could debunk several false rumors circulating on the Internet, namely: that his middle name was originally Muhammad rather than Hussein; that his mother had originally named him "Barry" rather than "Barack"; and that Barack Obama Sr. was not his biological father, as well as the rumor that Barack Obama was not a natural-born citizen.^{[47][48][49]}

In August 2008, Philip J. Berg, a former member of the Democratic State Committee of Pennsylvania, brought an unsuccessful lawsuit against Obama, which alleged "that Obama was born in Mombasa, Kenya."^{[50][51]}

In October 2008, an NPR article referred to "Kenyan-born" Senator Barack Obama.^[52] Also that month, anonymous e-mails circulated claiming that the Associated Press (AP) had reported Obama was "Kenyan-Born".^[53] The claims were based on an AP story that had appeared five years earlier in a Kenyan publication, *The Standard*.^{[53][54]} The rumor-checking website Snopes.com found that the headline and lead-in sentence describing Obama as born in Kenya and misspelling his first name had been added by the Kenyan newspaper, and did not appear in the story issued by the AP or in any other contemporary newspaper that picked up the AP story.^{[53][55]}

In 2012, the far-right website Breitbart published a copy of a promotional booklet that Obama's literary agency, Acton & Dystel, printed in 1991 (and later posted to their website, in a biography in place until April 2007) which misidentified Obama's birthplace and states that Obama was "born in Kenya and raised in Indonesia and Hawaii". When this was posted by Breitbart, the booklet's editor said that this incorrect information had been her mistake, not based on anything provided to her agency by Obama.^[56]

Release of the birth certificates

Short form, 2008

On June 12, 2008, Obama's campaign responded to the rumors by posting an image of Obama's birth certificate on the *"Fight The Smears"* website.^{[57][58]}

The image is a scan of a laser-printed document obtained from and certified by the Hawaii Department of Health on June 6, 2007. It is a "Certification of Live Birth", sometimes referred to as a short form birth certificate, and contains less information than the longer "Certificate of Live Birth", which Hawaii no longer issues.^{[59][60]} Asked about this, Hawaiian Department of Health spokeswoman Janice Okubo explained that Hawaii stopped issuing the longer "Certificate" in 2001 when their birth records were "put into electronic files for consistent reporting", and therefore Hawaii "does not have a short-form or long-form certificate".^[61] A "record of live birth", partially handwritten and partially typed, was created and submitted in 1961 when Obama was born, and is "located in a bound volume in a file cabinet on the first floor of the state Department of Health". The document was used to create the state's electronic records, and has been examined by state officials multiple times since the controversy began.^[60]



Scanned image of Barack Obama's birth certificate released by his presidential campaign in June 2008.^[31]

In releasing the certificate, the Obama website declared that the rumors "aren't actually about that piece of paper – they're about manipulating people into thinking Barack is not an American citizen."^[58] The campaign also provided the Daily Kos blog with a copy of the document.^{[62][63]} Referring to this release, *National Review* columnist Jim Geraghty, wrote on June 12, 2008:

... this document is what he or someone authorized by him was given by the state out of its records. Barring some vast conspiracy within the Hawaii State Department of Health, there is no reason to think his [original] birth certificate would have any different data.^[62]

Frequent arguments of those questioning Obama's eligibility related to the fact that he did not originally release a copy of his "original" or "long form" birth certificate, but rather a "short form" version that did not include all of the information given on 1961 Hawaii-issued birth certificates. It was claimed that the use of the term "certification of live birth" on the first document means it is not equivalent to a "birth certificate". These arguments have been debunked numerous times by media investigations,^[18] every judicial forum that has addressed the matter, and Hawaiian government officials – among whom a consensus has been reached that the document released by the Obama campaign is indeed his official birth certificate.^[64] The director of the state Department of Human Health confirmed that the state "has Senator Obama's original birth certificate on record in accordance with state policies and procedures".^{[15][65]} The short form is "*prima facie* evidence of the fact of birth in any court proceeding."^[31]

Rejection by conspiracy theorists

The release of the certificate in 2008 resulted in a fresh round of questions. It was asserted that the certificate had been digitally forged with Adobe Photoshop and lacked a stamped seal of the state, which led them to demand that Obama release his "original" 1961 birth certificate.^[48] Jerome Corsi, author of the book *The Obama Nation: Leftist Politics and the Cult of Personality*, told Fox News that "the campaign has a false, fake birth certificate posted on their website ... it's been shown to have watermarks from Photoshop. It's a fake document that's on the Web site right now, and the original birth certificate the campaign refuses to produce."^[31] This view was rejected by FactCheck.org, which viewed the Obama campaign's hard copy of the Certification of Live Birth and reported that:

FactCheck.org staffers have now seen, touched, examined and photographed the original birth certificate. We conclude that it meets all of the requirements from the State Department for proving U.S. citizenship. Claims that the document lacks a raised seal or a signature are false. We have posted high-resolution photographs of the document as "supporting documents" to this article. Our conclusion: Obama was born in the U.S.A. just as he has always said.^[31]

Corsi continued to cast doubt on Obama's birth certificate as late as March 2019. In a CNN interview, he stated, "I want to see the original 1961 birth records from Kenya, that'll settle it ... the State of Hawaii will not show those records to anyone." Corsi's attorney, Larry Klayman, falsely asserted during the same interview, "the birth certificate uses the word 'African-American' in 1961."^{[66][67]}

Hawaii Department of Health response

The director of Hawaii's Department of Health, Chiyome Fukino, issued a statement confirming that the state held Obama's "original birth certificate on record in accordance with state policies and procedures".^{[15][65]} Noting "there have been numerous requests for Senator Barack Hussein Obama's official birth certificate," Fukino explained that the department was prohibited by state law from

releasing it to "persons who do not have a tangible interest in the vital record". She said: "No state official, including Governor Linda Lingle, has ever instructed that this vital record be handled in a manner different from any other vital record in the possession of the State of Hawaii."^{[15][68][69]}

According to the website TVNewser, CNN's researchers stated in 2009 that the original birth certificate no longer existed, as Hawaii discarded all paper birth records in 2001, and the certification of live birth was the official copy.^[70] Contradicting this report, Janice Okubo, public information officer for the Hawaii DOH, said "We don't destroy vital records."^[71] The Health Department's director emphasized the assertion:

I, Dr. Chiyome Fukino, director of the Hawaii State Department of Health, have seen the original vital records maintained on file by the Hawaii State Department of Health verifying Barack Hussein Obama was born in Hawaii and is a natural-born American citizen. I have nothing further to add to this statement or my original statement issued in October 2008, over eight months ago.^{[71][72]}

Joshua Wisch, a spokesman for the Hawaii Attorney General's office, stated in 2011 that the original "long form" birth certificate – described by Hawaiian officials as a "record of live birth" kept in the archives of the Hawaii Department of Health is "... a Department of Health record and it can't be released to anybody", including President Obama. Wisch added that state law does not authorize photocopying such records.^[60]

Long form, 2011

On April 22, 2011, Obama asked Loretta Fuddy, director of the Hawaii Department of Health, for certified copies of his original Certificate of Live Birth ("long-form birth certificate").^[73] Accompanying the letter was a written request from Judith Corley, Obama's personal counsel, requesting a waiver of the department's policy of issuing only computer-generated certificates. Corley stated that granting the waiver would relieve the department of the burden of repeated inquiries into the President's birth records.^[74]

On April 25, 2011, Fuddy approved the request and witnessed the copying process as the health department's registrar issued the certified copies. The same day, Corley personally visited the department headquarters in Honolulu to pay the required fee on Obama's behalf, and received the two requested certified copies of the original birth certificate, an accompanying letter from Fuddy attesting to the authenticity of same, and a receipt for the processing fee. Fuddy said that she had granted the exception to its normal policy of issuing only computer-generated copies by virtue of Obama's status, in an effort to avoid ongoing requests for the birth certificate.^{[75][76]}

On April 27, 2011, White House staffers gave reporters a copy of the certificate, and posted a PDF image of the certificate on the White House website.^{[77][78]} The certificate reconfirmed the information on the official short-form certificate released in 2008, and provided additional details such as the name of the hospital at which Obama was born.^{[79][80]}

Rejection by conspiracy theorists

A claim put forth by the *Drudge Report*^[81] that the newly released document was a forgery made with image editing software quickly spread on the Internet.^[82] Nathan Goulding, chief technology officer of the *National Review* magazine, dismissed the matter of "layered components" found in the White House PDF by suggesting "that whoever scanned the birth certificate in Hawaii forgot to turn off the OCR setting on the scanner." Nathan added, "I've confirmed that scanning an image, converting it to a PDF, optimizing that PDF, and then opening it up in Illustrator, does in fact create layers similar to what is seen in the birth certificate PDF. You can try it yourself at home."^[83]

"Showing papers"

Goldie Taylor, a commentator for the African American news site *The Grio*, characterized the demand that Obama provide his birth certificate as an equivalent of making him "show his papers", as blacks were once required to do under Jim Crow laws.^[84] Sociologist Matthew W. Hughey has cited many of the claims as evidence of racial "othering" of Obama against the conflation of the *White Anglo-Saxon Protestant* (WASP) subject as the ideal and authentic American citizen.^[85]

False claims

Born in Kenya

Some opponents of Obama's presidential eligibility claim that he was born in Kenya and was therefore not born a United States citizen. Whether Obama having been born outside the U.S. would have invalidated his U.S. citizenship at birth is debated. Political commentator Andrew Malcolm, of the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote that Obama would still be eligible for the presidency, regardless of where he was born, because his mother was an American citizen, saying that Obama's mother "could have been on Mars when wee Barry emerged and he'd still be American."^[86] A contrary view is promoted by UCLA Law Professor Eugene Volokh, who has said that in the hypothetical scenario that Obama was born outside the U.S., he would *not* be a natural-born citizen, since the then-applicable law^[87] would have required Obama's mother to have been in the U.S. at least "five years after the age of 14", but Ann Dunham was three months shy of her 19th birthday when Obama was born.^[88]

Obama's paternal step-grandmother's version of events

An incorrect but popularly reported claim is that his father's stepmother, Sarah Obama, told Anabaptist Bishop Ron McRae in a recorded transatlantic telephone conversation that she was present when Obama was born in Kenya.^[89]

The *McClatchy* newspapers gave an explanation of how the story about Obama's step-grandmother began. The tape is cut off in the middle of the conversation, before the passage in which she clarifies her meaning: "'Obama was not born in Mombasa. He was born in America,' the translator says after talking to the woman. ... Another response later says, 'Obama in Hawaii. Hawaii. She says he was born in Hawaii.'"^[90]

Sarah Obama shed more light on the controversy in a 2007 interview with the *Chicago Tribune*. In the interview, Obama's paternal step-grandmother stated that six months after Barack Obama Sr. and Ann Dunham were married, she received a letter at her home in Kenya announcing the birth of Barack Obama II, who was born August 4, 1961.^[91]

In a June 2012 interview at her Kenyan home, Sarah Obama was asked: "Some people want to believe that the president was born in Kenya. Have these people ever bothered you or asked for his birth certificate?" Her response was: "But Barack Obama wasn't born in Kenya."^[92]

Fake Kenyan birth certificate

On August 2, 2009, Orly Taitz released and attached to court documents a purported Kenyan birth certificate which she said, if authenticated and shown to be genuine, would significantly narrow and shorten the discovery and pre-trial litigation period in the *Keyes v. Bowen* lawsuit, in which the plaintiffs asked for a judicial order that Obama provide documentation that he is a natural-born citizen of the United States. Legal papers submitted describe the document as an "unauthenticated color photocopy of certified copy of registration of birth".^{[93][94]} The document was almost immediately revealed to be a forgery. It purports to have been issued by the "Republic of Kenya", when in fact, such a state did not yet exist at the time of Obama's birth as indicated on the document (Kenya was a British Colony until 1963).^[95]

Subsequently, evidence was unearthed that the alleged Kenyan birth certificate was a modified version of a 1959 Australian birth certificate found on an online genealogy website.^{[96][97]} The *Washington Independent* website cited an anonymous blogger^[98] as having taken responsibility for the forgery and posting four photos substantiating his claim.^[99]

Not born in Hawaii

Despite the existence of Obama's Hawaii certification of live birth, Terry Lakin's attorney, among others, have claimed that anyone, including foreign-born children, could acquire a Hawaiian certification of live birth, and so Obama's possession of such a certificate does not prove that he was born in Hawaii.^[100] However, the suggestion that this could have applied to Obama was rejected by Janice Okubo, director of communications for the Hawaii Department of Health: "If you were born in Bali, for example, you could get a certificate from the state of Hawaii saying you were born in Bali. You could not get a certificate saying you were born in Honolulu. The state has to verify a fact like that for it to appear on the certificate."^[101] Another fact that refutes this specific claim is that the law allowing foreign-born children to obtain Hawaiian birth certificates did not exist until 20 years after Obama was born, while Obama's published birth certificate says his birth information was recorded four days after his birth in 1961, and explicitly states that he was born in Honolulu.^[102]

Additionally, some people claim that the information in the birth certificate only has to be based on the testimony of one parent.^[102]

On July 27, 2009, Fukino issued a statement explicitly stating she has "seen the original vital records maintained on file by the Hawaii State Department of Health verifying Barack Hussein Obama was born in Hawaii and is a natural-born American citizen".^{[103][104]}

Hawaiian Department of Health spokeswoman Janice Okubo elaborated on state policy for the release of vital records: "If someone from Obama's campaign gave us permission in person and presented some kind of verification that he or she was Obama's designee, we could release the vital record."^[105]

A hospital spokesperson at Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women & Children has said that their standard procedure is to neither confirm nor deny Obama was born there, "even though all the information out there says he was born at Kapiolani Hospital", citing federal privacy laws.^[26]

91-939 Kalapu St., Ewa Beach, Ewa, daughter, Aug. 3.
 Mr. and Mrs. Barack H. Obama, 6085 Kalanianaʻole Hwy., son, Aug. 4.
 Mr. and Mrs. Norman Asing, 2135 Ani Aniku St., son, Aug. 4.
 Mr. and Mrs. Andrew A. M.

Obama's birth announcement, published in *The Honolulu Advertiser* on August 13, 1961

In 1961, birth notices for Barack Obama were published in both the *Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* on August 13 and 14, 1961, respectively, listing the home address of Obama's parents as 6085 Kalanianaʻole Highway in Honolulu.^{[26][31]} On November 9, 2008, in response to the persistent rumors, the *Advertiser* posted on its web site a screenshot of the announcement taken from its microfilmed archives. Such notices were sent to newspapers routinely by the Hawaii Department of Health.^[26]

In an editorial published on July 29, 2009, the *Star-Bulletin* pointed out that both newspapers' vital-statistics columns are available on microfilm in the main state library. "Were the state Department of Health and Obama's parents really in cahoots to give false information to the newspapers [...]" the newspaper asked.^[106]

Lost U.S. citizenship

It has been suggested that Obama obtained Indonesian citizenship (and thus may have lost U.S. citizenship) when he lived there as a child.^[107] As an attempt to prove that Obama was no longer a U.S. citizen (or held dual citizenship), some claim his 1981 trip to Pakistan took place at a time when there was supposedly a ban on United States passport holders entering that country, which would in turn have required him to use a non-U.S. passport. There was in fact no such ban. A *The New York Times* article and U.S. State Department travel advisories from 1981 make it clear that travel to Pakistan by U.S. passport holders was legal at that time.^{[108][109][110]}

An April Fools' Day hoax email circulated on the Internet starting in 2009. It falsely claimed that Obama applied to Occidental College under the name "Barry Soetoro" claiming to be "a foreign student from Indonesia" in order to obtain a Fulbright scholarship (which does not exist for undergraduate students from Indonesia).^[111]

Disputes over "natural-born citizen" requirements

Another theory of Obama's ineligibility is that, regardless of his place of birth, he does not meet the constitutional definition of a natural-born citizen.

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States ..." According to law professor Gabriel J. Chin, "there is agreement that 'natural born citizens' include those made citizens by birth under the 14th Amendment."^{[112][113]}

Despite this agreement, two similar but distinct theories nonetheless contend Obama, although born in Hawaii, does not qualify as a "natural-born citizen".^{[114][115]}

Parental citizenship

Some campaigners, such as the Tennessee-based Liberty Legal Foundation, contend that in order for a person to be a natural-born citizen within the meaning of Article II, Section 1, it is necessary that both parents be U.S. citizens at the time of that person's birth. Those who subscribe to this theory argue that

since Obama's father was not a U.S. citizen, Obama could not have been a natural-born citizen, and is therefore ineligible to be President of the United States. The Liberty Legal Foundation has cited a passage in the decision on an 1875 voting rights case which came before the U.S. Supreme Court – *Minor v. Happersett* – in which the court stated there was no doubt that "all children born in a country of parents who were its citizens" were natural-born citizens.^{[116][117]} This legal theory on Obama's eligibility was unsuccessfully litigated several times, most notably in *Ankeny v. Governor of the State of Indiana* (2008).

Dual citizenship

Others, including New Jersey attorney Leo Donofrio, have falsely claimed that a person cannot be a natural-born citizen if he is a dual citizen at birth. Those who subscribe to this theory argue that because Obama's father was a Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies at the time Obama was born, Obama was born a dual citizen and therefore was not a natural-born citizen.^[115]

In August 2008, the *Rocky Mountain News* ran an online article asserting that Obama is both a U.S. and a Kenyan citizen.^[118] Obama actually was born a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC) under British law, by virtue of his descent from a Kenyan father at a time when Kenya was a British colony, but lost CUKC citizenship and became a Kenyan citizen when Kenya gained independence in 1963. However, Kenya's 1963 constitution prohibited dual citizenship in adulthood; Obama therefore automatically lost his Kenyan citizenship on his 23rd birthday in 1984, by failing to formally renounce any non-Kenyan citizenship and swear an oath of allegiance to Kenya.^[119] The *Rocky Mountain News* apologized for the error and published a correction,^[120] but the article continued to fuel online rumors about Obama's eligibility for the presidency. The current Kenyan constitution, effective since 2010, permits dual citizenship, but requires those who lost Kenyan citizenship prior to 2010 to complete a registration process to regain it.^[121]

Campaigners and proponents

Notable advocates of the view that Obama may not be eligible for the Presidency include Philip J. Berg, a Pennsylvania attorney and 9/11 conspiracy theorist. Berg describes himself as a "moderate to liberal" Democrat who backed Hillary Clinton for president.^[122] Another notable advocate is Alan Keyes, who was defeated by Obama in the 2004 Illinois U.S. Senate election, served as a diplomat in the Reagan administration, and is currently a media personality and self-described "conservative political activist".^[123] Orly Taitz, a California dentist and attorney who emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel, then to the United States, and holds dual U.S. and Israeli citizenship, has been called the "queen bee of the birthers", because she is often seen as the face of the movement.^[124]

Other notable advocates include Andy Martin, a perennial candidate who was "widely credited with starting the cyberwhisper campaign" that Obama is a secret Muslim,^[125] and Robert L. Schulz, a tax protester and activist who placed full-page advertisements in the *Chicago Tribune* in December 2008 arguing that Obama had been born in Kenya or had subsequently renounced U.S. citizenship.^[126] Larry Klayman, founder of both Judicial Watch and Freedom Watch, expressed doubts about Obama's natural-born citizenship.^[127] The



A protester questioning the legitimacy of Obama's birth certificate

Constitution Party, a paleoconservative third party, also campaigned for release of Obama's original long-form certificate.^[128] In December 2008, Alex Koppelman, a senior writer for *Salon*, characterized nearly all of the prominent people promoting the story Obama was not eligible to be president – including Jerome Corsi, Philip Berg, Andy Martin, and Robert Schultz – as having a "history of conspiracist thought".^[64]

The website AmericaMustKnow.com encouraged visitors to lobby members of the Electoral College to vote against Obama's confirmation as President and become faithless electors.^[48] Electors around the country received numerous letters and e-mails contending that Obama's birth certificate is a forgery and that he was born in Kenya, and requesting that Obama be denied the presidency.^[129] Some of the online campaigners coordinated their efforts with weekly conference calls, in which they discussed the latest news and how to advance the story.^[130]

The campaign was supported by the conservative WorldNetDaily (*WND*) website, which sponsored a letter-writing campaign to the Supreme Court.^[48] *WND*'s publisher Joseph Farah has written a number of editorials arguing that Obama's eligibility needs to be confirmed. *WND* has mounted an advertising campaign, using electronic billboards to ask "Where's The Birth Certificate?"^{[131][132]}

The talk radio hosts Michael Savage, G. Gordon Liddy, Brian Sussman, Lars Larson, Bob Grant, Jim Quinn, Rose Tennent, Barbara Simpson, Mark Davis, and Fred Grandy have all promoted the ineligibility claims on their radio shows. Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity and Lou Dobbs have also broached the issue several times on their shows.^{[13][133]} Savage, during an episode of his nationally syndicated radio show *The Savage Nation*, said that "We're getting ready for the Communist takeover of America with a noncitizen at the helm."^[130]

Some celebrities have promoted or touched upon the ineligibility claims. In August 2009, actor Chuck Norris, while not embracing the eligibility claims, wrote an open letter to Obama urging that he officially release his "original birth certificate", saying, "Refusing to post your original birth certificate is an unwise political and leadership decision that is enabling the 'birther' controversy."^[134] In December 2010, Baltimore Orioles baseball player Luke Scott asserted in a Yahoo! interview that Obama "was not born here" and that his birth certificate was never released.^[135] *The Huffington Post* reported that, in April 2011 during his stage show, Charlie Sheen said, "For starters, I was fucking born here, how about that? And I got proof! Nothing photoshopped about my birth certificate."^[136]

According to Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center, "the birther movement has gained a large following on the radical right ... it has been adopted by the most noxious elements out there." Some of those "noxious elements" include a number of avowed white-supremacist and neo-Nazi groups.^{[137][138]} James Wenneker von Brunn, an avowed white supremacist charged as the gunman in the June 10, 2009, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum shooting, had previously posted messages to the Internet accusing Obama and the media of hiding documents about his life.^{[139][140]}

In March 2017, after Obama was no longer the president, Malik Obama, his paternal half brother, posted on Twitter an image of a fake Kenyan birth certificate, which had been "debunked" in 2009 when it was first presented as part of one of the failed lawsuits that challenged Obama's ineligibility.^[141]

Donald Trump

Trump was the most prominent promoter of birther conspiracy theories.^{[142][143]} This elevated Trump's political profile in the years leading up to his successful 2016 presidential campaign.^{[142][143][144]} According to political scientists John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, Trump "became a virtual

spokesperson for the 'birther' movement. The strategy worked: when Trump flirted with running for president in 2011, his popularity was concentrated among the sizable share of Republicans who thought that President Obama was foreign born or a Muslim or both."^[143]

In 2010, at the urging of Donald Trump's lawyer Michael Cohen, the *National Enquirer* began promoting a potential Trump presidential campaign, and with Cohen's involvement, the tabloid began questioning Obama's birthplace and citizenship.^[145]

In March 2011, during an interview on *Good Morning America*, Donald Trump said he was seriously considering running for president, that he was a "little" skeptical of Obama's citizenship, and that someone who shares this view should not be so quickly dismissed as an "idiot"^[146] (as Trump considers the term "birther" to be "derogatory"^[147]). Trump added, "Growing up no one knew him,"^[146] a claim ranked Pants-on-Fire by Politifact.^[148] Later, Trump appeared on *The View* repeating several times that "I want him [Obama] to show his birth certificate." He speculated that "there [was] something on that birth certificate that [Obama] doesn't like", a comment which host Whoopi Goldberg described as "the biggest pile of dog mess I've heard in ages".^[149] On the March 30, 2011, edition of *CNN Newsroom*, anchor Suzanne Malveaux commented on Trump's statements, pointing out that she had made a documentary for which she had gone to Hawaii and spoken with people who knew Obama as a child.^{[150][151]} In an NBC TV interview broadcast on April 7, 2011, Trump said he would not let go of the issue, because he was not satisfied that Obama had proved his citizenship.^[152] After Trump began making his views public, he was contacted by Joseph Farah of *WorldNetDaily*, who was reportedly on the phone with Trump every day for a week, providing Trump with a "birther primer", answers to questions, and advice.^[153] After Obama released his long-form birth certificate on April 27, 2011, Trump said "I am really honored and I am really proud, that I was able to do something that nobody else could do."^[154]

On October 24, 2012, Trump offered to donate five million dollars to the charity of Obama's choice in return for the publication of his college and passport applications before October 31, 2012.^[155]

On September 16, 2016, as the Republican Party presidential nominee, Trump conceded that "President Barack Obama was born in the United States. Period." Trump gave himself credit for putting the controversy to rest and also repeated a false claim that Hillary Clinton, his opponent in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and one of Obama's opponents in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries, had started the controversy concerning Obama's place of birth. While those who did so were Clinton supporters, there is no evidence of Clinton or her campaign questioning Obama's birthplace.^[156]

Joe Arpaio

Volunteer investigators working under the direction of Maricopa County, Arizona, Sheriff Joe Arpaio have asserted that Obama's birth certificate is a computer-generated forgery. Rejecting this claim, an assistant to Hawaii's attorney general stated in July 2012 that "President Obama was born in Honolulu, and his birth certificate is valid. ... Regarding the latest allegations from a sheriff in Arizona, they are untrue, misinformed and misconstrue Hawaii law."^[157] Arizona state officials, including Governor Jan Brewer and Secretary of State Ken Bennett, have also dismissed Arpaio's objections and accepted the validity of Obama's birth certificate.^{[158][159]} Alex Pareene, a staff writer for *Salon*, wrote regarding a May 2012 trip to Hawaii by Arpaio's people that "I think we have long since passed the point at which I'd find this story believable in a fictional setting."^[160] In December 2016, Arpaio presented "9 points of forgery" that he said proved that the digital image of Obama's long form birth certificate was not authentic. He said he would submit his evidence to federal authorities.^{[161][162]}

Matthew Hill

Rep. Matthew Hill, one of a handful of Tennessee General Assembly members widely reported at the time to be birthers, demanded in 2009 that newly-elected president Obama should be compelled to present Hill and other Tennessee state legislators with a certified copy of his Hawaiian birth certificate.

Hill interviewed birther conspiracy advocate Orly Taitz at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville for a February 10, 2009, segment podcasted online by the IRN/USA Radio Network. During *The Matthew Hill Show* he stated:



TNGA Rep. Matthew Hill speaking during 2008 Republican primary debate, Jonesborough, Tennessee

We've said on this program many times ... we've had people call in and say why are you picking on him? And I've said, "Look it's really simple. If he is a U.S. citizen you produce the papers. If he's not a U.S. citizen, what does he do? He hides them. He's hiding them. We need the truth. We need the documents unsealed. We need to know what's going on."^[163]^[164]

Roy Moore

U.S. Senate candidate and former Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court Roy Moore first questioned Obama's citizenship in 2008, and said in 2016 that he didn't believe Obama had natural-born citizenship.^[165]

Richard Shelby

In February 2009, the *Cullman Times*, an Alabama newspaper, reported that at a town hall meeting there, U.S. Senator from Alabama Richard Shelby was asked if there was any truth to the rumors that Obama was not a natural-born citizen. According to the *Times* report, Shelby said, "Well his father was Kenyan and they said he was born in Hawaii, but I haven't seen any birth certificate. You have to be born in America to be president."^[166]

A Shelby spokesperson denied the story, but the newspaper stood by it.^[167]

Roy Blunt

On July 28, 2009, Mike Stark approached Missouri Congressman Roy Blunt asking him about the conspiracy theory that Barack Obama is not a natural-born citizen. Blunt responded: "What I don't know is why the President can't produce a birth certificate. I don't know anybody else that can't produce one. And I think that's a legitimate question. No health records, no birth certificate."^[168] Blunt's spokesperson later claimed that the quote was taken out of context.^[169]

Jean Schmidt

After giving a speech at the Voice of America Freedom Rally in West Chester, Ohio on September 5, 2009, Republican congresswoman Jean Schmidt replied to a woman who commented that Obama was ineligible for the Presidency, "I agree with you. But the courts don't."^[170] Schmidt's office subsequently responded that a video clip of this comment was "taken out of context", and reiterated that her stated position is that Obama is a citizen.^[171]

She had earlier voted to certify the Electoral College vote affirming his presidency, and had said she believes Obama is a U.S. citizen.^[172]

Nathan Deal

In November 2009, then-Representative Nathan Deal replied to a question about whether he believed that Obama "is a native-born American citizen who is eligible to serve as president" with a statement that "I am joining several of my colleagues in the House in writing a letter to the President asking that he release a copy of his birth certificate so we can have an answer to this question."^[173] Contrasting the differing fates of Deal, who won the 2010 gubernatorial election in Georgia, and former Democratic Representative Cynthia McKinney, who lost her primary after endorsing 9/11 conspiracy theories, David Weigel of Slate noted: "Dipping a toe into the birtherism fever swamp didn't stop Deal from winning a statewide primary."^[174]

Sarah Palin

During a December 3, 2009 interview on Rusty Humphries' radio talk show, Humphries asked Sarah Palin if she would make Obama's birth certificate a campaign issue in 2012, should she decide to run. Palin responded, "I think the public rightfully is still making it an issue. I don't have a problem with that. I don't know if I would have to bother to make it an issue, because I think that members of the electorate still want answers ... I think it's a fair question, just like I think past association and past voting records – all of that is fair game. The McCain-Palin campaign didn't do a good enough job in that area."^[175]

After news organizations and blogs picked up the quotation,^[176] Palin stated on her Facebook page that voters have the right to ask questions, and that she had herself never asked Obama to produce a birth certificate. She likened the questioning of Obama's birth certificate to questions raised during the 2008 presidential elections about her maternity to her son, Trig.^[177] This analogy was criticized by Mark Milian of the Los Angeles Times, who said: "It's not like Barack Obama hosted a radio show and called her a baby faker."^[178]

Tracey Mann

Tracey Mann, a candidate running for Congress from Kansas in 2010, stated at a candidate forum that Obama should release his birth certificate to resolve the issue. In a radio interview, he said: "I think the president of the United States needs to come forth with his papers and show everyone that he's an American citizen and put this issue to bed once and for all." In response, on July 21, 2010, The Hutchinson News, a local paper in Hutchinson, Kansas, withdrew their endorsement of Mann, saying that Mann "questions the citizenship of President Barack Obama despite evidence that is irrefutable to most objective, rational people – including a birth certificate released by the Hawaii secretary of state and birth announcements printed in Honolulu's two major newspapers".^[179] Mann responded that he was "disappointed and mystified" by the decision and that they had misunderstood his position, as he

was "not interested in pursuing this issue in Congress" and had "never had any interest in spending any time on the matter".^[180] Mann was defeated in the Republican primary by state senator Tim Huelskamp.^[181]

David Vitter

At a townhall meeting in Metairie, Louisiana on July 11, 2010, Senator David Vitter said: "I personally don't have standing to bring litigation in court, but I support conservative legal organizations and others who would bring that to court. I think that is the valid and most possibly effective grounds to do it." His campaign provided no additional comments.^{[182][183]}

Newt Gingrich

On September 11, 2010, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich stated that Obama could only be understood by people who "understand Kenyan, anti-colonial behavior".^[184] While Gingrich did not define this behavior, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs accused Gingrich of "trying to appeal to the fringe of people who don't believe the president was born in this country ... You would normally expect better of somebody who held the position of Speaker of the House, but look, it is political season, and most people will say anything, and Newt Gingrich does that on a, genuinely, on a regular basis."^[185]

Andy Martin

In December 2010, Andy Martin (plaintiff in *Martin v. Lingle* and self-described "King of the Birthers") announced his candidacy to seek the 2012 Republican nomination for the President of the United States.^[186] In February 2011, Martin's planned appearance at a Republican meeting in Deering, New Hampshire, was cancelled after his anti-Semitic past was discovered.^[187]

Mike Huckabee

On February 28, 2011, on Steve Malzberg's radio program Mike Huckabee, a 2008 candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, falsely claimed that Obama had been raised in Kenya^[188] and that "[Obama] probably grew up hearing that the British were a bunch of imperialists who persecuted his grandfather."^[188] Huckabee, speaking on *The O'Reilly Factor*, said that he misspoke and intended to say Indonesia, characterizing his comment as a "verbal gaffe".^[189]

Michele Bachmann

In March 2011, Representative Michele Bachmann told conservative radio host Jeff Katz: "I'll tell you one thing, if I was ever to run for president of the United States, I think the first thing I would do in the first debate is offer my birth certificate, so we can get that off the table." Previously on *Good Morning America*, when asked about Obama's origins, she replied, "Well, that isn't for me to state. That's for the president to state."^[190]

Mike Coffman

On May 12, 2012, Mike Coffman, a congressman running for re-election in the Sixth Congressional District of Colorado, addressed a Republican fundraising event in Elbert County. Coffman stated that he did not know where Obama was born, and that Obama was "in his heart ... just not an American." Coffman issued an apology on May 16, saying that he had misspoken and that he had confidence in Obama's citizenship and legitimacy as president.^[191] In a May 23 *Denver Post* op-ed piece, Coffman described his comment as "inappropriate and boneheaded".^[192]

Arizona electors

In December 2012, three of the eleven electors from Arizona who cast their votes for Mitt Romney raised doubts about Obama's birthplace. One was the chair of the Republican Party of Arizona, Tom Morrissey. Morrissey later insisted that he was not a birther, but said he was not convinced the birth certificate produced by Obama was real.^[193]

Political impact

Although claims about Obama's citizenship were evaluated in 2008 by the McCain campaign and ultimately rejected,^[195] they became a significant issue among sections of the political right. Activists unsuccessfully lobbied Republican members of Congress to reject the 2008 Electoral College vote and block Obama's election when it came before Congress for certification on January 8, 2009.^[196] By mid-2009, the natural born citizen issue was one of the hottest and most lucrative sources of fundraising for organizations on the right that raise funds through direct mail and telemarketing. Online petition sites such as that of Alan Keyes, who has been collecting signatures on the birth certificate issue, are a major source for generating mailing lists of movement conservatives.^[197] The web site *WorldNetDaily* published more than 200 articles on the subject by July 2009^[198] and has sold billboards, bumper stickers and postcards asking "Where's the birth certificate?" and similar slogans in an effort which has "already raised tens of thousands of dollars".^[199]

Moderate conservatives soon found themselves "bombarded with birther stuff".^[197] Protesters at the Tea Party protests in 2009 carried signs about the birth certificate issue,^[200] some of which were recommended by protest organizers.^[197] In an incident that attracted widespread media coverage, moderate Republican Representative Michael Castle was booed and heckled during a July 2009 town hall meeting in Georgetown, Delaware, when he told a woman protesting about Obama's birth certificate: "if you're referring to the president there, he is a citizen of the United States."^[201]

NBC Nightly News reported that other members of Congress often hear the issue too; an anonymous congressman told the program that he was reluctant to advertise his own town hall meetings for fear of this issue drowning out everything else.^[202]

"Here is what the Republican party needs to do: we have to say that's crazy. So I'm here to tell you that those who think the president was born somewhere other than Hawaii you're crazy ... let's knock this crap off and talk about the real differences we have.

—Republican U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, October 1, 2009^[194]



A birth certificate-related bumper sticker, below two other stickers

A number of Republican legislators have proposed legislation and constitutional amendments at the state and federal levels to address issues raised by the birth certificate campaigners. Some Republicans are said to "want the issue to go away", seeing it as a distraction. Democratic commentators have criticized the reluctance of some Republicans to distance themselves from the proponents of the conspiracy theories, suggesting that "Republican officials are reluctant to denounce the birthers for fear of alienating an energetic part of their party's base."^[13] NBC News' "First Read" team commented: "the real story in all of this is that Republican Party has a HUGE problem with its base right now."^[203]

Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele released a statement through his spokesperson saying, "Chairman Steele believes that this is an unnecessary distraction and believes that the president is a U.S. citizen."^[204]

Conservative Joel Pollak, writing for *The American Thinker*, has stated that the reason the "Birther theory" has caught on particularly among conservatives, is the weakness of the Republican opposition, stating:

In the absence of strong Republican leadership, some find the Birther theory a compelling, if desperate, solution. Yet it is ultimately a self-destructive one – not just because it is almost certainly false, but because it contradicts the essential spirit of the conservative movement.^[205]

Political analyst Marc Ambinder of *The Atlantic* and *CBS News* suggests this phenomenon goes to the heart of the dilemma now facing the Republican Party, positing that

Republican presidential candidates need to figure out how to diffuse [*sic*] angry birthers who are bound to show up and demand their attention. If they give credence to the birthers, they're not only advancing ignorance but also betraying the narrowness of their base. If they dismiss this growing movement, they might drive birthers to find more extreme candidates, which will fragment a Republican political coalition.^[206]

Political analyst Andrew Sullivan, writing in *The Sunday Times*, stated

The demographics tell the basic story: a black man is president and a large majority of white southerners cannot accept that, even in 2009. They grasp conspiracy theories to wish Obama – and the America he represents – away. Since white southerners comprise an increasing proportion of the 22% of Americans who still describe themselves as Republican, the GOP can neither dismiss the crankery nor move past it. The fringe defines what's left of the Republican centre.^[207]

On July 27, 2009, the House of Representatives passed a resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of Hawaii's statehood. The resolution, containing language recognizing Hawaii as President Obama's birth state, passed by a vote of 378–0.^[208]

Opinion surveys

In October 2008, the *Orange County Register's* OC Political Pulse poll found that a third of responding Republicans believed that Obama had been born outside the United States.^[209] As a result of the widespread publicity given to the citizenship controversy, 60% of respondents in an *Ohio State University* survey carried out in November 2008 had heard of the issue. However, only 10% believed the claims that Obama was not a citizen.^[210]

An opinion poll carried out for *Daily Kos* by *Research 2000* in July 2009 found that 77% of Americans believed that Obama was born in the U.S., while 11% didn't, and 12% were unsure. However, Republicans and Southerners were far more likely than other political or demographic groups to doubt that Obama was born in the United States. 58% of Republicans either believed that Obama was not born in the U.S. (28%) or were not sure (30%), with 42% believing that he was. An overwhelming majority of Democrats (93%) and independents (83%) believed that he was born in the U.S. Support for the belief that Obama was born outside the U.S. was strongest in the South, where only 47% of those polled believed he was born in the U.S., compared with an average of 90% of residents of the Northeast, Midwest and West.^[211] A marked racial disparity in the South was also apparent. *Politico's* congressional reporter, Glenn Thrush, commented that the Research 2000 poll "explains why Republicans, including Roy Blunt, are playing footsie with the Birther fringe".^[211] Writing on *National Journal's* Pollster.com blog, *Brendan Nyhan* observed that the poll "suggests that the encouragement of the birth certificate myth by conservative pundits and Republican politicians has begun to activate the GOP base on this issue".^[212]

A *Public Policy Polling* survey carried out in August 2009 found that 32% of Republicans in *Virginia* thought that Obama was born in the U.S., 41% thought he was foreign-born and the remaining 27% were unsure.^[213]

In *Utah*, an August 2009 poll carried out for the *Deseret News* and *KSL-TV* found that 67% of Utahns accepted the evidence that Obama was born in the U.S. The poll found that those who do not believe that Obama was born in the United States, or do not know, are predominantly middle-aged, lower-income Republican-leaning individuals without a college education.^[214]

A *Pew Research Center* poll found that 80% of Americans had heard about the Obama citizenship claims by August 2009. The poll found a significant partisan divide in views of the news coverage, with 58% of Democrats saying that the allegations had received too much attention from the media. Republicans were more inclined to say that the allegations had received too little attention, with 39% expressing this view against only 26% saying that the controversy had received too much attention.^[215]

In a *Harris Poll* online survey of 2,320 adults conducted in March 2010, 25% of the respondents said they believed that Obama was "not born in the United States and so is not eligible to be president".^[17] In a July 2010 CNN poll of adult Americans, 16% said they had doubts that Obama was born in the United States, and a further 11% were certain that he was not.^[18]

The percentage of doubters plummeted after President Obama released the long form certificate in April 2011.^{[20][21][22]} A *Gallup* telephone poll of 1018 adults conducted in May 2011 found that 5% of respondents believed that Obama was "definitely born in another country" and 8% believed he was "probably born in another country", versus 47% believing he was "definitely" and 18% "probably" born in the US.^[19] Broken down by political affiliation, the same poll found that 23% of self-identified Republicans, 14% of independents, and 5% of Democrats thought Obama was definitely or probably born in another country.^[19]

In July 2016, four months before Donald Trump was elected to the presidency, 41 percent of Republicans disagreed that Obama was born in the United States and 31 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, per an NBC poll.^[216]

A 2015 study found that among individuals who held birther views, they were predominantly conservative/Republican and held anti-Black attitudes.^[10] A 2019 study found that "among white Americans, birther beliefs are uniquely associated with racial animus."^[11]

Dilemma for Republicans

Because a portion of Republican voters and their Tea Party supporters believed Obama was not eligible to hold public office (see Opinion surveys section), Republicans sometimes found themselves caught in a dilemma between losing support or damaging their credibility.^{[217][218]} They had "to walk the fine line of humoring conspiracy-minded supporters without explicitly questioning Obama's legitimacy ..." ^[219] Other Republicans, including former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty and former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum, however, have plainly rejected these claims.^[220]

An example of these situations was Michael Castle, then Representative for Delaware, who ran in 2010 for the Senate seat vacated by Vice President Joe Biden. At a town hall meeting, Castle was confronted by constituents who jeered him for insisting that Obama is a citizen of the United States.^[221] Castle, one of the leading Republican moderates in the House, was later defeated by Tea Party-backed Christine O'Donnell in the Republican primary,^{[222][223]} who herself later lost the general election to Democratic nominee Chris Coons.

Commentary and criticism

Proponents of claims doubting Obama's eligibility have been dubbed "birthers" by their critics, who have drawn a parallel with 9/11 conspiracy theorists or "truthers". Leslie Savan of *The Nation* has compared the so-called "birthers" to other groups as well, including those who deny the moon landing, the Holocaust or global warming; "Teabaggers who refuse to believe they must pay taxes" and creationists who believe the earth is 6,000 years old.^[225] MSNBC political commentator Rachel Maddow has defined a "birther" as:

A specific new breed of American conspiracy theorists who believe that the real problem with Barack Obama being president is that he can't possibly have been born in the United States. He's not eligible to be president. The birth certificate is a fake. He's a foreigner. Once this has been exposed, I guess, he will be run out of the White House ... ^[226]



A man carrying a sign at a Tea Party protest in Austin, Texas, on July 4, 2009^{[101][224]}

A number of conservative commentators have criticized its proponents and their effect on the wider conservative movement. Talk show host Michael Medved has also been critical, calling them "the worst enemy of the conservative movement" for making other conservatives "look sick, troubled and not suitable for civilized company".^[227] Conservative columnist Ann Coulter has referred to them as "just a few cranks".^[228] During the 2008 presidential campaign, conservative pundit Steve Sailer similarly dismissed birthers' claims, considering the theory that Obama was born in Kenya to be especially implausible:

Do you know how many different flights she [Ann Dunham] would have had to take to get to Kenya in 1961? Honolulu to California, California to the East Coast, the East Coast (refueling at Gander Bay) to London, London to maybe Cairo, Cairo to Nairobi. How much would that have cost? And then you would be stuck having your baby in Africa rather than in a modern American hospital in Honolulu. Or you could go the other way around the world – it's about the same distance either way.^[229]

An editorial in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* dismissed the claims about Obama's eligibility as proposing "a vast conspiracy involving Obama's parents, state officials, the news media, the Secret Service, think-tanks and a host of yet-to-be-uncovered others who have connived since Obama's birth to build a false record so that he could eventually seek the presidency 47 years later."^[230] The *St. Petersburg Times'* fact-checking website, PolitiFact.com, concluded its series of articles on the birth certificate issue by saying:

There is not one shred of evidence to disprove PolitiFact's conclusion that the candidate's name is Barack Hussein Obama, or to support allegations that the birth certificate he released isn't authentic. And that's true no matter how many people cling to some hint of doubt and use the Internet to fuel their innate sense of distrust.^[231]

In November 2008, commentator and social critic Camille Paglia criticized the "blathering, fanatical overkill" of the topic, but also questioned Obama's response: "Obama could have ended the entire matter months ago by publicly requesting Hawaii to issue a fresh, long-form, stamped certificate and inviting a few high-profile reporters in to examine the document and photograph it," she said.^[232] A parenthetical in the same article noted that "the campaign did make the 'short-form' certificate available to Factcheck.org."^[232]

Factcheck.org noted, "The Hawaii Department of Health's birth record request form does not give the option to request a photocopy of your long-form birth certificate, but their short form has enough information to be acceptable to the State Department."^{[31][233]}

Writing in December 2008, Alex Koppelman discussed the validity of the common argument – that Obama should release a copy of his full, original certificate and the rumors and doubts would disappear.^[64] Conspiracy theory experts told Koppelman that when committed conspiracists are presented with more data debunking their theory, they refuse to accept the new evidence. "Whatever can't be ignored can be twisted to fit into the narrative; every new disclosure of something that should, by rights, end the controversy only opens up new questions, identifies new plotters," he wrote.^[64] Because Obama's release of the short-form had only "stoked the fever of conspiracy mongers", Koppelman predicted that releasing the long-form certificate "would almost certainly" continue the rumor cycle.^[64]

In response to the notion that Obama's grandparents might have planted a birth announcement in newspapers just so their grandson could some day be president, FactCheck suggested that "those who choose to go down that path should first equip themselves with a high-quality tinfoil hat."^[31] Brooks Jackson, the director of FactCheck, comments that "it all reflects a surge of paranoid distress among people who don't like Barack Obama" and who want the election results to go away.^[234] Chip Berlet, a journalist who has studied the spread of conspiracy theories, notes:

For some people, when their side loses an election, the only explanation that makes sense to them – that they can cope with – is that sinister, bad, evil people arranged some kind of fraud.^[235]

American political writer Dana Milbank, writing for *The Washington Post*, described the Obama citizenship theories of Bob Schulz (chairman of the We the People Foundation, which in 2008 publicly challenged Obama's citizenship) as "tales from the tinfoil-hat brigade".^[236] Colorado presidential elector Camilla Auger, responding to lobbying of members of the Electoral College, commented: "I was concerned that there are that many nutty people in the country making depressing, absurd allegations."^[129]

Some commentators have asserted that racism is a factor motivating the promotion of Obama citizenship conspiracy theories.^{[12][237]} J. Richard Cohen, the President of the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that monitors hate groups and extremism, wrote an e-mail to supporters in July 2009 declaring: "This conspiracy theory was concocted by an anti-Semite and circulated by racist extremists who cannot accept the fact that a black man has been elected president."^[238] An academic psychologist commented that a study published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* supported a conclusion that racism has played a role.^[239] Donald Trump's questioning how Obama gained admission to two Ivy-League institutions, as well as his comment, "I have a great relationship with the blacks", led David Remnick, David Letterman and Bill Maher,^[240] among others, to accuse Trump of racism,^{[239][241][242]} and an increased attention on race with respect to Obama.^[241] In April 2011, Marilyn Davenport, a Tea Party activist and member of the executive committee of the Republican Party's local Orange County, California, organization, created a nationwide controversy^[243] when she circulated a photograph by email, widely seen as racist, that had been edited to depict Barack Obama as the child of two chimpanzees, and^[244] to which she had added the caption, "Now you know why no birth certificate".^[245] Following the release of Obama's long-form certificate later that month, *The New York Times* remarked in an editorial that, "It is inconceivable that this campaign to portray Mr. Obama as the insidious 'other' would have been conducted against a white president."^[245]

Legislation and litigation

The controversy over Obama's citizenship and eligibility for the presidency prompted a number of Republican state and federal legislators to propose legislation aimed at requiring future presidential candidates to release copies of their birth certificates. Some legislators also lent their support to birth certificate-related litigation against Obama, joining as co-plaintiffs.^[246]

Although Obama was confirmed as president-elect by Congress on January 8, 2009,^[247] and sworn in as President on January 20,^[248] litigation continued into his presidency. Numerous individuals and groups filed state or federal lawsuits seeking to have Obama disqualified from standing or being confirmed for the Presidency, or to compel him to release additional documentation relating to his citizenship.^[249] By mid-December 2008, at least 17 lawsuits had been filed challenging Obama's eligibility in states including North Carolina,^[250] Ohio,^[251] Pennsylvania,^[252] Hawaii,^[253] Connecticut,^[254] New Jersey, Texas and Washington.^{[253][255]} No such suit resulted in the grant of any relief to the plaintiffs by any court; all of the cases were rejected in lower courts.^[256] Three post-election suits were dismissed by the Supreme Court of the United States.^{[48][257]}

In April 2011, the Arizona legislature became the first to pass a bill "requiring President Obama and other presidential candidates to prove their U.S. citizenship before their names can appear on the state's ballot".^[258] The bill, HB 2177, was vetoed by Governor Jan Brewer on April 18.^[259]

Obama is not the first President to be the subject of controversy surrounding the location of his birth. Andrew Jackson was the subject of similar claims, although it is not certain that they were raised during his presidency. Some said that Chester A. Arthur was born outside the United States, with his birth records later allegedly falsified to show he was born in Vermont.^{[260][261]}

Impact on the 2012 presidential election and beyond

In May 2012, the Arizona Secretary of State, Ken Bennett, asked Hawaii to verify Obama's Hawaiian birth to ensure his eligibility to appear on the November ballot.^[262] After Bennett proved that he needed the information as part of the regular course of official business, Hawaii officially confirmed that the information in the copy of the Certificate of Live Birth for the President matches the original record in their files.^{[263][264]} Later the same month, the Mississippi state Democratic Party requested Hawaii to verify that the long-form image on the White House website matched the copy on file and they were provided with a certified verification, bearing the state seal and signed by state registrar Alvin T. Onaka, who had certified both released birth certificates.^[265]

In September 2012, the State Objections Board of Kansas, composed of "three of the state's top elected Republicans", delayed acting on a petition to remove Barack Obama's name from the ballot, requesting information from Hawaii regarding his birth certificate;^[266] but later voted unanimously to accept Obama's citizenship and retain him on the state's ballot, despite objections from the floor by Orly Taitz.^[267]

White House responses

A common claim among those arguing that President Obama was not born in Hawaii is that all doubt would be settled if Obama released his "long form" birth certificate. However, commentators noted that doing so would be disadvantageous to Obama. First, it would encourage speculation as to why it took so long to release the document. Second, caving in to his political adversaries' demands would embolden them by giving them a victory. Finally, it would open the door to demands for other personal records unrelated to his birth certificate.^[268] Despite these concerns, both Obama and his press secretary have responded to reporters' questions about the issue.

Press secretary's response

At the end of the May 27, 2009, press briefing, *WorldNetDaily* reporter Lester Kinsolving asked about Obama's birth certificate. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs replied "It's on the Internet," to which Kinsolving responded "No, no, no – the long form listing his hospital and physician." Gibbs responded as follows:

Lester, this question in many ways continues to astound me. The state of Hawaii provided a copy with the seal of the President's birth. I know there are apparently at least 400,000 people (laughter) that continue to doubt the existence of and the certification by the state of Hawaii of the President's birth there, but it's on the Internet because we put it on the Internet for each of those 400,000 to download.^[269]

At a July 27, 2009, press briefing, radio talk show host Bill Press asked Gibbs if there was anything he could say to make the issue go away. Gibbs answered, "No. I mean, the God's honest truth is no," because "nothing will assuage" those who continue to pursue what he called "made-up, fictional nonsense" despite the evidence that Obama had already provided.^{[270][271]}

On August 6, 2009, Gibbs commented, "You couldn't sell this script in Hollywood," and summarized the contentions that he considered "totally crazy":

A pregnant woman leaves her home to go overseas to have a child – who there's not a passport for – so is in cahoots with someone ... to smuggle that child, that previously doesn't exist on a government roll somewhere back into the country and has the amazing foresight to place birth announcements in the Hawaii newspapers? All while this is transpiring in cahoots with those in the border, all so some kid named Barack Obama could run for President 46 and a half years later.^[272]

Barack Obama's response

At the February 2010 National Prayer Breakfast, Obama commented, "Surely you can question my policies without questioning my faith. Or for that matter my citizenship."^[273] He directly addressed the issue in August 2010, in an interview with Brian Williams. Williams asked Obama about the fact that a fifth of the American people do not believe that he is either American born or a Christian. Obama responded that "there is a mechanism, a network of misinformation that in a new media era can get churned out there constantly." He then added, "I can't spend all my time with my birth certificate plastered on my forehead."^[274]

On a few occasions, Obama has joked about the conspiracy theories surrounding his birth certificate and citizenship. At the 2010 White House Correspondents' Dinner, Obama said there are few things in life harder to find and more important to keep than love, and then added, "Well, love and a birth certificate."^[275] At the 2011 Gridiron Dinner, Obama referred to Bruce Springsteen's song, "Born in the U.S.A.", and commented, "Some things just bear repeating."^[276] On March 17, 2011 (Saint Patrick's Day), Obama said, "Now, speaking of ancestry, there has been some controversy about my own background. Two years into my presidency, some are still bent on peddling rumors about my origins. So today, I want to put all those rumors to rest. It is true my great-great-great-grandfather really was from Ireland. It's true. Moneygall, to be precise. I can't believe I have to keep pointing this out."^[277] On January 17, 2012, during a televised tribute to actress Betty White on her 90th birthday, Obama taped a segment in which he wrote White a letter saying that, given her appearance and vitality, he not only could not believe she was 90, he *did not* believe her, and requested to see her birth certificate.^[278]

In an April 2011 interview with George Stephanopoulos, Obama said, "I think that over the last two and a half years there's been an effort to go at me in a way that is politically expedient in the short-term for Republicans, but creates, I think a problem for them when they want to actually run in a general election where most people feel pretty confident the President was born where he says he was, in Hawaii. He doesn't have horns. We may disagree with him on some issues and we may wish that you know, the unemployment rate was coming down faster and we want him to know his plan on gas prices. But we're not really worrying about conspiracy theories or ... birth certificates. And so ... I think it presents a problem for them."^[279]

On April 27, 2011, referring to "sideshows and carnival barkers",^[280] Obama appeared in the White House press room an hour after the release of the long form and said, "I know there is going to be a segment of people for which no matter what we put out this issue will not be put to rest. But I am speaking to the vast majority of the American people, as well as to the press. We do not have time for this kind of silliness. We've got better stuff to do."^{[154][280]}

Later in 2011, Obama's re-election campaign offered for sale mugs with a picture of Obama (captioned "Made in the USA") and the image of the birth certificate. The campaign states, "There's really no way to make the conspiracy about President Obama's birth certificate completely go away, so we might as well laugh at it – and make sure as many people as possible are in on the joke."^[281]

See also

- [Early life and career of Barack Obama](#)
- [Barack Obama religion conspiracy theories](#)
- [Birthright citizenship in the United States](#)
- [Chester A. Arthur](#)
- [Security paper](#)
- [Where's the Birth Certificate?](#)
- [Dreams from My Real Father](#)

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- Obama Conspiracy Theories (<http://www.obamaconspiracy.org/>) watchdog website

Commentary

- Culture of Conspiracy: The Birthers (<https://web.archive.org/web/20090306090447/http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=BF547975-18FE-70B2-A85A7CB6F7889EED>) by *The Politico*
- Anti-Obama Lunatics Living in Denial (<http://www.nation.co.ke/News/-/1056/635400/-/lull727/-/index.html>) by *The Daily Nation*
- 11 Most Paranoid Obama Conspiracy Theories (https://huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/03/11-most-paranoid-obama-co_n_343771.html)
- The former British police officer who wants to bring down Barack Obama (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/22/barack-obama-british-conspiracist>) by *The Guardian*
- American Grotesque (<https://www.gq.com/news-politics/big-issues/201001/american-grotesque-john-jeremiah-sullivan-birthers?printable=true>) by John Jeremiah Sullivan, *GQ Magazine* cover story, January 2010
- Birthers (<http://www.salon.com/news/politics/birthers/index.html>) collected commentary at *Salon.com*

Multimedia

- The Daily Show*: "The Born Identity" (<http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/wed-july-22-2009/the-born-identity>) July 22, 2009
- Gordon Liddy on *MSNBC's Hardball With Chris Matthews* (<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/22425001>) July 23, 2009
- The Colbert Report*: "Womb Raiders" Part 1 (<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/29638/july-28-2009/womb-raiders---the-fight-for-the-truth-behind-obama-s-birth>) and Part 2 with Orly Taitz (<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/229691/july-28-2009/womb-raiders---orly-taitz>) July 28, 2009
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Deep state in the United States

The deep state is a conspiracy theory^{[1][2][3][4][5]} which suggests that collusion and cronyism exist within the U.S. political system and constitute a hidden government within the legitimately elected government.^{[6][7][8][9][10]} Author Mike Lofgren believes that there is "a hybrid association of elements of government and parts of top-level finance and industry that is effectively able to govern the United States without reference to the consent of the governed as expressed through the formal political process",^[11] or consider the deep state to encompass corruption prevalent among career politicians and civil servants.^[12] The 'deep state' theory has been dismissed by authors for The New York Times^[13] and The New York Observer.^[14] University of Miami Professor Joseph Uscinski says, "The concept has always been very popular among conspiracy theorists, whether they call it a deep state or something else."^[15]

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Associated with the military–industrial complex

The term "deep state" has been associated with the "military-industrial complex" by Mike Lofgren, who has identified this complex as the private part of the deep state.^[16] However, Marc Ambinder has suggested that a myth about the "deep state" is that it functions as one entity; in reality, he states, "the deep state contains multitudes, and they are often at odds with one another."^[17]

Statements and opinions about the deep state

- According to the journalist Robert F. Worth, "the expression *deep state* originated in Turkey in the 1990s, where the military colluded with drug traffickers and hitmen to wage a dirty war against Kurdish insurgents".^[18] The term "deep state" is likely a translation from the Turkish *derin devlet* (literally: "deep state" = "deep polity").^[19]

- In 2014, Bill Moyers, the former press secretary during the Johnson Administration, hosted a discussion on his PBS television show with a longterm congressional staff member examining the concept of a "deep state hiding in plain sight" that promotes military conflicts regardless of which party is in charge of the executive or legislative branches.^[20] Likewise in *The Concealment of the State*, political science professor Jason Royce Lindsey^[21] argues that even without a conspiratorial agenda, the term *deep state* is useful for understanding aspects of the national security establishment in developed countries, with emphasis on the United States. Lindsey writes that the deep state draws power from the national security and intelligence communities, a realm where secrecy is a source of power.^{[22]:35–36} Historian Alfred W. McCoy states that the increase in the power of the U.S. intelligence community since the September 11 attacks "has built a fourth branch of the U.S. government" that is "in many ways autonomous from the executive, and increasingly so."^[23]
- In a *Foreign Affairs* journal article and subsequent expansion in a law review, UCLA Law professor Jon D. Michaels^[24] rejects "the premise of an American deep state" in a defense of what he terms the 'administrative state' against Donald Trump's attempts to "deconstruct" it. Michaels argues that the concept of the 'deep state' is more relevant to developing governments such as Egypt, Pakistan and Turkey, "where shadowy elites in the military and government ministries have been known to countermand or simply defy democratic directives" than the United States "where governmental power structures are almost entirely transparent".^{[25][26]}
- Former NSA leaker Edward Snowden has used the term generally to refer to the influence of civil servants over elected officials: "the deep state is not just the intelligence agencies, it is really a way of referring to the career bureaucracy of government. These are officials who sit in powerful positions, who don't leave when presidents do, who watch presidents come and go ... they influence policy, they influence presidents."^[27]
- In an opinion piece by linguist Geoffrey Nunberg, he said the "deep state" is an "elastic label – depending on the occasion" and its "story conforms to the intricate grammar of those conspiracy narratives". He also contrasted the change in the "twin bogeys of conservative rhetoric", from bureaucratic "meddlesome bunglers" of "big government" to "conniving ideologues" who "orchestrates complex schemes".^[28]
- According to political scientist George Friedman, the Deep State has been in place since 1871 and continues beneath the federal government, controlling and frequently reshaping policies; in this view the U.S. civil service, was created to limit the power of the president. Prior to 1871, the president could select federal employees, all of whom served at the pleasure of the president. This is no longer the case.^[29]
- On March 20, 2018, Senator Rand Paul said "Absolutely there is a deep state because the deep state is the intelligence communities that do not have oversight." He continued, "There is *no skeptic*" [emphasis in original] among the four Republican and four Democratic Senators "who are supposedly" providing oversight, so that the intelligence communities, "with their enormous power ... have become a deep state."^[30] On December 4, 2018, Paul, in commenting on the CIA Director briefing only those eight Senators rather than the entire Senate, he added "Do you want to know what the deep state is? The CIA Director is coming to the U.S. Senate and only briefing a select few members of the Senate. Why shouldn't every senator know what is going on? The deep state wants to keep everyone in the dark. This is just ridiculous"^[31] On December 10, 2018, he said "The very definition of a 'deep state' is when the very people, congressional leaders – people who are elected by the people – are not allowed to hear the intelligence."^[32]
- Writing in a piece for the *Moyers & Company* website, John Light asserts that the term deep state "has been used for decades abroad to describe any network of entrenched government officials who function independently from elected politicians and work toward their own ends," but during the era of

Trump the term has been twisted to mean "a *sub rosa* part of the liberal establishment, that crowd resistant to the reality TV star's insurgent candidacy all along."^[33]

- Michael Crowley, senior foreign affairs correspondent for *Politico*, wrote, "Beneath the politics of convenience is the reality that a large segment of the United States government really does operate without much transparency or public scrutiny, and has abused its awesome powers in myriad ways."^[34]
- Tufts University professor Michael J. Glennon claimed that President Barack Obama did not succeed in resisting and/or changing what he calls the "double government": the defense and national security network.^[35] Mike Lofgren felt Obama was pushed into the Afghanistan "surge" in 2009.^[11] Another major campaign promise Obama made was the closure of Guantanamo Bay Prison Camp, which he was unable to accomplish. This has been attributed indirectly to the influence of a deep state.^[36]
- *Rolling Stone* magazine quoted Fox News panelist Charles Krauthammer, who called the idea ridiculous, and summarized the Deep State concept this way: "Is there actually a deep state? If you mean entrenched bureaucracy, then of course there is. If you mean a government-wide conspiracy, then the answer is almost certainly no."^[6] *Salon* magazine traced Donald Trump's belief in a Deep State to conspiracy theorist Alex Jones of *Infowars*, who, it says, "believes that the government – a.k.a. the "deep state" – has orchestrated attacks and events throughout history. This includes the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building, the massacre at Sandy Hook (he claims that many of the parents were actors), the Boston Marathon attack, and on and on," including believing that the 9/11 attack was "executed by the United States government." The magazine also points to Trump's long-time ally, Roger Stone, as an influence. Stone has written several books which center on conspiracy theories, and blames Lyndon Johnson for the death of President John F. Kennedy, and alleges that Ted Cruz's father was involved in that assassination.^[7]

Deep State and Donald Trump

2017

President Donald Trump's supporters use the term to refer to allegations that intelligence officers and executive branch officials guide policy through leaking or other internal means.^{[37][13]} According to a July 2017 report by the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "the Trump administration was being hit by national security leaks 'on a nearly daily basis' and at a far higher rate than its predecessors encountered".^[38] According to David Gergen, quoted in *Time* magazine, the term has been appropriated by Steve Bannon and *Breitbart News* and other supporters of the Trump Administration in order to delegitimize the critics of that presidency.^[36]

In May 2017, former Democratic U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich stated in an interview on Fox News that a deep state within the bureaucracy was trying to destroy Trump's presidency. He further elaborated "The political process of the United States of America [is] under attack by intelligence agencies and individuals in those agencies...You have politicization of agencies that is resulting in leaks from anonymous, unknown people and the intention is to take down a president...Now this is very dangerous to America. It's a threat to our republic, it constitutes a clear and present danger to our way of life. So we have to be asking, what is the motive of these people? Who's putting these leaks out? Why doesn't somebody come forward and make a charge and put their name and reputation behind it, instead of attacking through the media and not substantiating their position?" In an interview several months earlier Kucinich said "What's at the core of this is an effort by some in the intelligence community to upend any positive relationship between the U.S. and Russia...There are people trying to separate the U.S. and Russia so this military-industrial-intel axis can cash in."^{[39][40]}

Trump and Steve Bannon, his former chief strategist, have both made allegations about a deep state which they believed was interfering with the president's agenda.^{[41][42][43]} In 2018, describing the deep state as an "entrenched bureaucracy", Trump accused the United States Department of Justice "of being part of the 'deep state'" in a statement advocating the prosecution of Huma Abedin.^[44] Some Trump allies and right-wing media outlets have alleged that former president Barack Obama is coordinating a deep state resistance to Trump.^{[41][45]} While the belief in a deep state is popular among Trump supporters, critics maintain that it has no basis in reality,^[46] arguing that the sources of the leaks frustrating the Trump administration lack the organizational depth of deep states in other countries. Critics also warned that use of the term in the U.S. could undermine confidence in vital institutions and be used to justify suppressing dissent.^{[41][47]}

2020

In February 2020, Trump cabinet member and acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, when asked if a deep state working against President Trump exists, stated that it was "absolutely, 100% true".^[48]

In an article for *The New York Review of Books*, Michael Tomasky quoted Newt Gingrich as using the term in the context of the Robert Mueller investigation in July 2018, quoting Gingrich stating: "[Mueller is] ... the tip of the deep state spear aimed at destroying or at a minimum undermining and crippling the Trump presidency".^[49] Gingrich then added to the statement that "the brazen redefinition of Mueller's task tells you how arrogant the deep state is and how confident it is it can get away with anything".^[49]

Stephen Walt, professor of international relations at Harvard University, has written: "There's no secret conspiracy or deep state running U.S. foreign policy; to the extent that there is a bipartisan foreign-policy elite, it is hiding in plain sight."^[50]

The term has also been used in comments on the "deep state"-like influence allegedly wielded by career military officers such as H. R. McMaster, John Kelly and James Mattis in the Trump administration. The anthropologist C. August Elliott described this state of affairs as the emergence of a "shallow state": "an America where public servants now function as tugboats guiding the President's very leaky ship through the shallows and away from a potential shipwreck".^[51]

On September 5, 2018, *The New York Times* published an anonymous op-ed titled "I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration" written by a "senior official in the Trump Administration". In the essay, the official was critical of President Trump and claimed "that many of the senior officials in [Trump's] own administration are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations".^[52] House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy described this as evidence of the deep state at work,^[53] and David Bossie wrote an op-ed at Fox News claiming this was the deep state "working against the will of the American people".^[54] However, there was some doubt as to the actual importance of the anonymous author, with some estimating that hundreds or thousands of possible positions could be considered "senior officials"^[55] and the inherent paradox of exposing the existence of such a group.^[56]

Polls

According to a poll of Americans in April 2017, about half (48%) thought there was a "deep state", defined as "military, intelligence and government officials who try to secretly manipulate government", while about a third (35%) of all participants thought it was a conspiracy theory and the remainder (17%)

had no opinion. Of those who believe a "deep state" exists, more than half (58%) said it was a major problem, a net of 28% of those surveyed.^{[57][58]}

A March 2018 poll found most respondents (63%) were unfamiliar with the term "deep state", but a majority believe that a deep state likely exists in the United States when described as "a group of unelected government and military officials who secretly manipulate or direct national policy". Three-fourths (74%) of the respondents say that they believe this type of group probably (47%) or definitely (27%) exists in the federal government.^{[59][60][61]}

An October 2019 *The Economist*/YouGov poll found that, without giving a definition of "deep state" to respondents, 70% of Republicans, 38% of independents, and 13% of Democrats agreed that a "deep state" was "trying to overthrow Trump."^[62]

Closely related concepts

Bob Jessop, in his book *The State: Past, Present, Future*,^[12] notes the similarity of three constructs:

1. 'Deep state' – for which he cites Mike Lofgren's 2014 definition: "a hybrid association of elements of government and parts of top-level finance and industry that is effectively able to govern ... without reference to the consent of the governed as expressed through the formal political process".^[11]
2. 'Dark state' – "networks of officials, private firms, media outlets, think tanks, foundations, NGOs, interest groups, and other forces that attend to the needs of capital, not of everyday life" while "concealed from public gaze" (or "hidden in plain sight"), citing Jason Lindsay (2013).^{[22]:37–38}
3. 'The Fourth Branch' of U.S. government – consisting of "an ever more unchecked and unaccountable centre ..., working behind a veil of secrecy", citing Tom Engelhardt (2014).^[63]

See also

- [Council for National Policy](#)
- [I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration](#)
- [Fourth branch of government](#)
- [List of American conspiracy theories](#)
- [Groundswell group](#)
- [Shadow government \(conspiracy\)](#)

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Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting conspiracy theories

The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting occurred on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut. The perpetrator, Adam Lanza, fatally shot his mother before murdering 20 students and six staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School, and later committed suicide.^[1] A number of fringe figures have promoted conspiracy theories that doubt or dispute what occurred at Sandy Hook. Various conspiracy theorists have claimed, for example, that the massacre was actually orchestrated by the U.S. government as part of an elaborate plot to promote stricter gun control laws.^[2]

The more common conspiracy theory, adopted initially by James Fetzer, James Tracy and others, and further popularized by Alex Jones, denied that the massacre actually occurred, asserting that it was faked. Fetzer and Tracy posited a classified training exercise involving members of federal and local law enforcement, the news media, and crisis actors, which they claim was modeled on Operation Closed Campus, an Iowa "full-scale" school-shooting drill that was canceled in 2011 amid threats and public outcry. Jones described the shooting incident as "synthetic, completely fake with actors; in my view, manufactured . . . it just shows how bold they are that they clearly used actors."^{[3][4]}

No evidence supports the conspiracy theories, which make a number of implausible claims.^{[5][6][7]} Moreover, many Sandy Hook conspiracy theories contradict one another.^[6] A number of sources have published articles debunking various claims put forward by conspiracy theorists.^{[6][8][9][10]} In 2018, the parents of several children killed in the Sandy Hook shooting launched a lawsuit against Alex Jones and other authors of conspiracy videos for defamation, accusing them of engaging in a campaign of "false, cruel, and dangerous assertions".^[11] In 2019, Jones reversed his stance and stated that the massacre was real.^[12]

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United States government involvement

Some conspiracy theories have alleged that the shooting was a hoax^[13] and a false flag operation staged by the United States government.^[14] Others claim the attack is being used by politicians to push through new gun control legislation,^{[15][16][17]} or to otherwise persecute gun owners and survivalists.^[6]

Lawyer and dentist Orly Taitz—best known for her promotion of Barack Obama citizenship ("birther") conspiracy theories—was quoted as asking "Was Adam Lanza drugged and hypnotized by his handlers to make him into a killing machine as an excuse as the regime is itching to take all means of self defense from the populace before the economic collapse?"^[18]

Talk show host Clyde Lewis wrote: "Don't you find it at all interesting that Adam Lanza, the alleged shooter at Sandy Hook, woke up one day and decided to shoot up a school and kill children at about the same time that Barack Obama told the U.N. that he would sign the small arms treaty?"^[19]

According to Live Science, "No one, regardless of what side of the gun control issue they are on, can deny that guns played a key role in the Sandy Hook killings. So the conspiracy theorists must instead challenge the claim that the attack even occurred. They believe it's all a hoax to scare people into supporting more gun control and a step toward an outright repeal of the Second Amendment." They also found that the vast majority of evidence used by conspiracy theorists to support the concept that Sandy Hook was a hoax is contradictory.^[20] Snopes.com also debunked several claims of alleged United States government involvement in the shootings.^[8]

Operation Closed Campus

Fetzer, Tracy, and others have claimed the shooting was a classified training-exercise modeled on Operation Closed Campus, a "full-scale" school-shooting drill involving the Department of Homeland Security, Iowa emergency-management agencies, state and local police, prosecuting attorneys, emergency radio operators, emergency medical personnel, moulage, local doctors and hospitals, the Red Cross, medical examiners, news media reporters, and crisis actors that was canceled in 2011 amid threats and public outcry.^{[21][22][23][24]}

Claims broadcast by Iranian television

Press TV, the official state media outlet of Iran, has promoted various antisemitic conspiracy theories blaming "Israeli death squads" for the shooting.^{[6][5]} Press TV interviewed *Veterans Today* website Gordon Duff, who quoted Michael Harris, a former Republican candidate for governor of Arizona, who made the "Israeli death squads" claim.^[7] Harris has publicly associated with neo-Nazi groups in the past and has previously claimed that Israel was responsible for the 2011 Norway attacks.^[7] Duff asserted that the attacks were an act of "revenge" for the perceived cooling of Israel–United States relations under President Obama, especially as a response to Obama's decision to nominate former senator Chuck Hagel, a perceived critic of Israel, for the position of United States Secretary of Defense.^{[25][7]} In another

broadcast by Press TV, Holocaust denier James H. Fetzer claimed that the massacre "appears to have been a psy op intended to strike fear in the hearts of Americans" that was conducted by "agents of Israel."^[5]

The Washington Post reported that claims broadcast on Press TV contain a large number of "obvious logical fallacies" typical of Iranian propaganda, which "has a well-earned reputation for incendiary anti-Israel stories and for wild conspiracy theories."^[7] *The Atlantic* wrote that the story "obviously plays on the worst fears of those who believe in secret Jewish cabals that run the world, but it's a pretty pathetic attempt at slander, even for Iran."^[6]

Additional conspirators

Ben Swann, a Cincinnati news anchor for Fox affiliate WXIX-TV, has suggested on his personal YouTube channel that Adam Lanza was accompanied by another shooter; he has made similar claims about the Aurora shooting and the Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting from earlier in 2012.^{[26][27]} Other conspiracy theorists have claimed that as many as four shooters were present.^[6]

There is no credible evidence that any additional shooters were present at the event.^[8] Some such reports may have been influenced by confused early news reports of the events.^[6]

Relationship to LIBOR scandal

Other conspiracy theories have focused on the claim that Adam Lanza's father was an executive with GE Energy Financial Services.^{[6][28]} According to these theories, Lanza's father was supposed to testify before the Senate Banking Committee with information about the Libor scandal. However, no such hearings were scheduled. Similar claims had been made about the father of James Holmes, the convicted perpetrator of the 2012 Aurora, Colorado shooting.^{[6][29]}

Timestamps of memorial sites

Conspiracy theories have claimed that various timestamps for creation dates, whois records, and Google caches of various memorial websites, fundraising sites, and Facebook were created before or immediately after the date and time of the shooting and are therefore "evidence" of a conspiracy or cover up. However, timestamps are frequently incorrect, particularly on search engines. Some timestamps are initially created and assigned to URLs that are then repurposed, meaning that a URL linked to a current event can have a much older date.^{[9][10]}

Alex Jones claims

In September 2014, conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who runs the website *InfoWars*, which had previously claimed that the murders were a "false flag" attack perpetrated by the government, made a new conspiracy claim that "no one died" at Sandy Hook Elementary School because the Uniform Crime Reports showed no murders in Newtown for 2012, and that the victims were "child actors."^{[30][31]} This claim is false and misrepresents the FBI report. In reality, because the Connecticut State Police was the lead investigator after the attack, the Sandy Hook victims were included in Connecticut's statewide records (under "State Police Misc.") rather than under the Newtown statistics.^{[31][32]}

In November 2016, Erica L. Lafferty, daughter of Dawn Lafferty Hochsprung, the school principal who was shot and killed at Sandy Hook School, wrote open letters to then-President-elect Donald Trump (published in *Medium* and *USA Today*), calling upon him to denounce Jones,^[33] after Trump had appeared on *InfoWars* during his presidential campaign and lavished praise on its presenter, saying that the conspiracy theorist had an "amazing" reputation and pledging not to let him down.^[33] On February 20, 2017, the Newtown School Board wrote to President Trump and urged him to recognize the murders of 26 people at Sandy Hook and to "remove your support from anyone who continues to insist that the tragedy was staged or not real."^{[34][35][36]} Trump did not respond to the letter.^{[34][35]}

In March 2018, six families of victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, as well as an FBI agent who responded to the attack, filed a defamation lawsuit in Bridgeport Superior Court in Connecticut^[37] against Jones for his role in spreading conspiracy theories about the shooting.^{[38][39][40][41]}

On April 16, 2018, parents of two other victims of the shooting sued Jones in Travis County, Texas (where Jones' media company is based), for \$1 million each.^{[42][43][44]} The trial is expected to be scheduled by the end of 2020.^[45]

James Tracy

James Tracy, a former professor at Florida Atlantic University who taught a course on conspiracy theories, has suggested the shooting either did not actually occur or occurred very differently than accounted in mainstream reports, claiming political motives for the coverup.^{[46][47]} Florida Atlantic president Mary Jane Saunders issued a statement that Tracy's views were "not shared by" the university.^[48] In response to his comments, the university opened an investigation of Tracy, who had tenure.^[49]

In December 2015, after the family of Noah Pozner – one of the children murdered at Sandy Hook – claimed that Tracy had harassed them, FAU moved to fire Tracy.^[50] Chan Lowe of the *Sun-Sentinel* speculated that the comments were a publicity stunt by Tracy.^[51] Tracy later declined an appearance on CNN with Anderson Cooper, suggesting that Cooper wanted to bring him and his family members harm by identifying him in a prior broadcast.^{[52][53]} The university fired Tracy on January 5, 2016, citing his refusal to file required paperwork related to outside employment for several years.^[54]

James Fetzer

In 2016, James Fetzer and Mike Palacek published the book *Nobody Died at Sandy Hook*, which claimed that the event was a classified Federal Emergency Management Agency drill involving federal and local law enforcement and the media, and that the government had created false death certificates to claim there were victims. Fetzer stated that the parents displayed old photos of their real children and made up new names for the photo subjects, thereby creating non-existent younger siblings. Fetzer also claimed that several of these older-age real children, who were unnamed and billed as "Newtown's Children," sung "America the Beautiful" at the 2013 Super Bowl with Jennifer Hudson, arguing there were strong facial similarities with the victims.^{[55][56]} Lenny Pozner, father of victim Noah Pozner, filed a defamation lawsuit against Fetzer and Palacek. Pozner won a summary judgement from the court in June 2019, with damages to be determined by trial in October. The book's publisher, Moon Rock Books, apologized to the Pozner family and agreed to take the book out of circulation at the end of June.^{[57][58]} On October 16, 2019, a jury awarded Leonard Pozner \$450,000 for defamation by James Fetzer. Fetzer announced his intention to appeal against the decision.^{[59][60]} A video similarly questioning official accounts of the

shooting received several million views on YouTube within a week of its posting,^[61] although the video has since been modified to display a disclaimer explaining that its creators "in no way claim this shooting never took place, or that people did not lose their lives."^[62]

Other conspiracy theorists and claims

Other sources have continued to claim that the entire event was a hoax. On September 12, 2014, during a political debate, Colorado Republican Party candidate Tom Ready (who was running for Pueblo County Commission) was accused by his opponent, Sal Pace, of posting an article on his Facebook page claiming the Sandy Hook shootings "never happened". Ready responded: "Well, there is some question of whether it happened, Sal." This was followed by more statements of the same tenor, prompting outraged yells from the audience. After allegedly receiving a death threat the next day, Ready reportedly apologized for his remarks.^{[63][64]}

Other conspiracy theorists have tried to connect the shooting to references in popular culture. Prison Planet, a website owned by British conspiracy theorist Paul Joseph Watson, mentioned that Newtown-based author Suzanne Collins wrote *The Hunger Games* books, in which 22 children are "ritualistically" killed, while 20 children were killed in the shooting.^[65] Others pointed out that "Sandy Hook" can be seen on a map in the 2012 Batman film *The Dark Knight Rises* despite Sandy Hook also being the name of the New Jersey peninsula just south of New York Harbor.^[65] This is what some conspiracy theorists refer to as predictive programming.^[65]

Several conspiracy theorists have also claimed a six-year-old victim of the shooting subsequently appeared in a photograph with President Barack Obama. In fact, the child in the photograph is actually the victim's sister, wearing her deceased sister's dress.^{[66][67]}

Analysis

Writing about the Sandy Hook conspiracy theories, Benjamin Radford argued that most conspiracy theorists who allege contradictions in official accounts ignore contradictions in their own accounts, citing research from the University of Kent that conspiracy theorists selectively focus on or ignore particular details in order to fit their preferred narrative.^{[68][66]} The conspiracy theories have also been called evidence of "the need for a national debate on mental illness."^[67]

The debunking website Snopes ran an editorial debunking the "Sandy Hook Exposed" video, explaining how many of the theories make little sense, and answered many questions conspiracy theorists wanted answers to.^[69]

Harassment by conspiracy theorists

Gene Rosen, a Newtown resident who was reported to have sheltered six Sandy Hook students and a bus driver in his home during the shooting, has been subject to harassment online alleging he was complicit in a government coverup,^[70] among other things.^[71] Some journalists have cited such incidents as part of a "Sandy Hook Truther Movement" analogous to the 9/11 Truth movement.^{[55][72][61]} A writer for the *Calgary Herald* reported that the movement self-identifies as "Operation Terror."^[67]

In May 2014, Andrew David Truelove stole a memorial sign from playgrounds dedicated to victims Grace McDonnell and Chase Kowalski.^[73] He then went on to call the parents of Grace McDonnell, proclaiming that he stole the sign and that he believed their deaths were a "hoax".^[74] He was arrested on May 30, and

the signs were found in his home.^[75] Truelove was convicted of the theft and sentenced to one year in prison.^[76]

Robbie Parker, the father of victim Emilie Parker – after doing a CNN interview on the day after the shooting – became the target of conspiracy theorists, who claimed the interview was staged.^[77] Parker has been attacked by theorists who believe he is a "crisis actor" and was "getting into character" before going on CNN to grieve over the loss of his child.^[77]

In April 2016, Matthew Mills, a man from Brooklyn, accepted a plea agreement with prosecutors on one count of interfering with police arising from an incident in November 2015, when Mills angrily approached the sister of murdered teacher Victoria Soto—who is regarded as a heroine for her attempt to protect her students from the shooter in the Sandy Hook attack—shoved a photograph in her face, "and began angrily charging that not only did the Sandy Hook tragedy not take place, but that Victoria Soto never existed."^{[78][79]} Mills entered an Alford plea and was thus found guilty; he was given a suspended sentence of one year in jail and two years' probation.^[78]

In December 2016, Lucy Richards, a woman from Tampa, was charged with four counts of transmitting threats in interstate commerce for sending death threats to Lenny Pozner, whose son Noah was the youngest of 20 children murdered.^{[80][81]} Pozner has been particularly targeted by Internet trolls and conspiracy theorists because he has vocally fought back against them.^[82] Richards had been expected to plead guilty to one count of transmitting threats, with both the prosecution and defense to recommend a sentence of probation and house arrest. However, in March 2017, Richards—who was free on bond—failed to show up to court for a change-of-plea hearing and sentencing. An arrest warrant was issued, Richards' bond was revoked, and she was soon apprehended.^[83] On June 7, 2017, Richards was sentenced to five months' imprisonment.^[84]

Lenny Pozner, the father of Sandy Hook victim Noah Pozner, founded an organization called the HONR Network, which takes legal action against harassers of Sandy Hook survivors and families.^[85]

Wolfgang Halbig, a past contributor to Infowars, was arrested in January 2020 for unauthorized possession of personal information of Lenny Pozner. Halbig had illegally obtained Pozner's private information and attempted to dox Pozner by sending those to a long list of recipients. Under Florida law, unauthorized possession of such information carries a maximum prison term of one year.^[86]

See also

- Gun politics in the United States
- List of conspiracy theories
- Reactions to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting

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Sutherland Springs church shooting

The **Sutherland Springs church shooting** occurred on November 5, 2017, when Devin Patrick Kelley of New Braunfels, Texas perpetrated a mass shooting at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Kelley killed 25 people (including a pregnant woman), and wounded 20 others before dying of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The attack is the deadliest mass shooting in Texas history, and the fifth-deadliest in the United States.^{[2]^[note 1]} It was the deadliest shooting in an American place of worship in modern history, surpassing the Charleston church shooting of 2015^[3] and the Waddell Buddhist temple shooting of 1991.^[4]

Kelley was prohibited by law from purchasing or possessing firearms and ammunition due to a domestic violence conviction in a court-martial while in the United States Air Force. The Air Force failed to record the conviction in the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Crime Information Center database, which is used by the National Instant Check System to flag prohibited purchases. The error prompted the Air Force to begin a review.^[5]

Sutherland Springs church shooting

Part of mass shootings in the United States



[Interactive fullscreen map]

Location	First Baptist Church 216 4th Street Sutherland Springs, Texas, U.S.
Coordinates	29.2732°N 98.0564°W
Date	November 5, 2017 c. 11:20 – 11:30 a.m. ^[1] (CST)
Attack type	<u>Mass shooting</u>
Weapon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>Ruger AR-556 semi-automatic rifle</u><u>Glock 19 semi-automatic pistol</u><u>Ruger SR22 semi-automatic pistol</u>
Deaths	26 (including the perpetrator)
Injured	20
Perpetrator	Devin Patrick Kelley
Defender	Stephen Willeford

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Shooting

A few minutes after 11 a.m., Kelley arrived in a pearl white Ford Explorer SUV at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs.^[6]

Around 11:20 a.m., Kelley stepped out of the SUV, wearing black tactical gear, a ballistic vest, and a black face-mask featuring a white skull,^[7] and wielding a Ruger AR-556 semi-automatic rifle. He approached the church from the right, opening fire on and killing two people outside the church and continuing to fire on the building itself. He then entered through a right side door, where worshippers were attending regular Sunday service.^{[7][8]}

Inside, he yelled, "Everybody dies, motherfuckers," as he proceeded up and down the center aisle and shot at people in the pews.^{[7][8]} Police found 15 empty magazines capable of holding 30 rounds each. Authorities stated Kelley fired approximately 700 rounds during the estimated 11 minute long shooting.^{[1][9][10][11]} According to investigators, the shooting was captured on a camera set up at the back of the church to record regular services for uploading online. The footage shows Kelley methodically shooting the victims, pausing only to reload his rifle.^[12]

Kelley was then confronted by and traded fire with Stephen Willeford, a local resident and former NRA firearms instructor^[13] who was armed with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle. Willeford had taken cover behind a truck across the street from the church and shot Kelley twice, once in the leg and once in the upper left torso under his tactical gear.^{[14][15][16]} Kelley, who had dropped his rifle upon the initial fire with Willeford, fired back with a handgun before fleeing in his Ford Explorer. Willeford fired one more round as Kelley sped north on FM 539.^{[17][18]} Willeford then noticed a pickup truck parked at the intersection of 4th St. and FM 539, driven by Johnnie Langendorff.



Stephen Willeford, former NRA firearms instructor who fired upon and injured the shooter

Willeford approached and entered Langendorff's truck on the passenger side. They then pursued Kelley at high speed for about five to seven minutes. According to Langendorff, they drove at speeds up to 95 miles per hour (155 km/h).^[19] While chasing Kelley, Langendorff called 9-1-1 and reported their location to the operator as they assumed that the police were on their way to the church.

During the chase, Kelley called his wife and spoke to her and his parents, informing them "I just shot up the Sutherland Springs church,"^[20] and telling his father that he was injured and thought that he would not survive.^[16] Kelley repeatedly emphasized how sorry he was.^[20] Bleeding from his injuries, Kelley soon lost control of his vehicle, hitting a road sign before crossing a bar ditch at the Hartfield/Sandy Elm Road intersection and finally stopping about 30 feet into the field on the opposite side.

Willeford and Langendorff observed that he was motionless, and police took over the scene when they arrived.^[21] Police found Kelley dead in his car^[22] with three gunshot wounds, including a self-inflicted head wound.^[23] Two handguns were found in the vehicle: a Glock 19 9mm and a Ruger SR22 .22-caliber, both of which Kelley had purchased.^[24]

Investigation

The Texas Rangers led the investigation, with the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) assisting.^[22] Investigators said the shooting was not motivated by racism or prejudice against religion, but by a dispute with Kelley's mother-in-law.^[25] There was no indication that anyone other than Kelley was involved in the shooting.^[12]

Victims

The attack occurred during the church's Sunday service.^[26] Twenty-six people were killed (including the shooter) and 20 others were injured. The dead comprised ten women (including one pregnant), seven men, seven girls, one boy.^[12] Twenty-three died inside the church, two outside, and one in a hospital.^[27] The oldest victim was 77 years old.^[12] One victim was the 14-year-old daughter of church pastor Frank Pomeroy, who was elsewhere the day of the attack.^{[28][26][22][29]} Visiting pastor Bryan Holcombe died with seven family members, including his pregnant daughter-in-law.^[30]

The injured victims were taken to Connally Memorial Medical Center in Floresville, University Hospital in San Antonio, and Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston.^[6]

Perpetrator

Early life and education

Devin Patrick Kelley (February 12, 1991 – November 5, 2017)^[31] was raised in New Braunfels, Texas, about 35 miles (56 km) from Sutherland Springs, and attended New Braunfels High School.^{[26][32][33]}

At New Braunfels High, Kelley had a lengthy disciplinary record, which included seven suspensions for "falsifying records, insubordination, profanity and a drug-related offense".^[34] One former high school classmate described him as "an outcast but not a loner" who was "popular among other outcasts".^[35] However, a martial arts instructor who taught Kelley during that time said Kelley signed up for his class because he was being bullied and that he did not fit in. Kelley graduated in 2009 with a 2.32 grade-point average and a ranking of 260 out of 393 students in his class.^[34] A close friend from middle school through high school recalled "he wasn't always a 'psychopath' though" and that "over the years we all saw him change into something that he wasn't".^[35]

Military service and violent behavior

After graduating, Kelley enlisted in the United States Air Force. He served in logistics readiness at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico from 2009 until 2014. He married in April 2011.^{[36][37]} In October 2012, he was charged with assaulting his wife and fracturing his toddler stepson's skull. In response, Kelley made death threats against the superior officers who charged him, and he was caught sneaking firearms onto Holloman Air Force Base.^[38] Around that same time, he made threats of self-harm to a coworker.^[34] He was then admitted to Peak Behavioral Health Services, a mental health facility in Santa Teresa, New Mexico.^[38]

In June 2012, Kelley escaped from Peak Behavioral Health Services but was soon apprehended ten miles away at a bus terminal in El Paso, Texas.^{[38][39]} The facility's director of military affairs later recalled that Kelley had stayed at the facility for several weeks, until he was brought to court-martial. While there, he

had expressed a desire for "some kind of retribution to his chain of command" and was discovered to have used computers to order "weapons and tactical gear to a P.O. box in San Antonio".^[39]

Kelley and his wife divorced in October 2012.^[36] In an interview with *Inside Edition*, his ex-wife said she lived in constant fear of him, as their marriage was filled with abuse. He once threatened her at gunpoint over a speeding ticket, and later threatened to kill her and her entire family.^[40]

Kelley was brought before a general court-martial on four charges: assault on his wife, aggravated assault on his stepson, two charges of pointing a loaded gun at his wife, and two counts of threatening his wife with an unloaded gun. In November 2012, Kelley pleaded guilty to two counts of Article 128 UCMJ, for the assault of his wife and stepson. In return, the weapons charges were dropped.^{[41][42][43]} He was sentenced to 12 months of confinement and a reduction in rank to Airman Basic. He appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, but was unsuccessful.^[44] In 2014, he was dismissed from the Air Force with a bad conduct discharge.^{[45][46]}

Personal life

After his release, Kelley returned to New Braunfels, where he lived in a converted barn at his parents' home. Shortly thereafter, he was investigated for sexual assault and rape, and for a physical assault of his then-girlfriend.^[42] A 2013 statement from the woman who accused Kelley of sexual assault detailed an alleged attack on her. A separate statement from Kelley's first wife (who divorced him in October 2012) said that Kelley had physically abused her during the marriage; the woman wrote, "For a whole year, he slapped me, choked me, kicked me, water-boarded me and held a gun to my head."^{[47][48]} However, the Comal County, Texas, Sheriff's Office did not bring charges against Kelley, and "the case became inactive because the victim did not respond to four follow-up calls and messages from a sheriff's office detective."^[48]

On April 4, 2014, Kelley married his then-girlfriend.^[49] The couple moved into a mobile home in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he was charged in August 2014 for misdemeanor cruelty to animals after beating his malnourished husky.^[50] He was given a deferred sentence of probation and was ordered to pay restitution and other fees; the charge was dismissed in March 2016, after he completed the sentence.^{[42][50]} In January 2015, a resident of El Paso County, Colorado, received a protection order against him.^[49]

Kelley attended the First Baptist Church in Kingsville, Texas, from May to June 2014 and volunteered as a helper for one day of Vacation Bible School.^[51] Later on, he stopped volunteering at the summer Bible class and began posting about atheism online.^[52] According to some of his former high school classmates, he was constantly "trying to preach his atheism" and describing people who believe in God as "stupid", causing them to delete him as a friend on Facebook for his posts.^{[53][52][54]}

At the time of the shooting, Kelley was again living at his parents' property in New Braunfels.^[42] He reportedly lied about his background to pass a background check and obtain a license from the Texas Department of Public Safety as a security guard,^{[55][56]} and was a security worker at the Summit Vacation and RV Resort in New Braunfels.^[32] He had previously worked as an unarmed security guard at the Schlitterbahn Waterpark and Resort in New Braunfels, but was fired after less than six weeks on the job.^[32] While he was working at The Summit Vacation and RV Resort, a family who encountered him commented on how "creepy" Kelley had seemed; one member described, "He seemed angry. He seemed annoyed by us, and he seemed like he wanted to exert some authority."^[57]

On the night of October 31, less than a week before the shooting, Kelley attended a festival at the First Baptist Church wearing all black. According to two parishioners who were at the festival, he acted so strangely that people had to keep an eye on him. One also examined him to make sure he was not carrying a firearm.^[40] According to a former Air Force colleague who temporarily got reacquainted with him online, Kelley claimed he would buy dogs and other animals and use them for "target practice". He also expressed his obsession with mass murders, including the Charleston church shooting, and joked about committing one himself. These comments prompted her to block him on Facebook.^{[34][58]}

Kelley's estranged second wife sometimes attended First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs with her family.^[42] Prior to the shooting, he sent threatening text messages to her mother.^[16] His wife and her mother were not at the church when the attack occurred, but he killed his wife's grandmother at the church.^{[16][59]}

Ability to purchase and carry firearms

In 2012, Kelley purchased two guns (a European American Armory Windicator .38-caliber revolver and a 9mm SIG Sauer P250 pistol) from the HAFB Base Exchange.^[60]

Kelley later purchased four guns, including a 9mm Glock 19 pistol, a .22-caliber Ruger SR22 pistol, a Ruger GP100 .357 Magnum revolver and a Ruger AR-556 rifle, at stores in Colorado and Texas between 2014 and 2017.^[61] On October 29, a week before the shooting, he posted a photo of what appeared to be a Ruger model AR-556 rifle on his Facebook profile. A Ruger AR-556 rifle was used in the attack, and two handguns were found in Kelley's vehicle.^[62]

Kelley purchased the semi-automatic rifle used in the shooting from an Academy Sports + Outdoors store in San Antonio on April 7, 2016.^[63] He filled out the required ATF Form 4473 and falsely indicated that he did not have a disqualifying criminal history. In Texas, an FBI National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) check is required at the time of purchase for all firearms except for purchasers with a valid license to carry a handgun.^{[64][65]}

The State of Texas denied his application for a license to carry a handgun,^{[52][63]} although a license is not required to purchase firearms under Texas state law.^[61]

Kelley's general court-martial guilty plea made it illegal for him to own, buy, or possess a firearm or ammunition. The conviction should have been flagged by NICS and prevented the purchase.^{[63][66]} Federal law prohibits those convicted of domestic violence—even if it is only a misdemeanor—from possessing firearms.^{[67][68]} However, the Air Force failed to relay the court-martial convictions to the FBI. In a statement admitting the oversight, the Air Force said, "Initial information indicates that Kelley's domestic violence offense was not entered into the National Crime Information Center database by the Holloman Air Force Base Office of Special Investigations."^{[5][69]} One day after the shooting, the Air Force said it had "launched a review of how the service handled the criminal records of former Airman Devin P. Kelley following his 2012 domestic violence conviction".^{[5][68]} Three days after the shooting, Vice President Mike Pence visited the crime scene, and said, "We will find why this information was not properly recorded in 2012, and we will work with leaders in Congress to ensure that this never happens again."^[70]

In 2018, the family of a couple that was murdered in the shooting sued the Air Force and the Department of Defense, alleging the government was negligent.^[71]

Reactions

The shooting brought attention to gaps in reporting to the federal background-check system intended to ban convicted domestic abusers, such as Kelley, from purchasing guns. Since 1996, the Lautenberg Amendment has prohibited the sale of firearms to those convicted of domestic abuse offenses, even misdemeanors, but gaps in reporting continue to exist.^[68]

Donald Trump, who was the 45th president of the United States at the time of the shooting, said at a press conference in Tokyo, Japan that "I think that mental health is a problem here. Based on preliminary reports, this was a very deranged individual with a lot of problems over a very long period of time. We have a lot of mental health problems in our country, as do other countries, but this isn't a guns situation ... we could go into it but it's a little bit soon to go into it. Fortunately somebody else had a gun that was shooting in the opposite direction, otherwise it wouldn't have been as bad as it was, it would have been much worse".^[72] Trump was asked about gun policy while visiting Seoul, South Korea. In response to a proposal for extreme vetting of gun ownership, Trump said that this would have made "no difference". He said that stricter gun control measures might have prevented Stephen Willeford from shooting Kelley, and commented, "Instead of having 26 dead, he would've had hundreds more dead."^{[73][74]} After the shooting, Trump issued a presidential proclamation honoring the victims^[75] and ordered the United States flag at half-staff at the White House and all public and military sites until the sunset of November 9.^[76] Willeford was called a hero for what he did.^[77]



Donald Trump discussing the shooting at a press conference in Tokyo, Japan

Texas Governor Greg Abbott said that the shooting "will be a long, suffering mourning for those in pain". Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton proposed that churches employ professional armed security guards, or at least arm more parishioners, to counter church shootings, which he said have happened "forever" and will again.^[78] Paxton was criticized by Manny Garcia, the Texas Democratic Party's deputy executive director, who said that "Texans deserve more from their chief law enforcement official than inaction and willful ignorance."^[79]

On November 9, the pastor of the church, Frank Pomeroy, announced that the building would be demolished and be replaced with a prayer garden, stating that it would be too painful to the victims to keep the building as is.^{[80][81]} Later in the month he told the *New York Times* that reports of the church being demolished were inaccurate, and that a decision on the future of the church had not yet been made.^[82]

On November 15, 2017, the day nine victims of the shooting were buried, Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) introduced the Fix NICS Act of 2017 (S.2135), to address deficiencies in the reporting process, and impose severe penalties for the failure of agencies to report convictions. The next day, Congressman Henry Cuellar (D-TX), whose district, Texas 28th, includes Sutherland Springs, introduced a version in the House of Representatives (H. R. 4434). Cuellar's bill was superseded by H. R. 4477, introduced by Congressman John Culberson (R-TX), representing Texas' 7th District, including western Houston and Harris County. The final version of the Fix NICS ACT was passed as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, signed as Pub.L.115-141 by President Donald Trump on March 23, 2018. A week later, Cornyn met with survivors and victims' families at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs to discuss details of the legislation. Between November 5, 2017, and March 30, 2018, the U. S. Air Force turned over at least 4,000 outstanding records to the FBI.^[83]

Conspiracy theories and harassment of victims' families

Fake news websites and far-right activists published misleading stories and conspiracy stories about the incident.^{[84][85][86][87]} They associated the shooter with a range of people and groups the far-right opposes^[85] such as identifying him as a Democrat, Hillary Clinton supporter, Bernie Sanders supporter, Alt-left supporter, or radical Muslim;^{[88][86]} or claiming that he carried an antifa flag and told churchgoers, "This is a communist revolution!"^{[89][90][91]} Some reports falsely claimed that he targeted the church because they were "white conservatives".^[85] Democratic U.S. Representative Vicente González twice incorrectly named the shooter as "Sam Hyde", a comedian who is often jokingly referred to as the perpetrator on social media. González said that he had been given that name by officials.^[92]

Conspiracy theories circulated at the hospital where victims were being treated. According to *The Washington Post*, a group of women who said they knew the victims were overheard discussing the shooting as a false flag operation designed to manipulate the public towards some nefarious end. The *Post* reporter sought to inquire further, but the women pushed her away, saying, "She [the reporter] is part of it [the conspiracy]," after which the reporter was removed from the hospital by police.^[84] The misinformation mirrored similar events in the aftermath of the Las Vegas shooting a few weeks earlier, in which perpetrator Stephen Paddock was falsely linked to leftist and Islamist groups.^[85]

In 2018, two conspiracy theorists, Jodi Mann and Robert Ussery, were arrested after accosting the church's pastor, whose daughter was killed in the shooting. Both were charged with trespassing and resisting arrest, and Ussery was also charged with making a terroristic threat and possession of marijuana. Mann and Ussery deny that the massacre occurred and instead promote "false flag" conspiracy notions on the Internet, asserting that the Sutherland Springs attack and other attacks were orchestrated for political purposes.^[93]

See also

- Gun violence in the United States
- Gun law in the United States
- Gun politics in the United States
- List of rampage killers in the United States
- List of shootings in Texas

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1. After the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, the Orlando nightclub shooting, the Virginia Tech shooting and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

External links

- First Baptist Church website (<http://www.ssfb.net/>)
 - CNN list of victims fatally shot (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/06/us/texas-church-shooting-victims-list/index.html>)
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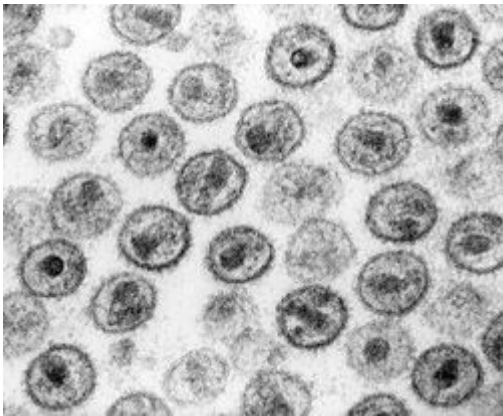
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HIV/AIDS denialism

HIV/AIDS denialism is the refusal to acknowledge that human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), despite the conclusive evidence.^{[1][2][3]} Some of its proponents reject the existence of HIV, while others accept that HIV exists but argue that it is a harmless passenger virus and not the cause of AIDS. Insofar as they acknowledge AIDS as a real disease, they attribute it to some combination of sexual behavior, recreational drugs, malnutrition, poor sanitation, haemophilia, or the effects of the medications used to treat HIV infection (antiretrovirals).^{[4][5]}

The scientific consensus is that the evidence showing HIV to be the cause of AIDS is conclusive^{[1][2]} and that HIV/AIDS denialist claims are pseudoscience based on conspiracy theories,^[6] faulty reasoning, cherry picking, and misrepresentation of mainly outdated scientific data.^{[1][2][7]} With the rejection of these arguments by the scientific community, HIV/AIDS denialist material is now targeted at less scientifically sophisticated audiences and spread mainly through the Internet.^{[8][9]}



Electron micrograph of the human immunodeficiency virus. HIV/AIDS denialists dispute the existence of HIV or its role in causing AIDS.

Despite its lack of scientific acceptance, HIV/AIDS denialism has had a significant political impact, especially in South Africa under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki. Scientists and physicians have raised alarm at the human cost of HIV/AIDS denialism, which discourages HIV-positive people from using proven treatments.^{[2][8][10][11][12][13]} Public health researchers have attributed 330,000 to 340,000 AIDS-related deaths, along with 171,000 other HIV infections and 35,000 infant HIV infections, to the South African government's former embrace of HIV/AIDS denialism.^{[14][15]} The interrupted use of antiretroviral treatments is also a major global concern as it potentially increases the likelihood of the emergence of antiretroviral-resistant strains of the virus.^[16]

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History

A constellation of symptoms named "Gay-related immune deficiency" was noted in 1982. In 1983, a group of scientists and doctors at the Pasteur Institute in France, led by Luc Montagnier, discovered a new virus in a patient with signs and symptoms that often preceded AIDS.^[17] They named the virus *lymphadenopathy-associated virus*, or LAV, and sent samples to Robert Gallo's team in the United States. Their findings were peer reviewed and slated for publication in Science.

At a 23 April 1984 press conference in Washington, D.C., Margaret Heckler, Secretary of Health and Human Services, announced that Gallo and his co-workers had discovered a virus that was the "probable" cause of AIDS. This virus was initially named HTLV-III.^[18] In the same year, Casper Schmidt responded to Gallo's papers with "The Group-Fantasy Origins of AIDS", published in the *Journal of Psychohistory*.^[19] Schmidt posited that AIDS was not an actual disease, but rather an example of "epidemic hysteria", in which groups of people subconsciously act out social conflicts. Schmidt compared AIDS to documented cases of epidemic hysteria in the past which were mistakenly thought to be infectious. (Schmidt himself would later die of AIDS in 1994.)^{[20][21]}

In 1986, the viruses discovered by Montagnier and Gallo, found to be genetically indistinguishable, were renamed HIV.^[22]

In 1987, molecular biologist Peter Duesberg questioned the link between HIV and AIDS in the journal *Cancer Research*.^[23] Duesberg's publication coincided with the start of major public health campaigns and the development of zidovudine (AZT) as a treatment for HIV/AIDS.

In 1988, a panel of the Institute of Medicine of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences found that "the evidence that HIV causes AIDS is scientifically conclusive."^[1] That same year, *Science* published Blattner, Gallo, and Temin's "HIV causes AIDS",^[24] and Duesberg's "HIV is not the cause of AIDS".^[25] Also that same year, the Perth Group, a group of denialists based in Perth, Western Australia led by Eleni Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos, published in the non-peer-reviewed journal *Medical Hypotheses* their first article questioning aspects of HIV/AIDS research,^[26] arguing that there was "no compelling reason for preferring the viral hypothesis of AIDS to one based on the activity of oxidising agents."

In 1989, Duesberg exercised his right as a member of the National Academy of Sciences to bypass the peer review process and published his arguments in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (PNAS) unreviewed. The editor of PNAS initially resisted, but ultimately allowed Duesberg to publish, saying, "If you wish to make these unsupported, vague, and prejudicial statements in print, so be it. But I cannot see how this would be convincing to any scientifically trained reader."^[27]

In 1990, the physiologist Robert Root-Bernstein published his first peer-reviewed article detailing his objections to the mainstream view of AIDS and HIV.^[28] In it, he questioned both the mainstream view and the "dissident" view as potentially inaccurate.

In 1991, The Group for the Scientific Reappraisal of the HIV-AIDS Hypothesis, comprising twelve scientists, doctors, and activists, submitted a short letter to various journals, but the letter was rejected.^[29]

In 1993, *Nature* published an editorial arguing that Duesberg had forfeited his right of reply by engaging in disingenuous rhetorical techniques and ignoring any evidence that conflicted with his claims.^[30] That same year, Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos and coauthors from the Perth Group alleged in the journal *Nature Biotechnology* (then edited by fellow denialist Harvey Bialy) that the Western blot test for HIV was not standardized, non-reproducible, and of unknown specificity due to a claimed lack of a "gold standard".^{[31][32]}

On 28 October 1994, Robert Willner, a physician whose medical license had been revoked for, among other things, treating an AIDS patient with ozone therapy, publicly jabbed his finger with blood he said was from an HIV-infected patient.^[10] Willner died in 1995 of a heart attack.^[33]

In 1995, The Group for the Scientific Reappraisal of the HIV-AIDS Hypothesis in 1991 published a letter in *Science* similar to the one they had attempted to publish in 1991.^[34] That same year, Continuum, a denialist group, placed an advertisement in the British gay and lesbian magazine *The Pink Paper* offering a £1,000 reward to "the first person finding one scientific paper establishing actual isolation of HIV", according to a set of seven steps they claimed to have been drawn up by the Pasteur Institute in 1973.^[35] The challenge was later dismissed by various scientists, including Duesberg, asserting that HIV undoubtedly exists.^[35] Stefan Lanka argued in the same year that HIV does not exist.^[36] Also that year, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases released a report concluding that "abundant epidemiologic, virologic and immunologic data support the conclusion that infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the underlying cause of AIDS."^{[37][38]}

In 1996, the *British Medical Journal* published "Response: arguments contradict the "foreign protein-zidovudine" hypothesis"^[39] as a response to a petition by Duesberg: "In 1991 Duesberg challenged researchers... We and Darby et al. have provided that evidence". The paper argued that Duesberg was wrong regarding the cause of AIDS in haemophiliacs. In 1997, The Perth Group questioned the existence of HIV, and speculated that the production of antibodies recognizing HIV proteins can be caused by allogenic stimuli and autoimmune disorders.^{[40][41]} They continued to repeat this speculation through at least 2006.^[42]

In 1998, Joan Shenton published the book *Positively False – Exposing the Myths Around HIV and AIDS*, which promotes AIDS denialism. In the book, Shenton claims that AIDS is a conspiracy created by pharmaceutical companies to make money from selling antiretroviral drugs.^[43]

In 2006, Celia Farber, a journalist and prominent HIV/AIDS denialist, published an essay in the March issue of *Harper's Magazine* entitled "Out of Control: AIDS and the Corruption of Medical Science", in which she summarized a number of arguments for HIV/AIDS denialism and alleged incompetence, conspiracy, and fraud on the part of the medical community.^[44] Scientists and AIDS activists extensively criticized the article as inaccurate, misleading, and poorly fact-checked.^{[45][46]}

In 2007, members of the Perth Group testified at an appeals hearing for Andre Chad Parenzee, asserting that HIV could not be transmitted by heterosexual sex. The judge concluded, "I reject the evidence of Ms Papadopoulos-Eleopoulos and Dr Turner. I conclude... that they are not qualified to give expert opinions."^[47]

In 2009, a paper was published in the then non-peer-reviewed journal *Medical Hypotheses* by Duesberg and four other researchers which criticized a 2008 study by Chigwedere et al.,^[14] which found that HIV/AIDS denialism in South Africa resulted in hundreds of thousands of preventable deaths from

HIV/AIDS, because the government delayed the provision of antiretroviral drugs. The paper concluded that "the claims that HIV has caused huge losses of African lives are unconfirmed and that HIV is not sufficient or even necessary to cause the previously known diseases, now called AIDS in the presence of antibody against HIV."^[48] Later that year, the paper was withdrawn from the journal on the grounds of it having methodological flaws, and that it contained assertions "that could potentially be damaging to global public health". A revised version was later published in *Italian Journal of Anatomy and Embryology*.^[49]

US courts

In 1998, HIV/AIDS denialism and parental rights clashed with the medical establishment in court when Maine resident Valerie Emerson fought for the right to refuse to give AZT to her four-year-old son, Nikolas Emerson, after she witnessed the death of her daughter Tia, who died at the age of three in 1996. Her right to stop treatment was upheld by the court in light of "her unique experience."^[50] Nikolas Emerson died eight years later. The family refused to reveal whether the death was AIDS related.^[51]

South Africa

In 2000, South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki invited several HIV/AIDS denialists to join his Presidential AIDS Advisory Panel.^[52] A response named the Durban Declaration was issued affirming the scientific consensus that HIV causes AIDS:

"The declaration has been signed by over 5,000 people, including Nobel Prize winners, directors of leading research institutions, scientific academies and medical societies, notably the US National Academy of Sciences, the US Institute of Medicine, Max Planck institutes, the European Molecular Biology Organization, the Pasteur Institute in Paris, the Royal Society of London, the AIDS Society of India and the National Institute of Virology in South Africa. In addition, thousands of individual scientists and doctors have signed, including many from the countries bearing the greatest burden of the epidemic. Signatories are of MD, PhD level or equivalent, although scientists working for commercial companies were asked not to sign."^[13]

In 2008, University of Cape Town researcher Nicoli Natrass, and later that year a group of Harvard scientists led by Zimbabwean physician Pride Chigwedere each independently estimated that Thabo Mbeki's denialist policies led to the early deaths of more than 330,000 South Africans.^{[14][15]} Barbara Hogan, the health minister appointed by Mbeki's successor, voiced shame over the studies' findings and stated: "The era of denialism is over completely in South Africa."^[53]

In 2009, Fraser McNeill wrote an article arguing that South Africa's reluctance to openly address HIV/AIDS resulted from social conventions that prevent people from talking about causes of death in certain situations, rather than from Mbeki's denialist views.^[54] Similarly, political scientist Anthony Butler has argued that "South African HIV/AIDS policy can be explained without appeals to leadership irrationality or wider cultural denialism."^[55]

In July 2016 Aaron Motsoaledi, the Health Minister of South Africa, wrote an article for the Centre for Health Journalism in which he criticised past South African leaders for their denialism, describing it as an "unlucky moment" in a country which has since become a leader in treatment and prevention.^[56]

Denialists' claims and scientific evidence

The term "HIV/AIDS denialism" denotes the rejection of the mainstream scientific view that AIDS is a medical condition that is brought about by HIV infection. The use of the term encompasses the denial of the existence of the virus (HIV denialism), the denial of the causation of AIDS by HIV (that is, the proposed link between the virus and the syndrome), and the denial of the effects on the human body that are ascribed to HIV (that is, the description and characterization of the virus). In a framework incorporating the second denial and/or the third, criticism of the current scientific view has variously been rested on the claim that HIV has not been adequately isolated,^[57] that HIV does not fulfill Koch's postulates,^[58] HIV testing is inaccurate,^[31] and/or that antibodies to HIV neutralize the virus and render it harmless.^[59] Suggested alternative causes of AIDS variously include recreational drugs, malnutrition, and the very antiretroviral drugs used to treat the syndrome.^[60]

Such claims have been examined extensively in the peer-reviewed medical and scientific literature; a scientific consensus has arisen that denialist claims have been convincingly disproved, and that HIV does indeed cause AIDS.^{[2][61]} In the cases cited by Duesberg where HIV "cannot be isolated", PCR or other techniques demonstrate the presence of the virus,^[62] and denialist claims of HIV test inaccuracy result from an incorrect or outdated understanding of how HIV antibody testing is performed and interpreted.^{[63][64]} Regarding Koch's postulates, *New Scientist* reported: "It is debatable how appropriate it is to focus on a set of principles devised for bacterial infections in a century when viruses had not yet been discovered. HIV does, however, meet Koch's postulates as long as they are not applied in a ridiculously stringent way". The author then demonstrated how each postulate has been met – the suspected cause is strongly associated with the disease, the suspected pathogen can be both isolated and spread outside the host, and when the suspected pathogen is transmitted to a new and uninfected host, that host develops the disease.^{[2][65]} The latter was proven in a number of tragic accidents, including an instance when multiple scientific technicians with no other known risk factors were exposed to concentrated HIV in a laboratory accident, and transmission by a dentist to patients, the majority of whom had no other known risk factor or source of exposure except the same dentist in common.^[2] In 2010, Chigwedere and Max Essex demonstrated in the medical journal *AIDS and Behavior* that HIV as the cause of AIDS fulfills both Koch's postulates and the Bradford Hill criteria for causality.^[66]

Early denialist arguments held that the HIV/AIDS paradigm was flawed because it had not led to effective treatments. However, the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy in the mid-1990s and dramatic improvements in survival of HIV/AIDS patients reversed this argument, as these treatments were based directly on anti-viral activity and the HIV/AIDS paradigm.^[67] The development of effective anti-AIDS therapies based on targeting of HIV has been a major factor in convincing some denialist scientists to accept the causative role of HIV in AIDS.^[68]

In a 2010 article on conspiracy theories in science, Ted Goertzel lists HIV/AIDS denialism as an example where scientific findings are being disputed on irrational grounds. He describes proponents as relying on rhetoric, appeal to fairness, and the right to a dissenting opinion rather than on evidence. They frequently invoke the meme of a "courageous independent scientist resisting orthodoxy", invoking the name of persecuted physicist and astronomer Galileo Galilei.^[69] Regarding this comparison, Goertzel states:

...being a dissenter from orthodoxy is not difficult; the hard part is actually having a better theory. Publishing dissenting theories is important when they are backed by plausible evidence, but this does not mean giving critics 'equal time' to dissent from every finding by a mainstream scientist.

— Goertzel, 2010^[69]

Denialist community

Denialists often use their critique of the link between HIV and AIDS to promote alternative medicine as a cure, and attempt to convince HIV-positive individuals to avoid ARV therapy in favour of vitamins, massage, yoga and other unproven treatments.^[70] Despite this promotion, denialists will often downplay any association with alternative therapies, and attempt to portray themselves as "dissidents". An article in the *Skeptical Inquirer* stated:

AIDS denialists [prefer] to characterize themselves as brave "dissidents" attempting to engage a hostile medical/industrial establishment in genuine scientific "debate." They complain that their attempts to raise questions and pose alternative hypotheses have been unjustly rejected or ignored at the cost of scientific progress itself...Given their resistance to all evidence to the contrary, today's AIDS dissidents are more aptly referred to as AIDS denialists.^[70]

Several scientists have been associated with HIV/AIDS denialism, although they have not themselves studied AIDS or HIV.^[9] One of the most famous and influential is Duesberg, professor of molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley, who since 1987 has disputed that the scientific evidence shows that HIV causes AIDS.^[23] Other scientists associated with HIV/AIDS denialism include biochemists David Rasnick and Harvey Bialy. Kary Mullis, who was awarded a Nobel Prize for his role in the development of the polymerase chain reaction, has expressed sympathy for denialist theories.^[71] Biologist Lynn Margulis argued that "there's no evidence that HIV is an infectious virus" and that AIDS symptoms "overlap...completely" with those of syphilis.^[72] Pathologist Étienne de Harven also expressed sympathy for HIV/AIDS denial.^{[73][74]}

Additional notable HIV/AIDS denialists include Australian academic ethicist Hiram Caton, the late mathematician Serge Lang,^[75] former college administrator Henry Bauer, journalist Celia Farber, American talk radio host and author on alternative and complementary medicine and nutrition Gary Null, and the late activist Christine Maggiore, who encouraged HIV-positive mothers to forgo anti-HIV treatment and whose 3-year-old daughter died of complications of untreated AIDS.^[76] Nate Mendel, bassist with the rock band Foo Fighters, expressed support for HIV/AIDS denialist ideas and organized a benefit concert in January 2000 for Maggiore's organization Alive & Well AIDS Alternatives.^[77] Organizations of HIV/AIDS denialists include the Perth Group, composed of several Australian hospital workers, and the Immunity Resource Foundation.^[78]

HIV/AIDS denialism has received some support from political conservatives in the United States. Duesberg's work has been published in *Policy Review*, a journal once published by The Heritage Foundation but later acquired by the Hoover Institution,^{[79][80][81]} and by Regnery Publishing. Regnery published Duesberg's *Inventing the AIDS Virus* in 1996,^[82] and journalist Tom Bethell's *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Science*, in which he endorses HIV/AIDS denialism, in 2005.^[83] Law professor Phillip E. Johnson has accused the Centers for Disease Control of "fraud" in relation to HIV/AIDS.^[84] Describing the political aspects of the HIV/AIDS denialism movement, Sociology professor Steven Epstein wrote in *Impure Science* that "... the appeal of Duesberg's views to conservatives—certainly including those with little sympathy for the gay movement—cannot be denied."^[85] The blog LewRockwell.com has also published articles supportive of HIV/AIDS denialism.^[86]

In a follow-up article in *Skeptical Inquirer*,^[87] Nattrass overviewed the prominent members of the HIV/AIDS denialist community and discussed the reasons of the intractable staying power of HIV/AIDS denialism in spite of scientific and medical consensus supported by over two decades of evidence. She

observed that despite being a disparate group of people with very different background and professions, the HIV/AIDS denialists self-organize to fill four important roles:^[87]

- "Hero scientists" to provide scientific legitimacy: Most notably Duesberg who plays the central role of HIV/AIDS denialism from the beginning. Others include David Rasnick, Étienne de Harven, and Kary Mullis whose Nobel Prize makes him symbolically important.
- "Cultropreneurs" to offer fake cures in place of antiretroviral therapy: Matthias Rath, Gary Null, Michael Ellner, and Roberto Giraldo all promote alternative medicine and remedies with a dose of conspiracy theories in the form of books, healing products, radio shows and counseling services.
- HIV-positive "living icons" to provide proof of concept by appearing to live healthily without antiretroviral therapy: Christine Maggiore was and still is the most important icon in the HIV/AIDS denialist movement despite the fact that she died of AIDS related complications in 2008.
- "Praise singers": sympathetic journalists and filmmakers who publicize the movement with uncritical and favorable opinion. They include journalists Celia Farber, Liam Scheff and Neville Hodgkinson; filmmakers Brent Leung and Robert Leppo.

Some of them had overlapping roles as board members of Rethinking AIDS and Alive and Well AIDS Alternatives, were involved in the film *House of Numbers*, *The Other Side of AIDS* or on Thabo Mbeki's AIDS Advisory Panel. Natrass argued that HIV/AIDS denialism gains social traction through powerful community-building effects where these four organized characters form "a symbiotic connection between AIDS denialism and alternative healing modalities" and they are "facilitated by a shared conspiratorial stance toward HIV science".^[87]

Former denialists

Several of the few prominent scientists who once voiced doubts about HIV/AIDS have since changed their views and accepted the fact that HIV plays a role in causing AIDS, in response to an accumulation of newer studies and data.^[88] Root-Bernstein, author of *Rethinking AIDS: The Tragic Cost of Premature Consensus* and formerly a critic of the causative role of HIV in AIDS, has since distanced himself from the HIV/AIDS denialist movement, saying, "Both the camp that says HIV is a pussycat and the people who claim AIDS is all HIV are wrong...The denialists make claims that are clearly inconsistent with existing studies."^[89]

Joseph Sonnabend, who until the late 1990s regarded the issue of AIDS causation as unresolved, has reconsidered in light of the success of newer antiretroviral drugs, stating, "The evidence now strongly supports a role for HIV... Drugs that can save your life can also under different circumstances kill you. This is a distinction that denialists do not seem to understand."^[89] Sonnabend has also criticized HIV/AIDS denialists for falsely implying that he supports their position, saying:

Some individuals who believe that HIV plays no role at all in AIDS have implied that I support their misguided views on AIDS causation by including inappropriate references to me in their literature and on their web sites. Before HIV was discovered and its association with AIDS established, I held the entirely appropriate view that the cause of AIDS was then unknown. I have successfully treated hundreds of AIDS patients with antiretroviral medications, and have no doubt that HIV plays a necessary role in this disease.^[90]

A former denialist wrote in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* in 2004:

The group [of denialists] regularly points to a substantial number of scientists supportive of its agenda to re-evaluate the HIV/AIDS hypothesis. Some of those members still listed are people who have been dead for a number of years. While it is correct that these people supported the objective of a scientific re-evaluation of the HIV/AIDS link when they were alive, it is clearly difficult to ascertain what these people would have made of the scientific developments and the accumulation of evidence for HIV as the crucial causative agent in AIDS, which has occurred in the years after their deaths.^[68]

Death of HIV-positive denialists

In 2007, [aidstruth.org](#), a website run by HIV researchers to counter denialist claims,^[91] published a partial list of HIV/AIDS denialists who had died of AIDS-related causes. For example, the editors of the magazine *Continuum* consistently denied the existence of HIV/AIDS. The magazine shut down after both editors died of AIDS-related causes.^[92] In each case, the HIV/AIDS denialist community attributed the deaths to unknown causes, secret drug use, or stress rather than HIV/AIDS.^{[21][68]} Similarly, several HIV-positive former dissidents have reported being ostracized by the AIDS-denialist community after they developed AIDS and decided to pursue effective [antiretroviral](#) treatment.^[93]

In 2008, activist [Christine Maggiore](#) died at the age of 52 while under a doctor's care for pneumonia. Maggiore, mother of two children, had founded an organisation to help other HIV-positive mothers avoid taking antiretroviral drugs that reduce the risk of HIV transmission from mother to child.^[94] After her three-year-old daughter died of [AIDS-related pneumonia](#) in 2005, Maggiore continued to believe that HIV is not the cause of AIDS, and she and her husband [Robin Scovill](#) sued [Los Angeles County](#) and others on behalf of their daughter's estate, for allegedly violating [Eliza Scovill's](#) civil rights by releasing an autopsy report that listed her cause of death as [AIDS-related pneumonia](#).^[76] The litigants settled out of court, with the county paying Scovill \$15,000 in March 2009, with no admission of wrongdoing. The Los Angeles coroner's ruling that Eliza Scovill died of AIDS remains the official verdict.^[95]

Local community group denialism

Australia: In 2009 representing the then [Australian Vaccination-Skeptics Network](#), President [Meryl Dorey](#) signed a petition claiming that "the AIDS industry and the media" had tricked the public and the media into believing that HIV causes AIDS.^[96]

Canada: The Alberta Reappraising AIDS Society created the petition in March 2000 and has reportedly since attracted "2,951 doubters" representing groups and individuals. Signatories reportedly deny "that Aids is heterosexually transmitted".^[97]

Impact beyond the scientific community

AIDS-denialist claims have failed to attract support in the scientific community, where the evidence for the causative role of HIV in AIDS is considered conclusive. However, the movement has had a significant impact in the political sphere, culminating with former South African President [Thabo Mbeki's](#) embrace of AIDS-denialist claims.^[98] The resulting governmental refusal to provide effective anti-HIV treatment in South Africa has been blamed for hundreds of thousands of premature AIDS-related deaths in South Africa.^[53]

North America and Europe

Skepticism about HIV being the cause of AIDS began almost immediately after the discovery of HIV was announced. One of the earliest prominent skeptics was the journalist John Lauritsen, who argued in his writings for the *New York Native* that amyl nitrite poppers played a role in AIDS, and that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had used statistical methods that concealed this.^[99] Lauritsen's *The AIDS War* was published in 1993.^[100]

Scientific literature

The publication of Duesberg's first AIDS paper in 1987 provided visibility for denialist claims. Shortly afterwards, the journal *Science* reported that Duesberg's remarks had won him "a large amount of media attention, particularly in the gay press where he is something of a hero."^[101] However, Duesberg's support in the gay community diminished as he made a series of statements perceived as homophobic; in an interview with *The Village Voice* in 1988, Duesberg stated his belief that the AIDS epidemic was "caused by a lifestyle that was criminal twenty years ago."^[102]

In the following few years, others became skeptical of the HIV theory as researchers initially failed to produce an effective treatment or vaccine for AIDS.^[103] Journalists such as Neville Hodgkinson and Celia Farber regularly promoted denialist ideas in the American and British media; several television documentaries were also produced to increase awareness of the alternative viewpoint.^[104] In 1992–1993, *The Sunday Times*, where Hodgkinson served as scientific editor, ran a series of articles arguing that the AIDS epidemic in Africa was a myth. These articles stressed Duesberg's claims and argued that antiviral therapy was ineffective, HIV testing unreliable, and that AIDS was not a threat to heterosexuals. The *Sunday Times* coverage was heavily criticized as slanted, misleading, and potentially dangerous; the scientific journal *Nature* took the unusual step of printing a 1993 editorial calling the paper's coverage of HIV/AIDS "seriously mistaken, and probably disastrous."^[105]

Finding difficulty in publishing his arguments in the scientific literature, Duesberg exercised his right as a member of the National Academy of Sciences to publish in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (*PNAS*) without going through the peer review process. However, Duesberg's paper raised a "red flag" at the journal and was submitted by the editor for non-binding review. All of the reviewers found major flaws in Duesberg's paper; the reviewer specifically chosen by Duesberg noted the presence of "misleading arguments", "nonlogical statements", "misrepresentations", and political overtones.^[27] Ultimately, the editor of *PNAS* acquiesced to publication,^[106] writing to Duesberg: "If you wish to make these unsupported, vague, and prejudicial statements in print, so be it. But I cannot see how this would be convincing to any scientifically trained reader."^[27]

HIV/AIDS denialists often resort to special pleading to support their assertion, arguing for different causes of AIDS in different locations and subpopulations. In North America, AIDS is blamed on the health effects of unprotected anal sex and poppers on homosexual men, an argument which does not account for AIDS in drug-free heterosexual women who deny participating in anal sex. In this case, HIV/AIDS denialists claim the women are having anal sex but refuse to disclose it. In haemophiliac North American children who contracted HIV from blood transfusions, the haemophilia itself or its treatment is claimed to cause AIDS. In Africa, AIDS is blamed on poor nutrition and sanitation due to poverty. For wealthy populations in South Africa with adequate nutrition and sanitation, it is claimed that the antiretroviral drugs used to treat AIDS cause the condition. In each case, the most parsimonious explanation and uniting factor – HIV positive status – is ignored, as are the thousands of studies that converge on the common conclusion that AIDS is caused by HIV infection.^[5]

Haemophilia is considered the best test of the HIV-AIDS hypothesis by both denialists and AIDS researchers. While Duesberg claims AIDS in haemophiliacs is caused by contaminated clotting factors and HIV is a harmless passenger virus, this result is contradicted by large studies on haemophiliac patients who received contaminated blood. A comparison of groups receiving high, medium and low levels of contaminated clotting factors found the death rates differed significantly depending on HIV status. Of 396 HIV positive haemophiliacs followed between 1985 and 1993, 153 died. The comparative figure for the HIV negative group was one out of 66, despite comparable doses of contaminated clotting factors. A comparison of individuals receiving blood donations also supports the results; in 1994 there were 6888 individuals with AIDS who had their HIV infection traced to blood transfusions. Since the introduction of HIV testing, the number of individuals whose AIDS status can be traced to blood transfusions was only 29 (as of 1994).^[4]

Lay press and on the Internet

With the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in 1996–1997, the survival and general health of people with HIV improved significantly.^{[67][107]} The positive response to treatment with anti-HIV medication cemented the scientific acceptance of the HIV/AIDS paradigm, and led several prominent HIV/AIDS denialists to accept the causative role of HIV.^{[68][89]} Finding their arguments increasingly discredited by the scientific community, denialists took their message to the popular press. A former denialist wrote:

Scientists among the HIV dissidents used their academic credentials and academic affiliations to generate interest, sympathy, and allegiances in lay audiences. They were not professionally troubled about recruiting lay people—who were clearly unable to evaluate the scientific validity or otherwise of their views—to their cause.^[68]

In addition to elements of the popular and alternative press, AIDS denialist ideas are propagated largely via the Internet.^[108]

A 2007 article in *PLoS Medicine* noted:

Because these denialist assertions are made in books and on the Internet rather than in the scientific literature, many scientists are either unaware of the existence of organized denial groups, or believe they can safely ignore them as the discredited fringe. And indeed, most of the HIV deniers' arguments were answered long ago by scientists. However, many members of the general public do not have the scientific background to critique the assertions put forth by these groups, and not only accept them but continue to propagate them.^[8]

Lay opinion and AIDS-related behaviors

AIDS activists have expressed concern that denialist arguments about HIV's harmlessness may be responsible for an upsurge in HIV infections. Denialist claims continue to exert a significant influence in some communities; a survey conducted at minority gay pride events in four American cities in 2005 found that 33% of attendees doubted that HIV caused AIDS.^[109] Similarly, a 2010 survey of 343 people living with HIV/AIDS found that one in five of them thought that there was no proof that HIV caused AIDS, and that HIV treatments did more harm than good.^[110] According to Stephen Thomas, director of the University of Pittsburgh Center for Minority Health, "people are focusing on the wrong thing. They're

focusing on conspiracies rather than protecting themselves, rather than getting tested and seeking out appropriate care and treatment."^[111] African Americans are exceptionally likely to believe that HIV does not cause AIDS, partly because they sometimes perceive the role of HIV in the disease as part of a racist agenda.^[112] A 2012 survey of young adults in Cape Town, South Africa found that belief in AIDS denialism was strongly related to an increased probability of engaging in unsafe sex.^[113]

South Africa

HIV/AIDS denialist claims have had a major political, social, and public health impact in South Africa. The government of then President Thabo Mbeki was sympathetic to the views of HIV/AIDS denialists, with critics charging that denialist influence was responsible for the slow and ineffective governmental response to the country's massive AIDS epidemic.

Independent studies have arrived at almost identical estimates of the human costs of HIV/AIDS denialism in South Africa. According to a paper written by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health, between 2000 and 2005, more than 330,000 deaths and an estimated 35,000 infant HIV infections occurred "because of a failure to accept the use of available [antiretroviral drugs] to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS in a timely manner."^[14] Nicoli Natrass of the University of Cape Town estimates that 343,000 excess AIDS-related deaths and 171,000 infections resulted from the Mbeki administration's policies, an outcome she refers to in the words of Peter Mandelson as "genocide by sloth".^[15]

Durban Declaration

In 2000, when the International AIDS Conference was held in Durban, Mbeki convened a Presidential Advisory Panel containing a number of HIV/AIDS denialists, including Duesberg and David Rasnick.^[114] The Advisory Panel meetings were closed to the general press; an invited reporter from the Village Voice wrote that Rasnick advocated that HIV testing be legally banned and denied that he had seen "any evidence" of an AIDS catastrophe in South Africa, while Duesberg "gave a presentation so removed from African medical reality that it left several local doctors shaking their heads."^[52]

In his address to the International AIDS Conference, Mbeki reiterated his view that HIV was not wholly responsible for AIDS, leading hundreds of delegates to walk out on his speech.^[115] Mbeki also sent a letter to a number of world leaders likening the mainstream AIDS research community to supporters of the apartheid regime.^[114] The tone and content of Mbeki's letter led diplomats in the U.S. to initially question whether it was a hoax.^{[116][117]}

AIDS scientists and activists were dismayed at the president's behavior and responded with the Durban Declaration, a document affirming that HIV causes AIDS, signed by over 5,000 scientists and physicians.^{[13][115]}

Criticism of governmental response

The former South African health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang also attracted heavy criticism, as she often promoted nutritional remedies such as garlic, lemons, beetroot and olive oil, to people suffering from AIDS,^{[118][119][120]} while emphasizing possible toxicities of antiretroviral drugs, which she has referred to as "poison".^[121] The South African Medical Association has accused Tshabalala-Msimang of "confusing a vulnerable public".^[122] In September 2006, a group of over 80 scientists and academics called for "the immediate removal of Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang as minister of health and for an end to the

disastrous, pseudoscientific policies that have characterized the South African government's response to HIV/AIDS."^[123] In December 2006, deputy health minister Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge described "denial at the very highest levels" over AIDS.^[124]

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki's government was widely criticized for delaying the rollout of programs to provide antiretroviral drugs to people with advanced HIV disease and to HIV-positive pregnant women. The national treatment program began only after the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) brought a legal case against Government ministers, claiming they were responsible for the deaths of 600 HIV-positive people a day who could not access medication.^{[114][125]} South Africa was one of the last countries in the region to begin such a treatment program, and roll-out has been much slower than planned.^[121]

At the XVI International AIDS Conference, Stephen Lewis, UN special envoy for AIDS in Africa, attacked Mbeki's government for its slow response to the AIDS epidemic and reliance on denialist claims:

It [South Africa] is the only country in Africa ... whose government is still obtuse, dilatory and negligent about rolling out treatment... It is the only country in Africa whose government continues to promote theories more worthy of a lunatic fringe than of a concerned and compassionate state.^[123]

In 2002, Mbeki requested that HIV/AIDS denialists no longer use his name in their literature and stop signing documents with "Member of President Mbeki's AIDS Advisory Panel".^[114] This coincided with the South African government's statement accompanying its 2002 AIDS campaign, that "...in conducting this campaign, government's starting point is based on the premise that HIV causes AIDS".^[126] Nonetheless, Mbeki himself continued to promote and defend AIDS-denialist claims. His loyalists attacked former President Nelson Mandela in 2002 when Mandela questioned the government's AIDS policy, and Mbeki attacked Malegapuru William Makgoba, one of South Africa's leading scientists, as a racist defender of "Western science" for opposing HIV/AIDS denialism.^[53]

In early 2005, former South African President Nelson Mandela announced that his son had died of complications of AIDS. Mandela's public announcement was seen as both an effort to combat the stigma associated with AIDS, and as a "political statement designed to... force the President [Mbeki] out of his denial."^{[127][128]}

Post-Mbeki government in South Africa

In 2008, Mbeki was ousted from power and replaced as President of South Africa by Kgalema Motlanthe. On Motlanthe's first day in office, he removed Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, the controversial health minister who had promoted AIDS-denialist claims and recommended garlic, beetroot, and lemon juice as treatments for AIDS. Barbara Hogan, newly appointed as health minister, voiced shame at the Mbeki government's embrace of HIV/AIDS denialism and vowed a new course, stating: "The era of denialism is over completely in South Africa."^[53]

See also

- Discredited HIV/AIDS origins theories
- Germ theory denialism
- Misconceptions about HIV and AIDS

- Vaccine hesitancy

Footnotes

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External links

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases pages:

- "The HIV-AIDS connection" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160909192350/https://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/HIVAIDS/Understanding/howHIVCausesAIDS/Pages/connection.aspx>). Archived from the original (<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/HIVAIDS/Understanding/howHIVCausesAIDS/Pages/connection.aspx>) on 9 September 2016
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 - AidsTruth.org (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120302124609/http://aidstruth.org/>), an organization that advocates against AIDS denialism
-

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Discredited HIV/AIDS origins theories

Various fringe theories have arisen to speculate about purported alternative origins for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), with claims ranging from it being due to accidental exposure to supposedly purposeful acts. Several inquiries and investigations have been carried out as a result, and each of these theories has consequently been determined to be based on unfounded and/or false information. HIV has been shown to have evolved from or be closely related to the simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) in West Central Africa sometime in the early 20th century. HIV was discovered in the 1980s by the French scientist Luc Montagnier. Before the 1980s, HIV was an unknown deadly disease.^[1]

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Discredited theories

Smallpox vaccination theory

In 1987 there was some consideration given to the possibility that the "AIDS epidemic may have been triggered by the mass vaccination campaign which eradicated smallpox". An article^[2] in *The Times* suggested this, quoting an unnamed "adviser to WHO" with "I believe the smallpox vaccine theory is the explanation to the explosion of AIDS". It is now thought that the smallpox vaccine causes serious complications for people who already have impaired immune systems, and the *Times* article described the case of a military recruit with "dormant HIV" who died within months of receiving it. But no citation was provided regarding people who did not previously have HIV. Currently HIV is considered to be a

contraindication for the smallpox vaccine—both for an infected person and their sexual partners and household members.^{[3][4]} Some conspiracy theorists propose an expanded hypothesis in which the smallpox vaccine was deliberately contaminated with HIV.^[5]

In contrast, a research article was published in 2010 suggesting that it might have been the actual eradication of smallpox and the subsequent "ending" of the mass vaccination campaign that contributed to the sudden emergence of HIV. The theory was the possibility that immunization against smallpox "might play a role in providing an individual with some degree of protection to subsequent HIV infection and/or disease progression."^{[6][7]} Regardless of the effects of the smallpox vaccine itself, its use in practice in Africa is one of the categories of un-sterile injections that may have contributed to the spread and mutation of the immunodeficiency viruses.^[8]

Hepatitis B vaccine (HBV) theory

The dermatologist Alan Cantwell, in self-published books entitled *AIDS and the Doctors of Death: An Inquiry into the Origin of the AIDS Epidemic* (1988) and *Queer Blood: The Secret AIDS Genocide Plot* (1993), said that HIV is a genetically modified organism developed by U.S. Government scientists. The virus was then introduced into the population through Hepatitis B (via the Hepatitis B vaccine) experiments performed on gay and bisexual men between 1978–1981 in major U.S. cities. Cantwell claims that these experiments were directed by Wolf Szmunes, and that there was an ongoing government cover-up of the origins of the AIDS epidemic. Similar theories have been advanced by Robert B. Strecker,^[9] Matilde Krim, and Milton William Cooper.

Oral polio vaccine (OPV) theory

In the 1999 version of his OPV AIDS hypothesis, Edward Hooper proposed that early batches of the oral polio vaccine (OPV) grown in cultures of chimpanzee kidney cells, infected with a chimpanzee virus, were the original source of HIV-1 in Central Africa. A vial of the batch most strongly implicated by Hooper was found in storage in the UK, and analysis found no HIV/SIV sequences or chimpanzee cellular components, but did find traces of macaque mitochondria. Analysis of five samples of OPV in storage at the Wistar Institute, including one from a batch used in the Belgian Congo between 1958 and 1960, found no chimpanzee DNA.^[10] Other molecular biology and phylogenetic studies also contradict the hypothesis, and scientific consensus regards it as disproven.^{[11][12][13][14]} In 2004 the journal *Nature* described the hypothesis as "refuted".^[15]

Additional theories

These theories generally attribute HIV's origin to the US government or its contractors:

Created at Fort Detrick

Jakob Segal (1911–1995), a professor at Humboldt University in then-East Germany, proposed that HIV was engineered at a U.S. military laboratory at Fort Detrick, by splicing together two other viruses, Visna and HTLV-1. According to his theory, the new virus, created between 1977 and 1978, was tested on prison inmates who had volunteered for the experiment in exchange for early release. He further suggested that it was through these prisoners that the virus was spread to the population at large.

At the end of the Cold War, former KGB agents Vasili Mitrokhin and Oleg Gordievsky independently revealed that the Fort Detrick hypothesis was a propaganda operation devised by the KGB's First Chief Directorate codenamed "Operation INFEKTION". This revelation was later supported by officer Günther Bohnensack of section X of East Germany's Main Directorate for Reconnaissance.

It is known that Segal was in close contact with Russian KGB officers and Mitrokhin mentioned him as a central asset of the operation.^{[16][17]} It is not entirely clear whether Segal pursued the hypothesis independently on his own accord or whether he was simply following orders. Segal himself always denied the latter and kept pursuing the hypothesis even after the operation had been canceled and the Cold War had ended.

Conspiracy to decrease the population

In *Behold a Pale Horse* (1991), radio broadcaster and author Milton William Cooper (1943–2001) proposed that AIDS was the result of a conspiracy to decrease the populations of blacks, Hispanics, and homosexuals.^[18]

Prevalence of conspiracy beliefs

According to Phil Wilson, executive director of the Black AIDS Institute in Los Angeles, conspiracy theories are becoming a barrier to the prevention of AIDS since people start to believe that no matter what measures they take, they can still be prone to contracting this disease. A 2005 study suggests this makes them less careful when engaging in practices that put them at risk because they believe there is no point.^[19] "Nearly half of the 500 African Americans surveyed said that HIV is man-made. More than one-quarter said they believed that AIDS was produced in a government laboratory, and 12 percent believed it was created and spread by the CIA... At the same time, 75 percent said they believed medical and public health agencies are working to stop the spread of AIDS in black communities."^[19]

Prominent endorsers of discredited theories

Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam endorses the view that governments and pharmaceutical companies have pursued genocidal racist policies including the creation and spread of HIV. Consequently, the group called for a boycott of U.S.-sponsored vaccination programs for children. Leonard Horowitz has been cited as influential in the boycott decision.^[20]

Wangari Maathai

The 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate and environmental activist Wangari Maathai was asked by a *Time* magazine interviewer if she stood by a previous alleged claim that "AIDS is a biological weapon manufactured by the developed world to wipe out the black race". Maathai responded, "I have no idea who created AIDS and whether it is a biological agent or not. But I do know things like that don't come from the moon. (...) I guess there is some truth that must not be too exposed."^[21] Maathai subsequently issued a written statement in December 2004: "I neither say nor believe that the virus was developed by white people or white powers in order to destroy the African people. Such views are wicked and destructive."^[22]

Manto Tshabalala-Msimang

In 2000 South Africa's Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang received criticism for distributing the chapter from Cooper's book discussing this theory to senior South African government officials.^[23] Nicoli Natrass, a longtime critic of AIDS denialists, criticized Tshabalala-Msimang for lending legitimacy to Cooper's theories and disseminating them in Africa.^[24]

See also

- Denialism
- Duesberg hypothesis
- History of HIV/AIDS
- HIV/AIDS denialism
- HIV/AIDS denialism in South Africa
- Operation INFEKTION
- Oral polio vaccine AIDS hypothesis
- SV40
- Zoonosis

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External links

- [Is AIDS a manmade disease? \(https://www.straightdope.com/21342103/is-aids-a-manmade-disease\)](https://www.straightdope.com/21342103/is-aids-a-manmade-disease)
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Water fluoridation controversy

The **water fluoridation controversy** arises from political, moral, ethical, economic, and health considerations regarding the fluoridation of public water supplies.

For deprived groups in both maturing and matured countries, international and national agencies and dental associations across the world support the safety and effectiveness of water fluoridation.^[1] Proponents of water fluoridation see it as a question of public health policy and equate the issue to vaccination and food fortification, claiming significant benefits to dental health and minimal risks.^[2]

In contrast, opponents of water fluoridation view it as an infringement of individual rights, if not an outright violation of medical ethics,^[3] on the basis that individuals have no choice in the water that they drink, unless they drink more expensive bottled water.^[4] A small minority of scientists have challenged the medical consensus, variously claiming that water fluoridation has no or little cariostatic benefits, may cause serious health problems, is not effective enough to justify the costs, and is pharmacologically obsolete.^{[5][6][7][8]}

Opposition to fluoridation has existed since its initiation in the 1940s.^[9] During the 1950s and 1960s, conspiracy theorists claimed that fluoridation was a communist plot to undermine American public health.^[10] In recent years water fluoridation has become a prevalent health and political issue in many countries, resulting in some countries and communities discontinuing its use while others have expanded it.^{[11][12]} The controversy is propelled by a significant public opposition supported by a minority of professionals,^[13] which include researchers, dental and medical professionals, alternative medical practitioners, health food enthusiasts, a few religious groups (mostly Christian Scientists in the U.S.), and occasionally consumer groups and environmentalists.^[14] Organized political opposition has come from libertarians,^[15] the John Birch Society,^[16] and from groups like the Green parties in the UK and New Zealand.^[17]

Proponents and opponents have been both criticized for overstating the benefits or overstating the risks, and understating the other, respectively.^{[18][19]} Systematic reviews have cited the lack of high quality research for the benefits and risks of water fluoridation and questions that are still unsettled.^{[11][19][20]} Researchers who oppose the practice state this as well.^[21] According to a 2013 Congressional Research Service report on fluoride in drinking water, these gaps in the fluoridation scientific literature fuel the controversy.^[12]

Public water fluoridation was first practiced in 1945, in the US. As of 2012, 25 countries have supplemental water fluoridation to varying degrees, and 11 of them have more than 50% of their population drinking fluoridated water. A further 28 countries have water that is naturally fluoridated, though in many of them there are areas where fluoride is above the optimum level.^[22] As of 2012 about 435 million people worldwide received water fluoridated at the recommended level, of whom 57 million (13%) received naturally fluoridated water and 377 million (87%) received artificially fluoridated water.^[22] In 2014, three-quarters of the US population on the public water supply received fluoridated water, which represented two-thirds of the total US population.^[23]

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Medical consensus

National and international health agencies and dental associations throughout the world have endorsed water fluoridation as safe and effective.^{[1][24]}

The views on the most effective method for community prevention of tooth decay are mixed. The Australian government states that water fluoridation is the most effective means of achieving fluoride exposure that is community-wide.^[25] The World Health Organization states water fluoridation, when feasible and culturally acceptable, has substantial advantages, especially for subgroups at high risk,^[26] while the European Commission finds no advantage to water fluoridation compared with topical use.^[27]

FDI World Dental Federation supports water fluoridation as safe and effective.^[22] the European Academy of Paediatric Dentistry,^[28] and the national dental associations of Australia,^[29] Canada,^[30] and the U.S.^[31] The American Dental Association calls water fluoridation "one of the safest and most beneficial, cost-effective public health measures for preventing, controlling, and in some cases reversing, tooth decay."^[32]

In the English speaking nations—the United States, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand, all of which practice water fluoridation—many medical associations and authorities have published position statements and endorsed water fluoridation.

The U.S. Surgeon General,^[33] the American Public Health Association,^[34] the Royal Commission on the National Health Service,^[35] Australian Medical Association,^[36] New Zealand Medical Association,^[37] and Health Canada support fluoridation, citing a number of international scientific reviews that indicate

"there is no link between any adverse health effects and exposure to fluoride in drinking water at levels that are below the maximum acceptable concentration of 1.5 mg/L."^[38] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention listed water fluoridation as one of the ten great public health achievements of the 20th century in the U.S.,^[39] along with vaccination, family planning, recognition of the dangers of smoking, and other achievements.^[39]

In Israel, the Israeli Association of Public Health Physicians, the Israel Pediatric Association, and the Israel Dental Association, support fluoridation.^[40]

The World Health Organization, looking at global public health, identifies fluoride as one of a few chemicals for which the contribution from drinking-water to overall intake is an important factor in preventing disease. This is because there is clear evidence that optimal concentrations of fluoride provide protection against cavities, both in children and in adults.^{[41][42][43]}

Minority scientific view

The scientists or doctors who oppose water fluoridation argue that it has no or little cariostatic benefits, may cause serious health problems, is not effective enough to justify the costs, and is pharmacologically obsolete.^{[6][7][8]} Arvid Carlsson has argued that fluoridation violates modern pharmacological principles and doesn't take into account individual variations in response, which can be considerable even when the dosage is fixed.^{[8][44]} Paul Connett has stated "It's politics that is interfering with science in this issue...It's a matter of political will, and you cannot change political will if you don't get the people. We must involve the people."^[45]

Evidence

Proponents and opponents have been both criticized for overstating the benefits or overstating the risks, and understating the other, respectively.^{[18][19]} Systematic reviews have cited the lack of high-quality research for the benefits and risks of water fluoridation and questions that are still unsettled.^{[11][19][20]} A 2007 Nuffield Council on Bioethics report concluded that good evidence for or against water fluoridation is lacking.^[46] Researchers who oppose the practice state this as well.^[21] According to a 2013 Congressional Research Service report on fluoride in drinking water, these gaps in the fluoridation scientific literature fuel the controversy.^[12] John Doull, chairman of the 2006 National Research Council committee report on fluoride in drinking water, has stated a similar conclusion regarding the source of the controversy: "In the scientific community, people tend to think this is settled. I mean, when the U.S. surgeon general comes out and says this is one of the 10 greatest achievements of the 20th century, that's a hard hurdle to get over. But when we looked at the studies that have been done, we found that many of these questions are unsettled and we have much less information than we should, considering how long this [fluoridation] has been going on. I think that's why fluoridation is still being challenged so many years after it began. In the face of ignorance, controversy is rampant."^{[47][48]}

Safety

Fluoride can be present naturally in water at concentrations well above recommended levels, which can have several long-term adverse effects, including severe dental fluorosis, skeletal fluorosis, and weakened bones.^[49] In 1984 the World Health Organization recommended a guideline maximum fluoride value of 1.5 mg/L as a level at which fluorosis should be minimal, reaffirming it in 2006.^[50]

Fluoridation has little effect on risk of bone fracture (broken bones); it may result in slightly lower fracture risk than either excessively high levels of fluoridation or no fluoridation.^[25] There is no clear association between fluoridation and cancer or deaths due to cancer, both for cancer in general and also specifically for bone cancer and osteosarcoma.^{[25][51]}

In rare cases improper implementation of water fluoridation can result in overfluoridation that causes outbreaks of acute fluoride poisoning, with symptoms that include nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Three such outbreaks were reported in the U.S. between 1991 and 1998, caused by fluoride concentrations as high as 220 mg/L; in the 1992 Alaska outbreak, 262 people became ill and one person died.^[52] In 2010, approximately 60 gallons of fluoride were released into the water supply in Asheboro, North Carolina in 90 minutes—an amount that was intended to be released in a 24-hour period.^[53]

Like other common water additives such as chlorine, hydrofluosilicic acid and sodium silicofluoride decrease pH and cause a small increase of corrosivity, but this problem is easily addressed by increasing the pH.^[54] Although it has been hypothesized that hydrofluosilicic acid and sodium silicofluoride might increase human lead uptake from water, a 2006 statistical analysis did not support concerns that these chemicals cause higher blood lead concentrations in children.^[55] Trace levels of arsenic and lead may be present in fluoride compounds added to water; however, concentrations are below measurement limits.^[54]

The effect of water fluoridation on the natural environment has been investigated, and no adverse effects have been established. Issues studied have included fluoride concentrations in groundwater and downstream rivers; lawns, gardens, and plants; consumption of plants grown in fluoridated water; air emissions; and equipment noise.^[54]

Efficacy

Reviews have shown that water fluoridation reduces cavities in children.^{[20][27][56]} A conclusion for the efficacy in adults is less clear with some reviews finding benefit and others not.^{[20][56]} Studies in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s showed that water fluoridation reduced childhood cavities by fifty to sixty percent, while studies in 1989 and 1990 showed lower reductions (40% and 18% respectively), likely due to increasing use of fluoride from other sources, notably toothpaste, and also the 'halo effect' of food and drink that is made in fluoridated areas and consumed in unfluoridated ones.^[5]

A 2000 UK systematic review (York) found that water fluoridation was associated with a decreased proportion of children with cavities of 15% and with a decrease in decayed, missing, and filled primary teeth (average decreases was 2.25 teeth). The review found that the evidence was of moderate quality: few studies attempted to reduce observer bias, control for confounding factors, report variance measures, or use appropriate analysis. Although no major differences between natural and artificial fluoridation were apparent, the evidence was inadequate for a conclusion about any differences.^[51] A 2002 systematic review found strong evidence that water fluoridation is effective at reducing overall tooth decay in communities.^[57] A 2015 Cochrane review also found benefit in children.^[20]

Fluoride may also prevent cavities in adults of all ages. A 2007 meta-analysis by CDC researchers found that water fluoridation prevented an estimated 27% of cavities in adults, about the same fraction as prevented by exposure to any delivery method of fluoride (29% average).^[58] A 2011 European Commission review found that the benefits of water fluoridation for adult in terms of reductions in decay are limited.^[27] 2015 Cochrane review found no conclusive research in adults.^[20]

Most countries in Europe have experienced substantial declines in cavities without the use of water fluoridation.^[1] For example, in Finland and Germany, tooth decay rates remained stable or continued to decline after water fluoridation stopped. Fluoridation may be useful in the U.S. because unlike most European countries, the U.S. does not have school-based dental care, many children do not visit a dentist regularly, and for many U.S. children water fluoridation is the prime source of exposure to fluoride.^[59] The effectiveness of water fluoridation can vary according to circumstances such as whether preventive dental care is free to all children.^[60]

Ethics

Water fluoridation pits the common good against individual rights. Some say the common good overrides individual rights, and equate it to vaccination and food fortification.^{[2][3]} Others say that individual rights override the common good, and say that individuals have no choice in the water that they drink, unless they drink more expensive bottled water,^[4] and some argue unequivocally that it does not stand up to scrutiny relative to the Nuremberg Code and other codes of medical ethics.^[3]

Those who emphasize the public good emphasize the medical consensus that appropriate levels of water fluoridation are safe and effective to prevent cavities and see it as a public health intervention, replicating the benefits of naturally fluoridated water, which can free people from the misery and expense of tooth decay and toothache, with the greatest benefit accruing to those least able to help themselves. This perspective suggests it would be unethical to withhold such treatment.^[61] In her book *50 Health Scares That Fizzled*, Joan Callahan writes that, "For lower-income people with no insurance, fluoridated water (like enriched flour and fortified milk) looks more like a free preventative health measure that a few elitists are trying to take away."^[62]

Those who emphasize individual or local choice, may view fluoridation as a violation of ethical or legal rules that prohibit medical treatment without medical supervision or informed consent or that prohibit administration of unlicensed medical substances,^{[1][63]} view it as "mass medication",^[64] or may even characterize it as a violation of the Nuremberg Code and the Council of Europe's Biomedical Convention of 1999.^{[3][12][18]} Another journal article suggested applying the precautionary principle to this controversy, which calls for public policy to reflect a conservative approach to minimize risk in the setting where harm is possible (but not necessarily confirmed) and where the science is not settled.^[65] Others have opposed it on the grounds of potential financial conflicts of interest driven by the chemical industry.^[66]

A 2007 Nuffield Council on Bioethics report reached a conclusion mainly on three points, stating that :

- The balance of benefit to risk ratio – is unclear due to the lack of good evidence for or against water fluoridation.
- Alternatives to the practice exist – topical fluoride therapy (toothbrushing etc.)
- The role of consent- It gets priority when there are potential harms.

The report therefore concluded that local and regional democratic procedures are the most appropriate way to decide whether to fluoridate.^{[46][67][68][69]}

Opposition groups and campaigns

The controversy is propelled by a significant public opposition supported by a minority of professionals,^[13] including researchers, dental and medical professionals, alternative medical practitioners such as chiropractors, health food enthusiasts, a few religious groups (mostly Christian Scientists in the U.S.), and occasionally consumer groups and environmentalists.^[14] Organized political opposition has come from libertarians,^[15] the John Birch Society,^[16] and from groups like the Green parties in the UK and New Zealand.^{[17][66][70]}

Opposition campaigns involve newspaper articles, talk radio, and public forums. Media reporters are often poorly equipped to explain the scientific issues, and are motivated to present controversy regardless of the underlying scientific merits. Websites, which are increasingly used by the public for health information, contain a wide range of material about fluoridation ranging from factual to fraudulent, with a disproportionate percentage opposed to fluoridation. Antifluoridationist literature links fluoride exposure to a wide variety of effects, including AIDS, allergy, Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, cancer, and low IQ, along with diseases of the gastrointestinal tract, kidney, pineal gland, and thyroid.^[71]

Public opinion

Many people do not know that fluoridation is meant to prevent tooth decay, or that natural or bottled water can contain fluoride. As fluoridation does not appear to be an important issue for the general public in the U.S., the debate may reflect an argument between two relatively small lobbies for and against fluoridation.^[72]

A survey of Australians in 2009 found that 70% supported and 15% opposed fluoridation. Those opposed were much more likely to score higher on outrage factors such as "unclear benefits".^[73]

A study of focus groups from 16 European countries in 2003 found that fluoridation was opposed by a majority of focus group members in most of the countries, including France, Germany, and the UK.^[72]

A survey in Sheffield, UK performed in 1999 found that while a 62% majority favored water fluoridation in the city, the 31% who were opposed expressed their preference with greater intensity than supporters.^[74]

Every year in the U.S., pro- and anti-fluoridationists face off in referenda or other public decision-making processes: in most of them, fluoridation is rejected.^[14]

Use throughout the world

Despite support by public health organizations and dental authorities, the practice is controversial as a public health measure; some countries and communities have discontinued it, while others have expanded it.^{[11][12]}

In the U.S., rejection in state and local communities is more likely when the decision is made by a public referendum; in Europe, most decisions against fluoridation have been made administratively.^[9] Neither side of the dispute appears to be weakening or willing to concede.^[14]

Water fluoridation is used in the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Israel, Hong Kong and a handful of other countries. Most countries failed to adopt fluoridation, yet experienced the same or greater decline in cavities as those countries that did fluoridate during the later half of the twentieth century.^[75] The following nations previously fluoridated their water, but stopped the practice, with the years when water fluoridation started and stopped in parentheses:

- Federal Republic of Germany (1952–1971)
- Sweden (1952–1971)
- Netherlands (1953–1976)
- Czechoslovakia (1955–1990)
- German Democratic Republic (1959–1990)
- Soviet Union (1960–1990)
- Finland (1959–1993)
- Japan (1952–1972)^[76]
- Israel (1981–2014, 2016–) *Mandatory by law since 2002.^{[77][78][79]}

In the United Kingdom a strategic health authority can direct a water company to fluoridate the water supply in an area if it is technically possible. The strategic health authority must consult with the local community and businesses in the affected area. The water company will act as a contractor in any new schemes and cannot refuse to fluoridate the supply.^[80]

In areas with complex water sources, water fluoridation is more difficult and more costly. Alternative fluoridation methods have been proposed, and implemented in some parts of the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) is currently assessing the effects of fluoridated toothpaste, milk fluoridation and salt fluoridation in Africa, Asia, and Europe. The WHO supports fluoridation of water in some areas.^[81] In some other countries, sodium fluoride is added to table salt.^[82]

As of 2012, 25 countries have artificial water fluoridation to varying degrees, 11 of them have more than 50% of their population drinking fluoridated water. A further 28 countries have water that is naturally fluoridated, though in many of them the fluoride is above the optimum level.^[22] As of 2012 about 435 million people worldwide received water fluoridated at the recommended level,^[22] about 211 million of them living in the United States.^[83]

History

Fluoridation began during a time of great optimism and faith in science and experts (the 1950s and 1960s), but even then, the public frequently objected. Opponents drew on distrust of experts and unease about medicine and science.^[84] Controversies include disputes over fluoridation's benefits and the strength of the evidence basis for these benefits, the difficulty of identifying harms, legal issues over whether water fluoride is a medicine, and the ethics of mass intervention.^[18]

The first large fluoridation controversy occurred in Wisconsin in 1950. Fluoridation opponents questioned the ethics, safety, and efficacy of fluoridation.^[85] New Zealand was the second country to fluoridate, and similar controversies arose there.^[86] Fears about fluoride were likely exacerbated by the reputation of fluoride compounds as insect poisons and by early literature which tended to use terms such as "toxic" and "low grade chronic fluoride poisoning" to describe mottling from consumption of 6 mg/L of fluoride prior to tooth eruption, a level of consumption not expected to occur under controlled fluoridation.^[87] When voted upon, the outcomes tend to be negative, and thus fluoridation has had a history of gaining through administrative orders in North America.^[85]

Conspiracy theories involving fluoridation are common, and include claims that fluoridation was motivated by protecting the U.S. atomic bomb program from litigation, that (as famously parodied in the film *Dr. Strangelove*, where a deranged U.S. Air Force general claimed that it would "sap and impurify all of our precious bodily fluids") it is part of a Communist or New World Order plot to take over the world, that it was pioneered by a German chemical company to make people submissive to those in

power, that behind the scenes it is promoted by the sugary food or phosphate fertilizer or aluminium industries, or that it is a smokescreen to cover failure to provide dental care to the poor.^[71] One such theory is that fluoridation was a public-relations ruse sponsored by fluoride polluters such as the aluminium maker Alcoa and the Manhattan Project, with conspirators that included industrialist Andrew Mellon and the Mellon Institute's researcher Gerald J. Cox, the Kettering Laboratory of the University of Cincinnati, the Federal Security Agency's administrator Oscar R. Ewing, and public-relations strategist Edward Bernays.^[88] Specific anti-fluoridation arguments change to match the spirit of the time.^[89]

Outside North America, water fluoridation was adopted in some European countries, but in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Denmark and Sweden banned fluoridation when government panels found insufficient evidence of safety, and the Netherlands banned water fluoridation when "a group of medical practitioners presented evidence" that it caused negative effects in a percentage of the population.

Communist conspiracy theory (1940s–1960s)

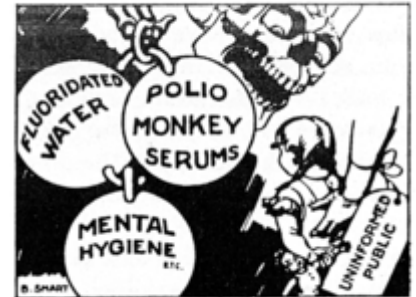
Water fluoridation has frequently been the subject of conspiracy theories. During the "Second Red Scare" in the United States during the late 1940s and 1950s, and to a lesser extent in the 1960s, activists on the far right of American politics routinely asserted that fluoridation was part of a far-reaching plot to impose a socialist or communist regime. These opponents believed it was "another aspect of President Truman's drive to socialize medicine."^[90] They also opposed other public health programs, notably mass vaccination and mental health services.^[91] Their views were influenced by opposition to a number of major social and political changes that had happened in recent years: the growth of internationalism, particularly the UN and its programs; the introduction of social welfare provisions, particularly the various programs established by the New Deal; and government efforts to reduce perceived inequalities in the social structure of the United States.^[92]

Others asserted the existence of "a Communist plot to deplete the brainpower and sap the strength of a generation of American children".^[90] Dr. Charles Bett, a prominent anti-fluoridationist, charged that fluoridation was "better than using the atom bomb because the atom bomb has to be made, has to be transported to the place it is to be set off while poisonous fluorine has been placed right beside the water supplies by the Americans themselves ready to be dumped into the water mains whenever a Communist desires!" Similarly, a right-wing newsletter, the *American Capsule News*, claimed that "the Soviet General Staff is very happy about it. Anytime they get ready to strike, and their 5th column takes over, there are tons and tons of this poison "standing by" municipal and military water systems ready to be poured in within 15 minutes."^[10]

This controversy had a direct impact on local program during the 1950s and 1960s, where referendums on introducing fluoridation were defeated in over a thousand Florida communities. It was not until as late as the 1990s that fluoridated water was consumed by the majority of the population of the United States.^[91]

The communist conspiracy argument declined in influence by the mid-1960s, becoming associated in the public mind with irrational fear and paranoia. It was portrayed in Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*, in which the character General Jack D. Ripper initiates a nuclear war in the hope of

At the Sign of THE UNHOLY THREE



Are you willing to PUT IN PAWN to the UNHOLY THREE all of the material, mental and spiritual resources of this GREAT REPUBLIC?

Illustration in a 1955 flier by the Keep America Committee, alleging that fluoridation was a Communist plot.

thwarting a communist plot to "sap and impurify" the "precious bodily fluids" of the American people with fluoridated water. Another satire appeared in the 1967 movie *In Like Flint*, in which a character's fear of fluoridation is used to indicate that he is insane.

Some anti-fluoridationists claimed that the conspiracy theories were damaging their goals; Dr. Frederick Exner, an anti-fluoridation campaigner in the early 1960s, told a conference: "most people are not prepared to believe that fluoridation is a communist plot, and if you say it is, you are successfully ridiculed by the promoters. It is being done, effectively, every day ... some of the people on our side are the fluoridators' 'fifth column'".^[10]

Later conspiracy theories

In 1987, Ian E. Stephens authored a self-published booklet, an extract of which was published in the Australian *New Age* publication *Nexus Magazine* in 1995. In it he claimed he was told by "Charles Elliot Perkins" that: "Repeated doses of infinitesimal amounts of fluoride will in time reduce an individual's power to resist domination by slowly poisoning and narcotising a certain area of the brain and will thus make him submissive to the will of those who wish to govern him ... Both the Germans and the Russians added sodium fluoride to the drinking water of prisoners of war to make them stupid and docile." These statements have been dismissed by reputable *Holocaust* historians as untrue, but they are regularly repeated to the present day in conspiracy publications and websites.^[93]

In 2004, on the U.S. television program *Democracy Now*, investigative journalist and author of the book *The Fluoride Deception*, Christopher Bryson claimed that, "the post-war campaign to fluoridate drinking water was less a public health innovation than a public relations ploy sponsored by industrial users of fluoride—including the government's nuclear weapons program."^[94]

2006 US NRC report

U.S. opponents of fluoridation were heartened by a 2006 *National Research Council* report about hazards of water naturally fluoridated to high levels;^[48] the report recommended lowering the U.S. maximum limit of 4 mg/L for fluoride in drinking water. The EPA failed to act on that recommendation.^[95]

Court cases

Europe

Water was fluoridated in large parts of the Netherlands from 1960 to 1973, at which point the *Supreme Court of the Netherlands* declared fluoridation of drinking water unauthorized.^[96] The Dutch Court decided that authorities had no legal basis for adding chemicals to drinking water if they did not also improve safety. It was also stated as support that consumers cannot choose a different tap water provider.^[97] Drinking water has not been fluoridated in any part of the Netherlands since 1973.

In *Ryan v. Attorney General* (1965), the *Supreme Court of Ireland* held that water fluoridation did not infringe the plaintiff's right to bodily integrity.^[98] The court found that such a right to bodily integrity did exist, despite the fact that it was not explicitly mentioned in the *Constitution of Ireland*, thus establishing the doctrine of *unenumerated rights* in Irish constitutional law.

United States

Fluoridation has been the subject of many court cases wherein activists have sued municipalities, asserting that their rights to consent to medical treatment and due process are infringed by mandatory water fluoridation.^[3] Individuals have sued municipalities for a number of illnesses that they believe were caused by fluoridation of the city's water supply. In most of these cases, the courts have held in favor of cities, finding no or only a tenuous connection between health problems and widespread water fluoridation.^[99] To date, no federal appellate court or state court of last resort (i.e., state supreme court) has found water fluoridation to be unlawful.^[100]

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External links

- Pipe Dreams: America's Fluoride Controversy (<https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/magazine/pipe-dreams-americas-fluoride-controversy>) – description of the history and controversy of fluoridated drinking water
- Water fluoridation (https://curlie.org/Society/Issues/Health/Water_Treatment/Fluoridation/) at Curlie

See also

- Fluoride therapy
 - Fluoride toxicity
 - Hexafluorosilicic acid
 - Sodium monofluorophosphate
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MMR vaccine and autism

Claims of a link between the **MMR vaccine and autism** have been extensively investigated and found to be false.^[1] The link was first suggested in the early 1990s and came to public notice largely as a result of the 1998 *Lancet* MMR autism fraud, characterised as "perhaps the most damaging medical hoax of the last 100 years".^[2] The fraudulent research paper authored by Andrew Wakefield and published in *The Lancet* claimed to link the vaccine to colitis and autism spectrum disorders. The paper was retracted in 2010^[3] but is still cited by anti-vaccinationists.^[4]

The claims in the paper were widely reported,^[5] leading to a sharp drop in vaccination rates in the UK and Ireland. Promotion of the claimed link, which continues in anti-vaccination propaganda despite being refuted,^{[6][7]} has led to an increase in the incidence of measles and mumps, resulting in deaths and serious permanent injuries.^{[8][9]} Following the initial claims in 1998, multiple large epidemiological studies were undertaken. Reviews of the evidence by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,^[10] the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academy of Sciences,^[11] the UK National Health Service,^[12] and the Cochrane Library^[13] all found no link between the MMR vaccine and autism.^[14] Physicians, medical journals, and editors^{[15][16][17][18][19]} have described Wakefield's actions as fraudulent and tied them to epidemics and deaths.^{[20][21]}

An investigation by journalist Brian Deer found that Wakefield, the author of the original research paper linking the vaccine to autism, had multiple undeclared conflicts of interest,^{[22][23]} had manipulated evidence,^[24] and had broken other ethical codes. The *Lancet* paper was partially retracted in 2004 and fully retracted in 2010, when *Lancet's* editor-in-chief Richard Horton described it as "utterly false" and said that the journal had been deceived.^[25] Wakefield was found guilty by the General Medical Council of serious professional misconduct in May 2010 and was struck off the Medical Register, meaning he could no longer practise as a physician in the UK.^[26] In 2011, Deer provided further information on Wakefield's improper research practices to the *British Medical Journal*, which in a signed editorial described the original paper as fraudulent.^{[27][28]} The scientific consensus is that there is no link between the MMR vaccine and autism and that the vaccine's benefits greatly outweigh its potential risks.

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Background

Revaccination campaign

In the wake of the measles outbreaks, which occurred in England in 1992, and on the basis of analyses of seroepidemiological data combined with mathematical modeling, British Health authorities predicted a major resurgence of measles in school-age children. Two strategies were then examined: either to target vaccination at all children without a history of prior measles vaccination or to immunize all children irrespective of vaccination history.^[29] In November 1994, the latter option was chosen and a national measles and rubella vaccination campaign, described as "one of the most ambitious vaccination initiatives that Britain has undertaken" was commenced:^[30] within one month, 92% of the 7.1 million schoolchildren in England aged 5–16 years received measles and rubella (MR) vaccine.^[31]

MMR litigation starts

In April 1994, Richard Barr,^[32] a solicitor, succeeded in winning legal aid for the pursuit of a class action lawsuit against the manufacturers of MMR vaccines under the UK Consumer Protection Act 1987. The class action case was aimed at Aventis Pasteur, SmithKline Beecham, and Merck, manufacturers respectively of Immavax, Pluserix-MMR and MMR II.^[33] This suit, based on a claim that MMR is a defective product and should not have been used, was the first big class action lawsuit funded by the Legal Aid Board (which became the Legal Services Commission, which in turn was replaced by the Legal Aid Agency) after its formation in 1988. Noticing two publications from Andrew Wakefield that explored the role of measles virus in Crohn's disease and inflammatory bowel disease,^{[34][35]} Barr contacted Wakefield for his expertise. According to Wakefield supporters, the two men first met on 6 January 1996.^[36] The Legal Services Commission halted proceedings in September 2003, citing a high probability of failure based on the medical evidence, bringing an end to the first case of research funding by the LSC.^[37]

1998 *The Lancet* paper

Wakefield's paper "Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children" was published in *The Lancet* on 28 February 1998. An investigation by journalist Brian Deer found that Wakefield had multiple undeclared conflicts of interest,^{[22][23]} had manipulated evidence,^[24] and had broken other ethical codes. The *Lancet* paper was partially retracted in 2004 and fully retracted in 2010, when *The Lancet's* editor-in-chief Richard Horton described it as "utterly false" and said that the journal had been deceived.^[25] Wakefield was found guilty by the General Medical Council of serious professional misconduct in May 2010 and was struck off the Medical Register, meaning he could no longer practise as a doctor in the UK.^[26] In 2011, Deer provided further

information on Wakefield's improper research practices to the *British Medical Journal*, which in a signed editorial described the original paper as fraudulent.^{[27][28]} The scientific consensus is that there is no link between the MMR vaccine and autism and that the vaccine's benefits greatly outweigh its risks.

By the time it was retracted, all authors other than Wakefield had requested their names be removed from the publication.^[38]

Fiona Godlee, editor of *The BMJ*, said in January 2011:^[16]

The original paper has received so much media attention, with such potential to damage public health, that it is hard to find a parallel in the history of medical science. Many other medical frauds have been exposed but usually more quickly after publication and on less important health issues.

Media role

Observers have criticized the involvement of mass media in the controversy, what is known as 'science by press conference',^[39] alleging that the media provided Wakefield's study with more credibility than it deserved. A March 2007 paper in *BMC Public Health* by Shona Hilton, Mark Petticrew, and Kate Hunt postulated that media reports on Wakefield's study had "created the misleading impression that the evidence for the link with autism was as substantial as the evidence against" through an attempt to create "balanced reporting".^[40] Earlier papers in *Communication in Medicine* and *British Medical Journal* concluded that media reports provided a misleading picture of the level of support for Wakefield's hypothesis.^{[41][42][43]}

A 2007 editorial in *Australian Doctor* complained that some journalists had continued to defend Wakefield's study even after *The Lancet* had published the retraction by 10 of the study's 12 original authors, but noted that it was an investigative journalist, Brian Deer, who had played a leading role in exposing weaknesses in the study.^[44] *PRWeek* noted that after Wakefield was removed from the general medical register for misconduct in May 2010, 62% of respondents to a poll regarding the MMR controversy stated they did not feel that the media conducted responsible reporting on health issues.^[45]

A *New England Journal of Medicine* article examining the history of antivaccinationists said that opposition to vaccines has existed since the 19th century, but "now the antivaccinationists' media of choice are typically television and the Internet, including its social media outlets, which are used to sway public opinion and distract attention from scientific evidence".^[20] The editorial characterized anti-vaccinationists as people who "tend toward complete mistrust of government and manufacturers, conspiratorial thinking, denialism, low cognitive complexity in thinking patterns, reasoning flaws, and a habit of substituting emotional anecdotes for data", including people who range from those "unable to understand and incorporate concepts of risk and probability into science-grounded decision making" and those "who use deliberate mistruths, intimidation, falsified data, and threats of violence".^[20]

In a January 2011 editorial in *The American Spectator*, Robert M. Goldberg contended that evidence from the scientific community of issues with Wakefield's research "were undermined because the media allowed Wakefield and his followers to discredit the findings just by saying so".^[46]

Seth Mnookin, author of *The Panic Virus*, also partly blames the media for presenting a false balance between scientific evidence and people's personal experiences: "Reporting fell into this 'on the one hand, on the other hand' fallacy, this notion that if you have two sides that are disagreeing, that means that you

should present both of them with equal weight."^[47]

Concerns have also been raised over the journal peer review system, which largely relies on trust among researchers,^[15] and the role of journalists reporting on scientific theories that they "are hardly in a position to question and comprehend".^[18] Neil Cameron, a historian who specializes in the history of science, writing for the *Montreal Gazette*, labeled the controversy a "failure of journalism" that resulted in unnecessary deaths, saying that: 1) *The Lancet* should not have published a study based on "statistically meaningless results" from only 12 cases; 2) the anti-vaccination crusade was continued by the satirical *Private Eye* magazine; and 3) a grapevine of worried parents and "nincompoop" celebrities fueled the widespread fears.^[48] The *Gazette* also reported that:^[49]

There is no guarantee that debunking the original study is going to sway all parents. Medical experts are going to have to work hard to try to undo the damage inflicted by what is apparently a rogue medical researcher whose work was inadequately vetted by a top-ranked international journal.

Litigation

During the 1980s and 1990s, a number of lawsuits were brought against manufacturers of vaccines, alleging the vaccines had caused physical and mental disorders in children. While these lawsuits were unsuccessful, they did lead to a large jump in the costs of the MMR vaccine, and pharmaceutical companies sought legislative protections. In 1993, Merck KGaA became the only company willing to sell MMR vaccines in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Italy

In June 2012, a local court in Rimini, Italy, ruled that the MMR vaccination had caused autism in a 15-month-old boy. The court relied heavily on the discredited *Lancet* paper and largely ignored the scientific evidence presented to it. The decision was appealed.^[50] On 13 February 2015, the decision was overturned by a Court of Appeals in Bologna.^[51]

Japan

The MMR scare caused a low percentage of mumps vaccination (less than 30%), which resulted in outbreaks in Japan.^[52] There were up to 2002 measles-caused deaths in Japan while there were none in the UK, but the extra deaths were attributed to Japan's application of the vaccine at a later age. A spokesman for the Ministry of Health said that the discontinuation had no effect in measles, but also mentioning that there were more deaths by measles while MMR was being used.^[53] In 1994 the government dropped the vaccination requirement for measles and rubella due to the 1993 MMR scare.^{[54]:2} It has been called a "measles exporter" by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.^[54] As another consequence of the scare, in 2003, 7 million schoolchildren had not been vaccinated against rubella.^[55]

Autism rates continued to rise in Japan after the discontinuation of the MMR vaccine, which disproves any large-scale effect of vaccination,^[56] and means that the withdrawal of MMR in other countries is unlikely to cause a reduction in autism cases.^[57] The Japanese government does not recognize any link between MMR and autism.^[53] By 2003 it was still trying to find a combined vaccine to replace MMR.^[58]

It was later discovered that some of the vaccines were administered after their expiry date and that the MMR compulsory vaccination was only retracted after the death of three children and more than 2000 reports of adverse effects.^[55] By 1993 the Japanese government had paid \$160,000 in compensation to the families of each of the three dead children.^[55] Other parents received no compensation because the government said that it was unproven that the MMR vaccine had been the cause; they decided to sue the manufacturer instead of the government.^[55] The Osaka district court ruled on 13 March 2003 that the death of two children (among numerous other serious conditions) had been indeed caused by Japan's strain of Urabe MMR.^{[59][60]} In 2006, the Osaka High Court stated in another ruling that the state was responsible for failing to properly supervise a manufacturer of the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, which caused severe side effects in children.^[61]

United Kingdom

Commenced before the Civil Procedure Rules were promulgated, the MMR Litigation had its status as group litigation achieved by the then Lord Chief Justice's practice direction of 8 July 1999. On 8 June 2007, the High Court judge, Justice Keith, put an end to the group litigation because the withdrawal of legal aid by the legal services commission had made the pursuit of most of the claimants impossible. He ruled that all but two claims against pharmaceutical companies must be discontinued.^[62] The judge stressed that his ruling did not amount to a rejection of any of the claims that MMR had seriously damaged the children concerned.^[63]

A pressure group, JABS (Justice, Awareness, Basic Support), was established to represent families with children who, their parents said, were "vaccine-damaged". £15 million in public legal aid funding was spent on the litigation, of which £9.7 million went to solicitors and barristers, and £4.3 million to expert witnesses.^[64]

United States

The omnibus autism proceeding (OAP)^[65] is a coordinated proceeding before the Office of Special Masters of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims—commonly called the vaccine court. It is structured to facilitate the handling of nearly 5000 vaccine petitions involving claims that children who have received certain vaccinations have developed autism. The Petitioners' Steering Committee have claimed that MMR vaccines can cause autism, possibly in combination with thiomersal-containing vaccines.^[66] In 2007 three test cases were presented to test the claims about the combination; these cases failed. The vaccine court ruled against the plaintiffs in all three cases, stating that the evidence presented did not validate their claims that vaccinations caused autism in these specific patients or in general.^[67]

In some cases, the plaintiffs' attorneys opted out of the Omnibus Autism Proceedings, which were concerned solely with autism, and issues concerned with bowel disorders; they argued their cases in the regular vaccine court.

On 30 July 2007, the family of Bailey Banks, a child with pervasive developmental delay, won its case versus the Department of Health and Human Services.^[68] In a case listed as relating to "non-autistic developmental delay", Special Master Richard B. Abell ruled that the Banks had successfully demonstrated, "the MMR vaccine at issue actually caused the conditions from which Bailey suffered and continues to suffer." In his conclusion, he ruled that he was satisfied that MMR had caused a brain inflammation called acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM). He reached this conclusion because of two vaccine cases in 1994 and 2001, which had concluded, "ADEM can be caused by natural measles, mumps, and rubella infections, as well as by measles, mumps, and rubella vaccines."^[69]

In other cases, attorneys did not claim that vaccines caused autism; they sought compensation for encephalopathy, encephalitis, or seizure disorders.^[70]

Research

The number of reported cases of autism increased dramatically in the 1990s and early 2000s. This increase is largely attributable to changes in diagnostic practices; it is not known how much, if any, growth came from real changes in autism's prevalence, and no causal connection to the MMR vaccine has been demonstrated.^[71]

In 2004, a meta review financed by the European Union assessed the evidence given in 120 other studies and considered unintended effects of the MMR vaccine, concluding that although the vaccine is associated with positive and negative side effects, a connection between MMR and autism was "unlikely".^[72] Also in 2004, a review article was published that concluded, "The evidence now is convincing that the measles–mumps–rubella vaccine does not cause autism or any particular subtypes of autistic spectrum disorder."^[73] A 2006 review of the literature regarding vaccines and autism found "[t]he bulk of the evidence suggests no causal relationship between the MMR vaccine and autism."^[74] A 2007 case study used the figure in Wakefield's 1999 letter to *The Lancet* alleging a temporal association between MMR vaccination and autism^[75] to illustrate how a graph can misrepresent its data, and gave advice to authors and publishers to avoid similar misrepresentations in the future.^[76] A 2007 review of independent studies performed after the publication of Wakefield *et al.*'s original report found that the studies provided compelling evidence against the hypothesis that MMR is associated with autism.^[77] A review of the work conducted in 2004 for UK court proceedings but not revealed until 2007 found that the polymerase chain reaction analysis essential to the Wakefield *et al.* results was fatally flawed due to contamination, and that it could not have possibly detected the measles that it was supposed to have detected.^[64] A 2009 review of studies on links between vaccines and autism discussed the MMR vaccine controversy as one of three main hypotheses that epidemiological and biological studies failed to support.^[78]

In 2012, the Cochrane Library published a review of dozens of scientific studies involving about 14,700,000 children, which found no credible evidence of an involvement of MMR with either autism or Crohn's disease. The authors stated "the design and reporting of safety outcomes in MMR vaccine studies, both pre- and post-marketing, are largely inadequate".^[13] A June 2014 meta-analysis involving more than 1.25 million children found "vaccinations are not associated with the development of autism or autism spectrum disorder. Furthermore, the components of the vaccines (thimerosal or mercury) or multiple vaccines (MMR) are not associated with the development of autism or autism spectrum disorder."^[79] In July 2014, a systematic review found "strong evidence that MMR vaccine is not associated with autism",^[80] and in March 2019, a large-scale study conducted by Statens Serum Institut following over 650,000 children for over 10 years found no link between the vaccine and autism, even among children with autistic siblings.^{[81][82]}

Disease outbreaks

After the controversy began, the MMR vaccination compliance dropped sharply in the United Kingdom, from 92% in 1996 to 84% in 2002. In some parts of London, it was as low as 61% in 2003, far below the rate needed to avoid an epidemic of measles.^[83] By 2006 coverage for MMR in the UK at 24 months was 85%, lower than the about 94% coverage for other vaccines.^[8]

After vaccination rates dropped, the incidence of two of the three diseases increased greatly in the UK. In 1998 there were 56 confirmed cases of measles in the UK; in 2006 there were 449 in the first five months of the year, with the first death since 1992; cases occurred in inadequately vaccinated children.^[84] Mumps cases began rising in 1999 after years of very few cases, and by 2005 the United Kingdom was in a mumps epidemic with almost 5000 notifications in the first month of 2005 alone.^[85] The age group affected was too old to have received the routine MMR immunisations around the time the paper by Wakefield *et al.* was published, and too young to have contracted natural mumps as a child, and thus to achieve a herd immunity effect. With the decline in mumps that followed the introduction of the MMR vaccine, these individuals had not been exposed to the disease, but still had no immunity, either natural or vaccine induced. Therefore, as immunisation rates declined following the controversy and the disease re-emerged, they were susceptible to infection.^{[86][87]} Measles and mumps cases continued in 2006, at incidence rates 13 and 37 times greater than respective 1998 levels.^[88] Two children who underwent kidney transplantation in London were severely and permanently injured by measles encephalitis.^[9]

Disease outbreaks also caused casualties in nearby countries. Three deaths and 1,500 cases were reported in the Irish outbreak of 2000, which occurred as a direct result of decreased vaccination rates following the MMR scare.^[9]

In 2008, for the first time in 14 years, measles was declared endemic in the UK, meaning that the disease was sustained within the population; this was caused by the preceding decade's low MMR vaccination rates, which created a population of susceptible children who could spread the disease.^[89] MMR vaccination rates for English children were unchanged in 2007–08 from the year before, at too low a level to prevent serious measles outbreaks.^[90] In May 2008, a British 17-year-old with an underlying immunodeficiency died of measles. In 2008 Europe also faced a measles epidemic, including large outbreaks in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland.^[89]

Following the January 2011 *BMJ* statements about Wakefield's fraud, Paul Offit, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a "long-time critic of the dangers of the anti-vaccine movement", said, "that paper killed children",^{[91][92][93]} and Michael Smith of the University of Louisville, an "infectious diseases expert who has studied the autism controversy's effect on immunization rates", said "clearly, the results of this (Wakefield) study have had repercussions."^{[94][95]} In 2014, Laurie Garrett, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, blamed "Wakefieldism" for an increase in the number of unvaccinated children in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, saying, "Our data suggests that where Wakefield's message has caught on, measles follows."^[96]

Impact on society

The *New England Journal of Medicine* said that antivaccinationist activities resulted in a high cost to society, "including damage to individual and community well-being from outbreaks of previously controlled diseases, withdrawal of vaccine manufacturers from the market, compromising of national security (in the case of anthrax and smallpox vaccines), and lost productivity".^[20]

Costs to society from declining vaccination rates (in US dollars) were estimated by AOL's DailyFinance in 2011:^[97]

- A 2002–2003 outbreak of measles in Italy, "which led to the hospitalizations of more than 5,000 people, had a combined estimated cost between 17.6 million euros and 22.0 million euros".
- A 2004 outbreak of measles from "an unvaccinated student return[ing] from India in 2004 to Iowa was \$142,452".

- A 2006 outbreak of mumps in Chicago, "caused by poorly immunized employees, cost the institution \$262,788, or \$29,199 per mumps case".
- A 2007 outbreak of mumps in Nova Scotia cost \$3,511 per case.
- A 2008 outbreak of measles in San Diego, California cost \$177,000, or \$10,376 per case.

In the United States, Jenny McCarthy blamed vaccinations for her son Evan's disorders and leveraged her celebrity status to warn parents of a link between vaccines and autism. Evan's disorder began with seizures and his improvement occurred after the seizures were treated, symptoms experts have noted are more consistent with Landau–Kleffner syndrome, often misdiagnosed as autism.^[98] After the *Lancet* article was discredited, McCarthy continued to defend Wakefield.^[99] An article in Salon.com called McCarthy "a menace" for her continued position that vaccines are dangerous.^[100]

Bill Gates has reacted strongly to Wakefield and the work of anti-vaccination groups:^[101]

Dr. [Andrew] Wakefield has been shown to have used absolutely fraudulent data. He had a financial interest in some lawsuits, he created a fake paper, the journal allowed it to run. All the other studies were done, showed no connection whatsoever again and again and again. So it's an absolute lie that has killed thousands of kids. Because the mothers who heard that lie, many of them didn't have their kids take either pertussis or measles vaccine, and their children are dead today. And so the people who go and engage in those anti-vaccine efforts—you know, they, they kill children. It's a very sad thing, because these vaccines are important.

The proportion of children in England receiving the vaccine by the age of two fell to 91.2% in 2017–18, from 91.6% the year before. Only 87.2% of five-year-olds had received both MMR vaccines.^[102]

With the onset of a large number of measles outbreaks in the United States in 2019, there is fear that parents who have not had their children vaccinated will help to spread infectious diseases in schools and universities where there are already other outbreaks.^[103]

See also

- Vaccine shedding
- Folk epidemiology of autism
- Measles resurgence in the United States

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Vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy refers to a delay in acceptance, or refusal of vaccines despite the availability of vaccine services. Vaccine hesitancy is complex and context specific, varying across time, place and vaccines.^[1] It is influenced by factors such as complacency, convenience and confidence.^[2] The term covers outright refusals to vaccinate, delaying vaccines, accepting vaccines but remaining uncertain about their use, or using certain vaccines but not others.^{[2][3]} Among the hesitant are groups known as "anti-vaxxers" or "anti vax", who are generally against vaccination.^[4]

There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that vaccines are generally safe and effective, and therefore the World Health Organization characterizes vaccine hesitancy as one of the top ten global health threats.^{[5][6][7][8][9][10]}

Hesitancy primarily results from public debates around the medical, ethical and legal issues related to vaccines. Vaccine hesitancy stems from multiple key factors including a person's lack of confidence (mistrust of the vaccine and/or healthcare provider), complacency (the person does not see a need for the vaccine or does not see the value of the vaccine), and convenience (access to vaccines).^[3] It has existed since the invention of vaccination, and pre-dates the coining of the terms "vaccine" and "vaccination" by nearly eighty years. The specific hypotheses raised by anti-vaccination advocates have been found to change over time.^[11] Vaccine hesitancy often results in disease outbreaks and deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases.^{[12][13][14][15][16][17]}

Proposed laws that would mandate vaccination, such as California Senate Bill 277 and Australia's No Jab No Pay, have been opposed by anti-vaccination activists and organizations.^{[18][19][20]} Opposition to mandatory vaccination may be based on anti-vaccine sentiment, concern that it violates civil liberties or reduces public trust in vaccination, or suspicion of profiteering by the pharmaceutical industry.^{[14][21][22][23][24]}

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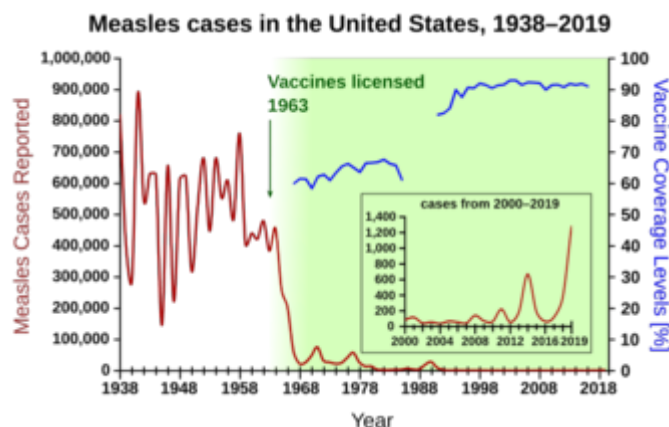
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Effectiveness

Scientific evidence for the effectiveness of large-scale vaccination campaigns is well established.^[25] Two to three million deaths are prevented each year worldwide due to vaccination and an additional 1.5 million deaths could be prevented each year if all recommended vaccines were used.^[26] Vaccination campaigns helped eradicate smallpox, which once killed as many as one in seven children in Europe,^[27] and have nearly eradicated polio.^[28] As a more modest example, infections caused by *Haemophilus influenzae* (Hib), a major cause of bacterial meningitis and other serious diseases in children, have decreased by over 99% in the US since the introduction of a vaccine in 1988.^[29] It is estimated that full vaccination, from birth to adolescence, of all US children born in a given year would save 33,000 lives and prevent 14 million infections.^[30]



Rates of measles fell sharply when universal immunization was introduced.

There is anti-vaccine literature that argues that reductions in infectious disease result from improved sanitation and hygiene (rather than vaccination) or that these diseases were already in decline before the introduction of specific vaccines. These claims are not supported by scientific data; the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases tended to fluctuate over time until the introduction of specific vaccines, at which point the incidence dropped to near zero. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website aimed at countering common misconceptions about vaccines argued, "Are we expected to believe that better sanitation caused the incidence of each disease to drop, just at the time a vaccine for that disease was introduced?"^[31]

Other critics argue that the immunity granted by vaccines is only temporary and requires boosters, whereas those who survive the disease become permanently immune.^[14] As discussed below, the philosophies of some alternative medicine practitioners are incompatible with the idea that vaccines are effective.^[32]

Population health

Incomplete vaccine coverage increases the risk of disease for the entire population, including those who have been vaccinated, because it reduces herd immunity. For example, the measles vaccine is given to children 9–12 months old, and the short window between the disappearance of maternal antibody (before which the vaccine often fails to seroconvert) and natural infection means that vaccinated children are frequently still vulnerable. Herd immunity lessens this vulnerability if all the children are vaccinated. Increasing herd immunity during an outbreak or risk of an outbreak is perhaps the most widely accepted justification for mass vaccination. When a new vaccine is introduced mass vaccination helps increase coverage rapidly.^[35]

If enough of a population is vaccinated, herd immunity takes effect, decreasing risk to people who cannot receive vaccines because they are too young or old, immunocompromised, or have severe allergies to the ingredients in the vaccine.^[36] The outcome for people with compromised immune systems who get infected is often worse than that of the general population.^[37]

Cost-effectiveness

Commonly used vaccines are a cost-effective and preventive way of promoting health, compared to the treatment of acute or chronic disease. In the US during 2001, routine childhood immunizations against seven diseases were estimated to save over \$40 billion per birth-year cohort in overall social costs, including \$10 billion in direct health costs, and the societal benefit-cost ratio for these vaccinations was estimated to be 16.5.^[38]

Necessity

When a vaccination program successfully reduces the disease threat, it may reduce the perceived risk of disease as cultural memories of the effects of that disease fade. At this point, parents may feel they have nothing to lose by not vaccinating their children.^[39] If enough people hope to become free-riders, gaining the benefits of herd immunity without vaccination, vaccination levels may drop to a level where herd immunity is ineffective.^[40] According to Jennifer Reich, those parents who believe vaccination to be quite effective but might prefer their children to remain unvaccinated, are those who are the most likely to be convinced to change their mind, as long as they are approached properly.^[41]



Charlotte Cleverley-Bisman had all four limbs partially amputated at age seven months due to meningococcal disease.^[33] More widespread vaccination can protect children like Cleverley-Bisman, who are too young to vaccinate, from catching the disease through development of herd immunity.^[34]

Common themes

While some anti-vaccinationists openly deny the improvements vaccination has made to public health, or succumb to conspiracy theories,^[14] it is much more common to cite concerns about safety.^[42] As with any medical treatment, there is a potential for vaccines to cause serious complications, such as severe allergic reactions,^[43] but unlike most other medical interventions, vaccines are given to healthy people and so a higher standard of safety is demanded.^[44] While serious complications from vaccinations are possible, they are extremely rare and much less common than similar risks from the diseases they prevent.^[31] As the success of immunization programs increases and the incidence of disease decreases, public attention shifts away from the risks of disease to the risk of vaccination,^[45] and it becomes challenging for health authorities to preserve public support for vaccination programs.^[46]

The overwhelming success of certain vaccinations has made certain diseases rare and consequently this has led to incorrect heuristic thinking, in weighing risks against benefits, among people who are vaccine-hesitant.^[47] Once such diseases (e.g., *Haemophilus influenzae B*) decrease in prevalence, people may no longer appreciate how serious the illness is due to a lack of familiarity with it and become complacent.^[47] The lack of personal experience with these diseases reduces the perceived danger and thus reduces the perceived benefit of immunization.^[48] Conversely, certain illnesses (e.g., influenza) remain so common that vaccine-hesitant people mistakenly perceive the illness to be non-threatening despite clear evidence that the illness poses a significant threat to human health.^[47] Omission and disconfirmation biases also contribute to vaccine hesitancy.^{[47][49]}

Various concerns about immunization have been raised. They have been addressed and the concerns are not supported by evidence.^[48] Concerns about immunization safety often follow a pattern. First, some investigators suggest that a medical condition of increasing prevalence or unknown cause is an adverse effect of vaccination. The initial study and subsequent studies by the same group have an inadequate methodology, typically a poorly controlled or uncontrolled case series. A premature announcement is

made about the alleged adverse effect, resonating with individuals suffering from the condition, and underestimating the potential harm of forgoing vaccination to those whom the vaccine could protect. Other groups attempt to replicate the initial study but fail to get the same results. Finally, it takes several years to regain public confidence in the vaccine.^[45] Adverse effects ascribed to vaccines typically have an unknown origin, an increasing incidence, some biological plausibility, occurrences close to the time of vaccination, and dreaded outcomes.^[50] In almost all cases, the public health effect is limited by cultural boundaries: English speakers worry about one vaccine causing autism, while French speakers worry about another vaccine causing multiple sclerosis, and Nigerians worry that a third vaccine causes infertility.^[51]

Autism

The idea of a link between **vaccines and autism** has been extensively investigated and conclusively shown to be false.^{[52][53]} The scientific consensus is that there is no relationship, causal or otherwise, between vaccines and incidence of autism,^{[45][54][55]} and vaccine ingredients do not cause autism.^[56]

Nevertheless, the anti-vaccination movement continues to promote myths, conspiracy theories, and misinformation linking the two.^[57] A developing tactic appears to be the "promotion of irrelevant research [as] an active aggregation of several questionable or peripherally related research studies in an attempt to justify the science underlying a questionable claim".^[58]

Thiomersal

Thiomersal (called "thimerosal" in the US) is an antifungal preservative used in small amounts in some multi-dose vaccines (where the same vial is opened and used for multiple patients) to prevent contamination of the vaccine.^[59] Despite thiomersal's efficacy, the use of thiomersal is controversial because it can be metabolized or degraded in the body to ethylmercury ($C_2H_5Hg^+$) and thiosalicylate.^{[60][61]} As a result, in 1999, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) asked vaccine makers to remove thiomersal from vaccines as quickly as possible on the precautionary principle. Thiomersal is now absent from all common US and European vaccines, except for some preparations of influenza vaccine.^[62] Trace amounts remain in some vaccines due to production processes, at an approximate maximum of one microgramme, around 15% of the average daily mercury intake in the US for adults and 2.5% of the daily level considered tolerable by the WHO.^{[61][63]} The action sparked concern that thiomersal could have been responsible for autism.^[62] The idea is now considered disproven, as incidence rates for autism increased steadily even after thiomersal was removed from childhood vaccines.^[64] Currently there is no accepted scientific evidence that exposure to thiomersal is a factor in causing autism.^{[65][66]} Since 2000, parents in the United States have pursued legal compensation from a federal fund arguing that thiomersal caused autism in their children.^[67] A 2004 Institute of Medicine (IOM) committee favored rejecting any causal relationship between thiomersal-containing vaccines and autism.^[68] The concentration of thiomersal used in vaccines as an antimicrobial agent ranges from 0.001% (1 part in 100,000) to 0.01% (1 part in 10,000).^[69] A vaccine containing 0.01% thiomersal has 25 micrograms of mercury per 0.5 mL dose, roughly the same amount of elemental mercury found in a three-ounce can of tuna.^[69] There is robust peer-reviewed scientific evidence supporting the safety of thiomersal-containing vaccines.^[69]

MMR vaccine

In the UK, the MMR vaccine was the subject of controversy after the publication in *The Lancet* of a 1998 paper by Andrew Wakefield and others reporting case histories of twelve children mostly with autism spectrum disorders with onset soon after administration of the vaccine.^[70] At a 1998 press conference, Wakefield suggested that giving children the vaccines in three separate doses would be safer than a single vaccination. This suggestion was not supported by the paper, and several subsequent peer-reviewed studies have failed to show any association between the vaccine and autism.^[71] It later emerged that Wakefield had received funding from litigants against vaccine manufacturers and that he had not informed colleagues or medical authorities of his conflict of interest.^[72] Had this been known, publication in *The Lancet* would not have taken place in the way that it did.^[73] Wakefield has been heavily criticized on scientific and ethical grounds for the way the research was conducted^[74] and for triggering a decline in vaccination rates, which fell in the UK to 80% in the years following the study.^{[75][76]} In 2004, the MMR-and-autism interpretation of the paper was formally retracted by ten of its thirteen coauthors,^[77] and in 2010 *The Lancet's* editors fully retracted the paper.^[78] Wakefield was struck off the UK medical register, with a statement identifying deliberate falsification in the research published in *The Lancet*,^[79] and is barred from practicing medicine in the UK.^[80]

The CDC, the IOM of the National Academy of Sciences, Australia's Department of Health, and the UK National Health Service have all concluded that there is no evidence of a link between the MMR vaccine and autism.^{[68][81][82][83]} A Cochrane review concluded that there is no credible link between the MMR vaccine and autism, that MMR has prevented diseases that still carry a heavy burden of death and complications, that the lack of confidence in MMR has damaged public health, and that the design and reporting of safety outcomes in MMR vaccine studies are largely inadequate.^[84] Additional reviews agree, with studies finding that vaccines are not linked to autism even in high risk populations with autistic siblings.^[85]

In 2009, *The Sunday Times* reported that Wakefield had manipulated patient data and misreported results in his 1998 paper, creating the appearance of a link with autism.^[86] A 2011 article in the *British Medical Journal* described how the data in the study had been falsified by Wakefield so that it would arrive at a predetermined conclusion.^[87] An accompanying editorial in the same journal described Wakefield's work as an "elaborate fraud" that led to lower vaccination rates, putting hundreds of thousands of children at risk and diverting energy and money away from research into the true cause of autism.^[88]

A special court convened in the United States to review claims under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program ruled on February 12, 2009, that parents of autistic children are not entitled to compensation in their contention that certain vaccines caused autism in their children.^[89]

Vaccine overload

Vaccine overload, a non-medical term, is the notion that giving many vaccines at once may overwhelm or weaken a child's immature immune system and lead to adverse effects.^[90] Despite scientific evidence that strongly contradicts this idea,^[64] there are still parents of autistic children that believe that vaccine overload causes autism.^[91] The resulting controversy has caused many parents to delay or avoid immunizing their children.^[90] Such parental misperceptions are major obstacles towards immunization of children.^[92]

The concept of vaccine overload is flawed on several levels.^[64] Despite the increase in the number of vaccines over recent decades, improvements in vaccine design have reduced the immunologic load from vaccines; the total number of immunological components in the 14 vaccines administered to US children in 2009 is less than ten percent of what it was in the seven vaccines given in 1980.^[64] A study published

in 2013 found no correlation between autism and the antigen number in the vaccines the children were administered up to the age of two. Of the 1,008 children in the study, one quarter of those diagnosed with autism were born between 1994 and 1999, when the routine vaccine schedule could contain more than 3,000 antigens (in a single shot of DTP vaccine). The vaccine schedule in 2012 contains several more vaccines, but the number of antigens the child is exposed to by the age of two is 315.^{[93][94]} Vaccines pose a very small immunologic load compared to the pathogens naturally encountered by a child in a typical year;^[64] common childhood conditions such as fevers and middle-ear infections pose a much greater challenge to the immune system than vaccines,^[95] and studies have shown that vaccinations, even multiple concurrent vaccinations, do not weaken the immune system^[64] or compromise overall immunity.^[96] The lack of evidence supporting the vaccine overload hypothesis, combined with these findings directly contradicting it, has led to the conclusion that currently recommended vaccine programs do not "overload" or weaken the immune system.^{[45][97][98][99]}

Any experiment based on withholding vaccines from children is considered unethical,^[100] and observational studies would likely be confounded by differences in the healthcare-seeking behaviors of under-vaccinated children. Thus, no study directly comparing rates of autism in vaccinated and unvaccinated children has been done. However, the concept of vaccine overload is biologically implausible, as vaccinated and unvaccinated children have the same immune response to non-vaccine-related infections, and autism is not an immune-mediated disease, so claims that vaccines could cause it by overloading the immune system go against current knowledge of the pathogenesis of autism. As such, the idea that vaccines cause autism has been effectively dismissed by the weight of current evidence.^[64]

Prenatal infection

There is evidence that schizophrenia is associated with prenatal exposure to rubella, influenza, and toxoplasmosis infection. For example, one study found a sevenfold increased risk of schizophrenia when mothers were exposed to influenza in the first trimester of gestation. This may have public health implications, as strategies for preventing infection include vaccination, simple hygiene, and, in the case of toxoplasmosis, antibiotics.^[101] Based on studies in animal models, theoretical concerns have been raised about a possible link between schizophrenia and maternal immune response activated by virus antigens; a 2009 review concluded that there was insufficient evidence to recommend routine use of trivalent influenza vaccine during the first trimester of pregnancy, but that the vaccine was still recommended outside the first trimester and in special circumstances such as pandemics or in women with certain other conditions.^[102] The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Academy of Family Physicians all recommend routine flu shots for pregnant women, for several reasons:^[103]

- their risk for serious influenza-related medical complications during the last two trimesters;
- their greater rates for flu-related hospitalizations compared to non-pregnant women;
- the possible transfer of maternal anti-influenza antibodies to children, protecting the children from the flu; and
- several studies that found no harm to pregnant women or their children from the vaccinations.

Despite this recommendation, only 16% of healthy pregnant US women surveyed in 2005 had been vaccinated against the flu.^[103]

Ingredient concerns

Aluminum compounds are used as immunologic adjuvants to increase the effectiveness of many vaccines.^[104] The aluminum in vaccines simulates or causes small amounts of tissue damage, driving the body to respond more powerfully to what it sees as a serious infection and promoting the development of a lasting immune response.^{[105][106]} In some cases these compounds have been associated with redness, itching, and low-grade fever,^[105] but the use of aluminum in vaccines has not been associated with serious adverse events.^{[104][107]} In some cases, aluminum-containing vaccines are associated with macrophagic myofasciitis (MMF), localized microscopic lesions containing aluminum salts that persist for up to 8 years. However, recent case-controlled studies have found no specific clinical symptoms in individuals with biopsies showing MMF, and there is no evidence that aluminum-containing vaccines are a serious health risk or justify changes to immunization practice.^{[104][107]} Infants are exposed to greater quantities of aluminum in daily life in breastmilk and infant formula than in vaccines.^[2] In general, people are exposed to low levels of naturally occurring aluminum in nearly all foods and drinking water.^[108] The amount of aluminum present in vaccines is small, less than one milligram, and such low levels are not believed to be harmful to human health.^[108]

Vaccine hesitant people have also voiced strong concerns about the presence of formaldehyde in vaccines. Formaldehyde is used in very small concentrations to inactivate viruses and bacterial toxins used in vaccines.^[109] Very small amounts of residual formaldehyde can be present in vaccines but are far below values harmful to human health.^{[110][111]} The levels present in vaccines are minuscule when compared to naturally-occurring levels of formaldehyde in the human body and pose no significant risk of toxicity.^[109] The human body continuously produces formaldehyde naturally and contains 50–70 times the greatest amount of formaldehyde present in any vaccine.^[109] Furthermore, the human body is capable of breaking down naturally occurring formaldehyde as well as the small amount of formaldehyde present in vaccines.^[109] There is no evidence linking the infrequent exposures to small quantities of formaldehyde present in vaccines with cancer.^[109]

Sudden infant death syndrome

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is most common in infants around the time in life when they receive many vaccinations.^[112] Since the cause of SIDS has not been fully determined, this led to concerns about whether vaccines, in particular diphtheria-tetanus toxoid vaccines, were a possible causal factor.^[112] Several studies investigated this and found no evidence supporting a causal link between vaccination and SIDS.^{[112][113]} In 2003, the Institute of Medicine favored rejection of a causal link to DTwP vaccination and SIDS after reviewing the available evidence.^[114] Additional analyses of VAERS data also showed no relationship between vaccination and SIDS.^[112] In fact, evidence is mounting that vaccination may protect children against SIDS.^{[112][113][115]}

Anthrax vaccines

In the mid-1990s media reports on vaccines discussed the Gulf War Syndrome, a multi-symptomatic disorder affecting returning US military veterans of the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf War. Among the first articles of the online magazine *Slate* was one by Atul Gawande in which the required immunizations received by soldiers, including an anthrax vaccination, were named as one of the likely culprits for the symptoms associated with the Gulf War Syndrome. In the late 1990s *Slate* published an article on the "brewing rebellion" in the military against anthrax immunization because of "the availability to soldiers of vaccine misinformation on the Internet". *Slate* continued to report on concerns about the required anthrax and smallpox immunization for US troops after the September 11 attacks and articles on the subject also appeared on the *Salon* website.^[116] The 2001 anthrax attacks heightened concerns about bioterrorism and the Federal government of the United States stepped up its efforts to store and create

more vaccines for American citizens.^[116] In 2002, *Mother Jones* published an article that was highly skeptical of the anthrax and smallpox immunization required by the United States Armed Forces.^[116] With the 2003 invasion of Iraq a wider controversy ensued in the media about requiring US troops to be vaccinated against anthrax.^[116] From 2003 to 2008 a series of court cases were brought to oppose the compulsory anthrax vaccination of US troops.^[116]

Swine flu vaccine

The US swine flu immunization campaign in response to the 1976 swine flu outbreak has become known as "the swine flu fiasco" because the outbreak did not lead to a pandemic as US President Gerald Ford had feared and the hastily rolled out vaccine was found to increase the number of Guillain-Barré Syndrome cases two weeks after immunization. Government officials stopped the mass immunization campaign due to great anxiety about the safety of the swine flu vaccine. The general public was left with greater fear of the vaccination campaign than the virus itself and vaccination policies, in general, were challenged.^[117]



U.S. President Gerald Ford receiving his vaccine for the swine flu.

During the 2009 flu pandemic, significant controversy broke out regarding whether the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine was safe in, among other countries, France. Numerous different French groups publicly criticized the vaccine as potentially dangerous.^[118] Because of similarities between the 2009 influenza A subtype H1N1 virus and the 1976 influenza A/NJ virus many countries established surveillance systems for vaccine-related adverse effects on human health. A possible link between the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine and Guillain-Barré Syndrome cases was studied in Europe and the United States.^[119]

Other safety concerns

Other safety concerns about vaccines have been promoted on the Internet, in informal meetings, in books, and at symposia. These include hypotheses that vaccination can cause epileptic seizures, allergies, multiple sclerosis, and autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes, as well as hypotheses that vaccinations can transmit bovine spongiform encephalopathy, hepatitis C virus, and HIV. These hypotheses have been investigated, with the conclusion that currently used vaccines meet high safety standards and that criticism of vaccine safety in the popular press is not justified.^{[48][99][120][121]} Large well-controlled epidemiologic studies have been conducted and the results do not support the hypothesis that vaccines cause chronic diseases. Furthermore, some vaccines are probably more likely to prevent or modify than cause or exacerbate autoimmune diseases.^{[98][122]} Another common concern parents often have is about the pain associated with administering vaccines during a doctor's office visit.^[123] This may lead to parental requests to space out vaccinations; however, studies have shown a child's stress response is not different when receiving one vaccination or two. The act of spacing out vaccinations may actually lead to more stressful stimuli for the child.^[2]

CIA fake vaccination clinic

In Pakistan, the CIA ran a fake vaccination clinic in an attempt to locate Osama bin Laden.^{[124][125]} As a direct consequence, there have been several attacks and deaths among vaccination workers. Several Islamist preachers and militant groups, including some factions of the Taliban, view vaccination as a plot to kill or sterilize Muslims.^[126] Efforts to eradicate polio have furthermore been disrupted by American drone strikes.^[124] This is part of the reason Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only countries where polio remained endemic as of 2015.^[127]

Vaccine myths

Several vaccination myths contribute to parental concerns and vaccine hesitancy. These include the alleged superiority of natural infection when compared to vaccination, questioning whether the diseases vaccines prevent are dangerous, whether vaccines pose moral or religious dilemmas, suggesting that vaccines are not effective, proposing unproven or ineffective approaches as alternatives to vaccines, and conspiracy theories that center on mistrust of the government and medical institutions.^[26]

Vaccination during illness

Many parents are concerned about the safety of vaccination when their child is sick.^[2] Moderate to severe acute illness with or without a fever is indeed a precaution when considering vaccination.^[2] Vaccines remain effective during childhood illness.^[2] The reason vaccines may be withheld if a child is moderately to severely ill is because certain expected side effects of vaccination (e.g. fever or rash) may be confused with progression of the illness.^[2] It is safe to administer vaccines to well-appearing children who are mildly ill with the common cold.^[2]

Natural Infection

Another common anti-vaccine myth is that the immune system produces a better immune protection in response to natural infection when compared to vaccination.^[2] In some cases, actual infection with the illness may produce lifelong immunity. However, natural disease carries a higher risk of harming a person's health than vaccines.^[2] For example, natural varicella infection carries a higher risk of bacterial superinfection with Group A streptococci.^[2]

HPV vaccine

The idea that the HPV vaccine is linked to increased sexual behavior is not supported by scientific evidence. A review of nearly 1,400 adolescent girls found no difference in teen pregnancy, incidence of sexually transmitted infection, or contraceptive counseling regardless of whether they received the HPV vaccine.^[2] Thousands of Americans die each year from cancers preventable by the vaccine.^[2]

Vaccine schedule

Other concerns have been raised about the vaccine schedule recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The immunization schedule is designed to protect children against preventable diseases when they are most vulnerable. The practice of delaying or spacing out these vaccinations increases the amount of time the child is susceptible to these illnesses.^[2] Receiving vaccines on the schedule recommended by the ACIP is not linked to autism or developmental delay.^[2]

Events following reductions in vaccination

In several countries, reductions in the use of some vaccines were followed by increases in the diseases' morbidity and mortality.^{[128][129]} According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, continued high levels of vaccine coverage are necessary to prevent a resurgence of diseases that have been nearly eliminated.^[130] Pertussis remains a major health problem in developing countries, where mass vaccination is not practiced; the World Health Organization estimates it caused 294,000 deaths in 2002.^[131] Vaccine hesitancy has contributed to the resurgence of preventable disease. For example, in 2019, the number of measles cases increased by thirty percent worldwide and many cases occurred in countries that had nearly eliminated measles.^[26]



Campaigners in [London](#) for expanded vaccination in the developing world

Stockholm, smallpox (1873–74)

An anti-vaccination campaign motivated by religious objections, concerns about effectiveness, and concerns about individual rights led to the vaccination rate in Stockholm dropping to just over 40%, compared to about 90% elsewhere in Sweden. A major smallpox epidemic began there in 1873. It led to a rise in vaccine uptake and an end of the epidemic.^[132]

UK, pertussis (1970s–80s)

In a 1974 report ascribing 36 reactions to whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine, a prominent public-health academic claimed that the vaccine was only marginally effective and questioned whether its benefits outweigh its risks, and extended television and press coverage caused a scare. Vaccine uptake in the UK decreased from 81% to 31%, and pertussis epidemics followed, leading to the deaths of some children. The mainstream medical opinion continued to support the effectiveness and safety of the vaccine; public confidence was restored after the publication of a national reassessment of vaccine efficacy. Vaccine uptake then increased to levels above 90%, and disease incidence declined dramatically.^[128]

Sweden, pertussis (1979–96)

In the vaccination moratorium period that occurred when [Sweden](#) suspended vaccination against whooping cough (pertussis) from 1979 to 1996, 60% of the country's children contracted the disease before the age of 10; close medical monitoring kept the death rate from whooping cough at about one per year.^[129]

Netherlands, measles (1999–2000)

An outbreak at a religious community and school in the [Netherlands](#) resulted in three deaths and 68 hospitalizations among 2,961 cases.^[133] The population in the several provinces affected had a high level of immunization, with the exception of one of the religious denominations, which traditionally does not accept vaccination. Ninety-five percent of those who contracted measles were unvaccinated.^[133]

UK and Ireland, measles (2000)

As a result of the MMR vaccine controversy, vaccination rates dropped sharply in the United Kingdom after 1996.^[134] From late 1999 until the summer of 2000, there was a measles outbreak in North Dublin, Ireland. At the time, the national immunization level had fallen below 80%, and in parts of North Dublin the level was around 60%. There were more than 100 hospital admissions from over 300 cases. Three children died and several more were gravely ill, some requiring mechanical ventilation to recover.^[135]

Nigeria, polio, measles, diphtheria (2001–)

In the early first decade of the 21st century, conservative religious leaders in northern Nigeria, suspicious of Western medicine, advised their followers not to have their children vaccinated with the oral polio vaccine. The boycott was endorsed by the governor of Kano State, and immunization was suspended for several months. Subsequently, polio reappeared in a dozen formerly polio-free neighbors of Nigeria, and genetic tests showed the virus was the same one that originated in northern Nigeria. Nigeria had become a net exporter of the poliovirus to its African neighbors. People in the northern states were also reported to be wary of other vaccinations, and Nigeria reported over 20,000 measles cases and nearly 600 deaths from measles from January through March 2005.^[136] In Northern Nigeria, it is a common belief that vaccination is a strategy created by the westerners to reduce the Northerners' population. As a result of this belief, a large number of Northerners reject vaccination.^[137] In 2006, Nigeria accounted for over half of all new polio cases worldwide.^[138] Outbreaks continued thereafter; for example, at least 200 children died in a late-2007 measles outbreak in Borno State.^[139]

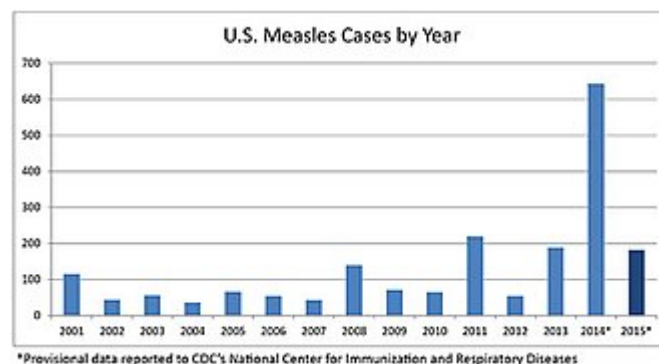
United States, measles (2005–)

In 2000, measles was declared eliminated from the United States because the internal transmission had been interrupted for one year; the remaining reported cases were due to importation.^[140]

A 2005 measles outbreak in the US state of Indiana was attributed to parents who had refused to have their children vaccinated.^[141]

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the three biggest outbreaks of measles in 2013 were attributed to clusters of people who were unvaccinated due to their philosophical or religious beliefs. As of August 2013, three pockets of outbreak – New York City, North Carolina, and Texas – contributed to 64% of the 159 cases of measles reported in 16 states.^{[142][143]}

The number of cases in 2014 quadrupled to 644,^[144] including transmission by unvaccinated visitors to Disneyland in California.^{[76][145]} Some 97% of cases in the first half of the year were confirmed to be due directly or indirectly to importation (the remainder were unknown), and 49% from the Philippines. More than half the victims (165 out of 288, or 57%) during that time were confirmed to be unvaccinated by choice; 30 (10%) were confirmed to have been vaccinated.^[146] The final count of measles in 2014 was 668 cases in 27 states.^[147]



From January 1 to June 26, 2015, 178 people from 24 states and the District of Columbia were reported to have measles. Most of these cases (117 cases [66%]) were part of a large multi-state outbreak linked to Disneyland in California, continued from 2014. Analysis by the CDC scientists showed that the measles virus type in this outbreak (B3) was identical to the virus type that caused the large measles outbreak in the Philippines in 2014.^[147] On July 2, 2015, the first confirmed death from measles in twelve years was recorded. An immunocompromised woman in Washington State was infected and later died of pneumonia due to measles.^[148]

By July 2016, a three-month measles outbreak affecting at least 22 people was spread by unvaccinated employees of the Eloy, Arizona detention center, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility owned by for-profit prison operator CoreCivic. Pinal County's health director presumed the outbreak likely originated with a migrant, but detainees had since received vaccinations. However convincing CoreCivic's employees to become vaccinated or demonstrate proof of immunity was much more difficult, he said.^[149]

In spring 2017, a measles outbreak occurred in Minnesota. As of June 16, 78 cases of measles had been confirmed in the state, 71 were unvaccinated and 65 were Somali-Americans.^{[150][151][152][153][154]} The outbreak has been attributed to low vaccination rates among Somali-American children, which can be traced back to 2008, when Somali parents began to express concern about disproportionately high numbers of Somali preschoolers in special education classes who were receiving services for autism spectrum disorder. Around the same time, disgraced former doctor Andrew Wakefield visited Minneapolis, teaming up with anti-vaccine groups to raise concerns that vaccines were the cause of autism,^{[155][156][157][158]} despite the fact that multiple studies have shown no connection between the MMR vaccine and autism.^[64]

From fall 2018 to early 2019, New York State experienced an outbreak of over 200 confirmed measles cases. Many of these cases were attributed to ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities with low vaccination rates in areas within Brooklyn and Rockland County. State Health Commissioner Howard Zucker stated that this was the worst outbreak of measles in his recent memory.^{[159][160]}

In January 2019, Washington state reported an outbreak of at least 73 confirmed cases of measles, most within Clark County, which has a higher rate of vaccination exemptions compared to the rest of the state. This led state governor Jay Inslee to declare a state of emergency, and the state's congress to introduce legislation to disallow vaccination exemption for personal or philosophical reasons.^{[161][162][163][164][165][166]}

Wales, measles (2013–)

In 2013, an outbreak of measles occurred in the Welsh city of Swansea. One death was reported.^[167] Some estimates indicate that while MMR uptake for two-year-olds was at 94% in Wales in 1995, it had fallen to as low as 67.5% in Swansea by 2003, meaning the region had a "vulnerable" age group.^[168] This has been linked to the MMR vaccine controversy, which caused a significant number of parents to fear allowing their children to receive the MMR vaccine.^[167] June 5, 2017, saw a new measles outbreak in Wales, at Lliswerry High School in the town of Newport.^[169]

United States, tetanus

Most cases of pediatric tetanus in the U.S. occur in unvaccinated children.^[170] In Oregon, in 2017, an unvaccinated boy had a scalp wound that his parents sutured themselves. Later the boy arrived at a hospital with tetanus. He spent 47 days in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and 57 total days in the

hospital, at a cost of \$811,929, not including the cost of airlifting him to the Oregon Health and Science University, Doernbecher Children's Hospital, or the subsequent two-and-a-half weeks of inpatient rehabilitation he required. Despite this, his parents declined the administration of subsequent tetanus boosters or other vaccinations.^[171] Due to privacy regulations, publicly identifying the payer of the costs was prohibited.^[172]

Romania (2016–present)

As of September 2017, a measles epidemic was ongoing across Europe, especially Eastern Europe. In Romania, there were about 9300 cases, and 34 people (all unvaccinated) had died.^[173] This was preceded by a 2008 controversy regarding the HPV vaccine. In 2012, doctor Christa Todea-Gross published a free downloadable book online, this book contained misinformation about vaccination from abroad translated into Romanian, which significantly stimulated the growth of the anti-vaccine movement.^[173] The government of Romania officially declared a measles epidemic in September 2016 and started an information campaign to encourage parents to have their children vaccinated. By February 2017, however, the stockpile of MMR vaccines was depleted, and doctors were overburdened. Around April, the vaccine stockpile had been restored. By March 2019, the death toll had risen to 62, with 15,981 cases reported.^[174]



Ovidiu Covaciu on how the Romanian antivaccine movement threatens Europe (2017)

Samoa, measles (2019)

The 2019 Samoa measles outbreak began in October 2019 and as of December 12, there were 4,995 confirmed cases of measles and 72 deaths, out of a Samoa population of 201,316.^{[175][176][177][178]} A state of emergency was declared on November 17, ordering all schools to be closed, barring children under 17 from public events, and making vaccination mandatory.^[179] UNICEF has sent 110,500 vaccines to Samoa. Tonga and Fiji have also declared states of emergency.^[180]

The outbreak has been attributed to a sharp drop in measles vaccination from the previous year, following an incident in 2018 when two infants died shortly after receiving measles vaccinations, which led the country to suspend its measles vaccination program.^[181] The reason for the two infants' deaths was incorrect preparation of the vaccine by two nurses who mixed vaccine powder with expired anesthetic.^[182] As of November 30, more than 50,000 people were vaccinated by the government of Samoa.^[182]

Dealing with vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy is challenging and optimal strategies for approaching it remain uncertain.^[183] Many interventions designed to address vaccine hesitancy have been based on the information deficit model.^[49] This model assumes that vaccine hesitancy is due to a person lacking the necessary information and attempts to provide them with that information to solve the problem.^[49] Despite many educational interventions attempting this approach, ample evidence indicates providing more information is often ineffective in changing a vaccine-hesitant person's views and may, in fact, have the opposite of the intended effect and reinforce their misconceptions.^{[26][49]}

Several communication strategies are recommended for use when interacting with vaccine-hesitant parents. These include establishing honest and respectful dialogue; acknowledging the risks of a vaccine but balancing them against the risk of disease; referring parents to reputable sources of vaccine information; and maintaining ongoing conversations with vaccine-hesitant families.^[2] The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends healthcare providers directly address parental concerns about vaccines when questioned about their efficacy and safety.^[123] Additional recommendations include asking permission to share information; maintaining a conversational tone (as opposed to lecturing); not spending excessive amounts of time debunking specific myths (this may have the opposite effect of strengthening the myth in the person's mind); focusing on the facts and simply identifying the myth as false; and keeping information as simple as possible (if the myth seems simpler than the truth, it may be easier for people to accept the simple myth).^[49] Storytelling and anecdote (e.g., about the decision to vaccinate one's own children) can be powerful communication tools for conversations about the value of vaccination.^[49] A New Zealand-based General Practitioner has used a comic, *Jenny & the Eddies*, both to educate children about vaccines and address his patients' concerns through open, trusting, and non-threatening conversations, concluding [that] "I always listen to what people have to say on any matter. That includes vaccine hesitancy. That's a very important opening stage to improving the therapeutic relationship. If I'm going to change anyone's attitude, first I need to listen to them and be open-minded."^[184] The perceived strength of the recommendation, when provided by a healthcare provider, also seems to influence uptake, with recommendations that are perceived to be stronger resulting in higher vaccination rates than perceived weaker recommendations.^[26]

Limited evidence suggests that a more paternalistic or presumptive approach ("Your son needs three shots today.") is more likely to result in patient acceptance of vaccines during a clinic visit than a participatory approach ("What do you want to do about shots?") but decreases patient satisfaction with the visit.^[185] A presumptive approach helps to establish that this is the normative choice.^[49] Similarly, one study found that the way in which physicians respond to parental vaccine resistance is important.^[2] Nearly half of initially vaccine-resistant parents accepted vaccinations if physicians persisted in their initial recommendation.^[49] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released resources to aid healthcare providers in having more effective conversations with parents about vaccinations.^[186]

Parents may be hesitant to have their children vaccinated due to concerns about the pain of vaccination. Several strategies can be used to reduce the child's pain.^[123] Such strategies include distraction techniques (pinwheels); deep breathing techniques; breastfeeding the child; giving the child sweet-tasting solutions; quickly administering the vaccine without aspirating; keeping the child upright; providing tactile stimulation; applying numbing agents to the skin; and saving the most painful vaccine for last.^[123] As above, the number of vaccines offered in a particular encounter is related to the likelihood of parental vaccine refusal (the more vaccines offered, the higher the likelihood of vaccine deferral).^[2] The use of combination vaccines to protect against more diseases but with fewer injections may provide reassurance to parents.^[2] Similarly, reframing the conversation with less emphasis on the number of diseases the healthcare provider is immunizing against (e.g., "we will do two injections (combined vaccinations) and an oral vaccine") may be more acceptable to parents than "we're going to vaccinate against seven diseases".^[2]

It is unclear whether interventions intended to educate parents about vaccines improve the rate of vaccination.^[185] It is also unclear whether citing the reasons of benefit to others and herd immunity improves parents' willingness to vaccinate their children.^[185] In one trial, an educational intervention designed to dispel common misconceptions about the influenza vaccine decreased parents' false beliefs about the vaccines but did not improve uptake of the influenza vaccine.^[185] In fact, parents with significant concerns about adverse effects from the vaccine were less likely to vaccinate their children

with the influenza vaccine after receiving this education.^[185] Multicomponent initiatives which include targeting undervaccinated populations, improving the convenience of and access to vaccines, educational initiatives, and mandates may improve vaccination uptake.^{[185][187]}

Cultural sensitivity is important to reducing vaccine hesitancy. For example, pollster Frank Luntz discovered that for conservative Americans, family is by far the "most powerful motivator" to get a vaccine (over country, economy, community, or friends).^[188] Luntz "also found a very pronounced preference for the word 'vaccine' over 'jab.'"^[188]

It is recommended that healthcare providers advise parents against performing their own web search queries since many websites on the Internet contain significant misinformation.^[2] Many parents perform their own research online and are often confused, frustrated, and unsure of which sources of information are trustworthy.^[49] Additional recommendations include introducing parents to the importance of vaccination as far in advance of the initial well-child visit as possible; presenting parents with vaccine safety information while in their pediatrician's waiting room; and using prenatal open houses and postpartum maternity ward visits as opportunities to vaccinate.^[2]

Internet advertising, on Facebook and elsewhere, is purchased by both public health authorities and anti-vaccination groups. In the United States, the majority of anti-vaccine Facebook advertising in December 2018 and February 2019 had been paid for one of two groups: Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Children's Health Defense and Stop Mandatory Vaccination. The ads targeted women and young couples and generally highlighted the alleged risks of vaccines, while asking for donations. Several anti-vaccination advertising campaigns also targeted areas where measles outbreaks were underway during this period. The impact of Facebook's subsequent advertising policy changes has not been studied.^{[189][190]}

The World Health Organization (WHO) published a paper in 2016 intending to aid experts on how to respond to vaccine deniers in public. The WHO recommends for experts to view the general public as their target audience rather than the vaccine denier when debating in a public forum. The WHO also suggests for experts to make unmasking the techniques that the vaccine denier uses to spread misinformation as the goal of the conversation. The WHO asserts that this will make the public audience more resilient against anti-vaccine tactics.^[191]

History

Variolation

Early attempts to prevent smallpox involved deliberate inoculation with the milder form of the disease (Variola Minor) in the expectation that a mild case would confer immunity and avoid Variola Major. Originally called inoculation, this technique was later called variolation to avoid confusion with cowpox inoculation (vaccination) when that was introduced by Edward Jenner. Although variolation had a long history in China and India, it was first used in North America and England in 1721. Reverend Cotton Mather introduced variolation to Boston, Massachusetts, during the 1721 smallpox epidemic.^[192] Despite strong opposition in the community,^[193] Mather convinced Zabdiel Boylston to try it. Boylston first experimented on his 6-year-old son, his slave, and his slave's son; each subject contracted the disease and was sick for several days until the sickness vanished and they were "no longer gravely ill".^[192] Boylston went on to variolate thousands of Massachusetts residents, and many places were named for him in gratitude as a result. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu introduced variolation to England. She had seen it used in Turkey and, in 1718, had her son successfully variolated in Constantinople under the supervision of Charles Maitland. When she returned to England in 1721, she had her daughter variolated by Maitland. This aroused considerable interest, and Sir Hans Sloane organized the variolation of some

inmates in Newgate Prison. These were successful, and after a further short trial in 1722, two daughters of Caroline of Ansbach Princess of Wales were variolated without mishap. With this royal approval, the procedure became common when smallpox epidemics threatened.^[194]

Religious arguments against inoculation were soon advanced. For example, in a 1722 sermon entitled "The Dangerous and Sinful Practice of Inoculation", the English theologian Reverend Edmund Massey argued that diseases are sent by God to punish sin and that any attempt to prevent smallpox via inoculation is a "diabolical operation".^[193] It was customary at the time for popular preachers to publish sermons, which reached a wide audience. This was the case with Massey, whose sermon reached North America, where there was early religious opposition, particularly by John Williams. A greater source of opposition there was William Douglass, a medical graduate of Edinburgh University and a Fellow of the Royal Society, who had settled in Boston.^{[194]:114–22}



An anti-vaccination caricature by James Gillray, *The Cow-Pock – or – The Wonderful Effects of the New Inoculation!* (1802)

Smallpox vaccination

After Edward Jenner introduced the smallpox vaccine in 1798, variolation declined and was banned in some countries.^{[195][196]} As with variolation, there was some religious opposition to vaccination, although this was balanced to some extent by support from clergymen, such as Reverend Robert Ferryman, a friend of Jenner's, and Rowland Hill,^{[194]:221} who not only preached in its favour but also performed vaccination themselves. There was also opposition from some variolators who saw the loss of a lucrative monopoly. William Rowley published illustrations of deformities allegedly produced by vaccination, lampooned in James Gillray's famous caricature depicted on this page, and Benjamin Moseley likened cowpox to syphilis, starting a controversy that would last into the 20th century.^{[194]:203–05}



Edward Jenner

There was legitimate concern from supporters of vaccination about its safety and efficacy, but this was overshadowed by general condemnation, particularly when legislation started to introduce compulsory vaccination. The reason for this was that vaccination was introduced before laboratory methods were developed to control its production and account for its failures.^[197] Vaccine was maintained initially through arm-to-arm transfer and later through production on the skin of animals, and bacteriological sterility was impossible. Further, identification methods for potential pathogens were not available until the late 19th to early 20th century. Diseases later shown to be caused by contaminated vaccine included erysipelas, tuberculosis, tetanus, and syphilis. This last, though rare – estimated at 750 cases in 100 million vaccinations^[198] – attracted particular attention. Much later, Charles Creighton, a leading medical opponent of vaccination, claimed that the vaccine itself was a cause of syphilis and devoted a book to the subject.^[199] As cases of smallpox started to occur in those who had been vaccinated earlier, supporters of vaccination pointed out that these were usually very mild and occurred years after the vaccination. In turn, opponents of vaccination pointed out that this contradicted Jenner's belief that

vaccination conferred complete protection.^{[197]:17–21} The views of opponents of vaccination that it was both dangerous and ineffective led to the development of determined anti-vaccination movements in England when legislation was introduced to make vaccination compulsory.^[200]

England

Because of its greater risks, variolation was banned in England by the 1840 Vaccination Act, which also introduced free voluntary vaccination for infants. Thereafter Parliament passed successive acts to enact and enforce compulsory vaccination.^[201] The 1853 act introduced compulsory vaccination, with fines for non-compliance and imprisonment for non-payment. The 1867 act extended the age requirement to 14 years and introduced repeated fines for repeated refusal for the same child. Initially, vaccination regulations were organised by the local Poor Law Guardians, and in towns where there was strong opposition to vaccination, sympathetic Guardians were elected who did not pursue prosecutions. This was changed by the 1871 act, which required Guardians to act. This significantly changed the relationship between the government and the public, and organized protests increased.^[201] In Keighley, Yorkshire, in 1876 the Guardians were arrested and briefly imprisoned in York Castle, prompting large demonstrations in support of the "Keighley Seven".^{[200]:108–09} The protest movements crossed social boundaries. The financial burden of fines fell hardest on the working class, who would provide the largest numbers at public demonstrations.^[202] Societies and publications were organized by the middle classes, and support came from celebrities such as George Bernard Shaw and Alfred Russel Wallace, doctors such as Charles Creighton and Edgar Crookshank, and parliamentarians such as Jacob Bright and James Allanson Picton.^[201] By 1885, with over 3,000 prosecutions pending in Leicester, a mass rally there was attended by over 20,000 protesters.^[203]

Under increasing pressure, the government appointed a Royal Commission on Vaccination in 1889, which issued six reports between 1892 and 1896, with a detailed summary in 1898.^[204] Its recommendations were incorporated into the 1898 Vaccination Act, which still required compulsory vaccination but allowed exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection on presentation of a certificate signed by two magistrates.^{[14][201]} These were not easy to obtain in towns where magistrates supported compulsory vaccination, and after continued protests, a further act in 1907 allowed exemption on a simple signed declaration.^[203] Although this solved the immediate problem, the compulsory vaccination acts remained legally enforceable, and determined opponents lobbied for their repeal. No Compulsory Vaccination was one of the demands of the 1900 Labour Party General Election Manifesto.^[205] This was done as a matter of routine when the National Health Service was introduced in 1948, with "almost negligible" opposition from supporters of compulsory vaccination.^[206]



Henry Wicklin, age 6, afflicted with smallpox. Smallpox was eradicated worldwide as a result of mandatory vaccinations.



In a postwar poster the Ministry of Health urged British residents to immunize children against diphtheria.

Vaccination in Wales was covered by English legislation, but the Scottish legal system was separate. Vaccination was not made compulsory there until 1863, and a conscientious objection was allowed after vigorous protest only in 1907.^{[197]:10–11}

In the late 19th century, Leicester in the UK received much attention because of how smallpox was managed there. There was particularly strong opposition to compulsory vaccination, and medical authorities had to work within this framework. They developed a system that did not use vaccination but was based on the notification of cases, the strict isolation of patients and contacts, and the provision of isolation hospitals.^[207] This proved successful but required acceptance of compulsory isolation rather than vaccination. C. Killick Millard, initially, a supporter of compulsory vaccination was appointed Medical Officer of Health in 1901. He moderated his views on compulsion but encouraged contacts and his staff to accept vaccination. This approach, developed initially due to overwhelming opposition to government policy, became known as the Leicester Method.^{[206][208]} In time it became generally accepted as the most appropriate way to deal with smallpox outbreaks and was listed as one of the "important events in the history of smallpox control" by those most involved in the World Health Organization's successful Smallpox Eradication Campaign. The final stages of the campaign generally referred to as "surveillance containment", owed much to the Leicester method.^{[209][210]}

United States

In the US, President Thomas Jefferson took a close interest in vaccination, alongside Benjamin Waterhouse, chief physician at Boston. Jefferson encouraged the development of ways to transport vaccine material through the Southern states, which included measures to avoid damage by heat, a leading cause of ineffective batches. Smallpox outbreaks were contained by the latter half of the 19th century, a development widely attributed to the vaccination of a large portion of the population. Vaccination rates fell after this decline in smallpox cases, and the disease again became epidemic in the late 19th century.^[211]

After an 1879 visit to New York by prominent British anti-vaccinationist William Tebb, The Anti-Vaccination Society of America was founded.^{[212][213]} The New England Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League formed in 1882, and the Anti-Vaccination League of New York City in 1885.^[213] Tactics in the US largely followed those used in England.^[214] Vaccination in the US was regulated by individual states, in which there followed a progression of compulsion, opposition, and repeal similar to that in England.^[215] Although generally organized on a state-by-state basis, the vaccination controversy reached the US Supreme Court in 1905. There, in the case of *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, the court ruled that states have the authority to require vaccination against smallpox during a smallpox epidemic.^[216]

John Pitcairn, the wealthy founder of the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company (now PPG Industries), emerged as a major financier and leader of the American anti-vaccination movement. On March 5, 1907, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, he delivered an address to the Committee on Public Health and Sanitation of the Pennsylvania General Assembly criticizing vaccination.^[217] He later sponsored the National Anti-Vaccination Conference, which, held in Philadelphia in October 1908, led to the creation of The Anti-Vaccination League of America. When the league organized later that month, members chose Pitcairn as their first president.^[218]

On December 1, 1911, Pitcairn was appointed by Pennsylvania Governor John K. Tener to the Pennsylvania State Vaccination Commission and subsequently authored a detailed report strongly opposing the commission's conclusions.^[218] He remained a staunch opponent of vaccination until his death in 1916.

Brazil

In November 1904, in response to years of inadequate sanitation and disease, followed by a poorly explained public health campaign led by the renowned Brazilian public health official Oswaldo Cruz, citizens and military cadets in Rio de Janeiro arose in a *Revolta da Vacina*, or Vaccine Revolt. Riots broke out on the day a vaccination law took effect; vaccination symbolized the most feared and most tangible aspect of a public health plan that included other features, such as urban renewal, that many had opposed for years.^[219]

Later vaccines and antitoxins

Opposition to smallpox vaccination continued into the 20th century and was joined by controversy over new vaccines and the introduction of antitoxin treatment for diphtheria. Injection of horse serum into humans as used in antitoxin can cause hypersensitivity, commonly referred to as serum sickness. Moreover, the continued production of the smallpox vaccine in animals and the production of antitoxins in horses prompted anti-vivisectionists to oppose vaccination.^[220]

Diphtheria antitoxin was serum from horses that had been immunized against diphtheria, and was used to treat human cases by providing passive immunity. In 1901, antitoxin from a horse named Jim was contaminated with tetanus and killed 13 children in St. Louis, Missouri. This incident, together with nine deaths from tetanus from contaminated smallpox vaccine in Camden, New Jersey, led directly and quickly to the passing of the Biologics Control Act in 1902.^[221]

Robert Koch developed tuberculin in 1890. Inoculated into individuals who have had tuberculosis, it produces a hypersensitivity reaction and is still used to detect those who have been infected. However, Koch used tuberculin as a vaccine. This caused serious reactions and deaths in individuals whose latent tuberculosis was reactivated by the tuberculin.^[222] This was a major setback for supporters of new vaccines.^{[197]:30–31} Such incidents and others ensured that any untoward results concerning vaccination and related procedures received continued publicity, which grew as the number of new procedures increased.^[223]

In 1955, in a tragedy known as the Cutter incident, Cutter Laboratories produced 120,000 doses of the Salk polio vaccine that inadvertently contained some live poliovirus along with inactivated virus. This vaccine caused 40,000 cases of polio, 53 cases of paralysis, and five deaths. The disease spread through the recipients' families, creating a polio epidemic that led to a further 113 cases of paralytic polio and another five deaths. It was one of the worst pharmaceutical disasters in US history.^[224]

Later 20th-century events included the 1982 broadcast of *DPT: Vaccine Roulette*, which sparked debate over the DPT vaccine,^[225] and the 1998 publication of a fraudulent academic article by Andrew Wakefield^[226] which sparked the MMR vaccine controversy. Also recently, the HPV vaccine has become controversial due to concerns that it may encourage promiscuity when given to 11- and 12-year-old girls.^{[227][228]}

Arguments against vaccines in the 21st century are often similar to those of 19th-century anti-vaccinationists.^[14]

COVID-19

In mid-2020, surveys on whether people would be willing to take a potential COVID-19 vaccine estimated that 67% or 80% of people in the US would accept a new vaccination against COVID-19.^{[229][230]}

In the United Kingdom, a 16 November 2020 YouGov poll showed that 42% said they were very likely to take the vaccine and 25% were fairly likely (67% likely overall); 11% would be very unlikely and 10% fairly unlikely (21% unlikely overall) and 12% are unsure.^[231] There have been a number of reasons expressed why people might not wish to take COVID-19 vaccines, such as concerns over safety, self-perception of being "low risk", or questioning the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in particular. 8% of those reluctant to take it say it is because they oppose vaccinations overall; this amounts to just 2% of the British public.^[231]

A December 2020 Ipsos/World Economic Forum 15-country poll asked online respondents whether they agreed with the statement: "If a vaccine for COVID-19 were available, I would get it." Rates of agreement were smallest in France (40%), Russia (43%) and South Africa (53%). In the United States, 69% of those polled agreed with the statement; rates were even higher in Britain (77%) and China (80%).^{[232][233]}

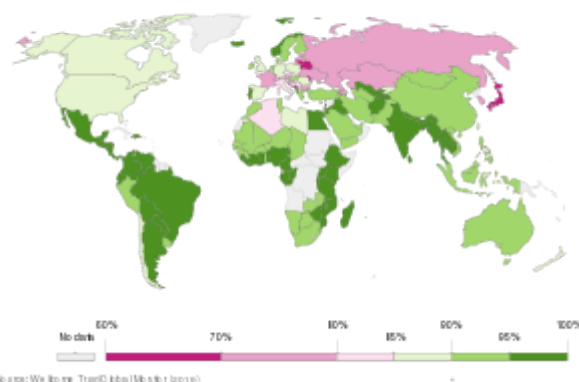
A March 2021 NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll found the difference between white and black Americans to be within the margin of error, but 47% of Trump supporters said they would refuse a COVID-19 vaccine, compared to 30% of all adults.^[234]

In May 2021, a report titled 'Global attitudes towards a COVID-19 vaccine' from the Institute of Global Health Innovation and Imperial College London, which included detailed survey data from March to May 2021 including survey data from 15 countries Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and the US. It found that in 13 of the 15 countries more than 50% of people were confident in covid-19 vaccines. In the UK 87% of survey respondents said they trusted the vaccines, which showed a significant increase in confidence following earlier less reliable polls. The survey also found trust in different vaccine brands varied, with the Pfizer–BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine being the most trusted across all age groups in most countries and particularly the most trusted for under 65s.^{[235][236]}

Geographical distribution of vaccine hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy is becoming an increasing concern, particularly in industrialized nations. For example, one study surveying parents in Europe found that 12–28% of surveyed parents expressed doubts about vaccinating their children.^[237] Several studies have assessed socioeconomic and cultural factors associated with vaccine hesitancy. Both high and low socioeconomic status as well as high and low education levels have all been associated with vaccine hesitancy in different populations.^{[123][238][239][240][241][242][243]} Other studies examining various populations around the world in different countries found that both high and low socioeconomic status are associated with vaccine hesitancy.^[3] An Australian study that examined the factors associated with vaccine attitudes and uptake separately found that under-vaccination correlated with lower socioeconomic status but not with negative attitudes towards vaccines. The researchers suggested that practical barriers are more likely to explain under-vaccination among individuals with lower socioeconomic status.^[240]

Share that agrees that vaccines are important for children to have, 2018
The share of people who responded that they "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the statement "vaccines are important for children to have".



Share that agrees that vaccines are important for children to have (2018)

Studies have demonstrated that children of parents who refused the pertussis vaccine, varicella vaccine, and pneumococcal vaccine are 23 times more likely to contract pertussis (whooping cough), nine times more likely to catch varicella (chickenpox), and six times more likely to be hospitalized with severe pneumonia from *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (pneumococcus).^[49]

Policy implications

Multiple major medical societies including the Infectious Diseases Society of America, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics support the elimination of all nonmedical exemptions for childhood vaccines.^[123]

Individual liberty

Compulsory vaccination policies have been controversial as long as they have existed, with opponents of mandatory vaccinations arguing that governments should not infringe on an individual's freedom to make medical decisions for themselves or their children, while proponents of compulsory vaccination cite the well-documented public health benefits of vaccination.^{[14][244]} Others argue that, for compulsory vaccination to effectively prevent disease, there must be not only available vaccines and a population willing to immunize, but also sufficient ability to decline vaccination on grounds of personal belief.^[245]

Vaccination policy involves complicated ethical issues, as unvaccinated individuals are more likely to contract and spread disease to people with weaker immune systems, such as young children and the elderly, and to other individuals in whom the vaccine has not been effective. However, mandatory vaccination policies raise ethical issues regarding parental rights and informed consent.^[246]

In the United States, vaccinations are not truly compulsory, but they are typically required in order for children to attend public schools. As of January 2021, five states – Mississippi, West Virginia, California, Maine, and New York – have eliminated religious and philosophical exemptions to required school immunizations.^[247]

Children's rights

Medical ethicist Arthur Caplan argues that children have a right to the best available medical care, including vaccines, regardless of parental feelings toward vaccines, saying "Arguments about medical freedom and choice are at odds with the human and constitutional rights of children. When parents won't protect them, governments must."^{[248][249]}

A review of court cases from 1905 to 2016 found that, of the nine courts that have heard cases regarding whether not vaccinating a child constitutes neglect, seven have held vaccine refusal to be a form of child neglect.^[250]

To prevent the spread of disease by unvaccinated individuals, some schools and doctors' surgeries have prohibited unvaccinated children from being enrolled, even where not required by law.^{[251][252]} Refusal of doctors to treat unvaccinated children may cause harm to both the child and public health, and may be considered unethical, if the parents are unable to find another healthcare provider for the child.^[253] Opinion on this is divided, with the largest professional association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, saying that exclusion of unvaccinated children may be an option under narrowly defined circumstances.^[123]

Religion

Since most religions were started far before vaccinations were invented, scriptures do not specifically address the topic of vaccination.^[2] However, vaccination has been opposed on religious grounds ever since it was first introduced. Some Christian opponents argued, when vaccination was first becoming widespread, that if God had decreed that someone should die of smallpox, it would be a sin to thwart God's will via vaccination.^[193] Religious opposition continues to the present day, on various grounds, raising ethical difficulties when the number of unvaccinated children threatens harm to the entire population.^[254] Many governments allow parents to opt out of their children's otherwise mandatory vaccinations for religious reasons; some parents falsely claim religious beliefs to get vaccination exemptions.^[255]

Many Jewish community leaders support vaccination.^[256] Among early Hasidic leaders, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772–1810) was known for his criticism of the doctors and medical treatments of his day. However, when the first vaccines were successfully introduced, he stated: "Every parent should have his children vaccinated within the first three months of life. Failure to do so is tantamount to murder. Even if they live far from the city and have to travel during the great winter cold, they should have the child vaccinated before three months."^[257]

Although gelatin can be derived from many animals, Jewish and Islamic scholars have determined that since the gelatin is cooked and not consumed as food, vaccinations containing gelatin are acceptable.^[2] However, in 2015 and again in 2020, the possible use of porcine-based gelatin in vaccines raised religious concerns among Muslims and Orthodox Jews about the halal or kosher status of several vaccinations against COVID-19.^[258] The Muslim Council of Britain argued against the use of intranasal influenza vaccine in 2019 due to the presence of gelatin in the vaccine and consider such vaccines to be non-halal (unclean).^[259]

In India, in 2018, a three-minute doctored clip circulated among Muslims claiming that the MR-VAC vaccine against measles and rubella was a "Modi government-RSS conspiracy" to stop the population growth of Muslims. The clip was taken from a TV show that exposed the baseless rumors.^[260] Hundreds of madrassas in the state of Uttar Pradesh refused permission to health department teams to administer vaccines because of rumors spread using WhatsApp.^[261]

Some Christians have objected to the use of cell cultures of some viral vaccines, and the virus of the rubella vaccine,^[262] on the grounds that they are derived from tissues taken from therapeutic abortions performed in the 1960s. The principle of double effect, originated by Thomas Aquinas, holds that actions with both good and bad consequences are morally acceptable in specific circumstances.^[263] The Vatican Curia has said that for vaccines originating from embryonic cells, Catholics have "a grave responsibility to use alternative vaccines and to make a conscientious objection", but concluded that it is acceptable for Catholics to use the existing vaccines until an alternative becomes available.^[264]

In the United States, some parents falsely claim religious exemptions when their real motivation for avoiding vaccines is supposed safety concerns.^[265] For a number of years, only Mississippi, West Virginia, and California did not provide religious exemptions. Following the 2019 measles outbreaks, Maine and New York repealed their religious exemptions, and the state of Washington did so for the measles vaccination.^[266]

According to a March 2021 poll conducted by The Associated Press/NORC, vaccine skepticism is more widespread among white evangelicals than most other blocs of Americans. Forty percent of white evangelical Protestants said they were not likely to get vaccinated against COVID-19.^[267]

Alternative medicine

Many forms of alternative medicine are based on philosophies that oppose vaccination (including germ theory denialism) and have practitioners who voice their opposition. As a consequence, the increase in popularity of alternative medicine in the 1970s planted the seed on the modern anti-vaccination movement.^[268] More specifically, some elements of the chiropractic community, some homeopaths, and naturopaths developed anti-vaccine rhetoric.^[32] The reasons for this negative vaccination view are complicated and rest at least in part on the early philosophies that shaped the foundation of these groups.^[32]

Chiropractic

Historically, chiropractic strongly opposed vaccination based on its belief that all diseases were traceable to causes in the spine and therefore could not be affected by vaccines. Daniel D. Palmer (1845–1913), the founder of chiropractic, wrote: "It is the very height of absurdity to strive to 'protect' any person from smallpox or any other malady by inoculating them with a filthy animal poison."^[269] Vaccination remains controversial within the profession.^[270] Most chiropractic writings on vaccination focus on its negative aspects.^[269] A 1995 survey of US chiropractors found that about one third believed there was no scientific proof that immunization prevents disease.^[270] While the Canadian Chiropractic Association supports vaccination,^[269] a survey in Alberta in 2002 found that 25% of chiropractors advised patients for, and 27% advised against, vaccinations for patients or for their children.^[271]

Although most chiropractic colleges try to teach about vaccination in a manner consistent with scientific evidence, several have faculty who seem to stress negative views.^[270] A survey of a 1999–2000 cross-section of students of Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC), which does not formally teach anti-vaccination views, reported that fourth-year students opposed vaccination more strongly than did first-year students, with 29.4% of fourth-year students opposing vaccination.^[272] A follow-up study on 2011–12 CMCC students found that pro-vaccination attitudes heavily predominated. Students reported support rates ranging from 84% to 90%. One of the study's authors proposed the change in attitude to be due to the lack of the previous influence of a "subgroup of some charismatic students who were enrolled at CMCC at the time, students who championed the Palmer postulates that advocated against the use of vaccination".^[273]

Policy positions

The American Chiropractic Association and the International Chiropractic Association support individual exemptions to compulsory vaccination laws.^[270] In March 2015, the Oregon Chiropractic Association invited Andrew Wakefield, chief author of a fraudulent research paper, to testify against Senate Bill 442,^[274] "a bill that would eliminate nonmedical exemptions from Oregon's school immunization law".^[275] The California Chiropractic Association lobbied against a 2015 bill ending belief exemptions for vaccines. They had also opposed a 2012 bill related to vaccination exemptions.^[276]

Homeopathy

Several surveys have shown that some practitioners of homeopathy, particularly homeopaths without any medical training, advise patients against vaccination.^[277] For example, a survey of registered homeopaths in Austria found that only 28% considered immunization an important preventive measure,

and 83% of homeopaths surveyed in Sydney, Australia, did not recommend vaccination.^[32] Many practitioners of naturopathy also oppose vaccination.^[32]

Homeopathic "vaccines" (nosodes) are ineffective because they do not contain any active ingredients and thus do not stimulate the immune system. They can be dangerous if they take the place of effective treatments.^[278] Some medical organizations have taken action against nosodes. In Canada, the labeling of homeopathic nosodes require the statement: "This product is neither a vaccine nor an alternative to vaccination."^[279]

Financial motives

Alternative medicine proponents gain from promoting vaccine conspiracy theories through the sale of ineffective and expensive medications, supplements, and procedures such as chelation therapy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy, sold as able to cure the 'damage' caused by vaccines.^[280] Homeopaths in particular gain through the promotion of water injections or 'nosodes' that they allege have a 'natural' vaccine-like effect.^[281] Additional bodies with a vested interest in promoting the "unsafeness" of vaccines may include lawyers and legal groups organizing court cases and class action lawsuits against vaccine providers.

Conversely, alternative medicine providers have accused the vaccine industry of misrepresenting the safety and effectiveness of vaccines, covering up and suppressing information, and influencing health policy decisions for financial gain.^[14] In the late 20th century, vaccines were a product with low profit margins,^[282] and the number of companies involved in vaccine manufacture declined. In addition to low profits and liability risks, manufacturers complained about low prices paid for vaccines by the CDC and other US government agencies.^[283] In the early 21st century, the vaccine market greatly improved with the approval of the vaccine Prevnar, along with a small number of other high-priced blockbuster vaccines, such as Gardasil and Pediarix, which each had sales revenues of over \$1 billion in 2008.^[282] Despite high growth rates, vaccines represent a relatively small portion of overall pharmaceutical profits. As recently as 2010, the World Health Organization estimated vaccines to represent 2–3% of total sales for the pharmaceutical industry.^[284]

War

The United States has a very complex history with compulsory vaccination, particularly in enforcing compulsory vaccinations both domestically and abroad to protect American soldiers during times of war. There are hundreds of thousands of examples of soldier deaths that were not the result of combat wounds but were instead from disease.^[285] Among wars with high death tolls from disease is the Civil War where an estimated 620,000 soldiers died from disease. American soldiers in other countries have spread diseases that ultimately disrupted entire societies and healthcare systems with famine and poverty.^[285]

Spanish–American War

The Spanish–American War began in April 1898 and ended in August 1898. During this time the United States gained control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines from Spain. As a military police power and as colonizers the United States took a very hands-on approach in administering healthcare particularly vaccinations to natives during the invasion and conquest of these countries.^[285] Although the Spanish–American War occurred during the era of "bacteriological revolution" where knowledge of disease was bolstered by germ theory, more than half of the soldier casualties in this war were from

disease.^[285] Unknowingly, American soldiers acted as agents of disease transmission, fostering bacteria in their haphazardly made camps. These soldiers invaded Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines and connected parts of these countries that had never before been connected due to low population density, thereby beginning epidemics.^[285] The mobility of American soldiers around these countries encouraged newfound mobility of disease that quickly infected natives.

Military personnel used Rudyard's Kipling's poem "The White Man's Burden" to explain their imperialistic actions in Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico and the need for the United States to help the "dark-skinned Barbarians"^[285] reach modern sanitary standards. American actions abroad before, during, and after the war emphasized a need for proper sanitation habits especially on behalf of the natives. Natives who refuse to oblige with American health standards and procedures risked fines or imprisonment.^[285] One penalty in Puerto Rico included a \$10 fine for a failure to vaccinate and an additional \$5 fine for any day a person continued to be unvaccinated; refusal to pay resulted in ten or more days of imprisonment. If entire villages refused the army's current sanitation policy at any given time they risked being burnt to the ground to preserve the health and safety of soldiers from endemic smallpox and yellow fever.^[285] Vaccines were forcibly administered to the Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Filipinos. Military personnel in Puerto Rico provided Public Health services that culminated in military orders that mandated vaccinations for children before they were six months old and a general vaccination order.^[285] By the end of 1899 in Puerto Rico alone the U.S. military and other hired native vaccinators called *practicantes*, vaccinated an estimated 860,000 natives in a five-month period. This period began the United States' movement toward an expansion of medical practices that included "tropical medicine" in an attempt to protect the lives of soldiers abroad.^[285]



Judge's cartoon of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem "The White Man's Burden" published in 1899. The poem's philosophy quickly was utilized to explain/justify the United States' response to the annexation of the Philippines. The United States used the "white man's burden" as an argument for imperial control of the Philippines and Puerto Rico based on the moral necessity to ensure the spread of civility and modernity.

Vietnam War

During the Vietnam War, vaccination was necessary for soldiers to fight overseas. Because disease follows soldiers,^[286] they had to receive vaccines preventing cholera, influenza, measles, meningococemia, Bubonic plague, poliovirus, smallpox, tetanus, diphtheria, typhoid, typhus, and yellow fever. However, the diseases mainly prevalent in Vietnam at this time were measles and polio. After arriving in Vietnam, the United States Military conducted the "Military Public Health Assistance Project".^[287] This public health program was a joint United States Military and Government of Vietnam concept to create or expand public medical facilities throughout South Vietnam.^[288] Local villages in Vietnam were inoculated. The United States military screened patients, dispensed medication, distributed clothing and food, and even passed out propaganda such as comic books.^[289]

Information warfare

An analysis of tweets from July 2014 through September 2017 revealed an active campaign on Twitter by the Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Russian troll farm accused of interference in the 2016 U.S. elections, to sow discord about the safety of vaccines.^{[290][291]} The campaign used sophisticated Twitter bots to amplify polarizing pro-vaccine and anti-vaccine messages, containing the hashtag #VaccinateUS, posted by IRA trolls.^[290]

Confidence in vaccines varies over place and time and among different vaccines. The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's Vaccine Confidence Project in 2016 found that confidence was lower in Europe than in the rest of the world. Refusal of the MMR vaccine has increased in twelve European states since 2010. The project published a report in 2018 assessing vaccine hesitancy among the public in all the 28 EU member states and among general practitioners in ten of them. Younger adults in the survey had less confidence than older people. Confidence had risen in France, Greece, Italy, and Slovenia since 2015 but had fallen in the Czech Republic, Finland, Poland, and Sweden. 36% of the GPs surveyed in the Czech Republic and 25% of those in Slovakia did not agree that the MMR vaccine was safe. Most of the GPs did not recommend the seasonal influenza vaccine. Confidence in the population correlated with confidence among GPs.^[292] A study of vaccine-hesitant U.S. college students found that after they interviewed survivors of vaccine-preventable diseases, they were more likely to become pro-vaccine than a control group.^[293]

Parties opposed to the use of vaccines frequently refer to data obtained from the US Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). This is a database of reports of issues associated with vaccines which has been useful for investigation, but since any claim can be entered into the VAERS, its data is not all reliable. Dubious claims about vaccines against hepatitis B, HPV and other diseases have been propagated based on misuse of data from VAERS.^[294]

See also

- Chemophobia
- Measles resurgence in the United States
- Misinformation related to vaccination
- Therapeutic nihilism
- Vaccine shedding

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Climate change denial

Climate change denial, or **global warming denial**, is denial, dismissal, or unwarranted doubt that contradicts the scientific consensus on climate change, including the extent to which it is caused by humans, its effects on nature and human society, or the potential of adaptation to global warming by human actions.^{[4][5][6]} Many who deny, dismiss, or hold unwarranted doubt about the scientific consensus on anthropogenic global warming self-label as "**climate change skeptics**",^{[7][5]} which several scientists have noted is an inaccurate description.^{[8][9][10]} Climate change denial can also be implicit when individuals or social groups accept the science but fail to come to terms with it or to translate their acceptance into action.^[11] Several social science studies have analyzed these positions as forms of denialism,^{[12][13]} pseudoscience,^[14] or propaganda.^[15]

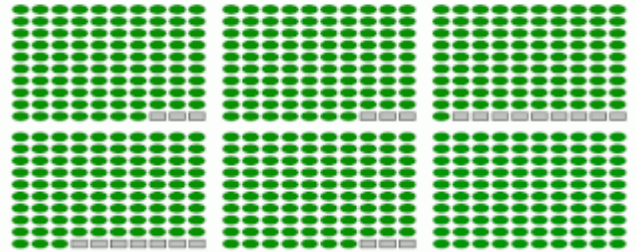
The campaign to undermine public trust in climate science has been described as a "denial machine" organized by industrial, political and ideological interests, and supported by conservative media and skeptical bloggers to manufacture uncertainty about global warming.^{[16][17][18]}

The politics of global warming have been affected by climate change denial and the political global warming controversy, undermining the efforts to act on climate change or adapting to the warming climate.^{[19][15][20]} Those promoting denial commonly use rhetorical tactics to give the appearance of a scientific controversy where there is none.^{[21][22]}

Organised campaigning to undermine public trust in climate science is associated with conservative economic policies and backed by industrial interests opposed to the regulation of CO₂ emissions.^[23] Climate change denial has been associated with the fossil fuels lobby, the Koch brothers, industry advocates and conservative think tanks, often in the United States.^{[15][24][25][26]} More than 90% of papers skeptical on climate change originate from right-wing think tanks.^[27]

Since the late 1970s, oil companies have published research broadly in line with the standard views on global warming. Despite this, oil companies organized a climate change denial campaign to disseminate public disinformation for several decades, a strategy that has been compared to the organized denial of

Academic studies of scientific consensus on human-caused global warming



Academic studies of scientific agreement on human-caused global warming among climate experts (2010-2015) reflect that the level of consensus correlates with expertise in climate science.^[1] A 2019 study found scientific consensus to be at 100%.^[2]



Former senator Tom Coburn of the United States in 2017 discussing the Paris agreement and denying the scientific consensus on human-caused global warming. Coburn claimed that sea level rise had been no more than 5 mm in 25 years, and asserted there was now global cooling. In 2013 he said "I am a global warming denier. I don't deny that."^[3]

the hazards of tobacco smoking by the tobacco industry, and often even carried out by the same individuals who previously spread the tobacco industry's denialist propaganda.^{[28][29][30]}

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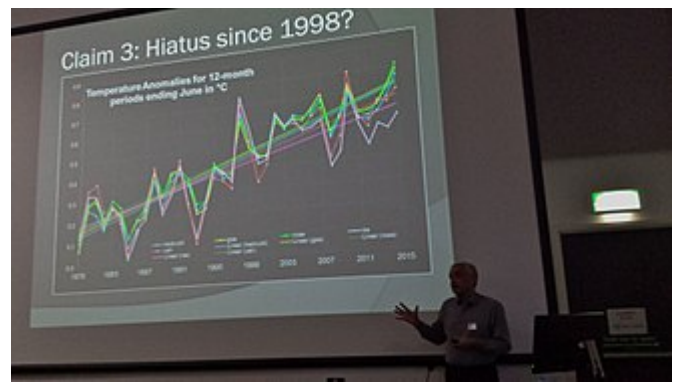
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Further reading

Terminology

"Climate change skepticism" and "climate change denial" refer to denial, dismissal or unwarranted doubt of the scientific consensus on the rate and extent of global warming, its significance, or its connection to human behavior, in whole or in part.^{[31][32]} Though there is a distinction between skepticism which indicates doubting the truth of an assertion and outright denial of the truth of an assertion, in the public debate phrases such as "climate skepticism" have frequently been used with the same meaning as climate denialism or contrarianism.^{[33][34]}

The terminology emerged in the 1990s. Even though all scientists adhere to scientific skepticism as an inherent part of the process, by mid November 1995 the word "skeptic" was being used specifically for the minority who publicized views contrary to the scientific consensus. This small group of scientists presented their views in public statements and the media, rather than to the scientific community.^{[35][36]} This usage continued.^[37] In his December 1995 article "The Heat is On: The warming of the world's climate sparks a blaze of denial", Ross Gelbspan said industry had engaged "a small band of skeptics" to confuse public opinion in a "persistent and well-funded campaign of denial".^[38] His 1997 book *The Heat is On* may have been the first to concentrate specifically on the topic.^[39] In it, Gelbspan discussed a "pervasive denial of global warming" in a "persistent campaign of denial and suppression" involving "undisclosed funding of these 'greenhouse skeptics' " with "the climate skeptics" confusing the public and influencing decision makers.^[40]



Amardeo Sarma lecturing about climate change denialism and the future world energy and environmental problems during the European Skeptics Congress 2015

A November 2006 CBC Television documentary on the campaign was titled *The Denial Machine*.^{[41][42]} In 2007 journalist Sharon Begley reported on the "denial machine",^[43] a phrase subsequently used by academics.^{[17][42]}

In addition to *explicit denial*, social groups have shown *implicit denial* by accepting the scientific consensus, but failing to come to terms with its implications or take action to reduce the problem.^[11] This was exemplified in Kari Norgaard's study of a village in Norway affected by climate change, where residents diverted their attention to other issues.^[44]

The terminology is debated: most of those actively rejecting the scientific consensus use the terms *skeptical* and *climate change skepticism*, and only a few have expressed preference for being described as deniers,^{[32][9]} but the word "skepticism" is incorrectly used, as scientific skepticism is an intrinsic part of scientific methodology.^{[10][45][46]} The term *contrarian* is more specific, but used less frequently. In academic literature and journalism, the terms "climate change denial" and "climate change deniers" have well-established usage as descriptive terms without any pejorative intent.^[47] Both the National Center for Science Education and historian Spencer R. Weart recognize that either option is problematic, but have decided to use "climate change denial" rather than "skepticism".^{[47][48]}

Terms related to "denialism" have been criticized for introducing a moralistic tone, and potentially implying a link with Holocaust denial.^{[10][49]} There have been claims that this link is intentional, which academics have strongly disputed.^[50] The usage of "denial" long predates the Holocaust, and is commonly applied in other areas such as HIV/AIDS denialism: the claim is described by John Timmer of *Ars Technica* as itself being a form of denial.^[51]

In December 2014, an open letter from the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry called on the media to stop using the term "skepticism" when referring to climate change denial. They contrasted scientific skepticism—which is "foundational to the scientific method"—with denial—"the a priori rejection of ideas without objective consideration"—and the behavior of those involved in political attempts to undermine climate science. They said "Not all individuals who call themselves climate change skeptics are deniers. But virtually all deniers have falsely branded themselves as skeptics. By perpetrating this misnomer, journalists have granted undeserved credibility to those who reject science and scientific inquiry."^{[50][52]}

In June 2015 Media Matters for America were told by *The New York Times* public editor that the newspaper was increasingly tending to use "denier" when "someone is challenging established science", but assessing this on an individual basis with no fixed policy, and would not use the term when someone was "kind of wishy-washy on the subject or in the middle." The executive director of the Society of Environmental Journalists said that while there was reasonable skepticism about specific issues, she felt that denier was "the most accurate term when someone claims there is no such thing as global warming, or agrees that it exists but denies that it has any cause we could understand or any impact that could be measured."^[53]

The Committee for Skeptical Inquiry letter inspired a petition by climatetruth.org^[54] in which signers were asked to 'Tell the Associated Press: Establish a rule in the AP StyleBook ruling out the use of "skeptic" to describe those who deny scientific facts.' On 22 September 2015, the Associated Press announced "an addition to *AP Stylebook* entry on global warming" which advised, "to describe those who don't accept climate science or dispute the world is warming from human-made forces, use climate change doubters or those who reject mainstream climate science. Avoid use of skeptics or deniers."^{[55][56]} On 17 May 2019, The Guardian also rejected use of the term "climate skeptic" in favor of "climate science denier".^[57]

History

Research on the effect of CO₂ on the climate began in 1824, when Joseph Fourier inferred the existence of the atmospheric "greenhouse effect". In 1860, John Tyndall quantified the effects of greenhouse gases on absorption of infrared radiation. Svante Arrhenius in 1896 showed that coal burning could cause global warming, and in 1938 Guy Stewart Callendar found it already happening to some extent.^{[58][59]} Research advanced rapidly after 1940; from 1957, Roger Revelle alerted the public to risks that fossil fuel burning was "a grandiose scientific experiment" on climate.^{[60][61]} NASA and NOAA took on research, the 1979 Charney Report concluded that substantial warming was already on the way, and "A wait-and-see policy may mean waiting until it is too late."^{[62][63]}

In 1959, a scientist working for Shell suggested in a New Scientist article, that carbon cycles are too vast to upset Nature's balance.^[64] By 1966 however, a coal industry research organization, Bituminous Coal Research Inc., published its finding that if then prevailing trends of coal consumption continue, "the temperature of the earth's atmosphere will increase and that vast changes in the climates of the earth will result." "Such changes in temperature will cause melting of the polar icecaps, which, in turn, would result in the inundation of many coastal cities, including New York and London."^[65] In a discussion following this paper in the same publication, a combustion engineer for Peabody Coal, now Peabody Energy, the world's largest coal supplier, added that the coal industry was merely "buying time" before additional government air pollution regulations would be promulgated to clean the air. Nevertheless, the coal industry for decades thereafter publicly advocated the position that increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is beneficial for the planet.^[65]

In response to increasing public awareness of the greenhouse effect in the 1970s, conservative reaction built up, denying environmental concerns which could lead to government regulation. With the 1981 Presidency of Ronald Reagan, global warming became a political issue, with immediate plans to cut spending on environmental research, particularly climate-related, and stop funding for CO₂ monitoring. Reagan appointed as Secretary of Energy James B. Edwards, who said that there was no real global warming problem. Congressman Al Gore had studied under Revelle and was aware of the developing science: he joined others in arranging congressional hearings from 1981 onwards, with testimony by scientists including Revelle, Stephen Schneider and Wallace Smith Broecker. The hearings gained enough public attention to reduce the cuts in atmospheric research.^[66] A polarized party-political debate

developed. In 1982, Sherwood B. Idso published his book *Carbon Dioxide: Friend or Foe?* which said increases in CO₂ would not warm the planet, but would fertilize crops and were "something to be encouraged and not suppressed", while complaining that his theories had been rejected by the "scientific establishment". An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report in 1983 said global warming was "not a theoretical problem but a threat whose effects will be felt within a few years", with potentially "catastrophic" consequences.^[67] The Reagan administration reacted by calling the report "alarmist", and the dispute got wide news coverage. Public attention turned to other issues, then the 1985 finding of a polar ozone hole brought a swift international response. To the public, this was related to climate change and the possibility of effective action, but news interest faded.^[68]

Public attention was renewed amidst summer droughts and heat waves when James Hansen testified to a Congressional hearing on 23 June 1988,^[69] stating with high confidence that long term warming was underway with severe warming likely within the next 50 years, and warning of likely storms and floods. There was increasing media attention: the scientific community had reached a broad consensus that the climate was warming, human activity was very likely the primary cause, and there would be significant consequences if the warming trend was not curbed.^[70] These facts encouraged discussion about new laws concerning environmental regulation, which was opposed by the fossil fuel industry.^[71]

From 1989 onwards industry-funded organizations including the Global Climate Coalition and the George C. Marshall Institute sought to spread doubt among the public, in a strategy already developed by the tobacco industry.^{[72][73][74]} A small group of scientists opposed to the consensus on global warming became politically involved, and with support from conservative political interests, began publishing in books and the press rather than in scientific journals.^[75] This small group of scientists included some of the same people that were part of the strategy already tried by the tobacco industry.^[76] Spencer Weart identifies this period as the point where legitimate skepticism about basic aspects of climate science was no longer justified, and those spreading mistrust about these issues became deniers.^[77] As their arguments were increasingly refuted by the scientific community and new data, deniers turned to political arguments, making personal attacks on the reputation of scientists, and promoting ideas of a global warming conspiracy.^[78]

With the 1989 fall of communism and the environmental movement's international reach at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the attention of U.S. conservative think tanks, which had been organized in the 1970s as an intellectual counter-movement to socialism, turned from the "red scare" to the "green scare" which they saw as a threat to their aims of private property, free trade market economies and global capitalism. As a counter-movement, they used environmental skepticism to promote denial of the reality of problems such as loss of biodiversity and climate change.^[79]

In 1992, an EPA report linked second-hand smoke with lung cancer. The tobacco industry engaged the APCO Worldwide public relations company, which set out a strategy of astroturfing campaigns to cast doubt on the science by linking smoking anxieties with other issues, including global warming, in order to turn public opinion against calls for government intervention. The campaign depicted public concerns as "unfounded fears" supposedly based only on "junk science" in contrast to their "sound science", and operated through front groups, primarily the Advancement of Sound Science Center (TASSC) and its Junk Science website, run by Steven Milloy. A tobacco company memo commented "Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy." During the 1990s, the tobacco campaign died away, and TASSC began taking funding from oil companies including Exxon. Its website became central in distributing "almost every kind of climate-change denial that has found its way into the popular press."^[80]

In the 1990s, the Marshall Institute began campaigning against increased regulations on environmental issues such as acid rain, ozone depletion, second-hand smoke, and the dangers of DDT.^{[73][80][76]} In each case their argument was that the science was too uncertain to justify any government intervention, a strategy it borrowed from earlier efforts to downplay the health effects of tobacco in the 1980s.^{[72][74]} This campaign would continue for the next two decades.^[81]

These efforts succeeded in influencing public perception of climate science.^[82] Between 1988 and the 1990s, public discourse shifted from the science and data of climate change to discussion of politics and surrounding controversy.^[83]

The campaign to spread doubt continued into the 1990s, including an advertising campaign funded by coal industry advocates intended to "reposition global warming as theory rather than fact,"^{[84][85]} and a 1998 proposal written by the American Petroleum Institute intending to recruit scientists to convince politicians, the media and the public that climate science was too uncertain to warrant environmental regulation.^[86] The proposal included a US\$ 5,000,000 multi-point strategy to "maximize the impact of scientific views consistent with ours on Congress, the media and other key audiences", with a goal of "raising questions about and undercutting the 'prevailing scientific wisdom'".^[87]

In 1998, Gelbspan noted that his fellow journalists accepted that global warming was occurring, but said they were in "'stage-two' denial of the climate crisis", unable to accept the feasibility of answers to the problem.^[88] A subsequent book by Milburn and Conrad on *The Politics of Denial* described "economic and psychological forces" producing denial of the consensus on global warming issues.^[89]

These efforts by climate change denial groups were recognized as an organized campaign beginning in the 2000s.^[90] The sociologists Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright played a significant role in this shift when they published an article in 2000 exploring the connection between conservative think tanks and climate change denial.^[91] Later work would continue the argument specific groups were marshaling skepticism against climate change - A study in 2008 from the University of Central Florida analyzed the sources of "environmentally skeptical" literature published in the United States. The analysis demonstrated that 92% of the literature was partly or wholly affiliated with a self-proclaimed conservative think tanks.^[92] A later piece of research from 2015 identified 4,556 individuals with overlapping network ties to 164 organizations which are responsible for the most efforts to downplay the threat of climate change in the U.S.^{[93][94]}

Gelbspan's *Boiling Point*, published in 2004, detailed the fossil-fuel industry's campaign to deny climate change and undermine public confidence in climate science.^[95] In *Newsweek*'s August 2007 cover story "The Truth About Denial", Sharon Begley reported that "the denial machine is running at full throttle", and said that this "well-coordinated, well-funded campaign" by contrarian scientists, free-market think tanks, and industry had "created a paralyzing fog of doubt around climate change."^[43]

Referencing work of sociologists Robert Antonio and Robert Brulle, Wayne A. White has written that climate change denial has become the top priority in a broader agenda against environmental regulation being pursued by neoliberals.^[96] Today, climate change skepticism is most prominently seen in the United States, where the media disproportionately features views of the climate change denial community.^[97] In addition to the media, the contrarian movement has also been sustained by the growth of the internet, having gained some of its support from internet bloggers, talk radio hosts and newspaper columnists.^[98]

The New York Times and others reported in 2015 that oil companies knew that burning oil and gas could cause climate change and global warming since the 1970s but nonetheless funded deniers for years.^{[28][29]} Dana Nuccitelli wrote in *The Guardian* that a small fringe group of climate deniers were no

longer taken seriously at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, in an agreement that "we need to stop delaying and start getting serious about preventing a climate crisis."^[99] However, *The New York Times* says any implementation is voluntary and will depend on any future world leaders—and every Republican U.S. presidential candidate in 2016 questioned or denied the science of climate change.^[100]

Ernesto Araújo, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs appointed by the newly elected president Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro has called global warming a plot by "cultural Marxists"^[101] and has eliminated the Climate Change Division of the ministry.^[102]



Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro with Donald Trump's former National Security Adviser John Bolton in Rio de Janeiro, 29 November 2018

Denial networks

The climate change denial industry is most powerful in the United States.^{[103][104]} In the 2016 United States election cycle, every Republican presidential candidate questioned or denied climate change, and opposed U.S. government steps to address climate change as has the Republican leader in the U.S. Senate.^[105]

A Pentagon report has pointed out how climate change denial threatens national security.^[106] A study from 2015 identified 4,556 individuals with overlapping network ties to 164 organizations which are responsible for the most efforts to downplay the threat of climate change in the U.S.^{[107][108]}

In 2013, the Center for Media and Democracy reported that the State Policy Network (SPN), an umbrella group of 64 U.S. think tanks, had been lobbying on behalf of major corporations and conservative donors to oppose climate change regulation.^[109]

International

The Clexit Coalition claims to be: "A new international organisation (which) aims to prevent ratification of the costly and dangerous Paris global warming treaty".^[110] It has members in 26 countries.^[111] According to The Guardian newspaper: "Clexit leaders are heavily involved in tobacco and fossil fuel-funded organizations".^[112]

Arguments and positions on global warming

Some climate change denial groups say that because CO₂ is only a trace gas in the atmosphere (roughly 400ppm, or 0.04%, 4 parts per 10,000) it can only have a minor effect on the climate. Scientists have known for over a century that even this small proportion has a significant warming effect, and doubling the proportion leads to a large temperature increase.^[114] The scientific consensus, as summarized by the IPCC fourth assessment report, the U.S. Geological Survey, and other reports, is that human activity is the leading cause of climate change. The burning of fossil fuels accounts for around 30 billion tons of CO₂ each year, which is 130 times the amount produced by volcanoes.^[115] Some groups allege that water vapor is a more significant greenhouse gas, and is left out of many climate models.^[114] While water vapor

is a greenhouse gas, the very short atmospheric lifetime of water vapor (about 10 days) compared that of CO₂ (hundreds of years) means that CO₂ is the primary driver of increasing temperatures; water vapour acts as a feedback, not a forcing, mechanism.^[116] Water vapor has been incorporated into climate models since their inception in the late 1800s.^[117]

Climate denial groups may also argue that global warming stopped recently, a global warming hiatus, or that global temperatures are actually decreasing, leading to global cooling. These arguments are based on short term fluctuations, and ignore the long term pattern of warming.^[118]

These groups often point to natural variability, such as sunspots and cosmic rays, to explain the warming trend.^[119] According to these groups, there is natural variability that will abate over time, and human influences have little to do with it. These factors are already taken into account when developing climate models, and the scientific consensus is that they cannot explain the observed warming trend.^[120]

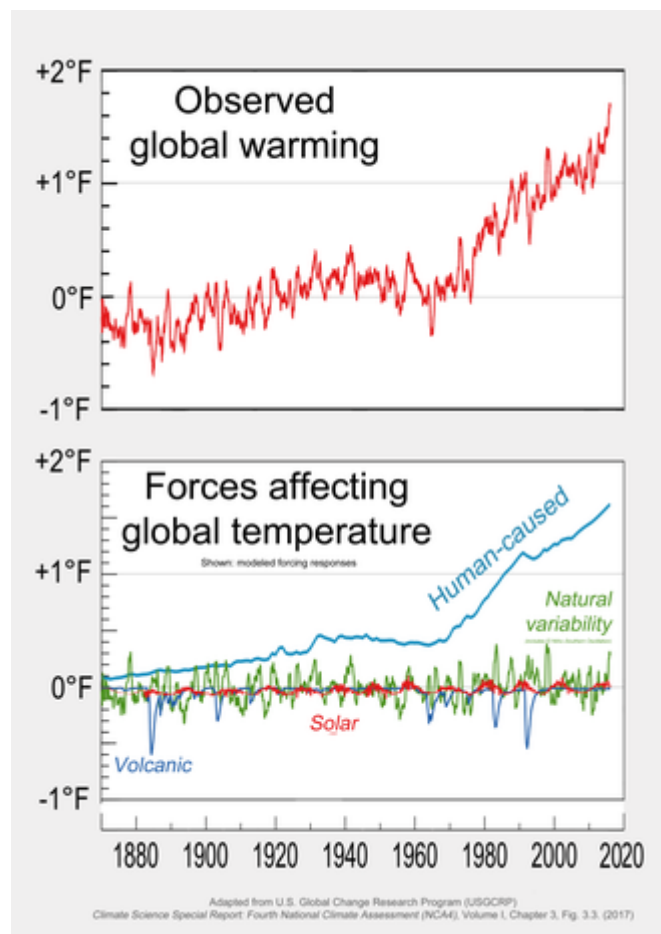
At a May 2018 meeting of the United States House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Alabama's Representative Mo Brooks claimed that sea level rise is caused not by melting glaciers but rather by coastal erosion and silt that flows from rivers into the ocean.^[121]

Climate change denial literature often features the suggestion that we should wait for better technologies before addressing climate change, when they will be more affordable and effective.^[122]

Conspiracy theories

Global warming conspiracy theories have been posited which allege that the scientific consensus is illusory, or that climatologists are acting on their own financial interests by causing undue alarm about a changing climate.^{[123][124][125]} Despite leaked emails during the Climatic Research Unit email controversy, as well as multinational, independent research on the topic, no evidence of such a conspiracy has been presented, and strong consensus exists among scientists from a multitude of political, social, organizational and national backgrounds about the extent and cause of climate change.^{[126][127]} Several researchers have concluded that around 97% of climate scientists agree with this consensus.^[128] As well, much of the data used in climate science is publicly available to be viewed and interpreted by competing researchers as well as the public.^[129]

In 2012, research by Stephan Lewandowsky (then of the University of Western Australia) concluded that belief in other conspiracy theories, such as that the FBI was responsible for the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., was associated with being more likely to endorse climate change denial.^[130]



The Fourth National Climate Assessment ("NCA4", U.S., 2017) includes charts^[113] illustrating how human factors—not various natural factors that have been investigated—are the predominant cause of observed global warming.

In February 2015, climate change denier Jim Inhofe, who had previously called climate change "the greatest hoax ever perpetrated against the American people," claimed to have debunked the alleged hoax when he brought a snowball with him in the U.S. Senate chamber and tossed it across the floor.^[131] He was succeeded in 2017 by John Barrasso, who similarly said: "The climate is constantly changing. The role human activity plays is not known."^[132]

Donald Trump tweeted in 2012 that the Chinese invented "the concept of global warming" because they believed it would somehow hurt U.S. manufacturing. In late 2015, he called global warming a "hoax."^[133]



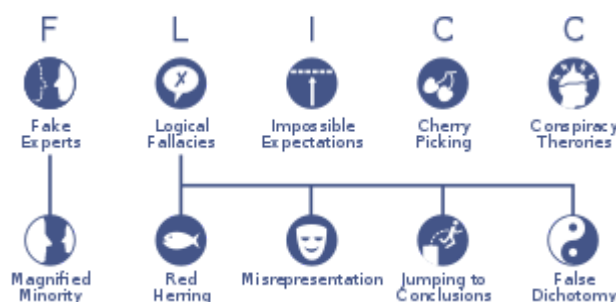
Inhofe holding a snowball on the U.S. Senate floor

Taxonomy of climate change denial

In 2004, Stefan Rahmstorf described how the media give the misleading impression that climate change was still disputed within the scientific community, attributing this impression to PR efforts of climate change skeptics. He identified different positions argued by climate skeptics, which he used as a taxonomy of climate change skepticism:^[134] Later the model was also applied on denial.^[8]

1. Trend sceptics or deniers (who deny there is global warming), [and] argue that no significant climate warming is taking place at all, claiming that the warming trend measured by weather stations is an artefact due to urbanisation around those stations ("urban heat island effect").
2. Attribution sceptics or deniers (who accept the global warming trend but see natural causes for this), [and] doubt that human activities are responsible for the observed trends. A few of them even deny that the rise in the atmospheric CO₂ content is anthropogenic [while others argue that] additional CO₂ does not lead to discernible warming [and] that there must be other—natural—causes for warming.
3. Impact sceptics or deniers (who think global warming is harmless or even beneficial).
— [8][134]

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF SCIENCE DENIAL



Characteristics of science denial (including climate science denial)

This taxonomy has been used in social science for analysis of publications, and to categorize climate change skepticism and climate change denial.^{[135][136]} Sometimes, a fourth category called "consensus denial" is added, which describes people who question the scientific consensus on anthropogenic global warming.^[8]

The National Center for Science Education describes climate change denial as disputing differing points in the scientific consensus, a sequential range of arguments from denying the occurrence of climate change, accepting that but denying any significant human contribution, accepting these but denying scientific findings on how this would affect nature and human society, to accepting all these but denying that humans can mitigate or reduce the problems.^[4] James L. Powell provides a more extended list,^[6] as does climatologist Michael E. Mann in "six stages of denial", a ladder model whereby deniers have over time conceded acceptance of points, while retreating to a position which still rejects the mainstream consensus.^[137]

1. CO₂ is not actually increasing.
2. Even if it is, the increase has no impact on the climate since there is no convincing evidence of warming.
3. Even if there is warming, it is due to natural causes.
4. Even if the warming cannot be explained by natural causes, the human impact is small, and the impact of continued greenhouse gas emissions will be minor.
5. Even if the current and future projected human effects on Earth's climate are not negligible, the changes are generally going to be good for us.
6. Whether or not the changes are going to be good for us, humans are very adept at adapting to changes; besides, it's too late to do anything about it, and/or a technological fix is bound to come along when we really need it.^[137]

Journalists and newspaper columnists including George Monbiot^{[138][139][140]} and Ellen Goodman,^[139] among others,^{[141][142]} have described climate change denial as a form of denialism.^[143]

Denialism in this context has been defined by Chris and Mark Hoofnagle as the use of rhetorical devices "to give the appearance of legitimate debate where there is none, an approach that has the ultimate goal of rejecting a proposition on which a scientific consensus exists." This process characteristically uses one or more of the following tactics:^{[22][144][145]}

1. Allegations that scientific consensus involves conspiring to fake data or suppress the truth: a global warming conspiracy theory.
2. Fake experts, or individuals with views at odds with established knowledge, at the same time marginalising or denigrating published topic experts. Like the manufactured doubt over smoking and health, a few contrarian scientists oppose the climate consensus, some of them the same individuals.
3. Selectivity, such as cherry picking atypical or even obsolete papers, in the same way that the MMR vaccine controversy was based on one paper: examples include discredited ideas of the medieval warm period.^[145]
4. Unworkable demands of research, claiming that any uncertainty invalidates the field or exaggerating uncertainty while rejecting probabilities and mathematical models.
5. Logical fallacies.

In 2015, environmentalist Bill McKibben accused President Obama (widely regarded as strongly in favour of action on climate change^[146]) of "Catastrophic Climate-Change Denial", for his approval of oil-drilling permits in offshore Alaska. According to McKibben, the President has also "opened huge swaths

of the Powder River basin to new coal mining." McKibben calls this "climate denial of the status quo sort", where the President denies "the meaning of the science, which is that we must keep carbon in the ground."^[147]

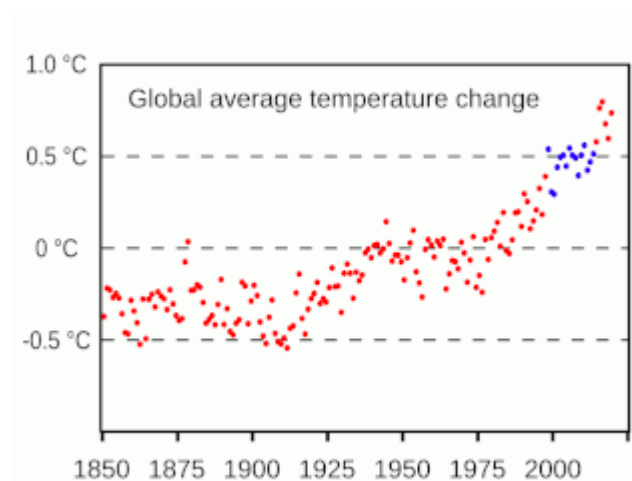
A study assessed the public perception and actions to climate change, on grounds of belief systems, and identified seven psychological barriers affecting the behavior that otherwise would facilitate mitigation, adaptation, and environmental stewardship. The author found the following barriers: cognition, ideological world views, comparisons to key people, costs and momentum, discredence toward experts and authorities, perceived risks of change, and inadequate behavioral changes.^{[148][149]}

Pseudoscience

Various groups, including the National Center for Science Education, have described climate change denial as a form of pseudoscience.^{[152][153][154]} Climate change skepticism, while in some cases professing to do research on climate change, has focused instead on influencing the opinion of the public, legislators and the media, in contrast to legitimate science.^[155]

In a review of the book *The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe* by Michael D. Gordin, David Morrison wrote:

In his final chapter, Gordin turns to the new phase of pseudoscience, practiced by a few rogue scientists themselves. Climate change denialism is the prime example, where a handful of scientists, allied with an effective PR machine, are publicly challenging the scientific consensus that global warming is real and is due primarily to human consumption of fossil fuels. Scientists have watched in disbelief that as the evidence for global warming has become ever more solid, the deniers have been increasingly successful in the public and political arena. ... Today pseudoscience is still with us, and is as dangerous a challenge to science as it ever was in the past.^[156]



One deceptive approach is cherry picking data from short time periods to assert that global average temperatures are not rising. **Blue trendlines** show short-term countertrends that mask longer-term warming trends that are shown by **red trendlines**.^[150] Such representations have been applied to the so-called Global warming hiatus (**blue dots**, 1998–2013).^[151]

In 2019, Senator Gerard Rennick of Queensland, Australia, accused the Australian Bureau of Meteorology of changing data from temperature records to support a climate change narrative. (The Bureau had updated data collected with old equipment to enable it to be compared with data collected with newer equipment.) "I don't believe the record," the senator said, citing his own "background in system accounting where I've changed records."^[157]

False beliefs

In 2015, at a town council meeting in Woodland, North Carolina, two individuals said they feared that solar farms would draw too much energy from the sun, one of whom was a retired science teacher who worried that this would interfere with the photosynthesis of nearby plants and also that it could cause cancer in humans.^[158] (Solar panels do not attract energy from the sun; they simply use what lands on them.)

Explaining the techniques of science denial and misinformation, by presenting "examples of people using cherry-picking or fake experts or false balance to mislead the public," has been shown to inoculate people somewhat against misinformation.^{[159][160][161]}

Dialogue focused on the question of how belief differs from scientific theory may provide useful insights into how the scientific method works, and how beliefs may have strong or minimal supporting evidence.^{[162][163]} Wong-Parodi's survey of the literature shows four effective approaches to dialogue, including "[encouraging] people to openly share their values and stance on climate change before introducing actual scientific climate information into the discussion."^[164]

Emotional and psychological aspects

Florida State Senator Tom Lee has described the emotional impact and reactions of individuals to climate change. Lee says, "If these predictions do bear out, that it's just economically daunting. I mean, you have to be the Grim Reaper of reality in a world that isn't real fond of the Grim Reaper. That's why I use the term emotionally shut down, because I think you lose people at hello a lot of times in the Republican conversation over this."^[165] Emotional reactions to climate change may include guilt, fear, anger, and apathy. Psychology Today, in an article titled "The Existential Dread of Climate Change, has suggested that "despair about our changing climate may get in the way of fixing it."^[166] The American Psychological Association has urged psychologists and other social scientists to work on psychological barriers to taking action on climate change.^[167]

Responding to climate denial - the role of emotions and persuasive argument

An *Irish Times* article notes that climate denial "is not simply overcome by reasoned argument," because it is not a rational response. Attempting to overcome denial using techniques of persuasive argument, such as supplying a missing piece of information, or providing general scientific education may be ineffective. A person who is in denial about climate is most likely taking a position based on their feelings, especially their feelings about things they fear.^[168]

Lewandowsky has stated that "It is pretty clear that fear of the solutions drives much opposition to the science."^[169]

It can be useful to respond to emotions, including with the statement "It can be painful to realise that our own lifestyles are responsible," in order to help move "from denial to acceptance to constructive action."^{[168][170][171]}

Farmers and climate denial

Seeing positive economic results from efforts at climate-friendly agricultural practices, or becoming involved in intergenerational stewardship of a farm may play a role in turning farmers away from denial. One study of climate change denial among farmers in Australia found that farmers were less likely to take a position of climate denial if they had experienced improved production from climate-friendly practices, or identified a younger person as a successor for their farm.^[172]

In the United States, rural climate dialogues sponsored by the Sierra Club have helped neighbors overcome their fears of political polarization and exclusion, and come together to address shared concerns about climate impacts in their communities. Some participants who start out with attitudes of anthropogenic climate change denial have shifted to identifying concerns which they would like to see addressed by local officials.^[173]

People who have changed their position

"I used to be a climate-change skeptic," conservative columnist Max Boot admitted in 2018, one who believed that "the science was inconclusive" and that worry was "overblown". Now, he says, referencing the Fourth National Climate Assessment, "the scientific consensus is so clear and convincing."^[174]

Climate change doubter Bob Inglis, a former US representative for South Carolina, changed his mind after appeals from his son on his environmental positions, and after spending time with climate scientist Scott Heron studying coral bleaching in the Great Barrier Reef. Inglis lost his House race in 2010, and went on to found republicEn, a nonprofit promoting conservative voices and solutions on climate change.^[175]

Jerry Taylor promoted climate denialism for 20 years as former staff director for the energy and environment task force at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and former vice president of the Cato Institute. Taylor began to change his mind after climate scientist James Hansen challenged him to reread some Senate testimony. He became President of the Niskanen Center in 2014, where he is involved in turning climate skeptics into climate activists, and making the business case for climate action.^{[176][177][178]}

In 2009, Russian president Dmitri Medvedev expressed his opinion that climate change was "some kind of tricky campaign made up by some commercial structures to promote their business projects." After the devastating 2010 Russian wildfires damaged agriculture and left Moscow choking in smoke, Medvedev commented, "Unfortunately, what is happening now in our central regions is evidence of this global climate change."^[179]

Michael Shermer, the publisher of *Skeptic Magazine*, reached a tipping point in 2006 as a result of his increasing familiarity with scientific evidence, and decided there was "overwhelming evidence for anthropogenic global warming." Journalist Gregg Easterbrook, an early skeptic of climate change who authored the influential book *A Moment on the Earth*, also changed his mind in 2006, and wrote an essay titled "Case Closed: The Debate About Global Warming is Over."^[179]

Weather Channel senior meteorologist Stu Ostro expressed skepticism or cynicism about anthropogenic global warming for some years, but by 2010, he had become involved in explaining the connections between man-made climate change and extreme weather."^[179]

Richard A. Muller, professor of physics at the University of California, Berkeley, and the co-founder of the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature project, funded by Charles Koch Charitable Foundation, has been a prominent critic of prevailing climate science. In 2011, he stated that "following an intensive

research effort involving a dozen scientists, I concluded that global warming was real and that the prior estimates of the rate of warming were correct. I'm now going a step further: Humans are almost entirely the cause."^[180]

Funding

Between 2002 and 2010, the combined annual income of 91 climate change counter-movement organizations—think tanks, advocacy groups and industry associations—was roughly \$900 million.^{[181][182]} During the same period, billionaires secretly donated nearly \$120 million (£77 million) via the Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund to more than 100 organizations seeking to undermine the public perception of the science on climate change.^{[183][184]}

As of the end of 2019, in the current U.S. election cycle, 97 percent of the coal industry's political contributions and 88 percent of the oil and gas industries' contributions had gone to Republicans,^{[185][186]} leading Paul Krugman to call the Republicans "the world's only major climate-denialist party."^[187]

Public opinion

Public opinion on climate change is significantly affected by media coverage of climate change, and the effects of climate change denial campaigns. Campaigns to undermine public confidence in climate science have decreased public belief in climate change, which in turn have affected legislative efforts to curb CO₂ emissions.^[188] Another reason why the public is skeptical about climate change is their lack of knowledge.^[7]

United States

In a 2006 ABC News/Time Magazine poll, 56% of Americans correctly answered that average global temperatures had risen over the previous three years. However, in the same poll, two-thirds said they believed that scientists had "a lot of disagreement" about "whether or not global warming is happening."^[189]

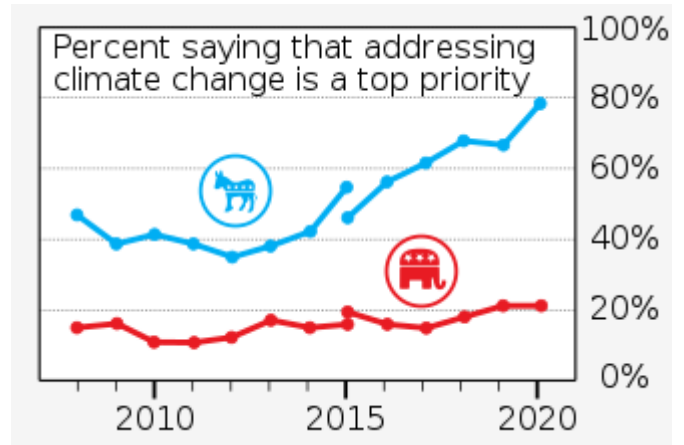
From 2001 to 2012, the number of Americans who said they believe in anthropogenic global warming decreased from 75 percent to 44 percent.^[190] (Scientists believe it is happening.)^[191]

A study found that public climate change policy support and behavior are significantly influenced by public beliefs, attitudes and risk perceptions.^[193] As of March 2018 the rate of acceptance among U.S. TV forecasters that the climate is changing has increased to ninety-five percent. The number of local television stories about global warming has also increased, by fifteen-fold. Climate Central has received some of the credit for this because they provide classes for meteorologists and graphics for television stations.^[194]

The popular media in the U.S. gives greater attention to climate change skeptics than the scientific community as a whole, and the level of agreement within the scientific community has not been accurately communicated.^{[195][196][197]} In some cases, news outlets have allowed climate change skeptics to explain the science of climate change instead of experts in climatology.^[198] US and UK media coverage differ from that presented in other countries, where reporting is more consistent with the scientific literature.^{[199][200]} Some journalists attribute the difference to climate change denial being propagated, mainly in the US, by business-centered organizations employing tactics worked out previously by the US

tobacco lobby.^{[72][201][202]} In France, the US and the UK, the opinions of climate change skeptics appear much more frequently in conservative news outlets than other news, and in many cases those opinions are left uncontested.^[203]

The efforts of Al Gore and other environmental campaigns have focused on the effects of global warming and have managed to increase awareness and concern, but despite these efforts, the number of Americans believing humans are the cause of global warming was holding steady at 61% in 2007, and those believing the popular media was understating the issue remained about 35%.^[204] A recent poll from 2015 suggests that while Americans are growing more aware of the dangers and implications of climate change for future generations, the majority are not worried about it.^[205] From a survey conducted in 2004, it was found that more than 30% of news presented in the previous decade showed equal attention to both human and non human contributions to global warming.^[206]



Democrats (blue) and Republicans (red) have long differed in views of the importance of addressing climate change, with the gap widening in the late 2010s mainly through Democrats' share increasing by more than 30 points.^[192]

(Discontinuity resulted from survey changing in 2015 from reciting "global warming" to "climate change".)

In 2018, the National Science Teachers Association urged teachers to "emphasize to students that no scientific controversy exists regarding the basic facts of climate change."^[207]

Europe

Climate change denial has been promoted by several far-right European parties, including Spain's Vox, Finland's far-right Finns Party, Austria's far-right Freedom Party, and Germany's anti-immigration Alternative for Deutschland (AFD).^[208]

Nationalism

It has been suggested that climate change can conflict with a nationalistic view because it is "unsolvable" at the national level and requires collective action between nations or between local communities, and that therefore populist nationalism tends to reject the science of climate change.^[209]

In a TED talk Yuval Noah Harari notes:^[210]

...nationalism has no solution to climate change. If you want to be a nationalist in the 21st century, you have to deny the problem. If you accept the reality of the problem, then you must accept that, yes, there is still room in the world for patriotism, there is still room in the world for having special loyalties and obligations towards your own people, towards your own country. I don't think anybody is really thinking of abolishing that. But in order to confront climate change, we need additional loyalties and commitments to a level beyond the nation.

In 2019, U.S. Undersecretary of Energy Mark W. Menezes said that the Freeport LNG project's exports would be "spreading freedom gas throughout the world," while Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy Steven Winberg echoed the call to internationally export "molecules of US freedom."^[211]

On the other hand, it has been argued that effective climate action is polycentric rather than international, and national interest in multilateral groups can be furthered by overcoming climate change denial.^[212] Climate change contrarians may believe in a "caricature" of internationalist state intervention that is perceived as threatening national sovereignty, and may re-attribute risks such as flooding to international institutions.^[213] UK Independence Party policy on climate change has been influenced by noted contrarian Christopher Monckton and then by its energy spokesman Roger Helmer MEP who stated in a speech "It is not clear that the rise in atmospheric CO₂ is anthropogenic".^[214]

Jerry Taylor of the Niskanen Center posits that climate change denial is an important component of Trumpian historical consciousness, and "plays a significant role in the architecture of Trumpism as a developing philosophical system."^[215]

Lobbying

Efforts to lobby against environmental regulation have included campaigns to manufacture doubt about the science behind climate change, and to obscure the scientific consensus and data.^[216] These efforts have undermined public confidence in climate science, and impacted climate change lobbying.^{[15][188]}

The political advocacy organizations FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity, funded by brothers David and Charles Koch of Koch Industries, were important in supporting the Tea Party movement and in encouraging the movement to focus on climate change.^[217] Other conservative organizations such as the Heritage Foundation, Marshall Institute, Cato Institute and the American Enterprise Institute were significant participants in these lobbying attempts, seeking to halt or eliminate environmental regulations.^{[218][219]}

This approach to downplay the significance of climate change was copied from tobacco lobbyists; in the face of scientific evidence linking tobacco to lung cancer, to prevent or delay the introduction of regulation. Lobbyists attempted to discredit the scientific research by creating doubt and manipulating debate. They worked to discredit the scientists involved, to dispute their findings, and to create and maintain an apparent controversy by promoting claims that contradicted scientific research. "'Doubt is our product,' boasted a now infamous 1969 industry memo. Doubt would shield the tobacco industry from litigation and regulation for decades to come."^[220] In 2006, George Monbiot wrote in *The Guardian* about similarities between the methods of groups funded by Exxon, and those of the tobacco giant Philip Morris, including direct attacks on peer-reviewed science, and attempts to create public controversy and doubt.^[138]

Former National Academy of Sciences president Frederick Seitz, who, according to an article by Mark Hertsgaard in *Vanity Fair*, earned about US\$585,000 in the 1970s and 1980s as a consultant to R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company,^[221] went on to chair groups such as the Science and Environmental Policy Project and the George C. Marshall Institute alleged to have made efforts to "downplay" global warming. Seitz stated in the 1980s that "Global warming is far more a matter of politics than of climate." Seitz authored the Oregon Petition, a document published jointly by the Marshall Institute and Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine in opposition to the Kyoto protocol. The petition and accompanying "Research Review of Global Warming Evidence" claimed:^[138]

The proposed limits on greenhouse gases would harm the environment, hinder the advance of science and technology, and damage the health and welfare of mankind. There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gases is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate. ... We are living in an increasingly lush environment of plants and animals as a result of the carbon dioxide increase. Our children will enjoy an Earth with far more plant and animal life than that with which we now are blessed. This is a wonderful and unexpected gift from the Industrial Revolution.

George Monbiot wrote in *The Guardian* that this petition, which he criticizes as misleading and tied to industry funding, "has been cited by almost every journalist who claims that climate change is a myth." Efforts by climate change denial groups played a significant role in the eventual rejection of the Kyoto protocol in the US.^[222]

Monbiot has written about another group founded by the tobacco lobby, The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC), that now campaigns against measures to combat global warming. In again trying to manufacture the appearance of a grass-roots movement against "unfounded fear" and "over-regulation," Monbiot states that TASSC "has done more damage to the campaign to halt [climate change] than any other body."^[138]

Drexel University environmental sociologist Robert Brulle analysed the funding of 91 organizations opposed to restrictions on carbon emissions, which he termed the "climate change counter-movement." Between 2003 and 2013, the donor-advised funds Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund, combined, were the largest funders, accounting for about one quarter of the total funds, and the American Enterprise Institute was the largest recipient, 16% of the total funds. The study also found that the amount of money donated to these organizations by means of foundations whose funding sources cannot be traced had risen.^{[223][224][225][226][227]}

Private sector

Several large corporations within the fossil fuel industry provide significant funding for attempts to mislead the public about the trustworthiness of climate science.^[228] ExxonMobil and the Koch family foundations have been identified as especially influential funders of climate change contrarianism.^[229] The bankruptcy of the coal company Cloud Peak Energy revealed it funded the Institute for Energy Research, a climate denial think tank, as well as several other policy influencers.^{[230][231]}

After the IPCC released its February 2007 report, the American Enterprise Institute offered British, American and other scientists \$10,000 plus travel expenses to publish articles critical of the assessment. The institute had received more than US\$1.6 million from Exxon, and its vice-chairman of trustees was former head of Exxon Lee Raymond. Raymond sent letters that alleged the IPCC report was not "supported by the analytical work." More than 20 AEI employees worked as consultants to the George W. Bush administration.^[232] Despite her initial conviction that climate change denial would abate with time, Senator Barbara Boxer said that when she learned of the AEI's offer, she "realized there was a movement behind this that just wasn't giving up."^[233]

The Royal Society conducted a survey that found ExxonMobil had given US\$2.9 million to American groups that "misinformed the public about climate change," 39 of which "misrepresented the science of climate change by outright denial of the evidence".^{[234][235]} In 2006, the Royal Society issued a demand

that ExxonMobil withdraw funding for climate change denial. The letter drew criticism, notably from Timothy Ball who argued the society attempted to "politicize the private funding of science and to censor scientific debate."^[236]

ExxonMobil denied that it has been trying to mislead the public about global warming. A spokesman, Gantt Walton, said that ExxonMobil's funding of research does not mean that it acts to influence the research, and that ExxonMobil supports taking action to curb the output of greenhouse gasses.^[237] Research conducted at an Exxon archival collection at the University of Texas and interviews with former employees by journalists indicate the scientific opinion within the company and their public posture towards climate change was contradictory.^[238]

Between 1989 and 2002, the Global Climate Coalition, a group of mainly United States businesses, used aggressive lobbying and public relations tactics to oppose action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight the Kyoto Protocol. The coalition was financed by large corporations and trade groups from the oil, coal and auto industries. *The New York Times* reported that "even as the coalition worked to sway opinion [towards skepticism], its own scientific and technical experts were advising that the science backing the role of greenhouse gases in global warming could not be refuted."^[239] In 2000, Ford Motor Company was the first company to leave the coalition as a result of pressure from environmentalists,^[240] followed by Daimler-Chrysler, Texaco, the Southern Company and General Motors subsequently left to GCC.^[241] The organization closed in 2002.

From January 2009 through June 2010, the oil, coal and utility industries spent \$500 million in lobby expenditures in opposition to legislation to address climate change.^{[242][243]}

In early 2015, several media reports emerged saying that Willie Soon, a popular scientist among climate change deniers, had failed to disclose conflicts of interest in at least 11 scientific papers published since 2008.^[244] They reported that he received a total of \$1.25m from ExxonMobil, Southern Company, the American Petroleum Institute and a foundation run by the Koch brothers.^[245] Charles R. Alcock, director of the Harvard–Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, where Soon was based, said that allowing funders of Soon's work to prohibit disclosure of funding sources was a mistake, which will not be permitted in future grant agreements.^[246]

Lewandowsky reports that by asking four questions about the free market he is able to predict with "67% "confidence" (that is, variance)" an individual's attitudes towards climate change.^[169]

Public sector

The Republican Party in the United States is unique in denying anthropogenic climate change among conservative political parties across the Western world.^{[248][249]} In 1994, according to a leaked memo, the Republican strategist Frank Luntz advised members of the Republican Party, with regard to climate change, that "you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue" and "challenge the science" by "recruiting experts who are sympathetic to your view."^[233] (In 2006, Luntz said he still believes "back [in] '97, '98, the science was uncertain", but he now agrees with the scientific consensus.)^[250] From 2008 to 2017, the Republican Party went from "debating how to combat human-caused climate change to arguing that it does not exist," according to *The New York Times*.^[251] In 2011, "more than half of the Republicans in the House and three-quarters of

In California during its 2020 wildfires

It'll start getting cooler, you just watch. ...
I don't think science knows, actually.

—U.S. President Donald Trump
September 13, 2020^[247]

Republican senators" said "that the threat of global warming, as a human-made and highly threatening phenomenon, is at best an exaggeration and at worst an utter "hoax"" according to Judith Warner writing in *The New York Times Magazine*.^[252] In 2014, more than 55% of congressional Republicans were climate change deniers, according to NBC News.^{[253][254]} According to PolitiFact in May 2014, Jerry Brown's statement that 'virtually no Republican' in Washington accepts climate change science, was "mostly true"; PolitiFact counted "eight out of 278, or about 3 percent" of Republican members of Congress who "accept the prevailing scientific conclusion that global warming is both real and man-made."^{[255][256]}

In 2005, *The New York Times* reported that Philip Cooney, former fossil fuel lobbyist and "climate team leader" at the American Petroleum Institute and President George W. Bush's chief of staff of the Council on Environmental Quality, had "repeatedly edited government climate reports in ways that play down links between such emissions and global warming, according to internal documents."^[257] Sharon Begley reported in *Newsweek* that Cooney "edited a 2002 report on climate science by sprinkling it with phrases such as 'lack of understanding' and 'considerable uncertainty.'" Cooney reportedly removed an entire section on climate in one report, whereupon another lobbyist sent him a fax saying "You are doing a great job."^[233] Cooney announced his resignation two days after the story of his tampering with scientific reports broke,^[258] but a few days later it was announced that Cooney would take up a position with ExxonMobil.^[259]

United States Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, in a 19 June 2017 interview with CNBC, acknowledged the existence of climate change and impact from humans, but said that he did not agree with the idea that carbon dioxide was the primary driver of global warming pointing instead to "the ocean waters and this environment that we live in".^[260] The American Meteorological Society responded in a letter to Perry saying that it is "critically important that you understand that emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are the primary cause", pointing to conclusions of scientists worldwide.^[261]

Republican Jim Bridenstine, the first elected politician to serve as NASA administrator, had previously stated that global temperatures were not rising. A month after the Senate confirmed his NASA position in April 2018, he acknowledged that human emissions of greenhouse gases are raising global temperatures.^{[262][263]}

Although climate denial positions have started to shift among the Republican Party leadership towards an acknowledgement that "the climate is changing", a 2019 report describes the climate right as "fragmented and underfunded."^[264]

Acknowledgement of climate change by politicians, while expressing uncertainty as to how much climate change can be attributed to human activity, has been described as a new form of climate denial, and "a reliable tool to manipulate public perception of climate change and stall political action."^{[265][266]}

Schools

According to documents leaked in February 2012, The Heartland Institute is developing a curriculum for use in schools which frames climate change as a scientific controversy.^{[267][268][269]} In 2017, Glenn Branch, Deputy Director of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), wrote that "the Heartland Institute is continuing to inflict its climate change denial literature on science teachers across the country". He also described how some science teachers were reacting to Heartland's mailings: "Fortunately, the Heartland mailing continues to be greeted with skepticism and dismissed with scorn."^[270] The NCSE has prepared Classroom Resources in response to Heartland and other anti-science threats.^[271]

Branch also referred to an article by ClimateFeedback.org^[270] which reviewed an unsolicited Heartland booklet, entitled "Why Scientists Disagree about Global Warming", which was sent to science teachers in the United States. Their intention was to send it to "more than 200,000 K-12 teachers". Each significant claim was rated for accuracy by scientists who were experts on that topic. Overall, they scored the accuracy of the booklet with an "F": "it could hardly score lower", and "the "Key Findings" section are incorrect, misleading, based on flawed logic, or simply factually inaccurate."^[272]

Effect

Manufactured uncertainty over climate change, the fundamental strategy of climate change denial, has been very effective, particularly in the US. It has contributed to low levels of public concern and to government inaction worldwide.^{[20][273]} An Angus Reid poll released in 2010 indicates that global warming skepticism in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom has been rising.^{[274][275]} There may be multiple causes of this trend, including a focus on economic rather than environmental issues, and a negative perception of the United Nations and its role in discussing climate change.^[276]

Another cause may be weariness from overexposure to the topic: secondary polls suggest that the public may have been discouraged by extremism when discussing the topic,^[274] while other polls show 54% of U.S. voters believe that "the news media make global warming appear worse than it really is."^[277] A poll in 2009 regarding the issue of whether "some scientists have falsified research data to support their own theories and beliefs about global warming" showed that 59% of Americans believed it "at least somewhat likely", with 35% believing it was "very likely".^[276]

According to Tim Wirth, "They patterned what they did after the tobacco industry. [...] Both figured, sow enough doubt, call the science uncertain and in dispute. That's had a huge impact on both the public and Congress."^[72] This approach has been propagated by the US media, presenting a false balance between climate science and climate skeptics.^[278] *Newsweek* reports that the majority of Europe and Japan accept the consensus on scientific climate change, but only one third of Americans considered human activity to play a major role in climate change in 2006; 64% believed that scientists disagreed about it "a lot."^[279] A 2007 *Newsweek* poll found these numbers were declining, although majorities of Americans still believed that scientists were uncertain about climate change and its causes.^[280] Rush Holt wrote a piece for *Science*, which appeared in *Newsweek*:

... for more than two decades scientists have been issuing warnings that the release of greenhouse gases, principally carbon dioxide (CO₂), is probably altering Earth's climate in ways that will be expensive and even deadly. The American public yawned and bought bigger cars. Statements by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Geophysical Union, American Meteorological Society, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and others underscored the warnings and called for new government policies to deal with climate change. Politicians, presented with noisy statistics, shrugged, said there is too much doubt among scientists, and did nothing.^[281]

Deliberate attempts by the Western Fuels Association "to confuse the public" have succeeded in their objectives. This has been "exacerbated by media treatment of the climate issue". According to a Pew poll in 2012, 57% of the US public are unaware of, or outright reject, the scientific consensus on climate change.^[282] Some organizations promoting climate change denial have asserted that scientists are increasingly rejecting climate change, but this notion is contradicted by research showing that 97% of published papers endorse the scientific consensus, and that percentage is increasing with time.^[282]

Social psychologist Craig Foster compares climate change denialists to flat-earth believers and the reaction to the latter by the scientific community. Foster states, "the potential and kinetic energy devoted to counter the flat-earth movement is wasteful and misguided... I don't understand why anybody would worry about the flat-earth gnat while facing the climate change mammoth... Climate change denial does not require belief. It only requires neglect."^[283]

In 2016, Aaron McCright argued that anti-environmentalism—and climate change denial specifically—has expanded to a point in the US where it has now become "a central tenet of the current conservative and Republican identity."^[284]

On the other hand, global oil companies have begun to acknowledge the existence of climate change and its risks.^[285] Still top oil firms are spending millions lobbying to delay, weaken or block policies to tackle climate change.^[286]

Manufactured climate change denial is also influencing how scientific knowledge is communicated to the public. According to climate scientist Michael E. Mann, "...universities and scientific societies and organizations, publishers, etc.—are too often risk averse when it comes to defending and communicating science that is perceived as threatening by powerful interests..."^{[287][288]}

See also

- Climate change
- Tobacco industry playbook
- Agnotology
- Anti-environmentalism
- Carbon bubble
- Effects of global warming
- Environmental skepticism
- Information Council on the Environment
- International Conference on Climate Change
- Climate alarmist
- Motivated reasoning
- Renewable energy commercialization: Non-technical barriers to acceptance
- Simmelweis reflex
- Films:
 - *Climate Change Denial Disorder*, satirical parody film about a fictional disease
 - *Before the Flood*, documenting climate change denial and lobbying processes

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 - who deny that significant climate change is occurring
 - who ... deny that human activity is significantly responsible
 - who ... deny the scientific evidence about its significant effects on the world and our society ...
 - who ... deny that humans can take significant actions to reduce or mitigate its impact.
 Of these varieties of climate change denial, the most visible are the first and the second."
5. "Why Is It Called Denial?" (<http://ncse.com/climate/denial/why-is-it-called-denial>). National Center for Science Education. 15 January 2016. Retrieved 21 January 2016.
6. Powell 2012, pp. 170–173: "Anatomy of Denial—Global warming deniers.... throw up a succession of claims, and fall back from one line of defense to the next as scientists refute each one in turn. Then they start over:
 'The earth is not warming.'
 'All right, it is warming but the Sun is the cause.'
 'Well then, humans are the cause, but it doesn't matter, because it warming will do no harm. More carbon dioxide will actually be beneficial. More crops will grow.'
 'Admittedly, global warming could turn out to be harmful, but we can do nothing about it.'
 'Sure, we could do something about global warming, but the cost would be too great. We have more pressing problems here and now, like AIDS and poverty.'
 'We might be able to afford to do something to address global warming some-day, but we need to wait for sound science, new technologies, and geoengineering.'
 'The earth is not warming. Global warming ended in 1998; it was never a crisis.'
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9. Washington 2013, p. 2: "Many climate change deniers call themselves climate 'skeptics'...However, refusing to accept the overwhelming 'preponderance of evidence' is not skepticism, it is *denial* and should be called by its true name... The use of the term 'climate skeptic' is a distortion of reality... Skepticism is healthy in both science and society; denial is not."

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11. **National Center for Science Education 2012**: "Climate change denial is most conspicuous when it is explicit, as it is in controversies over climate education. The idea of implicit (or "implicatory") denial, however, is increasingly discussed among those who study the controversies over climate change. Implicit denial occurs when people who accept the scientific community's consensus on the answers to the central questions of climate change on the intellectual level fail to come to terms with it or to translate their acceptance into action. Such people are in denial, so to speak, about climate change."
12. **Dunlap 2013**, pp. 691–698: "There is debate over which term is most appropriate... Those involved in challenging climate science label themselves "skeptics"... Yet skepticism is...a common characteristic of scientists, making it inappropriate to allow those who deny AGW to don the mantle of skeptics...It seems best to think of skepticism-denial as a continuum, with some individuals (and interest groups) holding a skeptical view of AGW...and others in complete denial"
13. **Timmer 2014**
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15. **Jacques, Dunlap & Freeman 2008**, p. 351: "Conservative think tanks...and their backers launched a full-scale counter-movement... We suggest that this counter-movement has been central to the reversal of US support for environmental protection, both domestically and internationally. Its major tactic has been disputing the seriousness of environmental problems and undermining environmental science by promoting what we term 'environmental scepticism.'"
16. **Vaidyanathan 2014**.
17. **Dunlap 2013**, pp. 691–698: "From the outset, there has been an organized "**disinformation**" campaign... to "manufacture uncertainty" over AGW ... especially by attacking climate science and scientists ... waged by a loose coalition of industrial (especially fossil fuels) interests and conservative foundations and think tanks ... often assisted by a small number of 'contrarian scientists. ... greatly aided by conservative media and politicians ... and more recently by a bevy of skeptical bloggers. This 'denial machine' has played a crucial role in generating skepticism toward AGW among laypeople and policymakers "
18. **Begley 2007**: "ICE and the Global Climate Coalition lobbied hard against a global treaty to curb greenhouse gases, and were joined by a central cog in the denial machine: the George C. Marshall Institute, a conservative think tank. the denial machine—think tanks linking up with like-minded, contrarian researchers"
19. **Dunlap 2013**: "Even though climate science has now firmly established that global warming is occurring, that human activities contribute to this warming... a significant portion of the American public remains ambivalent or unconcerned, and many policymakers (especially in the United States) deny the necessity of taking steps to reduce carbon emissions...From the outset, there has been an organized "disinformation" campaign... to generate skepticism and denial concerning AGW."
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32. National Center for Science Education 2012: "There is debate...about how to refer to the positions that reject, and to the people who doubt or deny, the scientific community's consensus on...climate change. Many such people prefer to call themselves skeptics and describe their position as climate change skepticism. Their opponents, however, often prefer to call such people climate change deniers and to describe their position as climate change denial... "Denial" is the term preferred even by many deniers."

33. **Nerlich 2010**, pp. 419, 437: "Climate scepticism in the sense of climate denialism or contrarianism is not a new phenomenon, but it has recently been very much in the media spotlight. Such disagreements are not new but the emails provided climate sceptics, in the sense of deniers or contrarians, with a golden opportunity to mount a sustained effort aimed at demonstrating the legitimacy of their views. This allowed them to question climate science and climate policies based on it and to promote political inaction and inertia. footnote 1. I shall use "climate sceptics" here in the sense of "climate deniers", although there are obvious differences between scepticism and denial (see Shermer, 2010; Kemp, et al., 2010). However, "climate sceptic" and "climate scepticism" were commonly used during the "climategate" debate as meaning "climate denier"."
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36. **Gelbspan 1998**, pp. 69–70, 246 At 16 November 1995 **United States House Science Subcommittee on Energy** hearing, **Pat Michaels** testified of "a small minority" opposing the IPCC assessment, and said "that the so-called skeptics were right".
37. **Antilla 2005**, p. footnote 5
38. **Gelbspan 1995**
39. **Painter & Ashe 2012**: "The term 'climate scepticism' emerged in around 1995, the year journalist Ross Gelbspan authored perhaps the first book focusing directly on what would retrospectively be understood as climate scepticism."
40. **Gelbspan 1998** p. 3 "But some individuals do not want the public to know about the immediacy and extent of the climate threat. They have been waging a persistent campaign of denial and suppression that has been lamentably effective."
pp. 33–34 "The campaign to keep the climate change off the public agenda involves more than the undisclosed funding of these 'greenhouse skeptics.' In their efforts to challenge the consensus scientific view....."
p. 35 "If the climate skeptics have succeeded in confusing the general public, their influence on decision makers has been, if anything, even more effective"
p. 173 "pervasive denial of global warming"
41. **CBC News: the fifth estate 2007**: "*The Denial Machine* investigates the roots of the campaign to negate the science and the threat of global warming. It tracks the activities of a group of scientists, some of whom previously consulted for Big Tobacco, and who are now receiving donations from major coal and oil companies. ... The documentary shows how fossil fuel corporations have kept the global warming debate alive long after most scientists believed that global warming was real and had potentially catastrophic consequences. ... *The Denial Machine* also explores how the arguments supported by oil companies were adopted by policy makers in both Canada and the U.S. and helped form government policy."
42. **Orlóci 2008**, pp. 86, 97: "The ideological justification for this came from the sceptics (e.g., Lomborg 2001a,b) and from the industrial 'denial machine'. ... CBC Television Fifth Estate, 15 November 2006, *The Climate Denial Machine*, Canada.

43. **Begley 2007**: "If you think those who have long challenged the mainstream scientific findings about global warming recognize that the game is over, think again. ... outside Hollywood, Manhattan and other habitats of the chattering classes, the denial machine is running at full throttle—and continuing to shape both government policy and public opinion. Since the late 1980s, this well-coordinated, well-funded campaign by contrarian scientists, free-market think tanks and industry has created a paralyzing fog of doubt around climate change. Through advertisements, op-eds, lobbying and media attention, greenhouse doubters (they hate being called deniers) argued first that the world is not warming; measurements indicating otherwise are flawed, they said. Then they claimed that any warming is natural, not caused by human activities. Now they contend that the looming warming will be minuscule and harmless. 'They patterned what they did after the tobacco industry,' says former senator Tim Wirth"
44. **Norgaard, Kari** (2011). *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. pp. 1–4. **ISBN 978-0-262-01544-8**.
45. **Mann, Michael E.** (2013). *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars: Dispatches from the Front Lines*. Columbia University Press. **ISBN 978-0-231-52638-8**. "Skepticism plays an essential role in the progress of science... Yet...in the context of the climate change denial movement... the term *skeptic* has often been co-opted to describe those who simply deny, rather than appraise critically."
46. **Jenkins 2015**, p. 229: "many who deny the consensus on climate change are not really skeptics but rather contrarians who practice "a kind of one-sided skepticism that entails simply rejecting evidence that challenges one's preconceptions" (Mann 2012:26)"
47. **National Center for Science Education 2012**: "Recognizing that no terminological choice is entirely unproblematic, NCSE — in common with a number of scholarly and journalistic observers of the social controversies surrounding climate change — opts to use the terms "climate change deniers" and "climate change denial. The terms are intended descriptively, not in any pejorative sense, and are used for the sake of brevity and consistency with a well-established usage in the scholarly and journalistic literature."
48. **Weart 2015 footnote 136a** (http://www.aip.org/history/climate/public2.htm#N_136a_): "I do not mean to use the term 'denier' pejoratively—it has been accepted by some of the group as a self-description — but simply to designate those who deny any likelihood of future danger from anthropogenic global warming."
49. **Anderegg, William R. L.**; anderegg@stanford.edu; **Prall, James W.**; **Harold, Jacob** (19 July 2010). "Reply to O'Neill and Boykoff: Objective classification of climate experts" (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2947900>). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. **107** (39): E152. Bibcode:2010PNAS..107E.152A (<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2010PNAS..107E.152A>). doi:10.1073/pnas.1010824107 (<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1010824107>). ISSN 0027-8424 (<http://www.worldcat.org/issn/0027-8424>). PMC 2947900 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2947900>).
50. **Gillis, Justin** (12 February 2015). "Verbal Warming: Labels in the Climate Debate" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/science/earth/in-climate-change-whats-in-a-name.html>). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 30 June 2015.
51. **Timmer 2014**: "some of the people who deserve that label are offended by it, thinking it somehow lumps them in with Holocaust deniers. But that in its own way is a form of denial; the word came into use before the Holocaust, and... denialism has been used as a label for people who refuse to accept the evidence for all sorts of things: HIV causing AIDS, vaccines being safe, etc."
52. **Boslough 2014**
53. "NY Times Public Editor: We're "Moving In A Good Direction" On Properly Describing Climate Deniers" (<http://mediamatters.org/blog/2015/06/22/ny-times-public-editor-were-moving-in-a-good-di/204089>). *Media Matters for America*. 22 June 2015. Retrieved 2 July 2015.
54. "AP: Deniers Are Not Skeptics!" (https://act.forecastthefacts.org/sign/ap_deniers_skeptics/). *Oil Change U.S.* Washington, D.C. Retrieved 22 May 2019.

55. Colford, Paul (22 September 2015). "An addition to AP Stylebook entry on global warming" (<https://blog.ap.org/announcements/an-addition-to-ap-stylebook-entry-on-global-warming>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 7 October 2019.
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57. Carrington, Damian (17 May 2019). "Why the Guardian is changing the language it uses about the environment" (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/may/17/why-the-guardian-is-changing-the-language-it-uses-about-the-environment>). *The Guardian*. Retrieved 22 May 2019.
58. Conway & Oreskes 2010, p. 170: "The doubts and confusion of the American people are particularly peculiar when put into historical perspective"
59. Powell 2012, pp. 36–39
60. Weart 2015a: "From the late 1940s into the 1960s, many of the papers cited in these essays carried a thought-provoking footnote: "This work was supported by the Office of Naval Research."
61. Weart 2007
62. Weart 2015a: quote p. viii in the Foreword by Climate Research Board chair Verner E. Suomi
63. Charney, Jule Gregory (23 July 1979). *Carbon Dioxide and Climate: A Scientific Assessment, Report of an Ad Hoc Study Group on Carbon Dioxide and Climate* (<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12181/carbon-dioxide-and-climate-a-scientific-assessment>). Woods Hole, Massachusetts: National Research Council. doi:10.17226/12181 (<https://doi.org/10.17226/12181>). ISBN 978-0-309-11910-8. Retrieved 22 September 2017.
64. "US firms knew about global warming in 1968 – what about Australia?" (<https://theconversation.com/us-firms-knew-about-global-warming-in-1968-what-about-australia-57878>). *The Conversation*. 2016.
65. Young, Élan (22 November 2019). "Coal Knew, Too, A Newly Unearthed Journal from 1966 Shows the Coal Industry, Like the Oil Industry, Was Long Aware of the Threat of Climate Change" (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/coal-industry-climate-change_n_5dd6bbebe4b0e29d7280984f). *Huffington Post*.
66. Weart 2015a: Global Warming Becomes a Political Issue (1980–1983) (<https://www.aip.org/history/climate/Govt.htm#S7>); "In 1981, Ronald Reagan took the presidency with an administration that openly scorned their concerns. He brought with him a backlash that had been building against the environmental movement. Many conservatives denied nearly every environmental worry, global warming included. They lumped all such concerns together as the rants of business-hating liberals, a Trojan Horse for government regulation." For details, see Money for Keeling: Monitoring CO2 (https://www.aip.org/history/climate/Kfunds.htm#M_29_)
67. Weart, Spencer R. (30 June 2009). *The Discovery of Global Warming* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=qX8yCpETS-IC&pg=PA141>). Harvard University Press. ISBN 978-0-674-04497-5.
68. Weart 2015: Breaking into Politics (1980–1988) (https://www.aip.org/history/climate/public2.htm#L_0400), "Sherwood Idso, who published arguments that greenhouse gas emissions would not warm the Earth or bring any other harm to the climate. Better still, by fertilizing crops, the increase of CO2 would bring tremendous benefits."
69. Hansen, James (1988). "Statement of Dr. James Hansen, director, NASA Goddard Institute for space studies" (https://web.archive.org/web/20110822055700/http://climatechange.procon.org/sourcefiles/1988_Hansen_Senate_Testimony.pdf) (PDF). *Climate Change ProCon.org*. Archived from the original (http://climatechange.procon.org/sourcefiles/1988_Hansen_Senate_Testimony.pdf) (PDF) on 22 August 2011. Retrieved 30 November 2015.

70. **Weart 2015** The Summer of 1988 (<https://www.aip.org/history/climate/public2.htm#S1988>): "A new breed of interdisciplinary studies was showing that even a few degrees of warming might have harsh consequences, both for fragile natural ecosystems and for certain agricultural systems and other human endeavours The timing was right, and the media leaped on the story. Hansen's statements, especially that severe warming was likely within the next 50 years, got on the front pages of newspapers and were featured in television news and radio talk shows.... The story grew as the summer of 1988 wore on. Reporters descended unexpectedly upon an international conference of scientists held in Toronto at the end of June. Their stories prominently reported how the world's leading climate scientists declared that atmospheric changes were already causing harm, and might cause much more; the scientists called for vigorous government action to restrict greenhouse gases."
71. **Weart 2015**: "Environmentalist organizations continued... lobbying and advertising efforts to argue for restrictions on emissions. The environmentalists were opposed and greatly outspent, by industries that produced or relied on fossil fuels. Industry groups not only mounted a sustained and professional public relations effort but also channeled considerable sums of money to individual scientists and small conservative organizations and publications that denied any need to act against global warming."
72. **Begley 2007**: "Through advertisements, op-eds, lobbying and media attention, greenhouse doubters (they hate being called deniers) argued first that the world is not warming... Then they claimed that any warming is natural... Now they contend that the looming warming will be minuscule and harmless. 'They patterned what they did after the tobacco industry,' says former senator Tim Wirth... 'Both figured, sow enough doubt, call the science uncertain and in dispute. That's had a huge impact on both the public and Congress.'"
73. **Weart 2015**: "The technical criticism most widely noted in the press came in several brief "reports"—not scientific papers in the usual sense—published between 1989 and 1992 by the conservative George C. Marshall Institute. The anonymously authored pamphlets ... [claimed] that proposed government regulation would be "extraordinarily costly to the U.S. economy," they insisted it would be unwise to act on the basis of the existing global warming theories ... In 1989 some of the biggest corporations in the petroleum, automotive, and other industries created a Global Climate Coalition, whose mission was to disparage every call for action against global warming."
74. **Conway & Oreskes 2010**: "Millions of pages of documents released during tobacco litigation ... show the crucial role that scientists played in sowing doubt about the links between smoking and health risks. These documents ... also show that the same strategy was applied not only to global warming, but to a laundry list of environmental and health concerns, including asbestos, secondhand smoke, acid rain, and the ozone hole."
75. **Weart 2015**: "Scientists noticed something that the public largely overlooked: the most outspoken scientific critiques of global warming predictions did not appear in the standard peer-reviewed scientific publications. The critiques tended to appear in venues funded by industrial groups, or in conservative media like the Wall Street Journal."
76. **Conway & Oreskes 2010**
77. **Weart 2011**, p. 46: "Scientists continually test their beliefs, seeking out all possible contrary arguments and evidence, and finally publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals, where further attempts at refutation are encouraged. But the small group of scientists who opposed the consensus on warming proceeded in the manner of lawyers, considering nothing that would not bolster their case, and publishing mostly in pamphlets, books, and newspapers supported by conservative interests. At some point they were no longer skeptics—people who would try to see every side of a case—but deniers, that is, people whose only interest was in casting doubt upon what other scientists agreed was true."
78. **Weart 2011**, pp. 47: "As the deniers found ever less scientific ground to stand on, they turned to political arguments. Some of these policy arguments were straightforward, raising serious questions about the efficacy and expense of proposed carbon taxes and emission-regulation schemes. But leading deniers also resorted to ad hominem tactics... On each side, some people were coming to believe that they faced a dishonest conspiracy, driven by ideological bias and naked self-interest"

79. Jacques, Dunlap & Freeman 2008, pp. 349–385: "Environmental skepticism encompasses several themes, but denial of the authenticity of environmental problems, particularly problems such as biodiversity loss or climate change that threaten ecological sustainability, is its defining feature"
80. (Hamilton 2011, pp. 104–106): "the tactics, personnel, and organisations mobilised to serve the interests of the tobacco lobby in the 1980s were seamlessly transferred to serve the interests of the fossil-fuel lobby in the 1990s. Frederick Seitz ... the task of the climate sceptics in the think tanks and PR companies hired by fossil fuel companies was to engage in 'consciousness lowering activities', to 'de-problematise' global warming by describing it as a form of politically driven panicmongering." For the tobacco company memo, see "Original "Doubt is our product..." memo" (<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/wjh13f00>). University of California, San Francisco. 21 August 1969. Retrieved 19 March 2010.
81. Conway & Oreskes 2010, p. 105: "As recently as 2007, the George Marshall Institute continued to insist that the damages associated with acid rain were always "largely hypothetical," and that "further scientific investigation revealed that most of them were not in fact occurring." The Institute cited no studies to support this extraordinary claim."
82. Weart 2015: "Public support for environmental concerns, in general, seems to have waned after 1988."
83. Weart 2015: "A study of American media found that in 1987 most items that mentioned the greenhouse effect had been feature stories about the science, whereas in 1988 the majority of the stories addressed the politics of the controversy. It was not that the number of science stories declined, but rather that as media coverage doubled and redoubled, the additional stories moved into social and political areas ... Before 1988, the journalists had drawn chiefly on scientists for their information, but afterward, they relied chiefly on sources who were identified with political positions or special interest groups."
84. Wald, Matthew L. (8 July 1991). "Pro-Coal Ad Campaign Disputes Warming Idea" (<https://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/08/business/pro-coal-ad-campaign-disputes-warming-idea.html>). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 1 March 2013.
85. Begley 2007: "Individual companies and industry associations—representing petroleum, steel, autos, and utilities, for instance—formed lobbying groups ... [the Information Council on the Environment's] game plan called for enlisting greenhouse doubters to "reposition global warming as theory rather than fact," and to sow doubt about climate research just as cigarette makers had about smoking research ... The coal industry's Western Fuels Association paid Michaels to produce a newsletter called World Climate Report, which has regularly trashed mainstream climate science."
86. Cox, Robert (2009). *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Sage. pp. 311–312. "to recruit a cadre of scientists who share the industry's views of climate science and to train them in public relations so they can help convince journalists, politicians and the public that the risk of global warming is too uncertain to justify controls on greenhouse gases"
87. Cushman, John, "Industrial Group Plans to Battle Climate Treaty" (<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/04/26/us/industrial-group-plans-to-battle-climate-treaty.html?scp=2&sq=climate%20science%20and%20to%20train%20them%20&st=cse&pagewanted=print>), *The New York Times*, 25 April 1998. Retrieved 10 March 2010.
88. Gelbspan 1998, pp. 3, 35, 46, 197.
89. Milburn, Michael A.; Conrad, Sheree D. (January 1998). *The Politics of Denial* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=ntVE1n3g51wC&pg=PA216>). MIT Press. pp. 216–. ISBN 978-0-262-63184-6. "Here again, as in the case of ozone depletion, economic and psychological forces are operating to produce a level of denial that threatens future generations."
90. Painter & Ashe 2012: "Academics took note of the discourse when they began to analyse media representations of climate change knowledge and its effect on public perceptions and policy-making, but in the 1990s, they did not yet focus on it as a coherent and defined phenomenon. This changed in the 2000s when McCright and Dunlap played an important role in deepening the concept of climate skepticism."

91. **Painter & Ashe 2012**: "McCright and Dunlap played an important role in deepening the concept of climate skepticism. Examining what they termed a 'conservative countermovement' to undermine climate change policy...McCright and Dunlap went beyond the study of media representations of climate change knowledge to give a coherent picture of the movement behind climate skepticism in the US."
92. **Jacques, Dunlap & Freeman 2008**, pp. 349–385
93. **BloombergBusiness (2015)**. "Unearthing America's Deep Network of Climate Change Deniers" (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-30/unearthing-america-s-deep-network-of-climate-change-deniers>).
94. **Farrell, Justin (2015)**. "Network structure and influence of the climate change counter-movement". *Nature Climate Change*. **6** (4): 370–374. Bibcode:2016NatCC...6..370F (<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2016NatCC...6..370F>). doi:10.1038/nclimate2875 (<https://doi.org/10.1038%2Fclimate2875>). S2CID 18207833 (<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:18207833>).
95. **Gelbspan, Ross (22 July 2004)**. "An excerpt from Boiling Point by Ross Gelbspan" (<http://grist.org/article/gelbspan-boiling/>). *Grist*. Retrieved 1 June 2015.
96. **Wayne A. White (18 October 2012)**. *Biosequestration and Ecological Diversity: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and Environmental Degradation* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=uif0DF0rFwMC&pg=PA206>). CRC Press. p. 206. ISBN 978-1-4398-5363-4. "Climate change denial and discrediting climate science have become pivotal to the antiregulatory cause of neoliberals."
97. **Antilla 2005**: "At the centre of this climate backlash is a group of dissident scientists. The number of these climate skeptics is greater in the US than in any other country. Although the peer-reviewed scientific literature agrees with the IPCC, within the media—wherefrom the majority of adults in the US are informed about science—claims that are dismissive of anthropogenic climate change are prominently featured."
98. **Jenkins 2015**, p. 243: "the community of climate change contrarians also includes a host of amateurs, from talk radio hosts to newspaper columnists to bloggers. In particular, the tremendous growth of the Internet has given sustenance to the contrarian movement"
99. **Nuccitelli, Dana (2015)**. "The Paris agreement signals that deniers have lost the climate wars" (<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2015/dec/14/the-paris-agreement-signals-that-deniers-have-lost-the-climate-wars>). *The Guardian*.
00. **Davenport, Coral (12 December 2015)**. "Nations Approve Landmark Climate Accord in Paris" (https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/europe/climate-change-accord-paris.html?_r=0). *The New York Times*.
01. **Watts, Jonathan (15 November 2018)**. "Brazil's new foreign minister believes climate change is a Marxist plot" (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/15/brazil-foreign-minister-ernesto-araujo-climate-change-marxist-plot>). *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0261-3077>). Retrieved 25 January 2019.
02. **Escobar, Herton (22 January 2019)**. "Brazil's new president has scientists worried. Here's why" (<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/01/brazil-s-new-president-has-scientists-worried-here-s-why>). *Science / AAAS*. Retrieved 25 January 2019.
03. **Readfearn, Graham (5 March 2015)**. "Doubt over climate science is a product with an industry behind it" (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/planet-oz/2015/mar/05/doubt-over-climate-science-is-a-product-with-an-industry-behind-it>). *The Guardian*.
04. **Washington, Haydn; Cook, John (2011)**. *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=qbVclC8w6w4C&q=climate+change+denial+industry&pg=PA108>). Earthscan. p. 108. ISBN 978-1-84971-335-1.
05. **The New York Times, 12 December 2015**, "Nations Approve Landmark Climate Accord in Paris" (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/europe/climate-change-accord-paris.html?_r=0)

06. "The Pentagon & Climate Change: How Deniers Put National Security at Risk" (<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-pentagon-climate-change-how-climate-deniers-put-national-security-at-risk-20150212>). *Rolling Stone*. 2015.
07. BloombergBusiness (2015). "Unearthing America's Deep Network of Climate Change Deniers" (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-30/unearthing-america-s-deep-network-of-climate-change-deniers>).
08. Justin Farrell (2015). "Network structure and influence of the climate change counter-movement". *Nature Climate Change*. **6** (4): 370–374. Bibcode:2016NatCC...6..370F (<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2016NatCC...6..370F>). doi:10.1038/nclimate2875 (<https://doi.org/10.1038%2Fncclimate2875>). S2CID 18207833 (<https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:18207833>).
09. Pilkington, Ed (14 November 2013). "Facebook and Microsoft help fund rightwing lobby network, report finds" (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/14/facebook-microsoft-rightwing-lobby-network-spj>). *The Guardian*. Retrieved 17 November 2013.
10. "After Brexit, Clexit" (<http://clexit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/clexit.pdf>) (PDF). *Clexit*. 1 August 2016. Retrieved 5 September 2018.
11. "Clexit now comprises 190 members from 26 countries" (<http://clexit.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/clexit-members.pdf>) (PDF). *Clexit*. 2016. Retrieved 5 September 2018.
12. Nuccitelli, Dana (8 August 2016). "Rejection of experts spreads from Brexit to climate change with 'Clexit' - Dana Nuccitelli" (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2016/aug/08/rejection-of-experts-spreads-from-brexit-to-climate-change-with-clexit>). *the Guardian*. Retrieved 15 April 2018.
13. "Climate Science Special Report: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume I - Chapter 3: Detection and Attribution of Climate Change" (<https://science2017.globalchange.gov/chapter/3/>). *science2017.globalchange.gov*. U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP). 2017. Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190923190450/https://science2017.globalchange.gov/chapter/3/>) from the original on 23 September 2019. Adapted directly from Fig. 3.3.
14. Rennie 2009: "Claim 1: Anthropogenic CO2 can't be changing climate, because CO2 is only a trace gas in the atmosphere and the amount produced by humans is dwarfed by the amount from volcanoes and other natural sources. Water vapor is by far the most important greenhouse gas, so changes in CO2 are irrelevant."
15. Rennie 2009: "According to the U.S. Geological Survey, anthropogenic CO2 amounts to about 30 billion tons annually—more than 130 times as much as volcanoes produce."
16. Archer, David (6 April 2005). "Water vapour: feedback or forcing?" (<http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2005/04/water-vapour-feedback-or-forcing/>). *RealClimate*. Retrieved 5 September 2018.
17. Rennie 2009: "from Arrhenius on, climatologists have incorporated water vapor into their models. In fact, water vapor is why rising CO2 has such a big effect on climate... Nevertheless, within this dynamic, the CO2 remains the main driver... of the greenhouse effect."
18. Rennie 2009: "Claim 3: Global warming stopped a decade ago; Earth has been cooling since then."
19. Rennie 2009: "Claim 4: The sun or cosmic rays are much more likely to be the real causes of global warming. After all, Mars is warming up, too."
20. Rennie 2009: "But in defiance of the naysayers who want to chalk the recent warming up to natural cycles, there is insufficient evidence that enough extra solar energy is reaching our planet to account for the observed rise in global temperatures."
21. Waldman, Scott (17 May 2018). "Republican lawmaker: Rocks tumbling into ocean causing sea level rise" (<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/05/republican-lawmaker-rocks-tumbling-ocean-causing-sea-level-rise>). *Science*. Retrieved 17 May 2018.
22. Rennie 2009: "Claim 7: Technological fixes, such as inventing energy sources that don't produce CO2 or geoengineering the climate, would be more affordable, prudent ways to address climate change than reducing our carbon footprint."

23. **Rennie 2009**: "Claim 5: Climatologists conspire to hide the truth about global warming by locking away their data. Their so-called "consensus" on global warming is scientifically irrelevant because science isn't settled by popularity.... Claim 6: Climatologists have a vested interest in raising the alarm because it brings them money and prestige."
24. White, Rob (2012). *Climate Change from a Criminological Perspective* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=NgzII7LvUVIC&pg=PA48>). Springer Science & Business Media. p. 49. ISBN 978-1-4614-3640-9. "many Americans, including many American politicians and decision-makers, are increasingly viewing climate change as a "left-wing plot"—part of the "one-world socialist agenda" or a "conspiracy to impose world government and a sweeping redistribution of wealth." Just as Republican Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma proclaimed on the Senate floor that "[g]lobal warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people", many Americans believe that climate change is "a cynical hoax perpetrated by climate scientists... greedy for grants.""
25. Uscinski, Joseph E.; Douglas, Karen; Lewandowsky, Stephan (September 2017). "Climate Change Conspiracy Theories". *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Climate Science*. 1. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.328 (<https://doi.org/10.1093%2Facrefore%2F9780190228620.013.328>). ISBN 9780190228620.
26. **Rennie 2009**: "If there were a massive conspiracy to defraud the world on climate (and to what end?), surely the thousands of e-mails and other files stolen from the University of East Anglia's Climatic Research Unit and distributed by hackers on November 20 would bear proof of it. So far, however, none has emerged. Most of the few statements that critics claim as evidence of malfeasance seem to have more innocent explanations that make sense in the context of scientists conversing privately and informally."
27. Eight major investigations on the leaked emails include: House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/61233/uk-climategate-inquiry-largely-clears.html>) (UK); Independent Climate Change Review (<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/08/science/earth/08climate.html>) (UK); International Science Assessment Panel ("Oxburgh panel") Reed, Sarah (14 April 2010). "Oxburgh Report Clears Controversial Climate Research Unit" (<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2010/04/oxburgh-report-clears-controversial-climate-research-unit>). *Science*. Retrieved 22 September 2017. (UK); Pennsylvania State University (https://web.archive.org/web/20100704031346/http://views.washingtonpost.com/climate-change/post-carbon/2010/07/by_juliet_eilperin_a_pennsylvania.html) first panel Kintisch, Eli (3 February 2010). "Climate Scientist Mann Partially Absolved by Penn State" (<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2010/02/climate-scientist-mann-partially-absolved-penn-state>). *Science*. Retrieved 22 September 2017. and second panel Kintisch, Eli (1 July 2010). "Michael Mann Exonerated as Penn State Inquiry Finds 'No Substance' To Allegations". *Science*. (US); United States Environmental Protection Agency (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-engl-and-essex-10899538>) (US); Department of Commerce (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2011/02/24/science-climategate-noaa.html>) (US); National Science Foundation (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-08-22/climate-change-scientist-cleared-in-u-s-data-altering-inquiry.html>) (US)
28. Anderegg, William R L; Prall, James W.; Harold, Jacob; Schneider, Stephen H. (2010). "Expert credibility in climate change" (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2901439>). *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 107 (27): 12107–9. Bibcode:2010PNAS..10712107A (<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2010PNAS..10712107A>). doi:10.1073/pnas.1003187107 (<https://doi.org/10.1073%2Fpnas.1003187107>). PMC 2901439 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2901439>). PMID 20566872 (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20566872>). "(i) 97–98% of the climate researchers most actively publishing in the field support the tenets of ACC (Anthropogenic Climate Change) outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and (ii) the relative climate expertise and scientific prominence of the researchers unconvinced of ACC are substantially below that of the convinced researchers."
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High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program

The **High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program** (**HAARP**) was initiated as an ionospheric research program jointly funded by the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Navy, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).^[1] It was designed and built by BAE Advanced Technologies. Its original purpose was to analyze the ionosphere and investigate the potential for developing ionospheric enhancement technology for radio communications and surveillance.^[2] As a university-owned facility, HAARP is a high-power, high-frequency transmitter used for study of the ionosphere.

The most prominent instrument at HAARP is the Ionospheric Research Instrument (IRI), a high-power radio frequency transmitter facility operating in the high frequency (HF) band. The IRI is used to temporarily excite a limited area of the ionosphere. Other instruments, such as a VHF and a UHF radar, a fluxgate magnetometer, a digisonde (an ionospheric sounding device), and an induction magnetometer, are used to study the physical processes that occur in the excited region.

Work on the HAARP facility began in 1993. The current working IRI was completed in 2007; its prime contractor was BAE Systems Advanced Technologies.^[1] As of 2008, HAARP had incurred around \$250 million in tax-funded construction and operating costs. In May 2014, it was announced that the HAARP program would be permanently shut down later in the year.^[3] After discussions between the parties, ownership of the facility and its equipment was transferred to the University of Alaska Fairbanks in August 2015.^[4]

HAARP is a target of conspiracy theorists, who claim that it is capable of "weaponizing" weather. Commentators and scientists say that advocates of this theory are uninformed, as claims made fall well outside the abilities of the facility, if not the scope of natural science.^{[5][6]}

High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program Research Station



Established	1993
Field of research	<u>Ionosphere</u>
Location	<u>Gakona, Alaska</u> , <u>United States</u>
Operating agency	<u>University of Alaska Fairbanks</u>
Website	<u>https://www.haarp.alaska.edu/</u>

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History

The High-frequency Active Auroral Research Program began in 1990. Ted Stevens, Republican U.S. senator from Alaska, helped win approval for the facility,^[7] and construction began in 1993.

In early May 2013, HAARP was temporarily shut down, awaiting a change between contractors to operate the facility. In July 2013, HAARP program manager James Keeney said, "Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is expected on site as a client to finish up some research in fall 2013 and winter 2014."^{[8][9]} The temporary shutdown was described as being due to "a contractor regime change." Ahtna, Incorporated, the Alaska Native corporation serving the region of Alaska where the HAARP site is located, was reportedly in talks to take over the facility administration contract from Marsh Creek, LLC.^[10]

In May 2014, the Air Force announced that the HAARP program would be shut down later in 2014.^{[3][11]} While experiments ended in the summer of 2014, the complete shutdown and dismantling of the facility was postponed until at least May 2015.^[12] In mid-August 2015 control of the facility and its equipment was turned over to the University of Alaska Fairbanks, which is making the facilities available for researchers on a pay-per-use basis.^[13]

Project overview

The HAARP project directs a 3.6 MW signal, in the 2.8–10 MHz region of the HF (high-frequency) band, into the ionosphere. The signal may be pulsed or continuous. Effects of the transmission and any recovery period can be examined using associated instrumentation, including VHF and UHF radars, HF receivers, and optical cameras. According to the HAARP team, this will advance the study of basic natural processes that occur in the ionosphere under the natural but much stronger influence of solar interaction. HAARP also enables studies of how the natural ionosphere affects radio signals.



HAARP antenna array

The insights gleaned at HAARP will enable scientists to develop methods to mitigate these effects to improve the reliability or performance of communication and navigation systems which would have a wide range of both civilian and military uses, such as an increased accuracy of GPS navigation and advances in underwater and underground research and applications. This may lead, among other things, to improved methods for submarine communication or an ability to remotely sense and map the mineral content of the terrestrial subsurface, and perhaps

underground complexes, of regions or countries. The current facility lacks range to be used in regions like the oil-rich Middle East, according to one of the researchers involved, but the technology could be put on a mobile platform.^[14]

The project was originally funded by the Office of Naval Research and jointly managed by the ONR and Air Force Research Laboratory, with principal involvement of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Many other US universities and educational institutions were involved in the development of the project and its instruments, namely the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Stanford University, Penn State University (ARL), Boston College, UCLA, Clemson University, Dartmouth College, Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland, College Park, University of Massachusetts Amherst, MIT, Polytechnic Institute of New York University, Virginia Tech and the University of Tulsa. The project's specifications were developed by the universities, who continued to play a major role in the design of future research efforts.

According to HAARP's original management, the project strove for openness, and all activities were logged and publicly available, a practice which continues under the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Scientists without security clearances, even foreign nationals, were routinely allowed on site, which also continues today. HAARP hosts an open house annually, during which time any civilian can tour the entire facility. In addition, scientific results obtained using HAARP are routinely published in major research journals (such as *Geophysical Research Letters* and *Journal of Geophysical Research*), written both by university scientists (American and foreign) and by U.S. Department of Defense research lab scientists.

Research

HAARP's main goal is basic science research in the uppermost portion of the atmosphere, termed the ionosphere. Essentially a transition between the atmosphere and the magnetosphere, the ionosphere is where the atmosphere is thin enough that the sun's X-rays and UV rays can reach it, but thick enough that there are enough molecules present to absorb those rays. Consequently, the ionosphere consists of a rapid increase in density of free electrons, beginning at ≈ 70 km, reaching a peak at ~ 300 km, and then falling off again as the atmosphere disappears entirely by $\sim 1,000$ km. Various aspects of HAARP can study all of the main layers of the ionosphere.

The profile of the ionosphere is highly variable, changing constantly on timescales of minutes, hours, days, seasons, and years. This profile becomes even more complex near Earth's magnetic poles, where the nearly vertical alignment and intensity of earth's magnetic field can cause physical effects like the aurora.

The ionosphere is traditionally very difficult to measure. Balloons cannot reach it because the air is too thin, but satellites cannot orbit there because the air is too thick. Hence, most experiments on the ionosphere give only small pieces of information. HAARP approaches the study of the ionosphere by following in the footsteps of an ionospheric heater called EISCAT near Tromsø, Norway. There, scientists pioneered exploration of the ionosphere by perturbing it with radio waves in the 2–10 MHz range, and studying how the ionosphere reacts. HAARP performs the same functions but with more power and a more flexible and agile HF beam.

Some of the main capabilities of HAARP include:

1. Generating very low frequency (VLF) radio waves by modulated heating of the auroral electrojet, useful because generating VLF waves ordinarily requires gigantic antennas

2. Generating artificial Airglow, which is typically subvisual but routinely detectable. Under certain geophysical conditions and transmitter configurations, it can be bright enough to observe with the unaided eye.^{[15][16]}
3. Generating extremely low frequency (ELF) waves in the 0.1 Hz range. These are next to impossible to produce any other way, because the length of an antenna is dictated by the wavelength of the signal it emits or receives.
4. Generating whistler-mode VLF signals that enter the magnetosphere and propagate to the other hemisphere, interacting with Van Allen radiation belt particles along the way
5. VLF remote sensing of the heated ionosphere

Research at the HAARP has included:

1. Plasma line observations
2. Stimulated electron emission observations
3. Gyro frequency heating research
4. Spread F observations (blurring of ionospheric echoes of radio waves due to irregularities in electron density in the F layer)
5. High-velocity trace runs
6. Airglow observations^[17]
7. Heating induced scintillation observations
8. VLF and ELF generation observations^[18]
9. Radio observations of meteors
10. Polar mesospheric summer echoes (PMSE) have been studied, probing the mesosphere using the IRI as a powerful radar, and with a 28 MHz radar and two VHF radars at 49 MHz and 139 MHz. The presence of multiple radars spanning both HF and VHF bands allows scientists to make comparative measurements that may someday lead to an understanding of the processes that form these elusive phenomena.
11. Research into extraterrestrial HF radar echos: the Lunar Echo experiment (2008).^{[19][20]}
12. Testing of Spread Spectrum Transmitters (2009)
13. Meteor shower impacts on the ionosphere
14. Response and recovery of the ionosphere from solar flares and geomagnetic storms
15. The effect of ionospheric disturbances on GPS satellite signal quality
16. Producing high density plasma clouds in Earth's upper atmosphere^[21]
17. Underground imaging.^[22]

Research conducted at the HAARP facility has allowed the US military to perfect communications with its fleet of submarines by sending radio signals over long distances.^{[23][24]}

Instrumentation and operation

The main instrument at HAARP is the Ionospheric Research Instrument (IRI). This is a high-power, high-frequency phased array radio transmitter with a set of 180 antennas, disposed in an array of 12x15 units that occupy a rectangle of about 30–40 acres (12–16 hectares).^{[25][26]} The IRI is used to temporarily energize a small portion of the ionosphere. The study of these disturbed volumes yields important information for understanding natural ionospheric processes.

During active ionospheric research, the signal generated by the transmitter system is delivered to the antenna array and transmitted in an upward direction. At an altitude between 70 to 350 km (43 to 217 mi) (depending on operating frequency), the signal is partially absorbed in a small volume several tens of kilometers in diameter and a few meters thick over the IRI. The intensity of the HF signal in the ionosphere is less than $3 \mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$, tens of thousands of times less than the Sun's natural electromagnetic radiation reaching the earth and hundreds of times less than even the normal random variations in intensity of the Sun's natural ultraviolet (UV) energy which creates the ionosphere. The small effects that are produced, however, can be observed with the sensitive scientific instruments installed at the HAARP facility, and these observations can provide information about the dynamics of plasmas and insight into the processes of solar-terrestrial interactions.^[27]

Each antenna element consists of a crossed dipole that can be polarized for linear, ordinary mode (O-mode), or extraordinary mode (X-mode) transmission and reception.^{[28][29]} Each part of the two section crossed dipoles is individually fed from a specially designed, custom-built transmitter that operates at very low distortion levels. The effective radiated power (ERP) of the IRI is limited by more than a factor of 10 at its lower operating frequencies. Much of this is due to higher antenna losses and a less efficient antenna pattern.

The IRI can transmit between 2.7 and 10 MHz, a frequency range that lies above the AM radio broadcast band and well below Citizens' Band frequency allocations. However, HAARP is licensed to transmit only in certain segments of this frequency range. When the IRI is transmitting, the bandwidth of the transmitted signal is 100 kHz or less. The IRI can transmit in continuous waves (CW) or in pulses as short as 10 microseconds (μs). CW transmission is generally used for ionospheric modification, while transmission in short pulses frequently repeated is used as a radar system. Researchers can run experiments that use both modes of transmission, first modifying the ionosphere for a predetermined amount of time, then measuring the decay of modification effects with pulsed transmissions.

There are other geophysical instruments for research located at the HAARP facility. Some of them are:

- A fluxgate magnetometer built by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute, available to chart variations in the Earth's magnetic field. Rapid and sharp changes of the magnetic field may indicate a geomagnetic storm.
- A digisonde that can provide ionospheric profiles, allowing scientists to choose appropriate frequencies for IRI operation. The HAARP makes current and historic digisonde information available online.
- An induction magnetometer, provided by the University of Tokyo, that measures the changing geomagnetic field in the Ultra Low Frequency (ULF) range of 0–5 Hz.

The facility is powered by a set of five 2500 kilowatt generators being driven by EMD 20-645-E4 diesel locomotive engines.

Site

The project site (62°23′30″N 145°09′03″W) is north of Gakona, Alaska just west of Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park. An environmental impact statement led to permission for an array of up to 180 antennas to be erected.^[30] HAARP was constructed at the previous site of an over-the-horizon radar (OTH) installation. A large structure, built to house the OTH now houses the HAARP control room, kitchen and offices. Several other small structures house various instruments.

The HAARP site was constructed in three distinct phases:^[31]

1. The **Developmental Prototype** (DP) had 18 antenna elements, organized in three columns by six rows. It was fed with a total of 360 kilowatts (kW) combined transmitter output power. The DP transmitted just enough power for the most basic of ionospheric testing.
2. The **Filled Developmental Prototype** (FDP) had 48 antenna units arrayed in six columns by eight rows, with 960 kW of transmitter power. It was fairly comparable to other ionospheric heating facilities. This was used for a number of successful scientific experiments and ionospheric exploration campaigns over the years.
3. The **Final IRI** (FIRI) is the final build of the IRI. It has 180 antenna units, organized in 15 columns by 12 rows, yielding a theoretical maximum gain of 31 dB. A total of 3.6 MW of transmitter power will feed it, but the power is focused in the upward direction by the geometry of the large phased array of antennas which allow the antennas to work together in controlling the direction. As of March 2007, all the antennas were in place, the final phase was completed and the antenna array was undergoing testing aimed at fine-tuning its performance to comply with safety requirements required by regulatory agencies. The facility officially began full operations in its final status of 3.6 MW transmitter power in the summer of 2007, yielding a maximum effective radiated power (ERP) of 5.1 gigawatts or 97.1 dBW. However, the site typically operates at a fraction of that power due to the lower antenna gain exhibited at frequencies used in standard operation.^[32]

Related facilities

In the United States, there are two related ionospheric heating facilities: the HIPAS, near Fairbanks, Alaska, which was dismantled in 2009, and one at the Arecibo Observatory^[33] in Puerto Rico, which collapsed in 2020. The European Incoherent Scatter Scientific Association (EISCAT) operates an ionospheric heating facility capable of transmitting over 1 GW effective radiated power (ERP), near Tromsø, Norway.^[34] The Sura Ionospheric Heating Facility, in Vasilsursk, Russia, near Nizhniy Novgorod, is capable of transmitting 190 MW ERP.

Conspiracy theories

HAARP is the subject of numerous conspiracy theories. Various individuals have speculated about hidden motivations and capabilities of the project. For example, Rosalie Bertell warned in 1996 about the deployment of HAARP as a military weapon.^[35] Michel Chossudovsky stated in a book published by the Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform that "recent scientific evidence suggests that HAARP is fully operational and has the capability of triggering floods, hurricanes, droughts and earthquakes."^[36] Over time, HAARP has been blamed for generating such catastrophes, as well as thunderstorms, in Iran, Pakistan, Haiti, Turkey, Greece and the Philippines, and even major power outages, the downing of TWA Flight 800, Gulf War syndrome, and chronic fatigue syndrome.^{[6][37][38]}

Allegations include the following:

- Nick Begich Jr., the son of the late U.S. Representative Nick Begich and brother of former U.S. Senator Mark Begich, is the author of *Angels Don't Play This HAARP*. He has claimed that the HAARP facility could trigger earthquakes and turn the upper atmosphere into a giant lens so that "the sky would literally appear to burn." He maintains a website that claims HAARP is a mind control device.^{[39][40]}
- A Russian military journal wrote that ionospheric testing would "trigger a cascade of electrons that could flip Earth's magnetic poles".^[39]
- The Alaska state legislature and the European Parliament held hearings about HAARP, the latter citing environmental concerns.^[41]

- Former Governor of Minnesota, ex-professional wrestler, and documentary maker Jesse Ventura questioned whether the government is using the site to manipulate the weather or to bombard people with mind-controlling radio waves. An Air Force spokeswoman said Ventura made an official request to visit the research station but was rejected. "He and his crew showed up at HAARP anyway and were denied access."^[42]
- Physicist Bernard Eastlund claimed that HAARP includes technology based on his own patents that has the capability to modify weather and neutralize satellites.^[5]
- It has been proposed as a cause of low frequency background hums said to be heard in various locales.^[43]

Two Georgia men arrested on drug charges in November 2016 were reportedly plotting domestic terrorism based on conspiracy theories about HAARP. The Coffee County Sheriff's Office said the men possessed a "massive arsenal" that included AR-15 rifles, Glock handguns, a Remington rifle and thousands of rounds of ammunition. According to police, the men wanted to destroy HAARP because they believed the facility manipulates the weather, controls minds and even traps the souls of people. Police say the men confessed that "God told them to go and blow this machine up that kept souls, so souls could be released."^{[44][45]}

Stanford University professor Umran Inan told *Popular Science* that weather-control conspiracy theories were "completely uninformed," explaining that "there's absolutely nothing we can do to disturb the Earth's [weather] systems. Even though the power HAARP radiates is very large, it's minuscule compared with the power of a lightning flash—and there are 50 to 100 lightning flashes every second. HAARP's intensity is very small."^[5] Computer scientist David Naiditch characterizes HAARP as "a magnet for conspiracy theorists," saying that HAARP attracts their attention because, "its purpose seems deeply mysterious to the scientifically uninformed."^[6] Journalist Sharon Weinberger called HAARP "the Moby Dick of conspiracy theories," and said the popularity of conspiracy theories often overshadows the benefits HAARP may provide to the scientific community.^{[46][47]} Austin Baird writing in the Alaska Dispatch said, "What makes HAARP susceptible to conspiracy criticism is simple. The facility doesn't open its doors in the same way as other federally-funded research facilities around the country, and it doesn't go to great efforts to explain the importance of its research to the public."^[37] In 2016, in response to these claims, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute, which manages the facility, announced that HAARP will host an annual open house in August, allowing visitors to tour the complex.^[48]

See also

- EISCAT
- Geophysical Institute
- HIPAS Observatory
- Ionospheric reflection
- Poker Flat Research Range
- Riometer
- SuperDARN
- Sura Ionospheric Heating Facility

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- HAARP (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110806030611/http://www.eastlundscience.com/HAARP.html>) at EastlundScience.com – website of Bernard Eastlund's Scientific Enterprises Corporation.
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Chemtrail conspiracy theory

The **chemtrail conspiracy theory** posits the erroneous^[1] belief that long-lasting condensation trails are "chemtrails" consisting of chemical or biological agents left in the sky by high-flying aircraft, sprayed for nefarious purposes undisclosed to the general public.^[2] Believers in this conspiracy theory say that while normal contrails dissipate relatively quickly, contrails that linger must contain additional substances.^{[3][4]} Those who subscribe to the theory speculate that the purpose of the chemical release may be solar radiation management,^[3] weather modification, psychological manipulation, human population control, biological or chemical warfare, or testing of biological or chemical agents on a population, and that the trails are causing respiratory illnesses and other health problems.^{[2][5]}



An Airbus A340's engines leaving a water condensation trail (contrail) – miniature clouds formed by the engine exhaust

The claim has been dismissed by the scientific community. There is no evidence that purported chemtrails differ from normal water-based contrails routinely left by high-flying aircraft under certain atmospheric conditions.^[6] Although proponents have tried to prove that chemical spraying occurs, their analyses have been flawed or based on misconceptions.^{[7][8]} Because of the persistence of the conspiracy theory and questions about government involvement, scientists and government agencies around the world have repeatedly explained that the supposed chemtrails are in fact normal contrails.^{[3][9][10]}

The term *chemtrail* is a portmanteau of the words *chemical* and *trail*, just as *contrail* is a portmanteau of *condensation* and *trail*.^[11]

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History

Chemtrail conspiracy theories began to circulate after the United States Air Force (USAF) published a 1996 report about weather modification.^[10] Following the report, in the late 1990s the USAF was accused of "spraying the U.S. population with mysterious substances" from aircraft "generating unusual contrail patterns."^{[6][12]} The theories were posted on Internet forums by people including Richard Finke and William Thomas, and were among many conspiracy theories popularized by late-night radio host Art Bell, starting in 1999.^{[13][8]} As the chemtrail conspiracy theory spread, federal officials were flooded with angry calls and letters.^{[10][3]}



Multiple concurrent contrails. How long they last depends upon the weather, especially the temperature, humidity, and wind speed.

A multi-agency response attempting to dispel the rumors was published in 2000 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).^{[14][15]} Many chemtrail believers interpreted agency fact sheets as further evidence of the existence of a government cover-up.^[3] The EPA refreshed its posting in 2015.^[16]

In the early 2000s the USAF released an undated fact sheet that stated the conspiracy theories were a hoax fueled in part by citations to a 1996 strategy paper drafted within their Air University titled *Weather as a Force Multiplier: Owning the Weather in 2025*.^{[17][18]} The paper was presented in response to a military directive to outline a future strategic weather modification system for the purpose of maintaining the United States' military dominance in the year 2025, and identified as "fictional representations of future situations/scenarios."^[18] The USAF further clarified in 2005 that the paper "does not reflect current military policy, practice, or capability", and that it is "not conducting any weather modification experiments or programs and has no plans to do so in the future."^{[6][19]} Additionally, the USAF states that the "'chemtrail' hoax has been investigated and refuted by many established and accredited universities, scientific organizations, and major media publications."^[6]

The conspiracy theories are seldom covered by the mainstream media, and when they are, they are usually cast as an example of anti-government paranoia.^[4] For example, in 2013, when it was made public that the CIA, NASA, and NOAA intended to provide funds to the National Academy of Sciences to conduct research into methods to counteract global warming with geoengineering, an article in the *International Business Times* anticipated that "the idea of any government agency looking at ways to control, or manipulate, the weather will be met with scrutiny and fears of a malign conspiracies" [sic], and mentioned chemtrail conspiracy theories as an example.^[20]

Description

Proponents of the chemtrail conspiracy theory find support for their theories in their interpretations of sky phenomena, videos posted to the Internet, and reports about government programs; they also have certain beliefs about the goals of the alleged conspiracy and the effects of its alleged efforts and generally take certain actions based on those beliefs.

Interpretation of evidence

Proponents of the chemtrail conspiracy theory say that chemtrails can be distinguished from contrails by their long duration, asserting that the chemtrails are those trails left by aircraft that persist for as much as a half-day or transform into cirrus-like clouds.^[4] The proponents claim that after 1995, contrails had a different chemical composition and lasted a lot longer in the sky; proponents fail to acknowledge evidence of long-lasting contrails shown in World War II-era photographs.^[8]

Proponents characterize contrails as streams that persist for hours and that, with their criss-cross, grid-like or parallel stripe patterns, eventually blend to form large clouds. Proponents view the presence of visible color spectra in the streams, unusual concentrations of sky tracks in a single area, or lingering tracks left by unmarked or military airplanes flying at atypical altitudes or locations as markers of chemtrails.^{[3][5][21][22][23]}

Photographs of barrels installed in the passenger space of an aircraft for flight test purposes have been claimed to show aerosol dispersion systems. The real purpose of the barrels is to simulate the weight of passengers or cargo. The barrels are filled with water, and the water can be pumped from barrel to barrel in order to test different centers of gravity while the aircraft is in flight.^[24]

Former CIA employee and whistleblower Edward Snowden, interviewed on "The Joe Rogan Experience", stated that he had searched through all the secret information of the US government for evidence about (aliens and) chemtrails. According to a CNN report^[25] about the webcast^[26] he said: "In case you were wondering: ... Chemtrails are not a thing", and: "I had ridiculous access to the networks of the NSA, the CIA, the military, all these groups. I couldn't find anything".

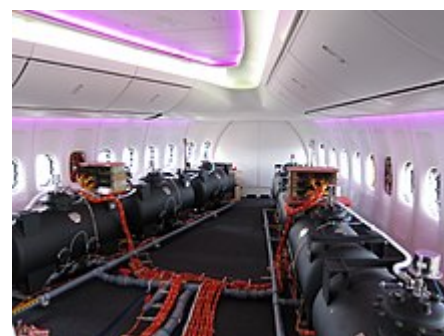
Jim Marrs has cited a 2007 Louisiana television station report as evidence for chemtrails. In the report, the air underneath a crosshatch of supposed chemtrails was measured and apparently found to contain unsafe levels of barium: at 6.8 parts per million, three times the US nationally recommended limit. A subsequent analysis of the footage showed, however, that the equipment had been misused, and the reading exaggerated by a factor of 100—the true level of barium measured was both usual and safe.^[7]

In May 2014 a video that went viral showed a commercial passenger airplane landing on a foggy night, which was described as emitting chemtrails.^[27] *Discovery News* pointed out that passengers sitting behind the wings would clearly see anything being sprayed, which would defeat any intent to be secretive, and that the purported chemical emission was normal air disruption caused by the wings, visible due to the fog.^[27]

In October 2014, Englishman Chris Bovey filmed a video of a plane jettisoning fuel on a flight from Buenos Aires to London, which had to dump fuel to lighten its load for an emergency landing in São Paulo. The clip went viral on Facebook, with over three million views and more than 52,000 shares, cited as evidence of chemtrails. He later disclosed that the video post was done as a prank, and consequently, he was subjected to some vitriolic abuse and threats from several conspiracy believers.^{[28][29]}



Airbus A380 water-filled tanks simulate passenger weight for different takeoff and landing displacement weights. Similar photographs are sometimes said to show chemtrail planes in action.



Ballast barrels with water in a prototype Boeing 747 flight-test plane

In some accounts, the chemicals are described as barium and aluminum salts, polymer fibers, thorium, or silicon carbide.^[30]

Chemtrail believers interpret the existence of cloud seeding programs and research into climate engineering as evidence for the conspiracy.^[31]

Beliefs

Various versions of the chemtrail conspiracy theory have been propagated via the Internet and radio programs.^[3] There are websites dedicated to the conspiracy theory, and it is particularly favored by far right groups because it fits well with deep suspicion of government.^[4]

A 2014 review of 20 chemtrail websites found that believers appeal to science in some of their arguments, but do not believe what academic or government-employed scientists say;^[30] scientists and federal agencies have consistently denied that chemtrails exist, explaining the sky tracks are simply persistent contrails.^{[3][12][32]} The review also found that believers generally hold that chemtrails are evidence of a global conspiracy; they allege various goals which include profit (for example, manipulating futures prices, or making people sick to benefit drug companies), population control, or weapons testing (use of weather as a weapon, or testing bioweapons).^{[30][32][2]} One of these ideas is that clouds are being seeded with electrically conductive materials as part of a massive electromagnetic superweapons program based around the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP).^{[33][34]} Believers say chemtrails are toxic; the 2014 review found that they generally hold that every person is under attack and often express fear, anxiety, sadness, and anger about this.^[30] A 2011 study of people from the US, Canada, and the UK found that 2.6% of the sample believed entirely in the conspiracy theory, and 14% believed it partially.^{[35][30]} An analysis of responses given to the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study^[36] showed that 9% of the 36,000 respondents believed it was "completely true" that "...the government has a secret program that uses airplanes to put harmful chemicals into the air..." while a further 19% believed this was "somewhat true".^[37]

Actions

Chemtrail conspiracy theorists often describe their experience as being akin to a religious conversion experience. When they "wake up" and become "aware" of chemtrails, the experience motivates them to advocacy of various forms.^[30] For example, they often attend events and conferences on geoengineering, and have sent threats to academics working in the geoengineering field.^[30]

In 2001, in response to requests from constituents, US Congressman Dennis Kucinich introduced (but did not author) H.R. 2977 (107th), the *Space Preservation Act of 2001* that would have permanently prohibited the basing of weapons in space, listing chemtrails as one of a number of "exotic weapons" that would be banned.^{[38][39]} Proponents have interpreted this explicit reference to chemtrails as official government acknowledgement of their existence.^{[21][40]} Skeptics note that the bill in question also mentions "extraterrestrial weapons" and "environmental, climate, or tectonic weapons".^[38] The bill received an unfavorable evaluation from the United States Department of Defense and died in committee, with no mention of chemtrails appearing in the text of any of the three subsequent failed attempts by Kucinich to enact a Space Preservation Act.

In 2003, in a response to a petition by concerned Canadian citizens regarding "chemicals used in aerial sprayings are adversely affecting the health of Canadians", the Government House Leader responded by stating, "There is no substantiated evidence, scientific or otherwise, to support the allegation that there is

high altitude spraying conducted in Canadian airspace. The term 'chemtrails' is a popularised expression, and there is no scientific evidence to support their existence."^{[41][42][43][44]} The house leader went on to say that "it is our belief that the petitioners are seeing regular airplane condensation trails, or contrails."^[41]

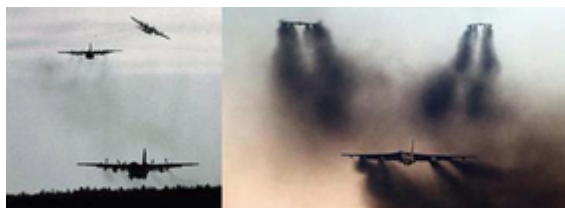
In the United Kingdom, in 2005 Elliot Morley, a Minister of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs^[45] was asked by David Drew, the Labour Party Member of Parliament for Stroud, "what research [the] Department has undertaken into the polluting effects of chemtrails for aircraft", and responded that "the Department is not researching into chemtrails from aircraft as they are not scientifically recognised phenomena", and that work was being conducted to understand "how contrails are formed and what effects they have on the atmosphere."^{[12][46]}

Some chemtrail believers adopt the notions of Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) who devised a "cloudbuster" device from pipework. Reich claimed this device would influence weather and remove harmful energy from the atmosphere. Some chemtrail believers have built cloudbusters filled with crystals and metal filings, which are pointed at the sky in an attempt to clear it of chemtrails.^[47]

Chemtrail believers sometimes gather samples and have them tested, rather than rely on reports from government or academic laboratories, but their experiments are usually flawed; for example, collecting samples in jars with metal lids contaminates the sample and is not done in scientific testing.^{[30][48]}

Contrails

Contrails, or condensation trails, are "streaks of condensed water vapor created in the air by an airplane or rocket at high altitudes".^[6] Fossil fuel combustion (as in piston and jet engines) produces carbon dioxide and water vapor. At high altitudes the air is very cold. Hot humid air from the engine exhaust mixes with the colder surrounding air, causing the water vapor to condense into droplets or ice crystals that form visible clouds. The rate at which contrails dissipate is entirely dependent on weather conditions. If the atmosphere is near saturation, the contrail may exist for some time. Conversely, if the atmosphere is dry, the contrail will dissipate quickly.^[6]



Exhaust gases and emissions



Wingtip condensation trails



Contrails from propeller-driven aircraft engine exhaust, early 1940s

It is well established by atmospheric scientists that contrails can persist for hours, and that it is normal for them to spread out into cirrus sheets. The different-sized ice crystals in contrails descend at different rates, which spreads the contrail vertically. Then the differential in wind speeds between altitudes (wind shear) results in horizontal spreading of the contrail. This mechanism is similar to the formation of cirrus uncinus clouds. Contrails between 25,000 and 40,000 feet (7,600 and 12,200 m) can often merge into an "almost solid" interlaced sheet.^[49] Contrails can have a lateral spread of several kilometers, and given sufficient air traffic, it is possible for contrails to create an entirely overcast sky that increases the ice budget of individual contrails and persists for hours.^[50]

Experts on atmospheric phenomena say that the characteristics attributed to chemtrails are simply features of contrails responding to diverse conditions in terms of sunlight, temperature, horizontal and vertical wind shear, and humidity levels present at the aircraft's altitude.^{[3][6][5][21]} In the US, the gridlike nature of the National Airspace System's flight lanes tends to cause crosshatched contrails, and in general it is hard to discern from the ground whether overlapping contrails are at similar altitudes or not.^[6] The jointly published fact sheet produced by NASA, the EPA, the FAA, and NOAA in 2000 in response to alarms over chemtrails details the science of contrail formation, and outlines both the known and potential impacts contrails have on temperature and climate.^[19] The USAF produced a fact sheet that described these contrail phenomena as observed and analyzed since at least 1953. It also rebutted chemtrail theories more directly by identifying the theories as a hoax and disproving the existence of chemtrails.^{[6][3]}



Contrail testing being carried out on an Airbus A340 and much older Boeing 707^[6]

Patrick Minnis, an atmospheric scientist with NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, has said that logic does not dissuade most chemtrail proponents: "If you try to pin these people down and refute things, it's, 'Well, you're just part of the conspiracy'", he said.^[3]

Analysis of the use of commercial aircraft tracks for climate engineering has shown them to be generally unsuitable.^[51]

Astronomer Bob Berman has characterized the chemtrail conspiracy theory as a classic example of failure to apply Occam's razor, writing in 2009 that instead of adopting the long-established "simple solution" that the trails consist of frozen water vapour, "the conspiracy web sites think the phenomenon started only a decade ago and involves an evil scheme in which 40,000 commercial pilots and air traffic controllers are in on the plot to poison their own children."^[52]

A 2016 survey of 77 atmospheric scientists concluded that "76 out of 77 (98.7%) of scientists that took part in this study said there was no evidence of a [secret large-scale atmospheric program] (SLAP), and that the data cited as evidence could be explained through other factors, such as typical contrail formation and poor data sampling instructions presented on SLAP websites."^{[53][54]}

See also

- California drought manipulation conspiracy theory
- Cloud iridescence
- Fuel dumping
- Herbicidal warfare
- List of conspiracy theories
- Mass hysteria
- Mick West (chemtrail skeptic)
- Solar radiation management
- Stratospheric Particle Injection for Climate Engineering
- Stratospheric sulfate aerosols (geoengineering)

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Abstract: "Bureau of Reclamation cooperated with California Department of Water Resources to design and implement a snowpack augmentation program to increase runoff to Oroville Reservoir. The program involves the collection of data to document physical processes leading to increased precipitation. This report summarizes the main results from 3 yr of in-situ physical studies and statistical analysis of precipitation data collected during 87 randomized seeding cases. Liquid propane released from high elevation sites has proven to be a viable, reliable method of seeding wintertime clouds in the Sierra Nevada."

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Project MKUltra

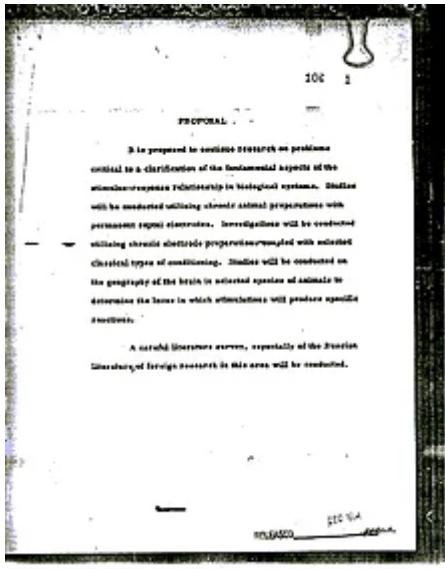
Project MKUltra (or **MK-Ultra**) is the code name given to a program of experiments on human subjects that were designed and undertaken by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), some of which were illegal.^{[1][2][3]} Experiments on humans were intended to develop procedures and identify drugs such as LSD to be used in interrogations in order to weaken the individual and force confessions through brainwashing and psychological torture. The project was organized through the Office of Scientific Intelligence of the CIA and coordinated with the United States Army Biological Warfare Laboratories.^[4] Other code names for drug-related experiments were Project Bluebird and Project Artichoke.^{[5][6]}

The operation was officially sanctioned in 1953, reduced in scope in 1964 and further curtailed in 1967. It was officially halted in 1973. The program also engaged in illegal activities,^{[7][8][9]} including the use of U.S. and Canadian citizens as its unwitting test subjects, which led to controversy regarding its legitimacy.^{[7](p74)[10][11][12]} MKUltra used numerous methods to manipulate its subjects' mental states and brain functions. Techniques included the covert administration of high doses of psychoactive drugs (especially LSD) and other chemicals, electroshocks,^[13] hypnosis,^{[14][15]} sensory deprivation, isolation, and verbal and sexual abuse, in addition to other forms of torture.^{[16][17]}

The scope of Project MKUltra was broad, with activities carried out under the guise of research at more than 80 institutions, including colleges and universities, hospitals, prisons, and pharmaceutical companies.^[18] The CIA operated using front organizations, although sometimes top officials at these institutions were aware of the CIA's involvement.^[19]

Project MKUltra was first brought to public attention in 1975 by the Church Committee of the United States Congress and Gerald Ford's United States President's Commission on CIA activities within the United States (also known as the Rockefeller Commission).

Investigative efforts were hampered by CIA Director Richard Helms's order that all MKUltra files be destroyed in 1973; the Church Committee and Rockefeller Commission investigations relied on the sworn testimony of direct participants and on the relatively small number of documents that survived Helms's destruction order.^[20] In 1977, a Freedom of Information Act request uncovered a cache of 20,000 documents relating to project MKUltra which led to Senate hearings later that year.^{[7][21]} Some surviving information regarding MKUltra was declassified in July 2001. In December 2018, declassified documents included a letter to an unidentified doctor discussing work on six dogs made to run, turn and stop via remote control and brain implants.^{[22][23]}



Declassified MKUltra documents

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Background

Origin of cryptonym

The project's [CIA cryptonym](#) is a combination of the [digraph](#) *MK*, indicating the sponsorship of the [Technical Services Staff](#) (TSS), and the word [Ultra](#) which formerly designated the most secret classification of [World War II intelligence](#). Other related cryptonyms include [Project MKNAOMI](#) and [Project MKDELTA](#).

Origin of project

According to author Stephen Kinzer, the CIA project "was a continuation of the work begun in WWII-era Japanese facilities and Nazi concentration camps on subduing and controlling human minds". Kinzer wrote that MKUltra's use of mescaline on unwitting subjects was a practice that Nazi doctors had begun in the Dachau concentration camp. Kinzer proposes evidence of the continuation of a Nazi agenda, citing the CIA's secret recruitment of Nazi torturers and vivisectionists to continue the experimentation on thousands of subjects, and Nazis brought to Fort Detrick, Maryland, to instruct CIA officers on the lethal uses of sarin gas.^[13]

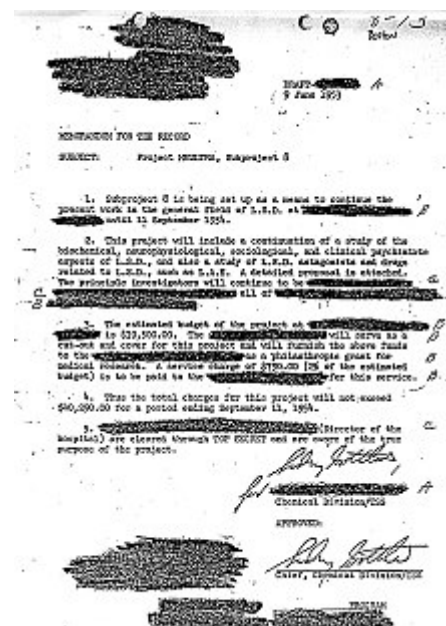
Aims and leadership

The project was headed by Sidney Gottlieb but began on the order of CIA director Allen Dulles on April 13, 1953.^{[24][25]} Its aim was to develop mind-controlling drugs for use against the Soviet bloc in response to alleged Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean use of mind control techniques on U.S. prisoners of war during the Korean War.^[26] The CIA wanted to use similar methods on their own captives, and was interested in manipulating foreign leaders with such techniques,^[27] devising several schemes to drug Fidel Castro. It often conducted experiments without the subjects' knowledge or consent.^[28] In some cases, academic researchers were funded through grants from CIA front organizations but were unaware that the CIA was using their work for these purposes.^[29]

The project attempted to produce a perfect truth drug for interrogating suspected Soviet spies during the Cold War, and to explore other possibilities of mind control. Subproject 54 was the Navy's top-secret "Perfect Concussion" program, which was supposed to use sub-audal frequency blasts to erase memory; the program was never carried out.^[30]

Most MKUltra records were destroyed in 1973 by order of CIA director Richard Helms, so it has been difficult for investigators to gain a complete understanding of the more than 150 funded research subprojects sponsored by MKUltra and related CIA programs.^[31]

The project began during a period of what English journalist Rupert Cornwell described as "paranoia" at the CIA, when the U.S. had lost its nuclear monopoly and fear of communism was at its height.^[32] CIA counter-intelligence chief James Jesus Angleton believed that a mole had penetrated the organization at the highest levels.^[32] The agency poured millions of dollars into studies examining ways to influence and control the mind and to enhance its ability to extract information from resistant subjects during interrogation.^{[33][34]} Some historians assert that one goal of MKUltra and related CIA projects was to create a "Manchurian Candidate"-style subject.^[35] American historian Alfred W. McCoy has claimed that the CIA attempted to focus media attention on these sorts of "ridiculous" programs so that the public would not look at the research's primary goal, which was effective methods of interrogation.^[33]



Sidney Gottlieb approved of an MKUltra sub-project on LSD in this June 9, 1953, letter.



Sidney Gottlieb, Sept. 21, 1977

Scale of project

One 1955 MKUltra document gives an indication of the size and range of the effort. It refers to the study of an assortment of mind-altering substances described as follows:^[36]

1. Substances which will promote illogical thinking and impulsiveness to the point where the recipient would be discredited in public.
2. Substances which increase the efficiency of mentation and perception.
3. Materials which will prevent or counteract the intoxicating effect of alcohol.
4. Materials which will promote the intoxicating effect of alcohol.
5. Materials which will produce the signs and symptoms of recognized diseases in a reversible way so they may be used for malingering, etc.
6. Materials which will render the induction of hypnosis easier or otherwise enhance its usefulness.
7. Substances which will enhance the ability of individuals to withstand privation, torture, and coercion during interrogation and so-called "brain-washing".
8. Materials and physical methods which will produce amnesia for events preceding and during their use.
9. Physical methods of producing shock and confusion over extended periods of time and capable of surreptitious use.
10. Substances which produce physical disablement such as paralysis of the legs, acute anemia, etc.
11. Substances which will produce "pure" euphoria with no subsequent let-down.
12. Substances which alter personality structure in such a way the tendency of the recipient to become dependent upon another person is enhanced.
13. A material which will cause mental confusion of such a type the individual under its influence will find it difficult to maintain a fabrication under questioning.
14. Substances which will lower the ambition and general working efficiency of men when administered in undetectable amounts.
15. Substances which promote weakness or distortion of the eyesight or hearing faculties, preferably without permanent effects.
16. A knockout pill which can be surreptitiously administered in drinks, food, cigarettes, as an aerosol, etc., which will be safe to use, provide a maximum of amnesia, and be suitable for use by agent types on an ad hoc basis.
17. A material which can be surreptitiously administered by the above routes and which in very small amounts will make it impossible for a person to perform physical activity.

Applications

The 1976 Church Committee report found that, in the MKDELTA program, "Drugs were used primarily as an aid to interrogations, but MKULTRA/MKDELTA materials were also used for harassment, discrediting or disabling purposes."^{[37][38][39]}

Other related projects

In 1964, MKSEARCH was the name given to the continuation of the MKULTRA program. The MKSEARCH program was divided into two projects dubbed MKOFTEN and MKCHICKWIT. Funding for MKSEARCH commenced in 1965, and ended in 1971.^[40] The project was a joint project between the U.S. Army Chemical Corps and the CIA's Office of Research and Development to find new offensive-use agents, with a focus on incapacitating agents. Its purpose was to develop, test, and evaluate capabilities in the covert use of biological, chemical, and radioactive material systems and techniques of producing predictable human behavioral and/or physiological changes in support of highly sensitive operational requirements.^[40]

By March 1971 over 26,000 potential agents had been acquired for future screening.^[41] The CIA was interested in bird migration patterns for chemical and biological warfare (CBW) research; subproject 139 designated "Bird Disease Studies" at Penn State.^[42]

MKOFTEN was to deal with testing and toxicological transmissivity and behavioral effects of drugs in animals and, ultimately, humans.^[40]

MKCHICKWIT was concerned with acquiring information on new drug developments in Europe and Asia, and with acquiring samples.^[40]

Experiments on Americans

CIA documents suggest that they investigated "chemical, biological, and radiological" methods of mind control as part of MKUltra.^[43] They spent an estimated \$10 million or more, roughly \$87.5 million adjusted for inflation.^[44]

LSD

Early CIA efforts focused on LSD-25, which later came to dominate many of MKUltra's programs.^[45] The CIA wanted to know if they could make Soviet spies defect against their will and whether the Soviets could do the same to the CIA's own operatives.^[46]

Once Project MKUltra got underway in April 1953, experiments included administering LSD to mental patients, prisoners, drug addicts, and sex workers – "people who could not fight back," as one agency officer put it.^[47] In one case, they administered LSD to a mental patient in Kentucky for 174 days.^[47] They also administered LSD to CIA employees, military personnel, doctors, other government agents, and members of the general public to study their reactions. LSD and other drugs were often administered without the subject's knowledge or informed consent, a violation of the Nuremberg Code the U.S. had agreed to follow after World War II. The aim of this was to find drugs which would bring out deep confessions or wipe a subject's mind clean and program them as "a robot agent."^[48]

In Operation Midnight Climax, the CIA set up several brothels within agency safehouses in San Francisco to obtain a selection of men who would be too embarrassed to talk about the events. The men were dosed with LSD, the brothels were equipped with one-way mirrors, and the sessions were filmed for later viewing and study.^[49] In other experiments where people were given LSD without their knowledge, they were interrogated under bright lights with doctors in the background taking notes. They told subjects they would extend their "trips" if they refused to reveal their secrets. The people under this interrogation were CIA employees, U.S. military personnel, and agents suspected of working for the other side in the Cold War. Long-term debilitation and several deaths resulted from this.^[48] Heroin addicts were bribed into taking LSD with offers of more heroin.^{[19][50]}

At the invitation of Stanford psychology graduate student Vik Lovell, an acquaintance of Richard Alpert and Allen Ginsberg, Ken Kesey volunteered to take part in what turned out to be a CIA-financed study under the aegis of MKUltra,^[51] at the Menlo Park Veterans' Hospital^{[52][53]} where he worked as a night aide.^[54] The project studied the effects of psychoactive drugs, particularly LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, cocaine, AMT and DMT on people.^[55]

The Office of Security used LSD in interrogations, but Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, the chemist who directed MKUltra, had other ideas: he thought it could be used in covert operations. Since its effects were temporary, he believed it could be given to high-ranking officials and in this way affect the course of important meetings, speeches, etc. Since he realized there was a difference in testing the drug in a laboratory and using it in clandestine operations, he initiated a series of experiments where LSD was given to people in "normal" settings without warning. At first, everyone in Technical Services tried it; a typical experiment involved two people in a room where they observed each other for hours and took notes. As the experimentation progressed, a point arrived where outsiders were drugged with no explanation whatsoever and surprise acid trips became something of an occupational hazard among CIA operatives. Adverse reactions often occurred, such as an operative who received the drug in his morning coffee, became psychotic and ran across Washington, seeing a monster in every car passing him. The experiments continued even after Frank Olson, an army chemist who had never taken LSD, was covertly dosed by his CIA supervisor and nine days later plunged to his death from the window of a 13th-story New York City hotel room, supposedly as a result of deep depression induced by the drug.^[56] According to Stephen Kinzer, Olson had approached his superiors some time earlier, doubting the morality of the project, and asked to resign from the CIA.^[57]

Some subjects' participation was consensual, and in these cases they appeared to be singled out for even more extreme experiments. In one case, seven volunteers in Kentucky were given LSD for seventy-seven consecutive days.^[58]

MKUltra's researchers later dismissed LSD as too unpredictable in its results.^[59] They gave up on the notion that LSD was "the secret that was going to unlock the universe," but it still had a place in the cloak-and-dagger arsenal. However, by 1962 the CIA and the army developed a series of super-hallucinogens such as the highly touted BZ, which was thought to hold greater promise as a mind control weapon. This resulted in the withdrawal of support by many academics and private researchers, and LSD research became less of a priority altogether.^[56]

Other drugs

Another technique investigated was the intravenous administration of a barbiturate into one arm and an amphetamine into the other.^[60] The barbiturates were released into the person first, and as soon as the person began to fall asleep, the amphetamines were released. The person would begin babbling incoherently, and it was sometimes possible to ask questions and get useful answers.

Other experiments involved heroin, morphine, temazepam (used under code name MKSEARCH), mescaline, psilocybin, scopolamine, alcohol and sodium pentothal.^[61]

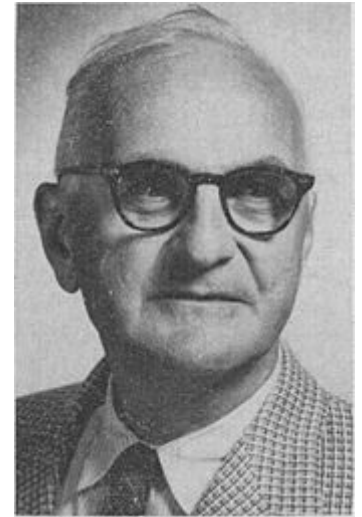
Hypnosis

Declassified MKUltra documents indicate they studied hypnosis in the early 1950s. Experimental goals included the creation of "hypnotically induced anxieties," "hypnotically increasing ability to learn and recall complex written matter," studying hypnosis and polygraph examinations, "hypnotically increasing

ability to observe and recall complex arrangements of physical objects" and studying "relationship of personality to susceptibility to hypnosis."^[62] They conducted experiments with drug-induced hypnosis and with anterograde and retrograde amnesia while under the influence of such drugs.

Experiments on Canadians

The CIA exported experiments to Canada when they recruited British psychiatrist Donald Ewen Cameron, creator of the "psychic driving" concept, which the CIA found interesting. Cameron had been hoping to correct schizophrenia by erasing existing memories and reprogramming the psyche. He commuted from Albany, New York to Montreal every week to work at the Allan Memorial Institute of McGill University, and was paid \$69,000 from 1957 to 1964 (which would be US\$579,480 in 2021, adjusting for inflation) to carry out MKUltra experiments there, the Montreal experiments. These research funds were sent to Cameron by a CIA front organization, the Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology, and as shown in internal CIA documents, Cameron did not know the money came from the CIA.^[63](pp141–142 (<https://archive.org/details/searchformanchuroojohn/page/141>))



Donald Ewen Cameron
c. 1967

In addition to LSD, Cameron also experimented with various paralytic drugs as well as electroconvulsive therapy at thirty to forty times the normal power. His "driving" experiments consisted of putting subjects into drug-induced comas for weeks at a time (up to three months in one case) while playing tape loops of noise or simple repetitive statements. His experiments were often carried out on patients who entered the institute for common problems such as anxiety disorders and postpartum depression, many of whom suffered permanent effects from his actions.^[63](pp140–150 (<https://archive.org/details/searchformanchuroojohn/page/140>)) His treatments resulted in victims' urinary incontinence, amnesia, forgetting how to talk, forgetting their parents and thinking their interrogators were their parents.^[64]

During this era, Cameron became known worldwide as the first chairman of the World Psychiatric Association as well as president of both the American Psychiatric Association and the Canadian Psychiatric Association. Cameron was also a member of the Nuremberg medical tribunal in 1946–1947.^[63](p141 (<https://archive.org/details/searchformanchuroojohn/page/141>))

Motivation and assessments

His work was inspired and paralleled by the British psychiatrist William Sargant at St Thomas' Hospital, London, and Belmont Hospital, Sutton, who was also involved in the Secret Intelligence Service and who experimented on his patients without their consent, causing similar long-term damage.^[65]

In the 1980s, several of Cameron's former patients sued the CIA for damages, which the Canadian news program The Fifth Estate documented.^[66] Their experiences and lawsuit was made into a 1998 television miniseries called The Sleep Room.^[67]

Naomi Klein argues in her book The Shock Doctrine that Cameron's research and his contribution to the MKUltra project was not about mind control and brainwashing, but about designing "a scientifically based system for extracting information from 'resistant sources'. In other words, torture."^[68]

Alfred W. McCoy writes, "Stripped of its bizarre excesses, Dr. Cameron's experiments, building upon Donald O. Hebb's earlier breakthrough, laid the scientific foundation for the CIA's two-stage psychological torture method",^[69] referring to first creating a state of disorientation in the subject, and then creating a situation of "self-inflicted" discomfort in which the disoriented subject can alleviate their pain by capitulating.^[69]

Secret detention camps

In areas under American control in the early 1950s in Europe and East Asia, mostly Japan, Germany and the Philippines, the CIA created secret detention centers so that the U.S. could avoid criminal prosecution. The CIA captured people suspected of being enemy agents and other people it deemed "expendable" to undertake various types of torture and human experimentation on them. The prisoners were interrogated while being administered psychoactive drugs, electroshocked and subjected to extremes of temperature, sensory isolation and the like to develop a better understanding of how to destroy and to control human minds.^[13]

Revelation

In 1973, amid a government-wide panic caused by Watergate, CIA Director Richard Helms ordered all MKUltra files destroyed.^[70] Pursuant to this order, most CIA documents regarding the project were destroyed, making a full investigation of MKUltra impossible. A cache of some 20,000 documents survived Helms's purge, as they had been incorrectly stored in a financial records building and were discovered following a FOIA request in 1977. These documents were fully investigated during the Senate Hearings of 1977.^[7]

In December 1974, *The New York Times* alleged that the CIA had conducted illegal domestic activities, including experiments on U.S. citizens, during the 1960s.^[71] That report prompted investigations by the United States Congress, in the form of the Church Committee, and by a commission known as the Rockefeller Commission that looked into the illegal domestic activities of the CIA, the FBI and intelligence-related agencies of the military.



Frank Church headed the Church Committee, an investigation into the practices of the U.S. intelligence agencies.

In the summer of 1975, congressional Church Committee reports and the presidential Rockefeller Commission report revealed to the public for the first time that the CIA and the Department of Defense had conducted experiments on both unwitting and cognizant human subjects as part of an extensive program to find out how to influence and control human behavior through the use of psychoactive drugs such as LSD and mescaline and other chemical, biological, and psychological means. They also revealed that at least one subject, Frank Olson had died after administration of LSD. Much of what the Church Committee and the Rockefeller Commission learned about MKUltra was contained in a report, prepared by the Inspector General's office in 1963, that had survived the destruction of records ordered in 1973.^[72] However, it contained little detail. Sidney Gottlieb, who had retired from the CIA two years previously and had headed MKUltra, was interviewed by the committee but claimed to have very little recollection of the activities of MKUltra.^[18]

The congressional committee investigating the CIA research, chaired by Senator Frank Church, concluded that "prior consent was obviously not obtained from any of the subjects". The committee noted that the "experiments sponsored by these researchers ... call into question the decision by the

agencies not to fix guidelines for experiments."

Following the recommendations of the Church Committee, President Gerald Ford in 1976 issued the first Executive Order on Intelligence Activities which, among other things, prohibited "experimentation with drugs on human subjects, except with the informed consent, in writing and witnessed by a disinterested party, of each such human subject" and in accordance with the guidelines issued by the National Commission. Subsequent orders by Presidents Carter and Reagan expanded the directive to apply to any human experimentation.

In 1977, during a hearing held by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, to look further into MKUltra, Admiral Stansfield Turner, then Director of Central Intelligence, revealed that the CIA had found a set of records, consisting of about 20,000 pages,^[73] that had survived the 1973 destruction orders because they had been incorrectly stored at a records center not usually used for such documents.^[72] These files dealt with the financing of MKUltra projects and contained few project details, but much more was learned from them than from the Inspector General's 1963 report.

On the Senate floor in 1977, Senator Ted Kennedy said:

The Deputy Director of the CIA revealed that over thirty universities and institutions were involved in an "extensive testing and experimentation" program which included covert drug tests on unwitting citizens "at all social levels, high and low, native Americans and foreign." Several of these tests involved the administration of LSD to "unwitting subjects in social situations.



1977 United States Senate report on MKUltra

At least one death, the result of the defenestration of Dr. Frank Olson, was attributed to Olson's being subjected, unaware, to such experimentation, nine days before his death. The CIA itself subsequently acknowledged that these tests had little scientific rationale. The agents conducting the monitoring were not qualified scientific observers.^{[74][75]}

In Canada, the issue took much longer to surface, becoming widely known in 1984 on a CBC news show, The Fifth Estate. It was learned that not only had the CIA funded Dr. Cameron's efforts, but also that the Canadian government was fully aware of this, and had later provided another \$500,000 in funding to continue the experiments. This revelation largely derailed efforts by the victims to sue the CIA as their U.S. counterparts had, and the Canadian government eventually settled out of court for \$100,000 to each of the 127 victims. Dr. Cameron died on September 8, 1967, after suffering a heart attack while he and his son were mountain climbing. None of Cameron's personal records of his involvement with MKUltra survived, since his family destroyed them after his death.^{[76][77]}

1994 U.S. General Accounting Office report

The U.S. General Accounting Office issued a report on September 28, 1994, which stated that between 1940 and 1974, DOD and other national security agencies studied thousands of human subjects in tests and experiments involving hazardous substances.

The quote from the study:^[78]

Working with the CIA, the Department of Defense gave hallucinogenic drugs to thousands of "volunteer" soldiers in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to LSD, the Army also tested quinuclidinyl benzilate, a hallucinogen code-named BZ. (Note 37) Many of these tests were conducted under the so-called MKULTRA program, established to counter perceived Soviet and Chinese advances in brainwashing techniques. Between 1953 and 1964, the program consisted of 149 projects involving drug testing and other studies on unwitting human subjects

Deaths

Given the CIA's purposeful destruction of most records, its failure to follow informed consent protocols with thousands of participants, the uncontrolled nature of the experiments, and the lack of follow-up data, the full impact of MKUltra experiments, including deaths, may never be known.^{[31][36][78][79]}

Several known deaths have been associated with Project MKUltra, most notably that of Frank Olson. Olson, a United States Army biochemist and biological weapons researcher, was given LSD without his knowledge or consent in November 1953, as part of a CIA experiment, and died by suicide by jumping out of a 13th-story window a week later. A CIA doctor assigned to monitor Olson claimed to have been asleep in another bed in a New York City hotel room when Olson fell to his death. In 1953, Olson's death was described as a suicide that had occurred during a severe psychotic episode. The CIA's own internal investigation concluded that the head of MKUltra, CIA chemist Sidney Gottlieb, had conducted the LSD experiment with Olson's prior knowledge, although neither Olson nor the other men taking part in the experiment were informed as to the exact nature of the drug until some 20 minutes after its ingestion. The report further suggested that Gottlieb was nonetheless due a reprimand, as he had failed to take into account Olson's already-diagnosed suicidal tendencies, which might have been exacerbated by the LSD.^[80]

The Olson family disputes the official version of events. They maintain that Frank Olson was murdered because, especially in the aftermath of his LSD experience, he had become a security risk who might divulge state secrets associated with highly classified CIA programs, about many of which he had direct personal knowledge.^[81] A few days before his death, Frank Olson quit his position as acting chief of the Special Operations Division at Detrick, Maryland (later Fort Detrick) because of a severe moral crisis concerning the nature of his biological weapons research. Among Olson's concerns were the development of assassination materials used by the CIA, the CIA's use of biological warfare materials in covert operations, experimentation with biological weapons in populated areas, collaboration with former scientists under Operation Paperclip, LSD mind-control research, and the use of psychoactive drugs during "terminal" interrogations under a program code-named Project ARTICHOKE.^[82] Later forensic evidence conflicted with the official version of events; when Olson's body was exhumed in 1994, cranial injuries indicated that Olson had been knocked unconscious before he exited the window.^[80] The medical examiner termed Olson's death a "homicide".^[83] In 1975, Olson's family received a \$750,000 settlement from the U.S. government and formal apologies from President Gerald Ford and CIA Director William Colby, though their apologies were limited to informed consent issues concerning Olson's ingestion of LSD.^[79] On 28 November 2012, the Olson family filed suit against the U.S. federal government for the wrongful death of Frank Olson.^[84] The case was dismissed in July 2013, due in part to the 1976 settlement between the family and government.^[85] In the decision dismissing the suit, U.S.

District Judge James Boasberg wrote, "While the court must limit its analysis to the four corners of the complaint, the skeptical reader may wish to know that the public record supports many of the allegations [in the family's suit], farfetched as they may sound."^[86]

A 2010 book by H. P. Albarelli Jr. alleged that the 1951 Pont-Saint-Esprit mass poisoning was part of MKDELTA, that Olson was involved in that event, and that he was eventually murdered by the CIA.^{[87][88]} However, academic sources attribute the incident to ergot poisoning through a local bakery.^{[89][90][91]}

Legal issues involving informed consent

The revelations about the CIA and the army prompted a number of subjects or their survivors to file lawsuits against the federal government for conducting experiments without informed consent. Although the government aggressively, and sometimes successfully, sought to avoid legal liability, several plaintiffs did receive compensation through court order, out-of-court settlement, or acts of Congress. Frank Olson's family received \$750,000 by a special act of Congress, and both President Ford and CIA director William Colby met with Olson's family to apologize publicly.

Previously, the CIA and the army had actively and successfully sought to withhold incriminating information, even as they secretly provided compensation to the families. One subject of army drug experimentation, James Stanley, an army sergeant, brought an important, albeit unsuccessful, suit. The government argued that Stanley was barred from suing under the Feres doctrine.

In 1987, the Supreme Court affirmed this defense in a 5–4 decision that dismissed Stanley's case: *United States v. Stanley*.^[92] The majority argued that "a test for liability that depends on the extent to which particular suits would call into question military discipline and decision making would itself require judicial inquiry into, and hence intrusion upon, military matters." In dissent, Justice William Brennan argued that the need to preserve military discipline should not protect the government from liability and punishment for serious violations of constitutional rights:

The medical trials at Nuremberg in 1947 deeply impressed upon the world that experimentation with unknowing human subjects is morally and legally unacceptable. The United States Military Tribunal established the Nuremberg Code as a standard against which to judge German scientists who experimented with human subjects.... [I]n defiance of this principle, military intelligence officials ... began surreptitiously testing chemical and biological materials, including LSD.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, writing a separate dissent, stated:

No judicially crafted rule should insulate from liability the involuntary and unknowing human experimentation alleged to have occurred in this case. Indeed, as Justice Brennan observes, the United States played an instrumental role in the criminal prosecution of Nazi officials who experimented with human subjects during the Second World War, and the standards that the Nuremberg Military Tribunals developed to judge the behavior of the defendants stated that the 'voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential ... to satisfy moral, ethical, and legal concepts.' If this principle is violated, the very least that society can do is to see that the victims are compensated, as best they can be, by the perpetrators.

In another lawsuit, Wayne Ritchie, a former United States Marshal, after hearing about the project's existence in 1990, alleged the CIA laced his food or drink with LSD at a 1957 Christmas party which resulted in his attempting to commit a robbery at a bar and his subsequent arrest. While the government admitted it was, at that time, drugging people without their consent, U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel found Ritchie could not prove he was one of the victims of MKUltra or that LSD caused his robbery attempt and dismissed the case in 2005.^{[93][94]}

Notable people

Experimenters

- Harold Alexander Abramson
- Donald Ewen Cameron
- Sidney Gottlieb
- Harris Isbell^[21]
- Louis Jolyon West
- Martin Theodore Orne

Documented subjects

- American poet Allen Ginsberg first took LSD in an experiment on Stanford University's campus where he could listen to records of his choice (he chose a Gertrude Stein reading, a Tibetan mandala, and Wagner). He said the experience resulted in "a slight paranoia that hung on all my acid experiences through the mid-1960s until I learned from meditation how to disperse that."^[95] He became an outspoken advocate for psychedelics in the 1960s and, after hearing suspicions that the experiment was CIA-funded, wrote, "Am I, Allen Ginsberg, the product one of the CIA's lamentable, ill-advised, or triumphantly successful experiments in mind control?"^[96]
- Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, is said to have volunteered for MKUltra experiments involving LSD and other psychedelic drugs at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Menlo Park while he was a student at nearby Stanford University. Kesey's experiences while under the influence of LSD inspired him to promote the drug outside the context of the MKUltra experiments, which influenced the early development of hippie culture.^{[97][55]}
- Robert Hunter was an American lyricist, singer-songwriter, translator, and poet, best known for his association with Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead. Along with Ken Kesey, Hunter was said to be an early volunteer MKUltra test subject at Stanford University. Stanford test subjects were paid to take LSD, psilocybin, and mescaline, then report on their experiences. These experiences were creatively formative for Hunter:

Sit back picture yourself swooping up a shell of purple with foam crests of crystal drops soft nigh they fall unto the sea of morning creep-very-softly mist ... and then sort of cascade tinkley-bell-like (must I take you by the hand, ever so slowly type) and then conglomerate suddenly into a peal of silver vibrant uncomprehendingly, blood singingly, joyously resounding bells ... By my faith if this be insanity, then for the love of God permit me to remain insane.^[98]

- Boston mobster James "Whitey" Bulger alleged he had been subjected to weekly injections of LSD and subsequent testing while in prison in Atlanta in 1957.^{[99][100]}

Alleged subjects

- Ted Kaczynski, an American domestic terrorist known as the Unabomber, was said to be a subject of a voluntary psychological study alleged by some sources to have been a part of MKUltra.^{[101][102][103]} As a sophomore at Harvard, Kaczynski participated in a study described by author Alston Chase as a "purposely brutalizing psychological experiment", led by Harvard psychologist Henry Murray.^{[104][105]} In total, Kaczynski spent 200 hours as part of the study.^[106]
- Lawrence Teeter was the attorney for Sirhan Sirhan who assassinated Robert F. Kennedy, and he believed that Sirhan was "operating under MK-ULTRA mind control techniques".^[107]

Aftermath

After retiring in 1972, Gottlieb dismissed his entire effort for the CIA's MKUltra program as useless.^{[32][108]} The CIA insists that MKUltra-type experiments have been abandoned.

In popular culture

MKUltra plays a part in many conspiracy theories due to its nature and the destruction of most records.^[109]

Films

- 1963 film *The Mind Benders* depicts the investigation of sensory deprivation by intelligence agencies for use in extracting information via torture, i.e. sensory deprivation.
- 1990 film *Jacob's Ladder* alludes to Project MKUltra throughout the movie.
- 1997 film *Conspiracy Theory* Project MKUltra is referred to by Dr. Jonas (Patrick Stewart) who says he headed the project. Also, the protagonist, Jerry (Mel Gibson) is reported by Dr. Jonas to be a test subject of Project MKUltra.
- 2006 film *Shadow Man* starring Steven Seagal has a plot that revolves around a (fictional) cancer-causing biological weapon called "MK Ultra".
- 2006 film *The Good Shepherd* depicts a defector who takes his own life by jumping from a high window after interrogation using torture and LSD.
- 2008 film *Pineapple Express* depicts Project MKUltra in the intro scene, although it is portrayed as taking place in 1937.
- 2009 film *The Killing Room* invokes Project MKUltra as the foundation to the base plot.
- Marvin Boggs (played by John Malkovich) in the films *RED* (2010) and *RED 2* (2013) had unknowingly been provided daily doses of LSD over a period of 11 years, making him highly paranoid, echoing the actions of MKUltra.
- 2013 film *The Banshee Chapter* is largely based around MKUltra.
- 2015 film *American Ultra* stars Jesse Eisenberg as a stoner slacker who discovers he is the sole survivor of the "Ultra" program, which turned him into the ultimate assassin.
- 2015 film *Mr. Right* depicts Hopper (portrayed by Tim Roth) mentioning the MKUltra program (at 27 minutes 15 seconds) as part of the foundation to the main character's motives and backstory.
- The Jason Bourne books and films starring Matt Damon, written by Robert Ludlum, are all based on MKUltra techniques.

Television

- The 1998 CBC miniseries *The Sleep Room* dramatizes brainwashing experiments funded by MKUltra that were performed on Canadian mental patients in the 1950s and 60s, and their subsequent efforts to sue the CIA.^[67]
- BYUtv's drama *Granite Flats* is a fictional dramatization of the implementation of MKUltra by a military hospital in Colorado.
- In season 2, episode 19 of *Bones*, "Spaceman in a Crater", Jack Hodgins mentions that Frank Olson was an unwitting participant and committed suicide, but that an exhumation 45 years later proved he was murdered.^[110]
- In an episode of ABC's *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, "The Things We Bury", one of the characters makes a reference to MKUltra.
- In season 2, episode 5 of *Fringe*, "Dream Logic", Walter Bishop briefly mentions his involvement with MKUltra.
- In season 6, episode 7 of *Archer*, "Nellis", Archer briefly mentions MKUltra while bluffing his way into Area 51; in season 7, episode 8, "Liquid Lunch", the program is explained to Archer's colleagues.
- In episode "Via Negativa" from the eighth season of *The X-Files*, The Lone Gunmen mention MKUltra while discussing a case with Agent Doggett.
- In *The X-Files* third-season episode "Jose Chung's From Outer Space", Jose Chung mentions the experiments as an example of the powerful effect "mere words" can have over the human mind.
- In *Alphas*, events imply that the Alphas program had its starts in the MKUltra program, and Dr. Rosen has access to certain files from the MKUltra project.
- In season 3, episode 10 of *NUMB3RS*, Don Eppes investigates the assassinations of a senator and a psychiatrist with links to MKUltra.
- In the fourth episode of Season 2 of *The Blacklist*, Cooper mentions Project MKUltra while talking to Elizabeth Keen. The entire episode is based on the premise of using genetic predisposition to make someone commit an act that they most likely would not have done in the first place.
- In season 1 of *Stranger Things*, the antagonist Dr. Martin Brenner is discovered to have been involved in MKUltra. One of the young protagonists, Eleven, was raised in a government laboratory after being born to an MKUltra test subject.
- In Season 5, Episode 10 of *The West Wing*, the White House press secretary is questioned by a reporter about mind control, leading her to investigate MKUltra and the budgetary allocations of DARPA for the project.
- Netflix original series *Manhunt: Unabomber* portrays the psychological torture of 16-year-old Harvard student Theodore Kaczynski by MKUltra researchers. Kaczynski was the perpetrator of serial bombings over a 17-year period and became known as the Unabomber.
- The 2017 Netflix documentary re-enactment mini-series *Wormwood* tells the story of Frank Olson and MKUltra through the eyes of his son, Eric.
- In the first season of *Dexter's Laboratory*, episode 27, Dexter falls asleep to a literal broken record that only recites a single phrase. He "wakes up" and moves through his day as a brain-washed shell, reciting only one phrase; this style of mind control echoes the MKUltra experiments carried out at Ravens Crag in Montreal, Canada.

Audio

- The song "MK Ultra" by British band Muse makes direct reference to this project in the title and uses lyrics to convey the effects of the project directly on a subject.
- Lyrics of "Look ... The Sun is Rising", the opening track to The Flaming Lips' 2013 album *The Terror*, narrate "a little spaceship" as a mechanism for MKUltra mind control.
- The song "The 4th Branch" by rapper Immortal Technique from his album *Revolutionary Volume 2*, compares modern media to MKUltra, "controlling your brain".

- Black Rebel Motorcycle Club's songs "US Government" and "MK Ultra" make direct reference to the project, as well as more oblique references.
- Progressive metal band Periphery's song "MK Ultra" makes direct reference to the project in the title.
- Olympia-based band Unwound's song "Mkultra" appears on both the *A Single History: 1991–1997* and *Rat Conspiracy* compilations.
- In 2019 British guitar amplifier manufacturer Orange Music Electronic Company designed a custom "one off" amplifier for blues guitarist Marcus King named the "MK Ultra".^[111]
- Rapper Lupe Fiasco's song "They. Resurrect. Over. New." from his 2015 album *Tetsuo & Youth* mentions MKUltra.
- Heavy metal band Toxic Holocaust's album *Chemistry of Consciousness* contains several references to the experiments, including the song "Mkultra".
- On metal band Arsonists Get All the Girls' 2013 album *Listen to the Color*, the songs "MK-ULTRA: Psychotropic Puppets" and "MK-DELTA: Glorified Killers" reference the program through title and lyrics.
- German band [:SITD:]'s song "MK Ultra" is titled for the project; the lyrics describe a person under the influence of drugs used in the project, losing their grasp on their humanity and mind.
- American singer-songwriter Will Wood's song "BlackBoxWarrior / OKULTRA" describes a person suffering from Stevens-Johnson Syndrome. Wood also references and builds off of MKULTRA history in his alternate reality game *Mary Bell University*.

Others

- The Stephen King book *Firestarter* is based on a fictionalized version of the MK Ultra experiments, and the protagonists all acquire powers as a result of the experimentation.
- Alan Glynn, the Irish novelist, uses Project MKUltra as part of the background for his plot in *Limitless* (also a film) and *Paradime* (2016).
- The horror game *Outlast* makes several major references to MK Ultra and implies that the experiments on the asylum inmates in the game are either a part of or associated with the program.
- Project MKUltra is mentioned in *Call of Duty: Black Ops* as the Soviet Union's attempt to turn protagonist Alex Mason into a Soviet sleeper agent with orders to assassinate President Kennedy. Mason's handler, CIA agent Jason Hudson, even mentions it when telling Mason he had been brainwashed by the Soviets, but was sabotaged to turn on his brainwashers.
- Project MKUltra is again mentioned in *Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War* as the CIA's attempt to turn protagonist "Bell" into an American sleeper agent with orders to find out who "Perseus" is. It is revealed and mentioned at the end of the story that "Bell" is a Russian agent who has undergone Project MKUltra.
- The game *Manhunt 2* is based around "The Pickman Project" which has several similarities to MKUltra and it is likely it was directly inspired by it.
- A cannabis strain called MKUltra has been developed by T.H.Seeds of Amsterdam.^[112]
- Project MKUltra is mentioned in the 2016 video game *Mafia III* by one of the characters, ex-CIA agent John Donovan.
- In the Broadway musical *We Will Rock You*, MKUltra is referred to as the Bohemians are brainwashed and experimented on to become vegetables.
- The online, anonymously-written science fiction and horror story 9MOTHER9HORSE9EYES9 borrows from and refers to the MKUltra project directly.^[113]
- The fictitious video game known as *Polybius* had spread around as an urban myth in the early 2000s. Many of the key points of *Polybius* allude to government control testing and other "men in black" type figures, suggesting *Polybius* took inspiration from project MKUltra at the time of its creation.^[114]

See also

United States

- CIA activities in the United States
- Unethical human experimentation in the United States

International

- Allegations of CIA drug trafficking
- Human radiation experiments
- Human rights violations by the CIA
- Poison laboratory of the Soviet secret services
- Unit 731

Operations

- Category:Central Intelligence Agency operations
- Project MKCHICKWIT
- Project MKOFTEN

Other

- Montauk Project
- Harold Blauer – a man who died within project MK-Ultra as a result of a 3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine injection

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External links

- Stephen Kinzer – Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 2. Oktober 2019 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uX4ksoSCoeE>)
- Entire Four (4) CD-ROM set of CIA / MKUltra Declassified documents released by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), image format (<http://www.theblackvault.com/documentarchive/cia-mkultra-collection/>), *The Black Vault*
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Radio-frequency identification

Radio-frequency identification (RFID) uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags attached to objects. An RFID system consists of a tiny radio transponder, a radio receiver and transmitter. When triggered by an electromagnetic interrogation pulse from a nearby RFID reader device, the tag transmits digital data, usually an identifying inventory number, back to the reader. This number can be used to track inventory goods.

There are two types of RFID tags:

- *Passive tags* are powered by energy from the RFID reader's interrogating radio waves.
- *Active tags* are powered by a battery and thus can be read at a greater range from the RFID reader, up to hundreds of meters.

Unlike a barcode, the tag does not need to be within the line of sight of the reader, so it may be embedded in the tracked object. RFID is one method of automatic identification and data capture (AIDC).^[1]

RFID tags are used in many industries. For example, an RFID tag attached to an automobile during production can be used to track its progress through the assembly line, RFID-tagged pharmaceuticals can be tracked through warehouses, and implanting RFID microchips in livestock and pets enables positive identification of animals. Tags can also be used in shops to expedite checkout, and to prevent theft by customers and employees.

Since RFID tags can be attached to physical money, clothing, and possessions, or implanted in animals and people, the possibility of reading personally-linked information without consent has raised serious privacy concerns.^[2] These concerns resulted in standard specifications development addressing privacy and security issues. ISO/IEC 18000 and ISO/IEC 29167 use on-chip cryptography methods for untraceability, tag and reader authentication, and over-the-air privacy. ISO/IEC 20248 specifies a digital signature data structure for RFID and barcodes providing data, source and read method authenticity. This work is done within ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 31 Automatic identification and data capture techniques.

In 2014, the world RFID market was worth US\$8.89 billion, up from US\$7.77 billion in 2013 and US\$6.96 billion in 2012. This figure includes tags, readers, and software/services for RFID cards, labels, fobs, and all other form factors. The market value is expected to rise from US\$12.08 billion in 2020 to US\$16.23 billion by 2029.^[3]

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History

In 1945, Léon Theremin invented a listening device for the Soviet Union which retransmitted incident radio waves with the added audio information. Sound waves vibrated a [diaphragm](#) which slightly altered the shape of the [resonator](#), which modulated the reflected radio frequency. Even though this device was a [covert listening device](#), rather than an identification tag, it is considered to be a predecessor of RFID because it was passive, being energized and activated by waves from an outside source.^[4]

Similar technology, such as the Identification friend or foe transponder, was routinely used by the Allies and Germany in World War II to identify aircraft as friendly or hostile. Transponders are still used by most powered aircraft.^[5] An early work exploring RFID is the landmark 1948 paper by Harry Stockman,^[6] who predicted that "Considerable research and development work has to be done before the remaining basic problems in reflected-power communication are solved, and before the field of useful applications is explored."



FasTrak, an RFID tag used for electronic toll collection in California

Mario Cardullo's device, patented on January 23, 1973, was the first true ancestor of modern RFID,^[7] as it was a passive radio transponder with memory.^[8] The initial device was passive, powered by the interrogating signal, and was demonstrated in 1971 to the New York Port Authority and other potential users. It consisted of a transponder with 16 bit memory for use as a toll device. The basic Cardullo patent covers the use of RF, sound and light as transmission carriers. The original business plan presented to investors in 1969 showed uses in transportation (automotive vehicle identification, automatic toll system, electronic license plate, electronic manifest, vehicle routing, vehicle performance monitoring), banking (electronic checkbook, electronic credit card), security (personnel identification, automatic gates, surveillance) and medical (identification, patient history).^[7]

In 1973, an early demonstration of *reflected power* (modulated backscatter) RFID tags, both passive and semi-passive, was performed by Steven Depp, Alfred Koelle and Robert Frayman at the Los Alamos National Laboratory.^[9] The portable system operated at 915 MHz and used 12-bit tags. This technique is used by the majority of today's UHFID and microwave RFID tags.^[10]

In 1983, the first patent to be associated with the abbreviation RFID was granted to Charles Walton.^[11]

Design

A radio-frequency identification system uses *tags*, or *labels* attached to the objects to be identified. Two-way radio transmitter-receivers called *interrogators* or *readers* send a signal to the tag and read its response.^[12]

Tags

RFID tags are made out of three pieces: a micro chip (an integrated circuit which stores and processes information and modulates and demodulates radio-frequency (RF) signals), an antenna for receiving and transmitting the signal and a substrate.^[13] The tag information is stored in a non-volatile memory.^[13] The RFID tag includes either fixed or programmable logic for processing the transmission and sensor data, respectively.

RFID tags can be either passive, active or battery-assisted passive. An active tag has an on-board battery and periodically transmits its ID signal.^[13] A battery-assisted passive tag has a small battery on board and is activated when in the presence of an RFID reader. A passive tag is cheaper and smaller because it has no battery; instead, the tag uses the radio energy transmitted by the reader. However, to operate a passive tag, it must be illuminated with a power level roughly a thousand times stronger than an active tag for signal transmission.^[14] This makes a difference in interference and in exposure to radiation.^[15]

Tags may either be read-only, having a factory-assigned serial number that is used as a key into a database, or may be read/write, where object-specific data can be written into the tag by the system user. Field programmable tags may be write-once, read-multiple; "blank" tags may be written with an electronic product code by the user.^[16]

The RFID tag receives the message and then responds with its identification and other information. This may be only a unique tag serial number, or may be product-related information such as a stock number, lot or batch number, production date, or other specific information. Since tags have individual serial numbers, the RFID system design can discriminate among several tags that might be within the range of the RFID reader and read them simultaneously.

Readers

RFID systems can be classified by the type of tag and reader. There are 3 types:^[17]

- A **Passive Reader Active Tag (PRAT)** system has a passive reader which only receives radio signals from active tags (battery operated, transmit only). The reception range of a PRAT system reader can be adjusted from 1–2,000 feet (0–600 m), allowing flexibility in applications such as asset protection and supervision.
- An **Active Reader Passive Tag (ARPT)** system has an active reader, which transmits interrogator signals and also receives authentication replies from passive tags.
- An **Active Reader Active Tag (ARAT)** system uses active tags activated with an interrogator signal from the active reader. A variation of this system could also use a Battery-Assisted Passive (BAP) tag which acts like a passive tag but has a small battery to power the tag's return reporting signal.

Fixed readers are set up to create a specific interrogation zone which can be tightly controlled. This allows a highly defined reading area for when tags go in and out of the interrogation zone. Mobile readers may be handheld or mounted on carts or vehicles.

Frequencies

RFID frequency bands^{[18][19]}

Band	Regulations	Range	Data speed	ISO/IEC 18000 section	Remarks	Approximate tag cost in volume (2006)
LF: 120–150 kHz	Unregulated	10 cm	Low	Part 2 (http://www.iso.org/iso/home/store/catalogue_ics/catalogue_detail_ics.htm?csnumber=46146)	Animal identification, factory data collection	US\$1
HF: 13.56 MHz	ISM band worldwide	10 cm–1 m	Low to moderate	Part 3	Smart cards (ISO/IEC 15693, ISO/IEC 14443 A, B), ISO-non-compliant memory cards (Mifare Classic, iCLASS, Legic, Felica ...), ISO-compatible microprocessor cards (Desfire EV1, Seos)	US\$0.02 to US\$5
UHF: 433 MHz	Short range devices	1–100 m	Moderate	Part 7 (https://www.iso.org/standards/57336.html)	Defense applications, with active tags	US\$5
UHF: 865–868 MHz (Europe) 902–928 MHz (North America)	ISM band	1–12 m	Moderate to high	Part 6 (https://www.iso.org/standards/59644.html)	EAN, various standards; used by railroads ^[20]	US\$0.04 to US\$1.00 (passive tags)
microwave: 2450–5800 MHz	ISM band	1–2 m	High	Part 4 (http://www.iso.org/iso/home/store/catalogue_ics/catalogue_detail_ics.htm?csnumber=62539)	802.11 WLAN, Bluetooth standards	US\$25 (active tags)
microwave: 3.1–10 GHz	Ultra wide band	up to 200 m	High	not defined	Requires semi-active or active tags	US\$5 projected

Signaling

Signaling between the reader and the tag is done in several different incompatible ways, depending on the frequency band used by the tag. Tags operating on LF and HF bands are, in terms of radio wavelength, very close to the reader antenna because they are only a small percentage of a wavelength away. In this near field region, the tag is closely coupled electrically with the transmitter in the reader. The tag can modulate the field produced by the reader by changing the electrical loading the tag represents. By switching between lower and higher relative loads, the tag produces a change that the reader can detect. At UHF and higher frequencies, the tag is more than one radio wavelength away from the reader, requiring a different approach. The tag can backscatter a signal. Active tags may contain functionally separated transmitters and receivers, and the tag need not respond on a frequency related to the reader's interrogation signal.^[21]



RFID hard tag

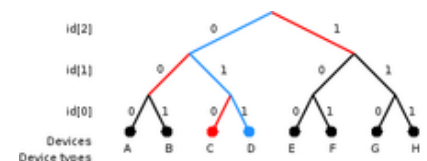
An Electronic Product Code (EPC) is one common type of data stored in a tag. When written into the tag by an RFID printer, the tag contains a 96-bit string of data. The first eight bits are a header which identifies the version of the protocol. The next 28 bits identify the organization that manages the data for this tag; the organization number is assigned by the EPCGlobal consortium. The next 24 bits are an object class, identifying the kind of product. The last 36 bits are a unique serial number for a particular tag. These last two fields are set by the organization that issued the tag. Rather like a URL, the total electronic product code number can be used as a key into a global database to uniquely identify a particular product.^[22]

Often more than one tag will respond to a tag reader, for example, many individual products with tags may be shipped in a common box or on a common pallet. Collision detection is important to allow reading of data. Two different types of protocols are used to "singulate" a particular tag, allowing its data to be read in the midst of many similar tags. In a slotted Aloha system, the reader broadcasts an initialization command and a parameter that the tags individually use to pseudo-randomly delay their responses. When using an "adaptive binary tree" protocol, the reader sends an initialization symbol and then transmits one bit of ID data at a time; only tags with matching bits respond, and eventually only one tag matches the complete ID string.^[23]

Both methods have drawbacks when used with many tags or with multiple overlapping readers.

Bulk reading

"Bulk reading" is a strategy for interrogating multiple tags at the same time, but lacks sufficient precision for inventory control. A group of objects, all of them RFID tagged, are read completely from one single reader position at one time. Bulk reading is a possible use of HF (ISO 18000-3), UHF (ISO 18000-6) and SHF (ISO 18000-4) RFID tags. However, as tags respond strictly sequentially, the time needed for bulk reading grows linearly with the number of labels to be read. This means it takes at least twice as long to read twice as many labels. Due to collision effects, the time required is greater.^[24]



An example of a binary tree method of identifying an RFID tag

A group of tags has to be illuminated by the interrogating signal just like a single tag. This is not a challenge concerning energy, but with respect to visibility; if any of the tags are shielded by other tags, they might not be sufficiently illuminated to return a sufficient response. The response conditions for inductively coupled HF RFID tags and coil antennas in magnetic fields appear better than for UHF or SHF dipole fields, but then distance limits apply and may prevent success.

Under operational conditions, bulk reading is not reliable. Bulk reading can be a rough guide for logistics decisions, but due to a high proportion of reading failures, it is not (yet) suitable for inventory management. However, when a single RFID tag might be seen as not guaranteeing a proper read, multiple RFID tags, where at least one will respond, may be a safer approach for detecting a known grouping of objects. In this respect, bulk reading is a fuzzy method for process support. From the perspective of cost and effect, bulk reading is not reported as an economical approach to secure process control in logistics.^[25]

Miniaturization

RFID tags are easy to conceal or incorporate in other items. For example, in 2009 researchers at Bristol University successfully glued RFID micro-transponders to live ants in order to study their behavior.^[26] This trend towards increasingly miniaturized RFIDs is likely to continue as technology advances.

Hitachi holds the record for the smallest RFID chip, at 0.05 mm × 0.05 mm. This is 1/64th the size of the previous record holder, the mu-chip.^[27] Manufacture is enabled by using the silicon-on-insulator (SOI) process. These dust-sized chips can store 38-digit numbers using 128-bit Read Only Memory (ROM).^[28] A major challenge is the attachment of antennas, thus limiting read range to only millimeters.

Lifecycle

Manufacture

The microchip is designed and made by a semiconductor manufacturer. The tag manufacturer cuts the chip from the wafer and connects it to the antenna.^[13]

The antenna is usually designed and made by a tag manufacturer. It can be made out of copper, aluminum, or silver strips. The antenna can take different shapes: a spiral, a single dipole antenna, two dipoles with one dipole perpendicular to another, or a folded dipole. The antenna length and geometry depends on the frequency at which the tag operates.^[13]

Chip and antenna are embedded onto a thin plastic substrate of 100 to 200 nm, for example polymer, PVC, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), phenolics, polyesters, styrene, or paper via copper etching or hot stamping. The fastest and cheapest process is via screen printing using conductive ink containing copper, nickel, or carbon.^[13]

Disposal

Tags contain metals and recycling is desirable on environmental grounds.^[29]

RFID tags can interfere with recycling in the waste stream: Aluminium antennas on glass containers can reduce the amount and quality of recycled glass, if they cannot be separated within the process.^{[29]:12}

In the paper waste stream, laminated copper foil antennas do not readily break down, but have to be removed in pulp as a non-recyclable solid waste, while silver ink from printed, non-laminated labels remains with paper substrate and cannot easily be extractable from paper.^[30]

RFID tags which cannot be removed from products or do not contain a kill switch – or partial kill switch – may present a privacy concern.^{[29]:12}

As of 2012, the EU had not addressed the question of disposal in its Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.^{[29]:13}

Uses

An RFID tag can be affixed to an object and used to track and manage inventory, assets, people, etc. For example, they can be affixed to cars, computer equipment, books, mobile phones, etc.

RFID offers advantages over manual systems or use of barcodes. The tag can be read if passed near a reader, even if it is covered by the object or not visible. The tag can be read inside a case, carton, box or other container, and unlike barcodes, RFID tags can be read hundreds per second; barcodes can only be read one at a time using current

devices. Some RFID tags, such as Battery-Assisted Passive tags, are also able to monitor temperature and humidity.^[31]

In 2011, the cost of passive tags started at US\$0.09 each; special tags, meant to be mounted on metal or withstand gamma sterilization, could cost up to US\$5. Active tags for tracking containers, medical assets, or monitoring environmental conditions in data centers started at US\$50 and could be over US\$100 each. Battery-Assisted Passive (BAP) tags were in the US\$3–10 range.

RFID can be used in a variety of applications,^{[32][33]} such as:

- Access management
- Tracking of goods
- Tracking of persons and animals^[34]
- Toll collection and contactless payment
- Machine readable travel documents
- Smartdust (for massively distributed sensor networks)
- Locating lost airport baggage^[35]
- Timing sporting events
- Tracking and billing processes
- Monitoring the physical state of perishable goods^[36]

In 2010, three factors drove a significant increase in RFID usage: decreased cost of equipment and tags, increased performance to a reliability of 99.9%, and a stable international standard around HF and UHF passive RFID. The adoption of these standards were driven by EPCglobal, a joint venture between GS1 and GS1 US, which were responsible for driving global adoption of the barcode in the 1970s and 1980s. The EPCglobal Network was developed by the Auto-ID Center.^[37]

Commerce

RFID provides a way for organizations to identify and manage stock, tools and equipment (asset tracking), etc. without manual data entry. Manufactured products such as automobiles or garments can be tracked through the factory and through shipping to the customer. Automatic identification with RFID can be used for inventory systems. Many organisations require that their vendors place RFID tags on all shipments to improve supply chain management.

Retail

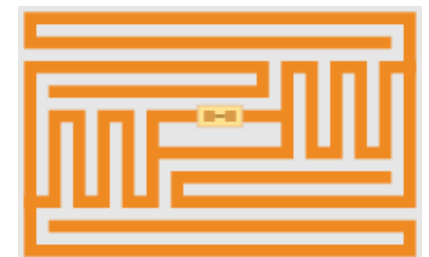
RFID is used for item level tagging in retail stores. In addition to inventory control, this provides both protection against theft by customers (shoplifting) and employees ("shrinkage") by using electronic article surveillance (EAS), and a self checkout process for customers. Tags of different types can be physically removed with a special tool or deactivated electronically once items have been paid for.^[38] On leaving the shop, customers have to pass near an RFID detector; if they have items with active RFID tags, an alarm sounds, both indicating an unpaid-for item, and identifying what it is.

Casinos can use RFID to authenticate poker chips, and can selectively invalidate any chips known to be stolen.^[39]

Access control



Electronic key for RFID based lock system



An EPC RFID tag used by Wal-Mart



Sewn-in RFID label in garment manufactured by the French sports supplier Decathlon. Front, back, and transparency scan.

RFID tags are widely used in identification badges, replacing earlier magnetic stripe cards. These badges need only be held within a certain distance of the reader to authenticate the holder. Tags can also be placed on vehicles, which can be read at a distance, to allow entrance to controlled areas without having to stop the vehicle and present a card or enter an access code.

Advertising

In 2010 Vail Resorts began using UHF Passive RFID tags in ski passes.^[40]

Facebook is using RFID cards at most of their live events to allow guests to automatically capture and post photos.

Automotive brands have adopted RFID for social media product placement more quickly than other industries. Mercedes was an early adopter in 2011 at the PGA Golf Championships,^[41] and by the 2013 Geneva Motor Show many of the larger brands were using RFID for social media marketing.^[42]

Promotion tracking

To prevent retailers diverting products, manufacturers are exploring the use of RFID tags on promoted merchandise so that they can track exactly which product has sold through the supply chain at fully discounted prices.^[43]

Transportation and logistics

Yard management, shipping and freight and distribution centers use RFID tracking. In the railroad industry, RFID tags mounted on locomotives and rolling stock identify the owner, identification number and type of equipment and its characteristics. This can be used with a database to identify the type, origin, destination, etc. of the commodities being carried.^[44]

In commercial aviation, RFID is used to support maintenance on commercial aircraft. RFID tags are used to identify baggage and cargo at several airports and airlines.^{[45][46]}

Some countries are using RFID for vehicle registration and enforcement.^[47] RFID can help detect and retrieve stolen cars.^{[48][49]}

RFID is used in intelligent transportation systems. In New York City, RFID readers are deployed at intersections to track E-ZPass tags as a means for monitoring the traffic flow. The data is fed through the broadband wireless infrastructure to the traffic management center to be used in adaptive traffic control of the traffic lights.^[50]

Hose stations and conveyance of fluids

The RFID antenna in a permanently installed coupling half (fixed part) unmistakably identifies the RFID transponder placed in the other coupling half (free part) after completed coupling. When connected, the transponder of the free part transmits all important information contactless to the fixed part. The coupling's location can be clearly identified by the RFID transponder coding. The control is enabled to automatically start subsequent process steps.

Track and trace test vehicles and prototype parts



RFID antenna for vehicular access control



RFID E-ZPass reader attached to the pole and mast arm (right) used in traffic monitoring in New York City

In the automotive industry, RFID is used to track and trace test vehicles and prototype parts (project Transparent Prototype).

Infrastructure management and protection

At least one company has introduced RFID to identify and locate underground infrastructure assets such as gas pipelines, sewer lines, electrical cables, communication cables, etc.^[51]

Passports

The first RFID passports ("E-passport") were issued by Malaysia in 1998. In addition to information also contained on the visual data page of the passport, Malaysian e-passports record the travel history (time, date, and place) of entry into and exit out of the country.

Other countries that insert RFID in passports include Norway (2005),^[52] Japan (March 1, 2006), most EU countries (around 2006), Australia, Hong Kong, the United States (2007), the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (2006), India (June 2008), Serbia (July 2008), Republic of Korea (August 2008), Taiwan (December 2008), Albania (January 2009), The Philippines (August 2009), Republic of Macedonia (2010), Argentina (2012), Canada (2013), Uruguay (2015)^[53] and Israel (2017).

Standards for RFID passports are determined by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and are contained in ICAO Document 9303, Part 1, Volumes 1 and 2 (6th edition, 2006). ICAO refers to the ISO/IEC 14443 RFID chips in e-passports as "contactless integrated circuits". ICAO standards provide for e-passports to be identifiable by a standard e-passport logo on the front cover.

Since 2006, RFID tags included in new United States passports will store the same information that is printed within the passport, and include a digital picture of the owner.^[54] The United States Department of State initially stated the chips could only be read from a distance of 10 centimetres (3.9 in), but after widespread criticism and a clear demonstration that special equipment can read the test passports from 10 metres (33 ft) away,^[55] the passports were designed to incorporate a thin metal lining to make it more difficult for unauthorized readers to skim information when the passport is closed. The department will also implement Basic Access Control (BAC), which functions as a personal identification number (PIN) in the form of characters printed on the passport data page. Before a passport's tag can be read, this PIN must be entered into an RFID reader. The BAC also enables the encryption of any communication between the chip and interrogator.^[56]

Transportation payments

In many countries, RFID tags can be used to pay for mass transit fares on bus, trains, or subways, or to collect tolls on highways.

Some bike lockers are operated with RFID cards assigned to individual users. A prepaid card is required to open or enter a facility or locker and is used to track and charge based on how long the bike is parked.

The Zipcar car-sharing service uses RFID cards for locking and unlocking cars and for member identification.^[57]

In Singapore, RFID replaces paper Season Parking Ticket (SPT).^[58]

Animal identification

RFID tags for animals represent one of the oldest uses of RFID. Originally meant for large ranches and rough terrain, since the outbreak of mad-cow disease, RFID has become crucial in animal identification management. An implantable RFID tag or transponder can also be used for animal identification. The transponders are better known as PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tags, passive RFID, or "chips" on animals.^[59] The Canadian Cattle

Identification Agency (<http://www.canadaid.com/>) began using RFID tags as a replacement for barcode tags. Currently CCIA tags are used in Wisconsin and by United States farmers on a voluntary basis. The USDA is currently developing its own program.

RFID tags are required for all cattle sold in Australia and in some states, sheep and goats as well.^[60]

Human implantation

Biocompatible microchip implants that utilize RFID technology are being routinely implanted in humans. The first-ever human to receive an RFID microchip implant was American artist Eduardo Kac in 1997.^{[61][62]} Kac implanted the microchip live on television in the context of his artwork Time Capsule. A year later, British professor of cybernetics Kevin Warwick had an RFID chip implanted in his arm by his general practitioner, George Boulos.^{[63][64]} In 2004 the 'Baja Beach Clubs' operated by Conrad Chase in Barcelona^[65] and Rotterdam offered implanted chips to identify their VIP customers, who could in turn use it to pay for service. In 2009 British scientist Mark Gasson had an advanced glass capsule RFID device surgically implanted into his left hand and subsequently demonstrated how a computer virus could wirelessly infect his implant and then be transmitted on to other systems.^[66]

The Food and Drug Administration in the United States approved the use of RFID chips in humans in 2004.^[67]

There is controversy regarding human applications of implantable RFID technology including concerns that individuals could potentially be tracked by carrying an identifier unique to them. Privacy advocates have protested against implantable RFID chips, warning of potential abuse. Some are concerned this could lead to abuse by an authoritarian government, to removal of freedoms,^[68] and to the emergence of an "ultimate panopticon", a society where all citizens behave in a socially accepted manner because others might be watching.^[69]

On July 22, 2006, Reuters reported that two hackers, Newitz and Westhues, at a conference in New York City demonstrated that they could clone the RFID signal from a human implanted RFID chip, indicating that the device was not as secure as was previously claimed.^[70]

Institutions

Hospitals and healthcare

In healthcare, there is a need for increased visibility, efficiency, and gathering of data around relevant interactions. RFID tracking solutions are able to help healthcare facilities manage mobile medical equipment, improve patient workflow, monitor environmental conditions, and protect patients, staff and visitors from infection or other hazards.

Adoption of RFID in the medical industry has been widespread and very effective.^[71] Hospitals are among the first users to combine both active and passive RFID.^[72] Many successful deployments in the healthcare industry have been cited where active technology tracks high-value, or frequently moved items, and where passive technology tracks smaller, lower cost items that only need room-level identification.^[73] For example, medical facility rooms can collect data from transmissions of RFID badges worn by patients and employees, as well as from tags assigned to facility assets, such as mobile medical devices.^[74] The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced plans to deploy RFID in hospitals across America to improve care and reduce costs.^[75]



A surgeon implants British scientist Dr Mark Gasson in his left hand with an RFID microchip (March 16, 2009)

A physical RFID tag may be incorporated with browser-based software to increase its efficacy. This software allows for different groups or specific hospital staff, nurses, and patients to see real-time data relevant to each piece of tracked equipment or personnel. Real-time data is stored and archived to make use of historical reporting functionality and to prove compliance with various industry regulations. This combination of RFID real-time locating system hardware and software provides a powerful data collection tool for facilities seeking to improve operational efficiency and reduce costs.^[76]

The trend is toward using ISO 18000-6c as the tag of choice and combining an active tagging system that relies on existing 802.11X wireless infrastructure for active tags.^[77]

Since 2004 a number of U.S. hospitals have begun implanting patients with RFID tags and using RFID systems, usually for workflow and inventory management.^{[78][79][80]} The use of RFID to prevent mix-ups between sperm and ova in IVF clinics is also being considered.^[81]

In October 2004, the FDA approved the USA's first RFID chips that can be implanted in humans. The 134 kHz RFID chips, from VeriChip Corp. can incorporate personal medical information and could save lives and limit injuries from errors in medical treatments, according to the company. Anti-RFID activists Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre discovered an FDA Warning Letter that spelled out health risks.^[82] According to the FDA, these include "adverse tissue reaction", "migration of the implanted transponder", "failure of implanted transponder", "electrical hazards" and "magnetic resonance imaging [MRI] incompatibility."

Libraries

Libraries have used RFID to replace the barcodes on library items. The tag can contain identifying information or may just be a key into a database. An RFID system may replace or supplement bar codes and may offer another method of inventory management and self-service checkout by patrons. It can also act as a security device, taking the place of the more traditional electromagnetic security strip.^[83]

It is estimated that over 30 million library items worldwide now contain RFID tags, including some in the Vatican Library in Rome.^[84]

Since RFID tags can be read through an item, there is no need to open a book cover or DVD case to scan an item, and a stack of books can be read simultaneously. Book tags can be read while books are in motion on a conveyor belt, which reduces staff time. This can all be done by the borrowers themselves, reducing the need for library staff assistance. With portable readers, inventories could be done on a whole shelf of materials within seconds.^[85] However, as of 2008 this technology remained too costly for many smaller libraries, and the conversion period has been estimated at 11 months for an average-size library. A 2004 Dutch estimate was that a library which lends 100,000 books per year should plan on a cost of €50,000 (borrow- and return-stations: 12,500 each, detection porches 10,000 each; tags 0.36 each). RFID taking a large burden off staff could also mean that fewer staff will be needed, resulting in some of them getting laid off,^[84] but that has so far not happened in North America where recent surveys have not returned a single library that cut staff because of adding RFID.^[86] In fact, library budgets are being reduced for personnel and increased for infrastructure, making it necessary for libraries to add automation to compensate for the reduced staff size.^[86] Also, the tasks that RFID takes over are largely not the primary tasks of librarians.^[86] A finding in the Netherlands is that borrowers are pleased with the fact that staff are now more available for answering questions.^[86]

Privacy concerns have been raised surrounding library use of RFID.^{[87][88]} Because some RFID tags can be read up to 100 metres (330 ft) away, there is some concern over whether sensitive information could be collected from an unwilling source. However, library RFID tags do not contain any patron information,^[89] and the tags used in the majority of libraries use a frequency only readable from approximately 10 feet (3.0 m).^[83] Another concern is that a non-library agency could potentially record the RFID tags of every person leaving the library without the library



RFID tags used in libraries: square book tag, round CD/DVD tag and rectangular VHS tag

administrator's knowledge or consent. One simple option is to let the book transmit a code that has meaning only in conjunction with the library's database. Another possible enhancement would be to give each book a new code every time it is returned. In future, should readers become ubiquitous (and possibly networked), then stolen books could be traced even outside the library. Tag removal could be made difficult if the tags are so small that they fit invisibly inside a (random) page, possibly put there by the publisher.

Museums

RFID technologies are now also implemented in end-user applications in museums.^[90] An example was the custom-designed temporary research application, "eXspot," at the Exploratorium, a science museum in San Francisco, California. A visitor entering the museum received an RF tag that could be carried as a card. The eXspot system enabled the visitor to receive information about specific exhibits. Aside from the exhibit information, the visitor could take photographs of themselves at the exhibit. It was also intended to allow the visitor to take data for later analysis. The collected information could be retrieved at home from a "personalized" website keyed to the RFID tag.^[91]

Schools and universities

In 2004 school authorities in the Japanese city of Osaka made a decision to start chipping children's clothing, backpacks, and student IDs in a primary school.^[92] Later, in 2007, a school in Doncaster, England is piloting a monitoring system designed to keep tabs on pupils by tracking radio chips in their uniforms.^[93] St Charles Sixth Form College in west London, England, started in 2008, uses an RFID card system to check in and out of the main gate, to both track attendance and prevent unauthorized entrance. Similarly, Whitcliffe Mount School in Cleckheaton, England uses RFID to track pupils and staff in and out of the building via a specially designed card. In the Philippines, during 2012, some schools already use RFID in IDs for borrowing books.^[94] Gates in those particular schools also have RFID scanners for buying items at school shops and canteens. RFID is also used in school libraries, and to sign in and out for student and teacher attendance.^[86]

Sports

RFID for timing races began in the early 1990s with pigeon racing, introduced by the company Deister Electronics in Germany. RFID can provide race start and end timings for individuals in large races where it is impossible to get accurate stopwatch readings for every entrant.

In races utilizing RFID, racers wear tags that are read by antennas placed alongside the track or on mats across the track. UHF tags provide accurate readings with specially designed antennas. Rush error, lap count errors and accidents at race start are avoided, as anyone can start and finish at any time without being in a batch mode.

The design of the chip and of the antenna controls the range from which it can be read. Short range compact chips are twist tied to the shoe, or strapped to the ankle with hook-and-loop fasteners. The chips must be about 400mm from the mat, therefore giving very good temporal resolution. Alternatively, a chip plus a very large (125mm square) antenna can be incorporated into the bib number worn on the athlete's chest at a height of about 1.25 m (4.10 ft).

Passive and active RFID systems are used in off-road events such as Orienteering, Enduro and Hare and Hounds racing. Riders have a transponder on their person, normally on their arm. When they complete a lap they swipe or touch the receiver which is connected to a computer and log their lap time.

RFID is being adapted by many recruitment agencies which have a PET (physical endurance test) as their qualifying procedure, especially in cases where the candidate volumes may run into millions (Indian Railway recruitment cells, police and power sector).



ChampionChip



J-Chip 8-channel receiver next to timing mat. The athlete wears a chip on a strap around his ankle.
 Ironman Germany (<https://web.archive.org/web/19961218232821/http://www.ironman.de/>) 2007 in Frankfurt.

A number of ski resorts have adopted RFID tags to provide skiers hands-free access to ski lifts. Skiers do not have to take their passes out of their pockets. Ski jackets have a left pocket into which the chip+card fits. This nearly contacts the sensor unit on the left of the turnstile as the skier pushes through to the lift. These systems were based on high frequency (HF) at 13.56 megahertz. The bulk of ski areas in Europe, from Verbier to Chamonix, use these systems.^{[95][96][97]}

The NFL in the United States equips players with RFID chips that measures speed, distance and direction traveled by each player in real-time. Currently cameras stay focused on the quarterback; however, numerous plays are happening simultaneously on the field. The RFID chip will provide new insight into these simultaneous plays.^[98] The chip triangulates the player's position within six inches and will be used to digitally broadcast replays. The RFID chip will make individual player information accessible to the public. The data will be available via the NFL 2015 app.^[99] The RFID chips are manufactured by Zebra Technologies. Zebra Technologies tested the RFID chip in 18 stadiums

last year to track vector data.^[100]

Complement to barcode

RFID tags are often a complement, but not a substitute, for UPC or EAN barcodes. They may never completely replace barcodes, due in part to their higher cost and the advantage of multiple data sources on the same object. Also, unlike RFID labels, barcodes can be generated and distributed electronically, *e.g.* via e-mail or mobile phone, for printing or display by the recipient. An example is airline boarding passes. The new EPC, along with several other schemes, is widely available at reasonable cost.

The storage of data associated with tracking items will require many terabytes. Filtering and categorizing RFID data is needed to create useful information. It is likely that goods will be tracked by the pallet using RFID tags, and at package level with Universal Product Code (UPC) or EAN from unique barcodes.

The unique identity is a mandatory requirement for RFID tags, despite special choice of the numbering scheme. RFID tag data capacity is large enough that each individual tag will have a unique code, while current barcodes are limited to a single type code for a particular product. The uniqueness of RFID tags means that a product may be tracked as it moves from location to location while being delivered to a person. This may help to combat theft and other forms of product loss. The tracing of products is an important feature that is well supported with RFID tags containing a unique identity of the tag and the serial number of the object. This may help companies cope with quality deficiencies and resulting recall campaigns, but also contributes to concern about tracking and profiling of persons after the sale.

Waste management

Since around 2007 there been increasing development in the use of RFID in the waste management industry. RFID tags are installed on waste collection carts, linking carts to the owner's account for easy billing and service verification.^[101] The tag is embedded into a garbage and recycle container, and the RFID reader is affixed to the garbage and recycle trucks.^[102] RFID also measures a customer's set-out rate and provides insight as to the number of carts serviced by each waste collection vehicle. This RFID process replaces traditional "pay as you throw" (PAYT) municipal solid waste usage-pricing models.

Telemetry

Active RFID tags have the potential to function as low-cost remote sensors that broadcast telemetry back to a base station. Applications of tagometry data could include sensing of road conditions by implanted beacons, weather reports, and noise level monitoring.^[103]

Passive RFID tags can also report sensor data. For example, the Wireless Identification and Sensing Platform is a passive tag that reports temperature, acceleration and capacitance to commercial Gen2 RFID readers.

It is possible that active or battery-assisted passive (BAP) RFID tags could broadcast a signal to an in-store receiver to determine whether the RFID tag – and by extension, the product it is attached to – is in the store.

Regulation and standardization

To avoid injuries to humans and animals, RF transmission needs to be controlled.^[104] A number of organizations have set standards for RFID, including the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), ASTM International, the DASH7 Alliance and EPCglobal.^[105]

Several specific industries have also set guidelines, including the Financial Services Technology Consortium (FSTC) for tracking IT Assets with RFID, the Computer Technology Industry Association CompTIA for certifying RFID engineers, and the International Airlines Transport Association IATA for luggage in airports.

Every country can set its own rules for frequency allocation for RFID tags, and not all radio bands are available in all countries. These frequencies are known as the ISM bands (Industrial Scientific and Medical bands). The return signal of the tag may still cause interference for other radio users.

- Low-frequency (LF: 125–134.2 kHz and 140–148.5 kHz) (LowFID) tags and high-frequency (HF: 13.56 MHz) (HighFID) tags can be used globally without a license.
- Ultra-high-frequency (UHF: 865–928 MHz) (Ultra-HighFID or UHFID) tags cannot be used globally as there is no single global standard, and regulations differ from country to country.

In North America, UHF can be used unlicensed for 902–928 MHz (± 13 MHz from the 915 MHz center frequency), but restrictions exist for transmission power. In Europe, RFID and other low-power radio applications are regulated by ETSI recommendations EN 300 220 and EN 302 208, and ERO recommendation 70 03, allowing RFID operation with somewhat complex band restrictions from 865–868 MHz. Readers are required to monitor a channel before transmitting ("Listen Before Talk"); this requirement has led to some restrictions on performance, the resolution of which is a subject of current research. The North American UHF standard is not accepted in France as it interferes with its military bands. On July 25, 2012, Japan changed its UHF band to 920 MHz, more closely matching the United States' 915 MHz band, establishing an international standard environment for RFID.

In some countries, a site license is needed, which needs to be applied for at the local authorities, and can be revoked.

As of 31 October 2014, regulations are in place in 78 countries representing approximately 96.5% of the world's GDP, and work on regulations was in progress in three countries representing approximately 1% of the world's GDP.^[106]

Standards that have been made regarding RFID include:

- ISO 11784/11785 – Animal identification. Uses 134.2 kHz.
- ISO 14223 – Radiofrequency identification of animals – Advanced transponders
- ISO/IEC 14443: This standard is a popular HF (13.56 MHz) standard for HighFIDs which is being used as the basis of RFID-enabled passports under ICAO 9303. The Near Field Communication standard that lets mobile devices act as RFID readers/transponders is also based on ISO/IEC 14443.
- ISO/IEC 15693: This is also a popular HF (13.56 MHz) standard for HighFIDs widely used for non-contact smart payment and credit cards.
- ISO/IEC 18000: Information technology—Radio frequency identification for item management:
- ISO/IEC 18092 Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Near Field Communication—Interface and Protocol (NFCIP-1)
- ISO 18185: This is the industry standard for electronic seals or "e-seals" for tracking cargo containers using the 433 MHz and 2.4 GHz frequencies.

- ISO/IEC 21481 Information technology—Telecommunications and information exchange between systems—Near Field Communication Interface and Protocol –2 (NFCIP-2)
- ASTM D7434, Standard Test Method for Determining the Performance of Passive Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Transponders on Palletized or Unitized Loads
- ASTM D7435, Standard Test Method for Determining the Performance of Passive Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Transponders on Loaded Containers
- ASTM D7580, Standard Test Method for Rotary Stretch Wrapper Method for Determining the Readability of Passive RFID Transponders on Homogenous Palletized or Unitized Loads
- ISO 28560-2— specifies encoding standards and data model to be used within libraries.^[107]

In order to ensure global interoperability of products, several organizations have set up additional standards for RFID testing. These standards include conformance, performance and interoperability tests.

EPC Gen2

EPC Gen2 is short for *EPCglobal UHF Class 1 Generation 2*.

EPCglobal, a joint venture between GS1 and GS1 US, is working on international standards for the use of mostly passive RFID and the Electronic Product Code (EPC) in the identification of many items in the supply chain for companies worldwide.

One of the missions of EPCglobal was to simplify the Babel of protocols prevalent in the RFID world in the 1990s. Two tag air interfaces (the protocol for exchanging information between a tag and a reader) were defined (but not ratified) by EPCglobal prior to 2003. These protocols, commonly known as Class 0 and Class 1, saw significant commercial implementation in 2002–2005.^[108]

In 2004, the Hardware Action Group created a new protocol, the Class 1 Generation 2 interface, which addressed a number of problems that had been experienced with Class 0 and Class 1 tags. The EPC Gen2 standard was approved in December 2004. This was approved after a contention from Intermec that the standard may infringe a number of their RFID-related patents. It was decided that the standard itself does not infringe their patents, making the standard royalty free.^[109] The EPC Gen2 standard was adopted with minor modifications as ISO 18000-6C in 2006.^[110]

In 2007, the lowest cost of Gen2 EPC inlay was offered by the now-defunct company SmartCode, at a price of \$0.05 apiece in volumes of 100 million or more.^[111]

Problems and concerns

Data flooding

Not every successful reading of a tag (an observation) is useful for business purposes. A large amount of data may be generated that is not useful for managing inventory or other applications. For example, a customer moving a product from one shelf to another, or a pallet load of articles that passes several readers while being moved in a warehouse, are events that do not produce data that are meaningful to an inventory control system.^[112]

Event filtering is required to reduce this data inflow to a meaningful depiction of moving goods passing a threshold. Various concepts have been designed, mainly offered as *middleware* performing the filtering from noisy and redundant raw data to significant processed data.

Global standardization

The frequencies used for UHF RFID in the USA are as of 2007 incompatible with those of Europe or Japan. Furthermore, no emerging standard has yet become as universal as the barcode.^[113] To address international trade concerns, it is necessary to use a tag that is operational within all of the international frequency domains.

Security concerns

A primary RFID security concern is the illicit tracking of RFID tags. Tags, which are world-readable, pose a risk to both personal location privacy and corporate/military security. Such concerns have been raised with respect to the United States Department of Defense's recent adoption of RFID tags for supply chain management.^[114] More generally, privacy organizations have expressed concerns in the context of ongoing efforts to embed electronic product code (EPC) RFID tags in general-use products. This is mostly as a result of the fact that RFID tags can be read, and legitimate transactions with readers can be eavesdropped on, from non-trivial distances. RFID used in access control,^[115] payment and eID (e-passport) systems operate at a shorter range than EPC RFID systems but are also vulnerable to skimming and eavesdropping, albeit at shorter distances.^[116]

A second method of prevention is by using cryptography. Rolling codes and challenge–response authentication (CRA) are commonly used to foil monitor-repetition of the messages between the tag and reader, as any messages that have been recorded would prove to be unsuccessful on repeat transmission. Rolling codes rely upon the tag's ID being changed after each interrogation, while CRA uses software to ask for a cryptographically coded response from the tag. The protocols used during CRA can be symmetric, or may use public key cryptography.^[117]

Unauthorized reading of RFID tags presents a risk to privacy and to business secrecy.^[118] Unauthorized readers can potentially use RFID information to identify or track packages, persons, carriers, or the contents of a package.^[117] Several prototype systems are being developed to combat unauthorized reading, including RFID signal interruption,^[119] as well as the possibility of legislation, and 700 scientific papers have been published on this matter since 2002.^[120] There are also concerns that the database structure of Object Naming Service may be susceptible to infiltration, similar to denial-of-service attacks, after the EPCglobal Network ONS root servers were shown to be vulnerable.^[121]

Health

Microchip–induced tumours have been noted during animal trials.^{[122][123]}

Shielding

In an effort to prevent the passive “skimming” of RFID-enabled cards or passports, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) issued a set of test procedures for evaluating electromagnetically opaque sleeves.^[124] For shielding products to be in compliance with FIPS-201 guidelines, they must meet or exceed this published standard; compliant products are listed on the website of the U.S. CIO's FIPS-201 Evaluation Program.^[125] The United States government requires that when new ID cards are issued, they must be delivered with an approved shielding sleeve or holder.^[126] Although many wallets and passport holders are advertised to protect personal information, there is little evidence that RFID skimming is a serious threat; data encryption and use of EMV chips rather than RFID makes this sort of theft rare.^{[127][128]}

There are contradictory opinions as to whether aluminum can prevent reading of RFID chips. Some people claim that aluminum shielding, essentially creating a Faraday cage, does work.^[129] Others claim that simply wrapping an RFID card in aluminum foil only makes transmission more difficult and is not completely effective at preventing it.^[130]

Shielding effectiveness depends on the frequency being used. Low-frequency LowFID tags, like those used in implantable devices for humans and pets, are relatively resistant to shielding, although thick metal foil will prevent most reads. High frequency HighFID tags (13.56 MHz—smart cards and access badges) are sensitive to shielding and are difficult to read when within a few centimetres of a metal surface. UHF Ultra-HighFID tags (pallets and

cartons) are difficult to read when placed within a few millimetres of a metal surface, although their read range is actually increased when they are spaced 2–4 cm from a metal surface due to positive reinforcement of the reflected wave and the incident wave at the tag.^[131]

Controversies

Privacy

The use of RFID has engendered considerable controversy and some consumer privacy advocates have initiated product boycotts. Consumer privacy experts Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre are two prominent critics of the "spychip" technology. The two main privacy concerns regarding RFID are as follows:

- As the owner of an item may not necessarily be aware of the presence of an RFID tag and the tag can be read at a distance without the knowledge of the individual, sensitive data may be acquired without consent.
- If a tagged item is paid for by credit card or in conjunction with use of a loyalty card, then it would be possible to indirectly deduce the identity of the purchaser by reading the globally unique ID of that item contained in the RFID tag. This is a possibility if the person watching also had access to the loyalty card and credit card data, and the person with the equipment knows where the purchaser is going to be.



Logo of the anti-RFID campaign by German privacy group digitalcourage (formerly FoeBuD)

Most concerns revolve around the fact that RFID tags affixed to products remain functional even after the products have been purchased and taken home and thus can be used for surveillance and other purposes unrelated to their supply chain inventory functions.^[132]

The RFID Network responded to these fears in the first episode of their syndicated cable TV series, saying that they are unfounded, and let RF engineers demonstrate how RFID works.^[133] They provided images of RF engineers driving an RFID-enabled van around a building and trying to take an inventory of items inside. They also discussed satellite tracking of a passive RFID tag.

The concerns raised may be addressed in part by use of the Clipped Tag. The Clipped Tag is an RFID tag designed to increase privacy for the purchaser of an item. The Clipped Tag has been suggested by IBM researchers Paul Moskowitz and Guenter Karjoth. After the point of sale, a person may tear off a portion of the tag. This allows the transformation of a long-range tag into a proximity tag that still may be read, but only at short range – less than a few inches or centimeters. The modification of the tag may be confirmed visually. The tag may still be used later for returns, recalls, or recycling.

However, read range is a function of both the reader and the tag itself. Improvements in technology may increase read ranges for tags. Tags may be read at longer ranges than they are designed for by increasing reader power. The limit on read distance then becomes the signal-to-noise ratio of the signal reflected from the tag back to the reader. Researchers at two security conferences have demonstrated that passive Ultra-HighFID tags normally read at ranges of up to 30 feet can be read at ranges of 50 to 69 feet using suitable equipment.^{[134][135]}

In January 2004 privacy advocates from CASPIAN and the German privacy group FoeBuD were invited to the METRO Future Store in Germany, where an RFID pilot project was implemented. It was uncovered by accident that METRO "Payback" customer loyalty cards contained RFID tags with customer IDs, a fact that was disclosed neither to customers receiving the cards, nor to this group of privacy advocates. This happened despite assurances by METRO that no customer identification data was tracked and all RFID usage was clearly disclosed.^[136]

During the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) between the 16th to 18 November 2005, founder of the free software movement, Richard Stallman, protested the use of RFID security cards by covering his card with aluminum foil.^[137]

In 2004–2005 the Federal Trade Commission staff conducted a workshop and review of RFID privacy concerns and issued a report recommending best practices.^[138]

RFID was one of the main topics of the 2006 Chaos Communication Congress (organized by the Chaos Computer Club in Berlin) and triggered a large press debate. Topics included electronic passports, Mifare cryptography and the tickets for the FIFA World Cup 2006. Talks showed how the first real-world mass application of RFID at the 2006 FIFA Football World Cup worked. The group monochrom staged a special 'Hack RFID' song.^[139]

Government control

Some individuals have grown to fear the loss of rights due to RFID human implantation.

By early 2007, Chris Paget of San Francisco, California, showed that RFID information could be pulled from a US passport card by using only \$250 worth of equipment. This suggests that with the information captured, it would be possible to clone such cards.^[140]

According to ZDNet, critics believe that RFID will lead to tracking individuals' every movement and will be an invasion of privacy.^[141] In the book *SpyChips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Move* by Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre, one is encouraged to "imagine a world of no privacy. Where your every purchase is monitored and recorded in a database and your every belonging is numbered. Where someone many states away or perhaps in another country has a record of everything you have ever bought. What's more, they can be tracked and monitored remotely".^[142]

Deliberate destruction in clothing and other items

According to an RSA laboratories FAQ, RFID tags can be destroyed by a standard microwave oven;^[143] however some types of RFID tags, particularly those constructed to radiate using large metallic antennas (in particular RF tags and EPC tags), may catch fire if subjected to this process for too long (as would any metallic item inside a microwave oven). This simple method cannot safely be used to deactivate RFID features in electronic devices, or those implanted in living tissue, because of the risk of damage to the "host". However the time required is extremely short (a second or two of radiation) and the method works in many other non-electronic and inanimate items, long before heat or fire become of concern.^[144]

Some RFID tags implement a "kill command" mechanism to permanently and irreversibly disable them. This mechanism can be applied if the chip itself is trusted or the mechanism is known by the person that wants to "kill" the tag.

UHF RFID tags that comply with the EPC2 Gen 2 Class 1 standard usually support this mechanism, while protecting the chip from being killed with a password.^[145] Guessing or cracking this needed 32-bit password for killing a tag would not be difficult for a determined attacker.^[146]

Reliability

Tag reliability

Generally, an RFID tag has an inlay, composed of three components, namely silicon (Si) chip, ACA (Anisotropic conductive adhesive) layer and flexible substrate (Al/PET), as shown in Fig.1(a). The chip is flip-chip assembled on the Al/PET flexible substrate through ACA hot-press process. After the bonding process, the shear strength of the tag inlay can be measured using the bond tester. The shear strength test principle is based on the solder ball shear test standard,^[147] as shown in Fig.1(b). A rigid clamping device is used to fix one side of the substrate, and the vacuum plate is used to absorb the bottom of the sample. The blade is pushed horizontally from one side. The maximum shear force for each joint, which finally separates the chip from the substrate, is recorded, as shown in Fig.1(c).^[148]

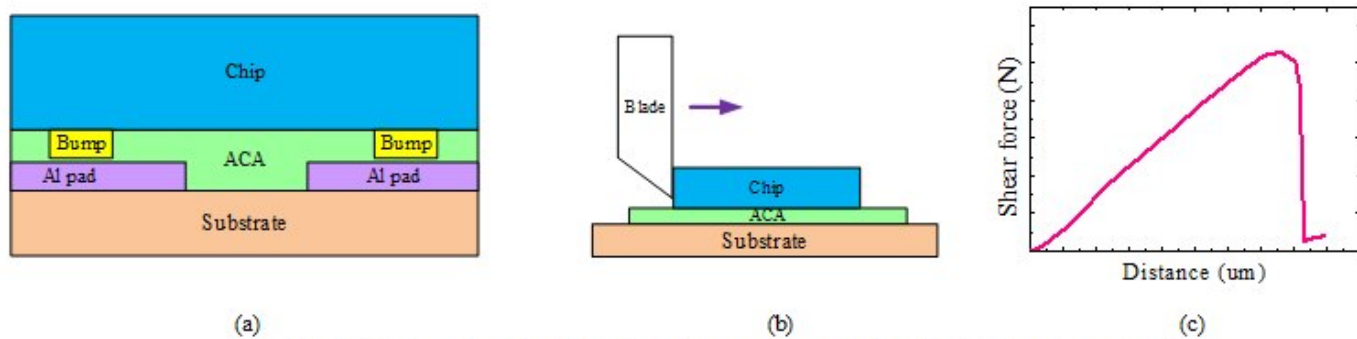


Fig. 1. (a) schematic of the RFID inlay (b) measurement principle (c) plot of maximum shear force

See also

- [AS5678](#)
- [Balise](#)
- [Bin bug](#)
- [Chipless RFID](#)
- [Internet of Things](#)
- [Mass surveillance](#)
- [Microchip implant \(human\)](#)
- [Near Field Communication \(NFC\)](#)
- [PositivelD](#)
- [Privacy by design](#)
- [Proximity card](#)
- [Resonant inductive coupling](#)
- [RFdump](#)
- [RFID in schools](#)
- [RFID Journal](#)
- [RFID on metal](#)
- [RSA blocker tag](#)
- [Smart label](#)
- [Speedpass](#)
- [TecTile](#)
- [Tracking system](#)

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External links

- An open source RFID library used as door opener (<https://www.codeproject.com/Articles/1096861/DIY-electronic-RFID-Door-Lock-with-Battery-Backup>)
- UHF regulations overview by GS1 (http://www.gs1.org/docs/epc/UHF_Regulations.pdf)
- What is RFID? Educational video by The RFID Network (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100530071726/http://rfid.net/basics>)
- How RFID Works (<http://www.howstuffworks.com/rfid.htm>) at HowStuffWorks

- Privacy concerns and proposed privacy legislation (<http://www.privacyrights.org/ar/RFIDposition.htm>)
 - RFID (https://curlie.org/Society/Issues/Science_and_Technology/RFID/) at Curlie
 - What is RFID? – animated explanation (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120322194318/http://www.explania.com/en/channels/technology/detail/what-is-rfid>)
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Flat Earth

The **flat Earth** model is an archaic conception of Earth's shape as a plane or disk. Many ancient cultures subscribed to a flat Earth cosmography, including Greece until the classical period (323 BC), the Bronze Age and Iron Age civilizations of the Near East until the Hellenistic period (31 BC), India until the Gupta period (early centuries AD), and China until the 17th century.

The idea of a spherical Earth appeared in ancient Greek philosophy with Pythagoras (6th century BC), although most pre-Socratics (6th–5th century BC) retained the flat Earth model. In the early 4th century BC Plato wrote about a spherical Earth, and by about 330 BC his former student, Aristotle, had provided strong empirical evidence for this. Knowledge of the Earth's global shape then gradually began to spread beyond the Hellenistic world.^{[1][2][3][4]}

Despite the scientific fact of Earth's sphericity, pseudoscientific^[5] flat Earth conspiracy theories are espoused by modern flat Earth societies and, increasingly, by unaffiliated individuals using social media.^{[6][7]}



Flat Earth map drawn by Orlando Ferguson in 1893. The map contains several references to biblical passages as well as various jabs at the "Globe Theory".

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History

Belief in flat Earth

West Asia

In early Egyptian^[8] and Mesopotamian thought, the world was portrayed as a disk floating in the ocean. A similar model is found in the Homeric account from the 8th century BC in which "Okeanos, the personified body of water surrounding the circular surface of the Earth, is the begetter of all life and possibly of all gods."^[9]

The Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts of ancient Egypt show a similar cosmography; Nun (the Ocean) encircled *nbwt* ("dry lands" or "Islands").^{[10][11][12]}

The Israelites also imagined the Earth to be a disc floating on water with an arched firmament above it that separated the Earth from the heavens.^[13] The sky was a solid dome with the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars embedded in it.^[14]



Imago Mundi Babylonian map, the oldest known world map, 6th century BC Babylonia

Greece

Poets

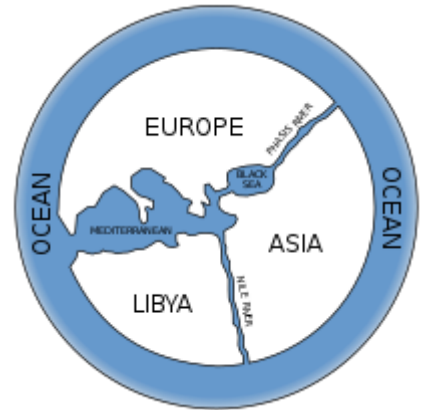
Both Homer^[15] and Hesiod^[16] described a disc cosmography on the Shield of Achilles.^{[17][18]} This poetic tradition of an Earth-encircling (*gaiakhos*) sea (Oceanus) and a disc also appears in Stasinus of Cyprus,^[19] Mimnermus,^[20] Aeschylus,^[21] and Apollonius Rhodius.^[22]

Homer's description of the disc cosmography on the shield of Achilles with the encircling ocean is repeated far later in Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* (4th century AD), which continues the narration of the Trojan War.^[23]

Philosophers

Several pre-Socratic philosophers believed that the world was flat: Thales (c. 550 BC) according to several sources,^[25] and Leucippus (c. 440 BC) and Democritus (c. 460–370 BC) according to Aristotle.^{[26][27][28]}

Thales thought that the Earth floated in water like a log.^[29] It has been argued, however, that Thales actually believed in a round Earth.^{[30][31]} Anaximander (c. 550 BC) believed that the Earth was a short cylinder with a flat, circular top that remained stable because it was the same distance from all things.^{[32][33]} Anaximenes of Miletus believed that "the Earth is flat and rides on air; in the same way the Sun and the Moon and the other heavenly bodies, which are all fiery, ride the air because of their flatness".^[34] Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 500 BC) thought that the Earth was flat, with its upper side touching the air, and the lower side extending without limit.^[35]



Possible rendering of
Anaximander's world map^[24]

Belief in a flat Earth continued into the 5th century BC. Anaxagoras (c. 450 BC) agreed that the Earth was flat,^[36] and his pupil Archelaus believed that the flat Earth was depressed in the middle like a saucer, to allow for the fact that the Sun does not rise and set at the same time for everyone.^[37]

Historians

Hecataeus of Miletus believed that the Earth was flat and surrounded by water.^[38] Herodotus in his *Histories* ridiculed the belief that water encircled the world,^[39] yet most classicists agree that he still believed Earth was flat because of his descriptions of literal "ends" or "edges" of the Earth.^[40]

Northern Europe

The ancient Norse and Germanic peoples believed in a flat Earth cosmography with the Earth surrounded by an ocean, with the axis mundi, a world tree (Yggdrasil), or pillar (Irminsul) in the centre.^{[41][42]} In the world-encircling ocean sat a snake called Jormungandr.^[43] The Norse creation account preserved in Gylfaginning (VIII) states that during the creation of the Earth, an impassable sea was placed around it.^[44]

And Jafnhárr said: "Of the blood, which ran and welled forth freely out of his wounds, they made the sea, when they had formed and made firm the Earth together, and laid the sea in a ring round. about her; and it may well seem a hard thing to most men to cross over it."

The late Norse Konungs skuggsjá, on the other hand, explains Earth's shape as a sphere:^[45]

If you take a lighted candle and set it in a room, you may expect it to light up the entire interior, unless something should hinder, though the room be quite large. But if you take an apple and hang it close to the flame, so near that it is heated, the apple will darken nearly half the room or even more. However, if you hang the apple near the wall, it will not get hot; the candle will light up the whole house; and the shadow on the wall where the apple hangs will be scarcely half as large as the apple itself. From this you may infer that the Earth-circle is round like a ball and not equally near the sun at every point. But where the curved surface lies nearest the sun's path, there will the greatest heat be; and some of the lands that lie continuously under the unbroken rays cannot be inhabited.

East Asia

In ancient China, the prevailing belief was that the Earth was flat and square, while the heavens were round,^[46] an assumption virtually unquestioned until the introduction of European astronomy in the 17th century.^{[47][48][49]} The English sinologist Cullen emphasizes the point that there was no concept of a round Earth in ancient Chinese astronomy:^[50]

Chinese thought on the form of the Earth remained almost unchanged from early times until the first contacts with modern science through the medium of Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century. While the heavens were variously described as being like an umbrella covering the Earth (the Kai Tian theory), or like a sphere surrounding it (the Hun Tian theory), or as being without substance while the heavenly bodies float freely (the Hsüan yeh theory), the Earth was at all times flat, although perhaps bulging up slightly.

The model of an egg was often used by Chinese astronomers such as Zhang Heng (78–139 AD) to describe the heavens as spherical:^[51]

The heavens are like a hen's egg and as round as a crossbow bullet; the Earth is like the yolk of the egg, and lies in the centre.

This analogy with a curved egg led some modern historians, notably Joseph Needham, to conjecture that Chinese astronomers were, after all, aware of the Earth's sphericity. The egg reference, however, was rather meant to clarify the relative position of the flat Earth to the heavens.^[52]



Illustration based on that of a 12th-century Asian cosmographer

In a passage of Zhang Heng's cosmogony not translated by Needham, Zhang himself says: "Heaven takes its body from the Yang, so it is round and in motion. Earth takes its body from the Yin, so it is flat and quiescent". The point of the egg analogy is simply to stress that the Earth is completely enclosed by Heaven, rather than merely covered from above as the Kai Tian describes. Chinese astronomers, many of them brilliant men by any standards, continued to think in flat-Earth terms until the seventeenth century; this surprising fact might be the starting-point for a re-examination of the apparent facility with which the idea of a spherical Earth found acceptance in fifth-century BC Greece.

Further examples cited by Needham supposed to demonstrate dissenting voices from the ancient Chinese consensus actually refer without exception to the Earth being square, not to it being flat.^[53] Accordingly, the 13th-century scholar Li Ye, who argued that the movements of the round heaven would be hindered by a square Earth,^[46] did not advocate a spherical Earth, but rather that its edge should be rounded off so as to be circular.^[54] However, Needham disagrees, affirming that Li Ye believed the Earth to be spherical, similar in shape to the heavens but much smaller.^[55] This was preconceived by the 4th-century scholar Yu Xi, who argued for the infinity of outer space surrounding the Earth and that the latter could be either square or round, in accordance to the shape of the heavens.^[56] When Chinese geographers of the 17th century, influenced by European cartography and astronomy, showed the Earth

as a sphere that could be circumnavigated by sailing around the globe, they did so with formulaic terminology previously used by Zhang Heng to describe the spherical shape of the Sun and Moon (i.e. that they were as round as a crossbow bullet).^[57]

As noted in the book *Huainanzi*,^[58] in the 2nd century BC, Chinese astronomers effectively inverted Eratosthenes' calculation of the curvature of the Earth to calculate the height of the Sun above the Earth. By assuming the Earth was flat, they arrived at a distance of 100 000 *li* (approximately 200 000 km). The *Zhoubi Suanjing* also discusses how to determine the distance of the Sun by measuring the length of noontime shadows at different latitudes, a method similar to Eratosthenes' measurement of the circumference of the Earth, but the *Zhoubi Suanjing* assumes that the Earth is flat.^[59]

Alternate or mixed theories

Greece: spherical Earth

Pythagoras in the 6th century BC and Parmenides in the 5th century stated that the Earth is spherical,^[60] and this view spread rapidly in the Greek world. Around 330 BC, Aristotle maintained on the basis of physical theory and observational evidence that the Earth was spherical, and reported an estimate of its circumference.^[61] The Earth's circumference was first determined around 240 BC by Eratosthenes.^[62] By the 2nd century AD, Ptolemy had derived his maps from a globe and developed the system of latitude, longitude, and climes. His *Almagest* was written in Greek and only translated into Latin in the 11th century from Arabic translations.



Semi-circular shadow of Earth on the Moon during a partial lunar eclipse

Lucretius (1st century BC) opposed the concept of a spherical Earth, because he considered that an infinite universe had no center towards which heavy bodies would tend. Thus, he thought the idea of animals walking around topsy-turvy under the Earth was absurd.^{[63][64]} By the 1st century AD, Pliny the Elder was in a position to claim that everyone agreed on the spherical shape of Earth,^[65] though disputes continued regarding the nature of the antipodes, and how it is possible to keep the ocean in a curved shape.

South Asia

The Vedic texts depict the cosmos in many ways.^{[66][67]} One of the earliest Indian cosmological texts picture the Earth as one of a stack of flat disks.^[68]

In the Vedic texts, Dyaus (heaven) and Prithvi (Earth) are compared to wheels on an axle, yielding a flat model. They are also described as bowls or leather bags, yielding a concave model.^[69] According to Macdonell: "the conception of the Earth being a disc surrounded by an ocean does not appear in the Samhitas. But it was naturally regarded as circular, being compared with a wheel (10.89) and expressly called circular (parimandala) in the *Shatapatha Brahmana*."^[70]

By about the 5th century CE, the *siddhanta* astronomy texts of South Asia, particularly of Aryabhata, assume a spherical Earth as they develop mathematical methods for quantitative astronomy for calendar and time keeping.^[71]

The medieval Indian texts called the Puranas describe the Earth as a flat-bottomed, circular disk with concentric oceans and continents.^{[69][72]} This general scheme is present not only in the Hindu cosmologies, but also in Buddhist and Jain cosmologies of South Asia.^[69] However, some Puranas include other models. For example, the fifth canto of the *Bhagavata Purana*, includes sections that describe the Earth both as flat and spherical.^{[73][74]}

Early Christian Church

During the early period of the Christian Church, the spherical view continued to be widely held, with some notable exceptions.^[75] Athenagoras, an eastern Christian writing around the year 175 CE, said that the Earth was spherical.^[76] Methodius (c. 290 AD), an eastern Christian writing against "the theory of the Chaldeans and the Egyptians" said: "Let us first lay bare ... the theory of the Chaldeans and the Egyptians. They say that the circumference of the universe is likened to the turnings of a well-rounded globe, the Earth being a central point. They say that since its outline is spherical, ... the Earth should be the center of the universe, around which the heaven is whirling."^[76] Lactantius, a western Christian writer and advisor to the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine, writing sometime between 304–313 CE, ridiculed the notion of *antipodes* and the philosophers who fancied that "the universe is round like a ball. They also thought that heaven revolves in accordance with the motion of the heavenly bodies. ... For that reason, they constructed brass globes, as though after the figure of the universe."^{[77][76]} Arnobius, another eastern Christian writing sometime around 305 CE, described the round Earth: "In the first place, indeed, the world itself is neither right nor left. It has neither upper nor lower regions, nor front nor back. For whatever is round and bounded on every side by the circumference of a solid sphere, has no beginning or end ..."^[76]

The influential theologian and philosopher Saint Augustine, one of the four Great Church Fathers of the Western Church, similarly objected to the "fable" of antipodes:^[78]

But as to the fable that there are Antipodes, that is to say, men on the opposite side of the Earth, where the sun rises when it sets to us, men who walk with their feet opposite ours that is on no ground credible. And, indeed, it is not affirmed that this has been learned by historical knowledge, but by scientific conjecture, on the ground that the Earth is suspended within the concavity of the sky, and that it has as much room on the one side of it as on the other: hence they say that the part that is beneath must also be inhabited. But they do not remark that, although it be supposed or scientifically demonstrated that the world is of a round and spherical form, yet it does not follow that the other side of the Earth is bare of water; nor even, though it be bare, does it immediately follow that it is peopled. For Scripture, which proves the truth of its historical statements by the accomplishment of its prophecies, gives no false information; and it is too absurd to say, that some men might have taken ship and traversed the whole wide ocean, and crossed from this side of the world to the other, and that thus even the inhabitants of that distant region are descended from that one first man.

Some historians do not view Augustine's scriptural commentaries as endorsing any particular cosmological model,^[79] but while the view that Augustine shared the common view of his contemporaries that the Earth is spherical, in line with his endorsement of science in *De Genesi ad*



An image of Thorntonbank Wind Farm (near the Belgian coast) with the lower parts of the more distant towers increasingly hidden by the horizon, demonstrating the curvature of the Earth

litteram,^[80] is still occasionally challenged,^[81] most scholars agree that "Augustine's acceptance of the earth's spherical shape [is] a well-established fact".^[82]

Diodorus of Tarsus, a leading figure in the School of Antioch and mentor of John Chrysostom, may have argued for a flat Earth; however, Diodorus' opinion on the matter is known only from a later criticism.^[83] Chrysostom, one of the four Great Church Fathers of the Eastern Church and Archbishop of Constantinople, explicitly espoused the idea, based on scripture, that the Earth floats miraculously on the water beneath the firmament.^[84] Athanasius the Great, Church Father and Patriarch of Alexandria, expressed a similar view in *Against the Heathen*.^[85]

Christian Topography (547) by the Alexandrian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes, who had traveled as far as Sri Lanka and the source of the Blue Nile, is now widely considered the most valuable geographical document of the early medieval age, although it received relatively little attention from contemporaries. In it, the author repeatedly expounds the doctrine that the universe consists of only two places, the Earth below the firmament and heaven above it. Carefully drawing on arguments from scripture, he describes the Earth as a rectangle, 400 days' journey long by 200 wide, surrounded by four oceans and enclosed by four massive walls which support the firmament. The spherical Earth theory is contemptuously dismissed as "pagan".^{[86][87][88]}



Cosmas Indicopleustes' world view – flat Earth in a Tabernacle

Severian, Bishop of Gabala (d. 408), wrote that the Earth is flat and the Sun does not pass under it in the night, but "travels through the northern parts as if hidden by a wall".^[89] Basil of Caesarea (329–379) argued that the matter was theologically irrelevant.^[90]

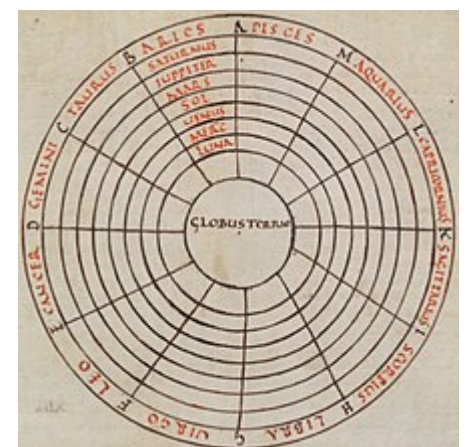
Europe: Early Middle Ages

Early medieval Christian writers in the early Middle Ages felt little urge to assume flatness of the Earth, though they had fuzzy impressions of the writings of Ptolemy and Aristotle, relying more on Pliny.^[91]

With the end of the Western Roman Empire, Western Europe entered the Middle Ages with great difficulties that affected the continent's intellectual production. Most scientific treatises of classical antiquity (in Greek) were unavailable, leaving only simplified summaries and compilations. In contrast, the Eastern Roman Empire did not fall, and it preserved the learning.^[92] Still, many textbooks of the Early Middle Ages supported the sphericity of the Earth in the western part of Europe.^[93]

Europe's view of the shape of the Earth in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages may be best expressed by the writings of early Christian scholars:

Bishop Isidore of Seville (560–636) taught in his widely read encyclopedia, the *Etymologies*, diverse views such as that the Earth "resembles a wheel"^[94] resembling Anaximander in language and the map that he provided. This was widely interpreted as referring to a disc-shaped Earth.^{[95][96]} An illustration from Isidore's *De Natura Rerum* shows the five zones of the



9th-century Macrobian cosmic diagram showing the *sphere of the Earth* at the center (*globus terrae*)

Earth as adjacent circles. Some have concluded that he thought the Arctic and Antarctic zones were adjacent to each other.^[97] He did not admit the possibility of antipodes, which he took to mean people dwelling on the opposite side of the Earth, considering them legendary^[98] and noting that there was no evidence for their existence.^[99] Isidore's T and O map, which was seen as representing a small part of a spherical Earth, continued to be used by authors through the Middle Ages, e.g. the 9th-century bishop Rabanus Maurus, who compared the habitable part of the northern hemisphere (Aristotle's northern temperate clime) with a wheel. At the same time, Isidore's works also gave the views of sphericity, for example, in chapter 28 of *De Natura Rerum*, Isidore claims that the Sun orbits the Earth and illuminates the other side when it is night on this side. See French translation of *De Natura Rerum*.^[100] In his other work *Etymologies*, there are also affirmations that the sphere of the sky has Earth in its center and the sky being equally distant on all sides.^{[101][102]} Other researchers have argued these points as well.^{[91][103][104]} "The work remained unsurpassed until the thirteenth century and was regarded as the summit of all knowledge. It became an essential part of European medieval culture. Soon after the invention of typography it appeared many times in print."^[105] However, "The Scholastics – later medieval philosophers, theologians, and scientists – were helped by the Arabic translators and commentaries, but they hardly needed to struggle against a flat-Earth legacy from the early middle ages (500–1050). Early medieval writers often had fuzzy and imprecise impressions of both Ptolemy and Aristotle and relied more on Pliny, but they felt (with one exception), little urge to assume flatness."^[91]

St Vergilius of Salzburg (c. 700–784), in the middle of the 8th century, discussed or taught some geographical or cosmographical ideas that St Boniface found sufficiently objectionable that he complained about them to Pope Zachary. The only surviving record of the incident is contained in Zachary's reply, dated 748, where he wrote:^[106]

As for the perverse and sinful doctrine which he (Virgil) against God and his own soul has uttered – if it shall be clearly established that he professes belief in another world and other men existing beneath the Earth, or in (another) sun and moon there, thou art to hold a council, deprive him of his sacerdotal rank, and expel him from the Church.

Some authorities have suggested that the sphericity of the Earth was among the aspects of Vergilius's teachings that Boniface and Zachary considered objectionable.^{[107][108]} Others have considered this unlikely, and take the wording of Zachary's response to indicate at most an objection to belief in the existence of humans living in the antipodes.^{[109][110][111][112][113]} In any case, there is no record of any further action having been taken against Vergilius. He was later appointed bishop of Salzburg and was canonised in the 13th century.^[114]



12th-century T and O map representing the inhabited world as described by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologiae* (chapter 14, *de terra et partibus*)



Isidore's portrayal of the five zones of the Earth

A possible non-literary but graphic indication that people in the Middle Ages believed that the Earth (or perhaps the world) was a sphere is the use of the *orb* (globus cruciger) in the regalia of many kingdoms and of the Holy Roman Empire. It is attested from the time of the Christian late-Roman emperor Theodosius II (423) throughout the Middle Ages; the *Reichsapfel* was used in 1191 at the coronation of emperor Henry VI. However the word *orbis* means "circle", and there is no record of a globe as a representation of the Earth since ancient times in the west until that of Martin Behaim in 1492. Additionally it could well be a representation of the entire "world" or cosmos.^[115]

A recent study of medieval concepts of the sphericity of the Earth noted that "since the eighth century, no cosmographer worthy of note has called into question the sphericity of the Earth".^[116] However, the work of these intellectuals may not have had significant influence on public opinion, and it is difficult to tell what the wider population may have thought of the shape of the Earth, if they considered the question at all.



12th-century depiction of a spherical Earth with the four seasons (book *Liber Divinorum Operum* by Hildegard of Bingen)

Europe: Late Middle Ages



Picture from a 1550 edition of *On the Sphere of the World*, the most influential astronomy textbook of 13th-century Europe

Hermannus Contractus (1013–1054) was among the earliest Christian scholars to estimate the circumference of Earth with Eratosthenes' method. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the most widely taught theologian of the Middle Ages, believed in a spherical Earth; and he even took for granted his readers also knew the Earth is round.^[117] Lectures in the medieval universities commonly advanced evidence in favor of the idea that the Earth was a sphere.^[118]

Tattersall shows that in many vernacular works in 12th- and 13th-century French texts the Earth was considered "round like a table" rather than "round like an apple". "In virtually all the examples quoted ... from epics and from non-'historical' romances (that is, works of a less learned character) the actual form of words used suggests strongly a circle rather than a sphere", though he notes that even in these works the language is ambiguous.^[119]

Portuguese navigation down and around the coast of Africa in the latter half of the 1400s gave wide-scale observational evidence for Earth's sphericity. In these explorations, the Sun position moved more northward the further south the explorers travelled. Its position directly overhead at noon gave evidence for crossing the equator. These apparent solar motions in detail were more consistent with north–south curvature and a distant Sun, than with any flat-Earth explanation. The ultimate demonstration came when Ferdinand Magellan's expedition completed the first global circumnavigation in 1521. Antonio Pigafetta, one of the few survivors of the voyage, recorded the loss of a day in the course of the voyage, giving evidence for east–west curvature.

Middle East: Islamic scholars

The Abbasid Caliphate saw a great flowering of astronomy and mathematics in the 9th century AD. Muslim scholars of the past believed in a spherical Earth.^[120]

The Quran mentions that the Earth (*al-arḍ*) was "spread out".^[121] To this 12th-century commentary, the *Tafsir al-Kabir* (al-Razi) by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi states: "If it is said: Do the words 'And the Earth We spread out' indicate that it is flat? We would respond: Yes, because the Earth, even though it is round, is an enormous sphere, and each little part of this enormous sphere, when it is looked at, appears to be flat. As that is the case, this will dispel what they mentioned of confusion. The evidence for that is the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): 'And the mountains as pegs' [an-Naba' 78:7]. He called them *awtaad* (pegs) even though these mountains may have large flat surfaces. And the same is true in this case."^[122]

The 11th-century scholar Ibn Hazm stated: "Evidence shows that the Earth is a sphere but public people say the opposite." He added: "None of those who deserve being Imams for Muslims has denied that Earth is round. And we have not received anything indicates a denial, not even a single word."^[123]

The 13th-century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah stated that the Earth is spherical and not flat. He stated that the Arabic word *falak* (Arabic: فَلَكٌ) refers to that which is round. The word is used in Quran 21:33^[124] and Quran 36:40^[125] to say that the sun and moon, night and day, each float in a falak. Unlike the previous scholars, scholar Al-Suyuti (d. 1505 CE) stated that the Earth is flat in his commentary on Quran 88:20,^[126] which he said was the opinion of the scholars of the law.^[127]

Ming Dynasty in China

A spherical terrestrial globe was introduced to Yuan-era Khanbaliq (i.e. Beijing) in 1267 by the Persian astronomer Jamal ad-Din, but it is not known to have made an impact on the traditional Chinese conception of the shape of the Earth.^[128] As late as 1595, an early Jesuit missionary to China, Matteo Ricci, recorded that the Ming-dynasty Chinese say: "The Earth is flat and square, and the sky is a round canopy; they did not succeed in conceiving the possibility of the antipodes."^[54]

In the 17th century, the idea of a spherical Earth spread in China due to the influence of the Jesuits, who held high positions as astronomers at the imperial court.^[129] Matteo Ricci, in collaboration with Chinese cartographers and translator Li Zhizao, published the *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* in 1602, the first Chinese world map based on European discoveries.^[130] The astronomical and geographical treatise *Gezhicao* (格致草) written in 1648 by Xiong Mingyu (熊明遇) explained that the Earth was spherical, not flat or square, and could be circumnavigated.^[129]

Myth of flat-Earth prevalence

Beginning in the 19th century, a historical myth arose which held that the predominant cosmological doctrine during the Middle Ages was that the Earth was flat. An early proponent of this myth was the American writer Washington Irving, who maintained that Christopher Columbus had to overcome the opposition of churchmen to gain sponsorship for his voyage of exploration. Later significant advocates of



Illustration of the spherical Earth in a 14th-century copy of *L'Image du monde* (c. 1246)

this view were John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White, who used it as a major element in their advocacy of the thesis^[131] that there was a long-lasting and essential conflict between science and religion.^[132] Some studies of the historical connections between science and religion have demonstrated that theories of their mutual antagonism ignore examples of their mutual support.^{[133][134]}

Subsequent studies of medieval science have shown that most scholars in the Middle Ages, including those read by Christopher Columbus, maintained that the Earth was spherical.^[135]

Modern flat-Earthers

In the modern era, the pseudoscientific belief in a flat Earth has been expressed by a variety of individuals and groups:

- English writer Samuel Rowbotham (1816–1885), writing under the pseudonym "Parallax", produced in 1849 a pamphlet "Zetetic Astronomy" arguing for a flat Earth and published results of many experiments that tested the curvatures of water over a long-drainage ditch, followed by another, called *The inconsistency of Modern Astronomy and its Opposition to the Scripture*. One of his supporters, John Hampden, lost a bet to Alfred Russel Wallace in the famous Bedford Level experiment, which attempted to prove it. In 1877, Hampden produced a book *A New Manual of Biblical Cosmography*.^[136] Rowbotham also produced studies that purported to show that the effects of ships disappearing below the horizon could be explained by the laws of perspective in relation to the human eye.^[137] In 1883, he founded Zetetic Societies in England and New York, to which he shipped a thousand copies of *Zetetic Astronomy*.
- William Carpenter, a printer originally from Greenwich, was a supporter of Rowbotham. Carpenter published *Theoretical Astronomy Examined and Exposed – Proving the Earth not a Globe* in eight parts from 1864 under the name *Common Sense*.^[138] He later emigrated to Baltimore, where he published *One Hundred Proofs the Earth is Not a Globe* in 1885.^[139] He wrote: "There are rivers that flow for hundreds of miles towards the level of the sea without falling more than a few feet – notably, the Nile, which, in a thousand miles, falls but a foot. A level expanse of this extent is quite incompatible with the idea of the Earth's convexity. It is, therefore, a reasonable proof that Earth is not a globe", as well as: "If the Earth were a globe, a small model globe would be the very best – because the truest – thing for the navigator to take to sea with him. But such a thing as that is not known: with such a toy as a guide, the mariner would wreck his ship, of a certainty! This is a proof that Earth is not a globe."
- John Jasper, an American slave turned prolific preacher, and friend of Carpenter's, echoed his friend's sentiments in his most famous sermon "The Sun do move", preached over 250 times, always by invitation. In a written account of his sermon, published in *The Richmond Whig* of March 19, 1878, Jasper says he would frequently cite the verse "I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth"^[140] and follow up by arguing: "So we are living on a four-cornered earth; then, my friends, will you tell me how in the name of God can an earth with four corners be round!" In the same article he argued: "if the earth is like others say, who hold a different theory, peopled on the other side, those people would be obliged to walk on the ground with their feet upward like flies on the ceiling of a room".^[141]
- In Brockport, New York, in 1887, M. C. Flanders argued the case of a flat Earth for three nights against two scientific gentlemen defending sphericity. Five townsmen chosen as judges voted unanimously for a flat Earth at the end. The case was reported in the *Brockport Democrat*.^[142]
- Joseph W. Holden of Maine, a former justice of the peace, gave numerous lectures in New England and lectured on flat-Earth theory at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. His fame stretched to North Carolina, where the Statesville Semi-weekly Landmark recorded at his death in 1900: "We hold to the doctrine that the Earth is flat ourselves and we regret exceedingly to learn that one of our members is dead."^[143]

- After Rowbotham's death, Lady Elizabeth Blount (Elizabeth de Sodington Blount, née Elizabeth Anne Mould Williams) created the Universal Zetetic Society in 1893 in England and created a journal called *Earth not a Globe Review*, which sold for twopence, as well as one called *Earth*, which only lasted from 1901 to 1904. She held that the Bible was the unquestionable authority on the natural world and argued that one could not be a Christian and believe the Earth is a globe. Well-known members included E. W. Bullinger of the Trinitarian Bible Society, Edward Haughton, senior moderator in natural science in Trinity College, Dublin and an archbishop. She repeated Rowbotham's experiments, generating some counter-experiments, but interest declined after the First World War.^[143] The movement gave rise to several books that argued for a flat, stationary Earth, including *Terra Firma* by David Wardlaw Scott.^[144]
- In 1898, during his solo circumnavigation of the world, Joshua Slocum encountered a group of flat-Earthers in Durban, South Africa. Three Boers, one of them a clergyman, presented Slocum with a pamphlet in which they set out to prove that the world was flat. Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal Republic, advanced the same view: "You don't mean *round* the world, it is impossible! You mean *in* the world. Impossible!"^[145]
- From 1915 to 1942 Wilbur Glenn Voliva, who in 1906 took over the Christian Catholic Church, a Pentecostal sect that established a utopian community in Zion, Illinois, preached flat Earth doctrine. He used a photograph of a twelve-mile (19 km) stretch of the shoreline at Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin, taken three feet (91 cm) above the waterline to prove his point. When the airship *Italia* disappeared on an expedition to the North Pole in 1928, he warned the world's press that it had sailed over the edge of the world. He offered a \$5000 award for proving that the Earth is not flat, under his own conditions.^[146] Teaching a globular Earth was banned in the Zion schools, and the message was transmitted on his WCB radio station.^[143]
- In 1956, Samuel Shenton set up the *International Flat Earth Research Society* (IFERS), better known as the Flat Earth Society from Dover, UK, as a direct descendant of the Universal Zetetic Society.
- Along with those who followed him, Frank Cherry (died 1963), the founder of the Black Hebrew Israelite religion, taught the existence of a flat Earth "surrounded by three layers of heaven."^[147]
- In 2018, astronomer Yaël Nazé analyzed the controversy over a Ph.D. dissertation proposed by a student at the University of Sfax in Tunisia, which defended a flat Earth, as well as a geocentric model of the solar system and a young Earth. The dissertation, which had not been approved by the committee overseeing environmental studies theses, had been made public and denounced in 2017 by Hafedh Ateb, a founder of the Tunisian Astronomical Society on his Facebook page.^[148]

Flat Earth Society

The *International Flat Earth Research Society* (IFERS), better known as the Flat Earth Society, was set up by Samuel Shenton in 1956, in Dover, UK, as a direct descendant of the Universal Zetetic Society. This was just before the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik; he responded: "Would sailing round the Isle of Wight prove that it were spherical? It is just the same for those satellites."

His primary aim was to reach children before they were convinced about a spherical Earth. Despite plenty of publicity, the space race eroded Shenton's support in Britain until 1967, when he started to become famous due to the Apollo program.^[143]

In 1972, Shenton's role was taken over by Charles K. Johnson, a correspondent from California, US. He incorporated the IFERS and steadily built it up to about 3000 members. He spent years examining the studies of flat- and round-Earth theories and proposed evidence of a conspiracy against flat Earth: "The idea of a spinning globe is only a conspiracy of error that Moses, Columbus, and FDR all fought..." His

article was published in the magazine *Science Digest* in 1980. It goes on to state: "If it is a sphere, the surface of a large body of water must be curved. The Johnsons have checked the surfaces of Lake Tahoe and the Salton Sea without detecting any curvature."^[151]

The Society declined in the 1990s following a fire at its headquarters in California, and Johnson died in 2001.^[152] It was revived as a website in 2004 by Daniel Shenton (no relation to Samuel Shenton). He believes that no one has provided proof that the world is not flat.^[153]

Internet-era resurgence

In the Internet era, the proliferation of communications technology and social-media platforms such as YouTube,^[154] Facebook^[155] and Twitter have given individuals, famous^[156] or otherwise, a platform to spread pseudo-scientific ideas and build stronger followings. The flat-Earth conjecture has flourished in this environment.^{[6][7][157]} Social media and the internet, furthermore, have made it easier for like-minded theorists to connect with one another and mutually reinforce their beliefs. In other words, social media has had a "levelling effect", in that experts have less sway in the public mind than they used to.^[158]

YouTube had faced criticism for allowing the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories through its platform. In 2019, YouTube stated that it was making changes in its software to reduce the distribution of videos based on conspiracy theories including flat Earth.^{[159][154][160]}

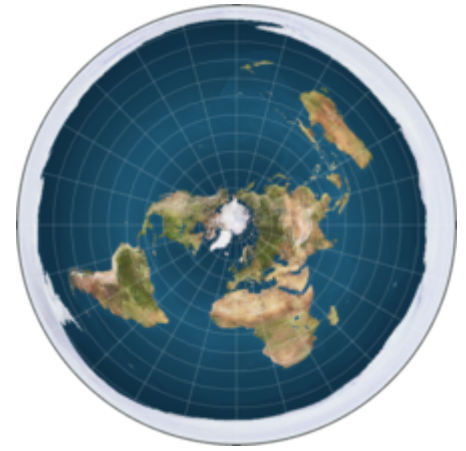
Organizations skeptical of fringe beliefs have occasionally performed tests to demonstrate the local curvature of the Earth. One of these, conducted by members of the Independent Investigations Group at the Salton Sea on June 10, 2018, was attended also by supporters of a flat Earth, and the encounter between the two groups was recorded by the National Geographic Explorer. This experiment successfully demonstrated the curvature of the Earth by the disappearance over distance of boat-based and shore-based targets.^{[161][162]}

Conspiracy theory

Members of the Flat Earth Society and other flat-Earthers claim that NASA and other government agencies conspire to fabricate evidence that the Earth is spherical.^[163] According to the most widely spread version of current flat-Earth theory, NASA is guarding the Antarctic ice wall that surrounds Earth.^[163] Flat-Earthers argue that NASA photoshops its satellite images, based on observations that the color of the oceans changes from image to image and that continents seem to be in different places.^[164] The publicly perpetuated image is kept up through a large-scale practice of "compartmentalization", according to which only a select number of individuals have knowledge about the truth.^[165]

Cultural references

The term *flat-earth-man*, used in a derogatory sense to mean anyone who holds ridiculously antiquated or impossible views, predates the more compact *flat-earthier*. It was recorded in 1908: "Fewer votes than one would have thought possible for any human candidate, were he even a flat-earth-man."^[166]



Azimuthal equidistant projections of the sphere like this one have also been co-opted as images of the flat Earth model depicting Antarctica as an ice wall^{[149][150]} surrounding a disk-shaped Earth.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* *flat-Earther's* first use is in 1934 in *Punch* magazine: "Without being a bigoted flat-earther, [Mercator] perceived the nuisance ... of fiddling about with globes ... in order to discover the South Seas."^[167]

See also

- List of topics characterized as pseudoscience
- Alderson disk
- Denialism
- Earth's rotation
- Geographical distance
- Hollow Earth
- Scientific mythology
- Scientific skepticism
- World Turtle

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Phoebus cartel

The **Phoebus cartel** existed to control the manufacture and sale of incandescent light bulbs. They appropriated market territories and fixed the useful life of such bulbs.^[1] Corporations based in Europe and America founded the cartel on January 15, 1925 in Geneva.^[2] Phoebus based itself in Switzerland. The corporation named itself *Phœbus S.A. Compagnie Industrielle pour le Développement de l'Éclairage* (French for "Phoebus, Inc. Industrial Company for the Development of Lighting"). They had intended the cartel to last for thirty years (1925 to 1955). The cartel ceased operations in 1939 owing to the outbreak of World War II. The cartel included manufacturers Osram, General Electric, Associated Electrical Industries, and Philips,^[3] among others.

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Phoebus cartel	
Predecessor	<u>Internationale Glühlampen Preisvereinigung</u>
Formation	15 January 1925
Founders	<u>Osram</u> , <u>General Electric</u> , <u>Associated Electrical Industries</u> , and <u>Philips</u> among others
Founded at	<u>Geneva, Switzerland</u>
Dissolved	1939
Type	<u>Cartel</u>
Purpose	Planned obsolescence
Products	<u>Incandescent light bulbs</u>

History

Osram, Philips, Tungsram, Associated Electrical Industries, ELIN, Compagnie des Lampes, International General Electric, and the GE Overseas Group created and joined the Phoebus cartel,^[4] holding shares in the Swiss corporation proportional to their lamp sales.

Osram founded a precursor organisation in 1921, the *Internationale Glühlampen Preisvereinigung*. When Philips and other manufacturers entered the American market, General Electric reacted by setting up the "International General Electric Company" in Paris. Both organisations co-ordinated the trading of patents and market penetration. Increasing international competition led to negotiations between all the major companies to control and restrict their respective activities in order not to interfere in each other's spheres.^{[5][6]}

In the late 1920s, a Swedish-Danish-Norwegian union of consumer cooperatives formed the North European Luma Co-op Society as an independent manufacturing center. Economic and legal threats by Phoebus did not achieve the desired effect, and in 1931 the Scandinavians produced and sold lamps at a considerably lower price than Phoebus.^[7]

The Phoebus cartel was intended to be dissolved in 1955^[6] but World War II greatly disrupted its operation.

Purpose

The Phoebus cartel divided the world's lamp markets into three categories:

- Home territories, the home country of individual manufacturers
- British overseas territories, under control of Associated Electrical Industries, Osram, Philips, and Tungsram
- Common territory, the rest of the world

The cartel lowered operational costs and worked to standardize the life expectancy of light bulbs at 1,000 hours^[6] (down from 2,500 hours),^[6] and raised prices without fear of competition. The cartel tested their bulbs and fined manufacturers for bulbs that lasted more than 1,000 hours. A 1929 table listed the amount of Swiss francs paid that depended on the exceeding hours of lifetime.^[8]

Some engineers deemed 1,000 hours a reasonable figure to balance the various operational aspects of an incandescent bulb, since longer lifespan means reduced efficacy (lumens per watt): a longer-life bulb of a given wattage puts out less light (and therefore proportionally more heat) than a shorter-life bulb of the same wattage.^[9] Nevertheless, long-life incandescent bulbs were and are available with lifespan ratings up to 2,500 hours, and these do in fact produce less light per watt.^[10]

In 1951, Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission in the United Kingdom issued a report to Parliament and noted that:

"As regards life standards, before the Phoebus Agreement and to this day the general service filament lamp was and is designed to have, on average, a minimum life of 1,000 hours. It has often been alleged—though not in evidence to us—that the Phoebus organisation artificially made the life of a lamp short with the object of increasing the number of lamps sold. As we have explained in Chapter 9, there can be no absolutely right life for the many varying circumstances to be found among the consumers in any given country, so that any standard life must always represent a compromise between conflicting factors. B.S.I. has always adopted a single life standard for general service filament lamps, and the representatives of both B.S.I. and B.E.A., as well as most lamp manufacturers, have told us in evidence that they regard 1,000 hours as the best compromise possible at the present time, nor has an evidence been offered to us to the contrary. Accordingly we must dismiss as misconceived the allegation referred to above."^[11]

In *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), Thomas Pynchon wrote about "Byron the Bulb", an anthropomorphic eternal lightbulb who fights against the Phoebus Cartel. Pynchon's story has been credited with bringing the Phoebus Cartel to the public eye.^{[12][13]}

See also

- Planned obsolescence
- Centennial Light

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Phantom time hypothesis

The **phantom time hypothesis** is a historical conspiracy theory asserted by Heribert Illig. First published in 1991, it hypothesizes a conspiracy by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III, Pope Sylvester II, and possibly the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII, to fabricate the Anno Domini dating system retroactively, in order to place them at the special year of AD 1000, and to rewrite history^[1] to legitimize Otto's claim to the Holy Roman Empire. Illig believed that this was achieved through the alteration, misrepresentation and forgery of documentary and physical evidence.^[2] According to this scenario, the entire Carolingian period, including the figure of Charlemagne, is a fabrication, with a "phantom time" of 297 years (AD 614–911) added to the Early Middle Ages.

The hypothesis has never attracted any support from historians.

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Heribert Illig

Illig was born in 1947 in Vohenstrauß, Bavaria. He was active in an association dedicated to Immanuel Velikovsky, catastrophism and historical revisionism, the *Gesellschaft zur Rekonstruktion der Menschheits- und Naturgeschichte* (English: *Society for the Reconstruction of Human and Natural History*). From 1989 to 1994 he acted as editor of the journal *Vorzeit-Frühzeit-Gegenwart* (English: *Past-Early-Present*). Since 1995, he has worked as a publisher and author under his own publishing company, *Mantis-Verlag*, and publishing his own journal, *Zeitensprünge* (English: *Leaps in Time*). Outside of his publications related to revised chronology, he has edited the works of Egon Friedell.

Before focusing on the early medieval period, Illig published various proposals for revised chronologies of prehistory and of Ancient Egypt. His proposals received prominent coverage in German popular media in the 1990s. His 1996 *Das erfundene Mittelalter* (English: *The Invented Middle Ages*) also received scholarly recensions, but was universally rejected as fundamentally flawed by historians.^[3] In 1997, the journal *Ethik und Sozialwissenschaften* (English: *Ethics and Social Sciences*) offered a platform for critical discussion to Illig's proposal, with a number of historians commenting on its various aspects.^[4] After 1997, there has been little scholarly reception of Illig's ideas, although they continued to be discussed as pseudohistory in German popular media.^[5] Illig continued to publish on the "phantom time

hypothesis" until at least 2013. Also in 2013, he published on an unrelated topic of art history, on German Renaissance master Anton Pilgram, but again proposing revisions to conventional chronology, and arguing for the abolition of the art historical category of Mannerism.^[6]

Proposal

The bases of Illig's hypothesis include:^{[7][8]}

- The scarcity of archaeological evidence that can be reliably dated to the period AD 614–911, the perceived inadequacies of radiometric and dendrochronological methods of dating this period, and the over-reliance of medieval historians on written sources.
- The presence of Romanesque architecture in tenth-century Western Europe, suggesting the Roman era was not as long ago as conventionally thought.
- The relation between the Julian calendar, Gregorian calendar and the underlying astronomical solar or tropical year. The Julian calendar, introduced by Julius Caesar, was long known to introduce a discrepancy from the tropical year of around one day for each century that the calendar was in use. By the time the Gregorian calendar was introduced in AD 1582, Illig alleges that the old Julian calendar should have produced a discrepancy of thirteen days between it and the real (or tropical) calendar. Instead, the astronomers and mathematicians working for Pope Gregory XIII had found that the civil calendar needed to be adjusted by only ten days. (The Julian calendar day Thursday, 4 October 1582 was followed by the first day of the Gregorian calendar, Friday, 15 October 1582). From this, Illig concludes that the AD era had counted roughly three centuries which never existed.

Criticism

- The most difficult challenge to the theory is through observations in ancient astronomy, especially those of solar eclipses cited by European sources prior to 600 AD (when phantom time would have distorted the chronology). Besides several others that are perhaps too vague to disprove the phantom time hypothesis, two in particular are dated with enough precision to question the hypothesis. One is reported by Pliny the Elder in 59 AD^[9] and one by Photius in 418 AD.^[10] Both of these dates and times have confirmed eclipses. In addition, observations during the Tang dynasty in China, and Halley's Comet, for example, are consistent with current astronomy with no "phantom time" added.^{[11][12]}
- Archaeological remains and dating methods such as dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) refute, rather than support, "phantom time".^[13]
- The Gregorian reform was never purported to bring the calendar in line with the Julian calendar as it had existed at the time of its institution in 45 BC, but as it had existed in 325 AD, the time of the Council of Nicaea, which had established a method for determining the date of Easter Sunday by fixing the vernal equinox on March 21 in the Julian calendar. By 1582, the astronomical equinox was occurring on March 10 in the Julian calendar, but Easter was still being calculated from a nominal equinox on March 21. In 45 BC the astronomical vernal equinox took place around March 23. Illig's "three missing centuries" thus correspond to the 369 years between the institution of the Julian calendar in 45 BC, and the fixing of the Easter Date at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.^[14]
- If Charlemagne and the Carolingian dynasty were fabricated, there would have to be a corresponding fabrication of the history of the rest of Europe, including Anglo-Saxon England, the Papacy, and the Byzantine Empire. The "phantom time" period also encompasses the life of Muhammad and the Islamic expansion into the areas of the former Roman Empire, including the conquest of Visigothic Iberia. This history too would have to be forged or drastically misdated. It would also have to be reconciled with the history of the Tang dynasty of China and its contact with Islam, such as at the Battle of Talas.^{[12][15]}

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See also

- [Historical revisionism](#)
- [The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended](#)
- [Glasgow Chronology](#)
- [New Chronology \(Fomenko\)](#)
- [New Chronology \(Rohl\)](#)
- [Revised chronology of Immanuel Velikovsky](#)
- [Jean Hardouin](#)

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External links

- [Explanation of the "phantom time hypothesis" in English](http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mgk25/volatile/Niemitz-1997.pdf) (<http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mgk25/volatile/Niemitz-1997.pdf>) (pdf)
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Death of Diana, Princess of Wales, conspiracy theories

After 1998, it was theorised that there was an orchestrated criminal conspiracy surrounding the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.^[1] Official investigations in both Britain and France found that Diana died in a manner consistent with media reports following the fatal car crash in Paris on 31 August 1997. In 1999, a French investigation concluded that Diana died as the result of a crash.^[2] The French investigator, Judge Hervé Stephan, concluded that the paparazzi were some distance from the Mercedes S280 when it crashed and were not responsible.^[3] After hearing evidence at the British inquest, a jury in 2008 returned a verdict of "unlawful killing" by driver Henri Paul and the paparazzi pursuing the car.^[4] The jury's verdict also stated: "In addition, the death of the deceased was caused or contributed to by the fact that the deceased were not wearing a seat belt and by the fact that the Mercedes struck the pillar in the Alma Tunnel rather than colliding with something else".^[5]

Prominent in disputing the official version of events have been the British newspaper *Daily Express*^{[6][7]} and Egyptian businessman Mohamed Al-Fayed, whose son, Dodi, was Diana's boyfriend at the time and also died with her in the crash. In 2003, Diana's butler Paul Burrell published a note that he claimed had been written by Diana, in which there were allegations that her former husband was "planning 'an accident' in [Diana's] car, brake failure and serious head injury" so that he could marry again.^{[8][9][10]} A special Metropolitan Police inquiry team was established in 2004, Operation Paget, headed by Commissioner John Stevens to investigate the various conspiracy theories which led up to the British inquest. This investigation looked into 175 conspiracy claims that had been made by Fayed.^[11] Fayed has persistently suggested what were found to be conspiracy theories at the inquest^{[12][13]} and has repeatedly claimed that he believes his son was murdered with Diana.^[14]

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Henri Paul

Security service connections

Theorists have alleged that the driver of the Mercedes-Benz, acting head of Ritz security Henri Paul, was in the pay of a national security service, though different versions of the allegation name the country of the security service alternately as Britain, France or the United States. Evidence purported to support this arises mainly from money in his possession at the time of his death and his personal wealth. These allegations are covered in chapter four of the Operation Paget criminal investigation report. Mohamed Al-Fayed claims that Henri Paul was working for MI6 and that they set him up.^[15] The inquiry found no evidence Henri Paul was an agent for any security service.^[16]

Blood samples

Another allegation concerns the reliability of blood tests carried out, which indicated Paul had been drinking before he took the controls of the car. The French investigators' conclusion that Paul was drunk was made on the basis of an analysis of blood samples, which were said to contain an alcohol level that (according to Jay's September 1997 report) was three times the French legal limit. This initial analysis was challenged by a British pathologist hired by Al-Fayed. In response, French authorities carried out a third test, this time using the more medically conclusive vitreous fluid from inside the eye, which confirmed the level of alcohol measured by blood and also showed Paul had been taking antidepressants.^[17]

It has been claimed that the level of alcohol reported to have been found in Paul's blood was inconsistent with his sober demeanour, as captured on the CCTV of the Ritz that evening.^[18] Professor Robert Forrest, a forensic pathologist, said that an alcoholic like Paul, with a higher tolerance for alcohol, would be able to appear more sober than he actually was.^{[19][20]} The families of Dodi Fayed and Henri Paul did not accept the findings of the French investigation.

It was disclosed in November 2006 that Lord Stevens had met with Paul's elderly parents telling them that their son was not drunk.^[21] Just prior to Stevens's appearance at the inquest, a source close to Stevens stated that this inconsistency could be explained as him being "considerate" and "sensitive" towards the elderly couple,^[21] an assessment Scott Baker suggested might be credible in his opening comments to the jury.^[22] Under cross-examination at the inquest in February 2008, Stevens denied "deliberately misleading" Paul's parents and said that the chauffeur's condition at the time of the crash did not match the police's definition of being drunk, which he said relied upon someone's physical responses.^[23] Stevens said that the available evidence suggested Paul had consumed only two alcoholic drinks, but this was not necessarily all that Paul had consumed, and that he was indeed "under the influence" of alcohol at the time of the crash.^[23] An expert cited in the report estimated that Paul had drunk the equivalent of five measures of Ricard, his favourite liquorice-flavoured French aperitif, before driving.^[24]

In the two French TOXLAB tests, Paul was found to have 12.8% carbon haemoglobin saturation, a combination of blood's iron-carrying pigment and carbon monoxide. A smoker normally has about 10%, so the result was not unusual.^[25] Paul had been smoking small cigars, *Cigarillos*, in the hours before the crash.^[26] Another test, backed by the opponents of the official findings, showed Paul had 20.7% in his blood at the time of death; if accurate, the rate of dispersal of carbon monoxide from the bloodstream would have meant that Paul's blood had 40% saturation a few hours earlier, and he would scarcely have been able to function at all.^[25]

On 9 December 2009, it was reported that DNA samples confirm the blood samples with high alcohol levels were indeed from the driver.^[27] This was established by a comparison with samples provided by Paul's parents, demonstrating that the blood tested was that of Henri Paul and that he had three times the French legal limit of alcohol in his blood.^[27]

Tomlinson's allegation of MI6 involvement

Richard Tomlinson, a former MI6 officer who was dismissed from the intelligence services and later served five months in prison for breaching the Official Secrets Act 1989,^[28] claimed in a sworn statement to the French inquiry in May 1999 that Britain's MI6 had been involved in the crash, suggesting that the security service had documentation which would assist Judge Stephan in his inquiry.^[29] The previous August, he had been reported by the BBC to have claimed that Paul was working for the security services and that one of Diana's bodyguards, either Trevor Rees-Jones (now known as Trevor Rees) or Kes Wingfield, was a contact for British intelligence.^[30] Tomlinson alleged that MI6 was monitoring Diana before her death, had told Mohamed Al-Fayed that Paul was an MI6 agent,^[31] and that her death mirrored plans he saw in 1992 for the assassination of then President of Serbia Slobodan Milošević, using a strobe light to blind his chauffeur.^[32]

On 13 February 2008, Tomlinson told the inquest that he may have misremembered and that he had no evidence that Paul was an MI6 agent,^[31] but he had said in the previous day's court session that Paul was supplying MI6 with information.^[32] Speaking by video-link from France, Tomlinson conceded that, after the interval of 16 or 17 years, he "could not remember specifically" whether the document he had seen during 1992 had in fact proposed the use of a strobe light to cause a traffic crash as a means of assassinating Milošević, although use of lights for this purpose had been covered in his MI6 training.^[31] The Operation Paget Inquiry was given unprecedented access to the offices of both MI5 and MI6 to investigate Tomlinson's claims. It was later revealed that the mentioned memo was a proposal written in March 1993 to assassinate another Serbian figure if he gained power, not Milošević.^{[33][34][35]} Furthermore, the plan did not involve anything about using flashlights.^[36]

Further evidence discrediting Tomlinson's claims was found in drafts of a book he was writing about his time in MI6 before he was jailed in 1998 for breaching the Official Secrets Act. The draft, dating from 1996, referred to the memo and contained none of the detail about a staged car crash with flashlights in a tunnel.^[36]

The inquest was later told by an anonymous MI6 manager (referred to during proceedings as "Miss X") that MI6 were not keeping any file on either the Princess or Dodi, and that there was no plan involving them.^[37] The inquiry concluded by dismissing Tomlinson's claims as an embellishment. It went on to comment that this embellishment was largely responsible for giving rise to the theories Diana was murdered.^[38]

Tomlinson was arrested by French authorities in July 2006 as part of their inquiry into the death of Diana.^[39] French police were also reported to have seized computer files and personal papers from his home in Cannes.

Relationship with Dodi Fayed

One of the main motives which has been advanced for alleged murder includes suggestions Diana was pregnant with Mohamed "Dodi" Fayed's child and the couple were about to get engaged. The alleged dislike of the idea of a non-Christian within the British Royal Family meant such a relationship between the mother of the future king and a prominent Egyptian Muslim would not be tolerated.^[40] In Mohamed Al-Fayed's view, which he repeated in court at the inquest in February 2008, Prince Philip, the Prince of Wales, Diana's sister Lady Sarah McCorquodale and numerous others were all involved in a plot to kill the Princess and his son.^[41] Jeffrey Steinberg of the *Executive Intelligence Review*, a publication of the American Lyndon LaRouche movement, has also put forward theories that the Princess of Wales was murdered by the security services under the instructions of Prince Philip.^[42] An article in *The Daily Telegraph* in 1998 reporting the *EIR* conspiracy theories alleged earlier links between the *EIR* and Al-Fayed,^[43] while Francis Wheen reported the following year that Al-Fayed's spokesman had advised journalists to contact Steinberg.^[44]

Al-Fayed made the assertion in television interviews that the couple were going to announce their engagement on the Monday after the crash, 1 September 1997. Operation Paget commented that an announcement of such magnitude from the Princess of Wales would have been a substantial media event of worldwide interest and would have required significant preparation. No evidence was found that any such preparation had been made.^[45]

CCTV evidence shown at the inquest indicates that Dodi left Alberto Repossi jewellers on the 30 August with nothing more than a catalogue.^[46] Repossi said in 2003 that the ring had been placed on Diana's finger in a St Tropez hotel, and was being resized for future collection in Paris, but later admitted to writer Martyn Gregory that he had received "legal papers" from Al-Fayed, a client for more than 20 years.^[3] Al-Fayed said the couple chose the ring in Monte Carlo, and Dodi had picked it up in Paris the day before he died after it had been altered.^[46] This statement of Al-Fayed was contradicted by the statements of Claude Roulet, a shop assistant, and the CCTV footage.^[47] A CCTV recording demonstrated that a ring had been selected by a Ritz hotel official. It was bought by Mohammed Al-Fayed after the couple's death.^[3]

A few hours before the crash, on the afternoon of 30 August, Diana's journalist friend Richard Kay received a call on his mobile phone from Diana in which she asked about what was likely to appear in the following day's Sunday papers about her.^[48] During this call, she made no mention of any announcement she intended to make.^[49]

More revealing was the statement given by Diana's eldest sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale, who testified that in a phone conversation with Diana on Friday 29 August, Diana spoke about Dodi Fayed in a manner that gave her sister the impression the relationship was on "stony ground".^[50] Statements from other friends and confidantes Diana spoke to in the week before her death, including her butler Paul Burrell, her friend Lady Annabel Goldsmith, and her spiritual adviser Rita Rogers, were unanimous that she was firm about not wanting to get engaged or married to anyone at that point in her life. A week before she died, the princess had told Goldsmith: "I need marriage like a rash on my face."^[51]

Diana's former private secretary, Patrick Jephson, said to the BBC in reaction to the publication of the Operation Paget Report in December 2006 that her facial expression in the CCTV footage of her at the Paris Ritz on her final evening with Dodi Fayed was one she would wear when she was disgruntled with a situation.^[52] However, CCTV images released on 6 October taken just minutes before their deaths, show a relaxed Diana and Dodi affectionately holding hands.^[53]

An inquiry witness was Hasnat Khan, a Muslim heart surgeon of Pakistani origin based in London, who had a relationship with Diana for two years. Diana had explored the possibility of marriage with him. This had been met with no opposition from the Royal Family and Prince Charles had given his blessing.^[51] Khan stated that he had received some racist hate mail from members of the public because of the relationship but had no reason to take what was said in this hate mail seriously. He also stated that he felt the relationship was not opposed by the Royal Family or any other branch of the British Government including the security services. Paul Burrell stated that Diana was still not over her break-up with Khan at the time of her death.^[54] It was also pointed out that Dodi and Diana had only met just under seven weeks before the crash, at Al-Fayed's villa in St. Tropez on 14 July, meaning there were only 47 days from their first meeting until the night of the crash. Of those days, their schedules permitted them to be together for an absolute maximum of 35 days. From analysis of Diana's actual movements, it is likely they had spent approximately 23 days together before the crash.^[55]

John Macnamara, a former senior detective at Scotland Yard, headed Al-Fayed's own investigation for five years from 1997. Cross-examined at the inquest on 14 February, he conceded that he had found no evidence of a criminal conspiracy to kill the Princess, or that she was engaged or pregnant at the time of her death, apart from the claims Al-Fayed had relayed to him.^[56]

Pregnancy

In January 2004, the former coroner of the Queen's Household, Dr. John Burton, said (in an interview with *The Times*) that he attended a post-mortem examination of the Princess's body at Fulham mortuary, where he personally examined her womb and found her not to be pregnant.^{[50][57]}

In an effort to examine the assertions made by Al-Fayed, Operation Paget had scientific tests carried out on pre-transfusion blood found in the footwell of the seat in the wrecked Mercedes the Princess of Wales occupied at the time of the crash. This blood was found to have no trace of the hCG hormone associated with pregnancy.^[58] The inquiry also extensively interviewed friends of Diana's who were in close contact with her in the weeks leading up to her death. The evidence obtained from these witnesses was of a very sensitive nature and most of it was not included in Operation Paget's criminal investigation report. However, it was reported that friends said she was in her normal menstrual cycle and there was evidence she was using contraception.^[59]

Al-Fayed's persistence in asserting Diana was pregnant led him to get members of his staff to tell the media that on their final day together, Diana and his son had visited a villa he owned in Paris to choose a room "for the baby". While the couple had indeed visited the villa, the circumstances of the visit were exaggerated to say it had lasted two hours and that it was in the presence of a prominent Italian interior designer. A security guard at the villa, Reuben Murrell, felt uncomfortable lying about the matter and sold his story to *The Sun* stating that the visit lasted just under thirty minutes and was not in the company of any interior designer. He provided stills from CCTV to prove this and said he had been in the presence of Diana and Dodi for the entirety of their visit, with there having been no conversation about them coming to live at the villa. He later resigned from Al-Fayed's employment and initiated an employment tribunal for constructive dismissal after Al-Fayed successfully sued him for breach of contract because of the CCTV images he supplied to *The Sun*.^{[60][61][62]} Senior members of Al-Fayed's staff made derogatory comments about Murrell and Trevor Rees-Jones in their statements to Operation

Paget.^[63] In 2004, a Channel 4 documentary, *The Diana Conspiracy*, claimed that the butler at the villa who, in a June 1998 interview with the ITV documentary *Diana: Secrets Behind the Crash*, claimed to have shown the couple around with their intent being to live there, was not even present at the villa on that day as he was on vacation.^[64]

Al-Fayed first claimed that the Princess of Wales was pregnant at the time of her death to the *Daily Express* in May 2001. "If it is true, it is strange that he sat upon this important information for three and a half years," Scott Baker said at the inquest.^[51]

Absence of CCTV images

The absence of CCTV images showing the Mercedes's journey from the hotel to the crash site has been frequently cited as evidence of an organised conspiracy. According to *The Independent* newspaper in 2006, there were more than 14 CCTV cameras in the Pont de l'Alma underpass, though none recorded footage of the fatal collision.^[65]

Judge Hervé Stéphan was appointed as Examining Magistrate in this case on 2 September 1997. On that day, by Judicial Order, he tasked the Brigade Criminelle with identifying all video and photographic images along the route taken by the Mercedes. Lieutenant Eric Gigou of the Brigade Criminelle led the team that carried out that work, initially by retracing the route several times and drawing up a list of possible locations. His report showed that the team identified ten locations of CCTV cameras. None of these had any images relevant to the inquiry, since they were principally security cameras facing the entrances to buildings. Most of the cameras were not maintained by the City of Paris; the owners of the buildings to which they were attached operated them privately. There was a traffic-monitoring camera above the underpass in the Place de l'Alma itself but this was under the control of la Compagnie de Circulation Urbaine de Paris (Paris Urban Traffic Unit). That department closed down at about 11 p.m., had no night duty staff and made no recordings. Officers in the Police Headquarters Information and Command Centre could continue to view the pictures shown by the traffic camera in real time but could not control it.

The subject of the CCTV cameras is dealt with in Chapter 5 of the Operation Paget report. It was also found that a photograph that was published in a book by David Cohen *Diana, Death of a Goddess* and captioned as having been taken just before the car entered the tunnel was in fact taken by a photographer as the car left the back of the Paris Ritz.^[66]

White Fiat Uno and James Andanson

Analysis of the wreckage of the Mercedes revealed it had glancing contact with a white Fiat Uno car which left traces of paint on the Mercedes bodywork. Extensive attempts by the French police to find the vehicle involved were unsuccessful.^[67] Although no one had seen the Fiat in the tunnel, some witnesses reported seeing an Uno exiting the tunnel.^[68]

Mohamed Al-Fayed alleged in his July 2005 statement to Operation Paget, and at other times, that the white Fiat Uno was being used by MI6^[69] as a means of causing the Mercedes to swerve and thereby crash into the side of the tunnel. Al-Fayed further alleged that the Fiat Uno was owned by a French photojournalist named Jean-Paul James Andanson,^[70] a security services agent according to Fayed,^[25] who had photographed Diana while she was at his villa in St. Tropez in July 1997. Andanson's death in May 2000, Al-Fayed claimed, was either due to guilt over what he had done or because he was assassinated by the French or British security services to silence him.^[49]

Operation Paget found that the white Fiat Uno Andanson owned was in an unroadworthy condition, being nine years old at the time, with 325,000 km on the odometer^[71] (suggesting that the car had been driven 27,000 miles per annum) and had not been maintained for several years prior. Andanson's neighbours confirmed the veracity of this evidence.^[71] Andanson had sold the car in October 1997.^[70] Operation Paget concluded it was extremely unlikely due to the car's condition and the fact Andanson had so openly disposed of it that it was the one at the scene of the crash in Paris. French police had examined Andanson's car as part of their effort to trace the one that had come into contact with the Mercedes with a view to prosecuting the driver for failing to render assistance and had reached the same conclusion. The French police spent a year after the crash searching for the vehicle and eliminated over 4,000 white Fiat Unos from their inquiry. Operation Paget decided it would be unlikely renewed enquiries would identify the vehicle involved as such a long period had elapsed since the crash. It concluded the threat of prosecution for a custodial offence probably deterred the driver from coming forward at the time.^[72]

A retired major in the French Brigade Criminelle, Jean Claude Mules, gave evidence to the inquest in February 2008. Andanson had been interviewed by French police in February 1998, and had been able to provide documentary evidence about his movements on the previous 30 and 31 August which had satisfied them that he could not have been the driver of the Fiat Uno involved. These demonstrated that Andanson could only have been at his home in Lignieres, 177 miles from Paris, at the time of the crash.^[70] Elizabeth, his widow, said at the London inquest in February 2008 that her husband had been at home in bed with her at the time of the crash.^[73]

Andanson's suicide

Andanson died in May 2000. The official verdict was suicide.^[74] His body was found in a black, burnt-out BMW in a forest near the town of Nant, near Millau, in the south of France. Andanson's death was attributed to problems in his private life. The 2008 inquest into the death of the Princess of Wales heard that evidence was uncovered from his friends and associates that prior to his death he had talked of suicide by pouring petrol in a car and lighting a cigar, as noted by Richard Horwell QC, for the Metropolitan Commissioner.^[75]

The Paget report states that when the car was found, Andanson's body was in the driver's seat of the car, and his head was detached and lay between the front seats. There was a hole in his left temple. The French pathologist concluded this hole was caused by the intense heat of the fire rather than, for example, a bullet wound.^[76]

Operation Paget found no evidence Andanson was known to any security service and, contrary to Al-Fayed's claims, his death was thoroughly investigated by French police (although the whereabouts of the car keys has never been explained). A break-in at his former workplace in June 2000 alleged to have been carried out by security services was found to be unconnected to his death, as no items related to him were stolen.^[77]

Le Van Thanh

It has been reported by numerous publications that the white Fiat Uno belonged to Le Van Thanh who was a 22-year-old taxi driver at the time of the crash. Thanh owned a white Fiat Uno identical to the one that struck the Princess of Wales' Mercedes. Georges and Sabine Dauzonne identified Thanh as "the agitated man they may have seen driving the car".^[78] Thanh has always refused interview requests.^{[79][80]} In 2006, Thanh's father said his son had re-sprayed his white Uno red hours after the

crash, allegedly waking up his mechanic brother in the night to help him.^[81] Following tests, it was concluded that the car "could have been involved in the accident", but Thanh's involvement in the crash "was ruled out by French police because he said he was at work on the night in question".^[79] It was later uncovered that he had left work early that night and could have been at the scene of the crime. Multiple witnesses recall seeing a man matching his description exit the tunnel seconds after the crash.^[6]

Bright flash

An alternative explanation for the cause of the crash has been reports of a bright white flash just before the car entered the tunnel, blinding the driver. Richard Tomlinson made this allegation at the inquiry, but the veracity of his evidence was found wanting.

It was found by the authorities that three eyewitnesses at the scene of the crash claimed to see a bright flash of light before the crash.^[82] François Levistre (originally François Levi)^[83] made a clear, specific claim that he saw a bright flash, but his three statements to the authorities were in conflict with each other.^[84] Both the French detectives investigating after the crash^[85] and later the officers who worked on Operation Paget rejected his evidence.^[86] With the Mercedes behind him, he claimed to have seen the flash in his rear-view mirror and recounted other elements of what he saw while he was negotiating the difficult bend out of the tunnel.^[87] Crucially, however, his testimony was directly contradicted by his then-wife, who was in the passenger seat next to him.^[86] However, eyewitness Brian Anderson, an American tourist, told detectives that he too saw a bright flash.^[88]

French Police in 1997 were aware of Levistre's conviction in Rouen during 1989 for dishonesty and his subsequent prison sentence,^[85] and he was not thought by them to be a reliable witness.^[89] Television documentaries produced by Channel 4 in 2004 and the BBC in 2006 both raised this issue;^[89] he appeared as a witness at the British inquiry via a video link in October 2007. *Diana: Secrets Behind the Crash* (3 June 1998), an ITV programme presented by Nicholas Owen, then ITN's Royal Correspondent, gave enough weight to the claims of Levistre that 93% of viewers polled by the *Mirror* newspaper just after the broadcast believed there had been a bright flash of light at the time of the crash.^[83]

The detail of eyewitness testimony was thoroughly reviewed and Operation Paget officers succeeded in uncovering two new witnesses. Other eyewitness testimony made little reference to the appearance of any inexplicable flashes at the crash site. Several witnesses who would be expected to have seen a blinding flash made no reference to one. In any event, the detailed crash reconstruction revealed that the chain of events that led to the car unavoidably colliding with the pillar started well before it was at the mouth of the tunnel where the flash is alleged to have occurred. Furthermore, a strobe light of the type that was alleged to have been used is so powerful that a flash emitted from it would have been bright enough to illuminate a very wide area. It would have likely blinded not only Paul, but also the driver of the white Fiat Uno, the pursuing paparazzi and witnesses standing at the road side. The Operation Paget report concluded that the alleged flash did not happen.^[90]

Seat belt

There was some media discussion in April 2006 suggesting that Diana was a faithful seat belt user and therefore the fact that both her and Dodi's seat belts either failed or were not used was sinister and might suggest sabotage.^[91] Her sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale later said that Diana "was religious in putting on her seat belt".^[92] Other sources question if she did in fact use her seat belt all the time, as was suggested.^[91]

"What is certain is that she was not wearing a seat belt and this made things worse. We would like to think that if she had been wearing a seat belt, we'd have been able to save her," said Prof. André Lienhart, who reviewed the emergency services' response for the French government investigation of the incident.^[93] CNN did an analysis of the crash in early September 1997 and concluded that injuries would have been minor had the occupants been wearing seat belts. The conclusions were provisional owing to limited data about the specific Mercedes model as the limousine was not sold in the US.^[94]

Analysis of the wreckage of the car after its repatriation to England in 2005 by a forensic accident investigator from the Transport Research Laboratory of thirty-five years experience on behalf of Operation Paget found that all the seat belts were in good working order except for the right rear one which was attached to the seat Diana occupied. Follow up enquiries with French investigators found that they had declared all the seat belts operational at an examination in October 1998, suggesting the damage to this seat belt took place after the crash.^[95]

The British inquest verdict explicitly stated that lack of seat belts had "caused or contributed to" the deaths of both Dodi and Diana.^[96]

Transport to the hospital

The first call to the emergency services' switchboard was logged at 12.26 a.m. The SAMU ambulance carrying the Princess arrived at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital at 2.06 a.m. This length of time has prompted much conspiracy-related comment.

The period between the crash and the arrival at the hospital takes into account the following: the time taken for emergency services to arrive; the time taken by the Sapeurs-Pompiers (fire service) of Paris to remove Diana from the damaged car; and the actual journey time from the crash site to the hospital. Police Officers Sébastien Dorzee and Lino Gagliadorne were the first emergency officials to arrive at the scene at around 12:30 a.m. Sergeants Xavier Gourmelom and Philippe Boyer of the Sapeurs-Pompiers arrived at around 12:32 a.m. Doctor Jean-Marc Martino, a specialist in anaesthetics and intensive care treatment and the doctor in charge of the SAMU ambulance, arrived at around 12:40 a.m. Diana was removed from the car at 1:00 a.m. She then went into cardiac arrest. Following external cardiopulmonary resuscitation, her heart started beating again. She was moved to the SAMU ambulance at 1:18 a.m.^[97]

The ambulance departed the crash scene at 1:41 a.m. and arrived at the hospital at 2:06 a.m.—a journey time of approximately 26 minutes. This included a stop at the Gare d'Austerlitz ordered by Dr Martino because of the drop in the blood pressure of the Princess of Wales and the necessity to deal with it. The ambulance was travelling slowly on his express instructions. The doctor was concerned about Diana's blood pressure and the effects on her medical condition of deceleration and acceleration.^[98]

The SAMU ambulance carrying Diana passed the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital on the Ile de la Cité en route to the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital. The decision to transfer her to the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital was taken by Dr Marc Lejay who was on despatch duty in SAMU Control on that night, in consultation with Dr Derossi, who was at the scene. The Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital was the main reception centre for multiple trauma patients in Paris. The Hôtel-Dieu was not equipped to deal with the injuries Diana had sustained. Lejay stated: 'The Hôtel-Dieu hospital on the 'Ile de la Cité' is closer but not equipped with heart surgery teams or neurosurgical teams or teams trained to take patients with multiple injuries.' Lejay was also aware that Professor Bruno Riou was on duty at the Pitié-Salpêtrière that night and was particularly skilled to treat her injuries. Dr Jean-Marc Martino supported this view.^[99]

Embalming of the body

Mohamed Al-Fayed alleged that Diana's body was deliberately embalmed shortly after her death to ensure that any pregnancy test at the post-mortem would produce a false result.

Operation Paget found that 31 August 1997 was a very hot day in Paris. Diana's body had been stored in an empty room adjacent to the emergency room where she had been treated at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital, as the mortuary was on the other side of the hospital grounds and some distance away. Dry ice and air conditioning units were placed in the room to keep it cool but appeared to have had little success.^[100]

Diana's two sisters and Prince Charles were scheduled to view the body later that afternoon before bringing it back to the United Kingdom. President Jacques Chirac and his wife also wished to pay their respects. This meant there was very little time to prepare the body for viewing, and it was deemed unacceptable to present Diana's body to her family and the President of France in the state it was in. Faced with this situation, the hospital staff decided to press ahead with embalming with only verbal authority from Madame Martine Monteil, the local superintendent of police, who assured Jean Monceau "that everything would be in order". Under French law, paperwork must be completed before undertaking the embalming of any corpse likely to be subject to a post-mortem. This paperwork was completed, but only after the embalming had been carried out, giving rise to allegations of suspicious circumstances. The allegations were made despite there being no way the hospital staff could have known whether or not Diana was pregnant, as a pregnancy test would have been irrelevant to her post crash treatment and accordingly was not carried out.^[101]

SAS

The Court Martial of SAS Sniper Danny Nightingale led to a letter written by witness, Soldier N, and sent to his in-laws coming to wider attention. Soldier N, Nightingale's former roommate, was in prison for illegally hiding firearms and ammunition. On 17 August 2013, the Metropolitan Police announced they were reviewing evidence that Soldier N had boasted that the SAS were behind the death of Princess Diana.^[102] The parents of Soldier N's estranged wife reportedly wrote to the SAS's commanding officer, claiming Soldier N had told his wife the unit "arranged" Diana's death and it was "covered up".^{[103][104]} The information was reportedly passed onto Scotland Yard by the Royal Military Police. However, Scotland Yard stressed that this information would not lead to a re-investigation and that they were examining its "relevance and credibility".^[105] They also confirmed that Prince Charles and Mohamed Al-Fayed were being kept informed as preliminary examination progressed. At the end of November 2013, Scotland Yard ended its study of the SAS allegations and released a statement: "The Metropolitan Police Service has scoped the information and is in the process of drawing up conclusions, which will be communicated to the families and interested parties first, before any further comment can be made,"^[106] On 16 December, it emerged from Sky News reports that there was "no credible evidence" that the SAS was involved in the death of the Princess and the others, and thus no reason to re-open the investigation.^{[107][108]}

Conspiracy theories in other media

The Murder of Princess Diana is a bestselling 2004 book by British journalist Noel Botham which disputes the official version of events and suggests an orchestrated conspiracy. A fictionalised telemovie adaptation, *The Murder of Princess Diana* was later released.

Unlawful Killing, a British documentary film about the deaths of Diana and Dodi, was shown May 2011 in Cannes, while the 2011 Cannes Film Festival was in progress. It was directed by Keith Allen and funded by Mohamed Al-Fayed. The film was not shown in British cinemas; lawyers for the producers

suggested that 87 cuts needed to be made before it could be certified for release.^[109] Following its failure to gain insurance against possible legal action, following putative distribution in the United States, the film was shelved in 2012.^[110]

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Denver International Airport

Denver International Airport (IATA: DEN, ICAO: KDEN, FAA LID: DEN), locally known as **DIA**, is an international airport in the Western United States, primarily serving metropolitan Denver, Colorado, as well as the greater Front Range Urban Corridor. At 33,531 acres (52.4 sq mi; 135.7 km²),^[3] it is the largest airport in North America by land area and the second largest in the world, behind King Fahd International Airport.^[4] Runway 16R/34L, with a length of 16,000 feet (3.03 mi; 4.88 km), is the longest public use runway in North America and the seventh longest in the world. The airport is 25 miles (40 km) driving distance from Downtown Denver,^[5] which is 19 miles (31 km) farther away than Stapleton International Airport, the airport DIA replaced.^[6]

Opened in 1995, DEN currently has non-stop service to 215 destinations amongst 23 different airlines throughout North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia; it is the fourth airport in the U.S. to exceed 200 destinations.^[7] The airport is a hub for both United Airlines and Frontier Airlines and a base for Southwest Airlines. With over 35,000 employees, the airport is the largest employer in Colorado. The airport is located on the western edge of the Great Plains and within sight of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains.

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Denver International Airport	
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IATA: <u>DEN</u> · ICAO: <u>KDEN</u> · FAA LID: <u>DEN</u> · WMO: <u>72565</u>	
Summary	
Airport type	Public
Owner	City & County of Denver Department of Aviation
Operator	City & County of Denver Department of Aviation
Serves	<u>Denver</u> , <u>Front Range Urban Corridor</u>
Location	Northeast <u>Denver</u> , <u>Colorado</u> , U.S.
Opened	February 28, 1995
<u>Hub for</u>	<div><div>▪ <u>Frontier Airlines</u></div><div>▪ <u>United Airlines</u></div></div>
<u>Focus city for</u>	<div><div>▪ <u>Southwest Airlines</u></div></div>
<u>Elevation AMSL</u>	5,434 ft / 1,656 m
<u>Coordinates</u>	<u>39°51′42″N 104°40′23″W</u>
Website	<u>flydenver.com</u> (<u>http://www.flydenver.com</u>)

Accidents and incidents

See also

References

External links

History



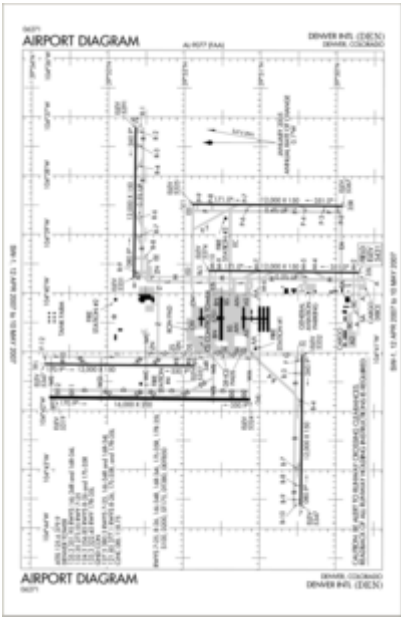
The Air Traffic Control Tower and Concourse C at Denver International Airport with a United Airlines Boeing 737-800 taxiing below

Denver has traditionally been home to one of the busier airports in the United States because of its location. Many airlines, including United Airlines, Western Airlines, former Frontier Airlines, Continental Airlines and People Express were hubbed at the former Stapleton International Airport. At times, Stapleton was a hub for three or four airlines. Reasons that justified the construction of the new DEN were that space was severely limited at Stapleton, and its runways were unable to deal efficiently with Denver's weather and wind patterns, causing nationwide travel disruption.

From 1980 to 1983, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) investigated six areas for a new metro area airport that were north and east of Denver. In September 1989, under the leadership of Denver Mayor Federico Peña, federal officials authorized the outlay of the first \$60 million (equivalent to \$125 million today) for the construction of DEN. Two years later, Mayor Wellington Webb inherited the megaproject, scheduled to open on October 29, 1993.^[8]

Delays caused by poor planning and repeated design changes due to changing requirements from United Airlines caused Mayor Webb to push opening day back, first to December 1993, then to March 1994. By September 1993, delays due to a millwright strike and other events meant opening day was pushed back

Maps



FAA airport diagram



- ☒ Show map of the United States
- ☐ Show map of Colorado
- ☐ Show all

Runways

Direction	Length		Surface
	ft	m	
7/25	12,000	3,658	Concrete
8/26	12,000	3,658	Concrete
16L/34R	12,000	3,658	Concrete
16R/34L	16,000	4,877	Concrete
17L/35R	12,000	3,658	Concrete
17R/35L	12,000	3,658	Concrete

Statistics (2020)

Passengers	33,741,129
Aircraft operations	442,571
Total cargo (lbs.)	661,094,348
Economic impact (2018)	\$33.5 billion ^[1]

Source: Denver International Airport^[2]

again, to May 15, 1994. In April 1994, the city invited reporters to observe the first test of the new automated baggage system. Reporters were treated to scenes of clothing and other personal effects scattered beneath the system's tracks, while the actuators that moved luggage from belt to belt would often toss the luggage right off the system instead. The mayor cancelled the planned May 15 opening. The baggage system continued to be a maintenance hassle and was finally terminated in September 2005, with traditional baggage handlers manually handling cargo and passenger luggage.^[9] On September 25, 1994, the airport hosted a fly-in that drew several hundred general aviation aircraft, providing pilots with a unique opportunity to operate in and out of the new airport, and to wander around on foot looking at the ground-side facilities—including the baggage system, which was still under testing. FAA controllers also took advantage of the event to test procedures, and to check for holes in radio coverage as planes taxied around and among the buildings.

DEN finally replaced Stapleton on February 28, 1995, 16 months behind schedule and at a cost of \$4.8 billion (equivalent to \$8.2 billion today),^[10] nearly \$2 billion over budget (\$3.4 billion today).^[6] The construction employed 11,000 workers.^[11] United Airlines Flight 1062 to Kansas City International Airport was the first to depart DIA and United Flight 1474 from Colorado Springs Airport was the first to arrive at the new airport.^[6] After the airport's runways were completed but before it opened, the airport used the codes (IATA: **DVX**, ICAO: **KDVX**). DIA later took over (IATA: **DEN**, ICAO: **KDEN**) as its codes from Stapleton when the latter airport closed.

In September 2003, the sixth and longest runway – 16R/34L – was added; at 16,000 ft (3.0 mi; 4.9 km), it is 4,000 ft (0.76 mi; 1.2 km) longer than the other runways. Its length – exceeded by only six other runways in the world – allows fully-laden Airbus A380s and Boeing 747-8s to take off in hot and high conditions at the airport, which is roughly 1 mi (1.6 km) above sea level.

During a blizzard on March 17–19, 2003, the weight of heavy snow tore a hole in the terminal's white fabric roof, and over 2 feet (0.61 m) of snow on paved areas closed the airport and its main access road (Peña Boulevard) for almost two days, stranding several thousand people.^{[12][13]}

In 2004, DEN was ranked first in major airports for on-time arrivals according to the FAA. Another blizzard on December 20–21, 2006, dumped over 20 inches (51 cm) of snow in about 24 hours. The airport was closed for more than 45 hours, stranding thousands.^[14] Following this, the airport invested heavily in new snow-removal equipment that has led to a dramatic reduction in runway occupancy times to clear snow, down from an average of 45 minutes in 2006 to just 15 minutes in 2014.

After shunning DEN for over a decade due to high fees, Southwest Airlines entered the airport in January 2006 with 13 daily flights.^[15] Southwest has since rapidly expanded and is now the airport's second-largest carrier after United.^[16]



A Southwest Airlines Boeing 737-800 taxis north at Denver International Airport.

On September 9, 2015, a political campaign was launched by Mayor Michael Hancock to radically expand commercial development at DIA, development previously prohibited by intergovernmental agreement between Denver and Adams County.^[17] The changes to the agreement were approved by both Denver and Adams County voters in November 2015.^[18] On November 19, 2015, the first part of a Hotel and Transit Center, the hotel, opened adjacent to the Jeppesen Terminal. On April 22, 2016, commuter rail service to the Hotel and Transit Center from Denver Union Station began.

In 2018, work began on a major interior renovation and reconfiguration including the beginning phases of construction to relocate two out of the three TSA security checkpoints from the Great Hall on Level 5 to Level 6 (East & West) while simultaneously updating and consolidating airline ticket counters/check-in for all airlines. Eventually, both pre- and post-security gathering and leisure areas will be incorporated into the spaces where both expansive TSA security areas on Level 5 are currently located. The third TSA security checkpoint currently accessible via the Concourse A bridge is expected to be removed. The renovation and reconfiguration will bring back the original intent and use of the Great Hall as a large commons area for airport patrons and visitors to enjoy. This phased terminal project is expected to be completed by 2025.^[19]

Additionally, work is underway on expanding all three concourses, with 12 new gates being added to A (including several gates with direct access to U.S. Customs and Border Protection), 11 to B, and 16 to C for a total of 39 gates.^[20] Following the completion of this project, United Airlines will lease 24 additional gates on both A and B (bringing its total gate count at DEN to around 90), as well as build a new United Club in A and expand their existing clubs in B.^[21] Southwest Airlines will lease 16 of the new gates on C bringing its total gate count at DEN to 40.^[22] When both the ongoing terminal and concourse projects are completed, the airport will be able to handle upwards of 90 million passengers per year.^[23]

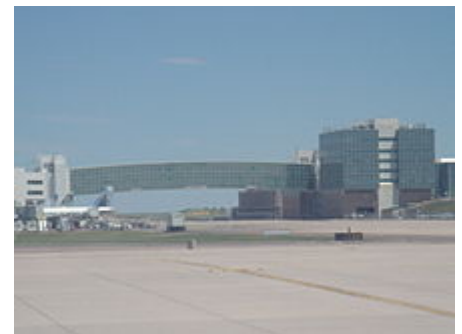
Facilities

The airport is 25 miles (40 km) driving distance from Downtown Denver, which is 19 miles (31 km) farther away than Stapleton International Airport, the airport DIA replaced.^[6] The distant location was chosen to avoid aircraft noise affecting developed areas, to accommodate a generous runway layout that would not be compromised by blizzards, and to allow for future expansion.

The 52.4 square miles (136 km²; 33,500 acres)^[3] of land occupied by the airport is more than one and a half times the size of Manhattan (33.6 square miles or 87 square kilometres). DIA occupies the largest amount of commercial airport land area in North America, by a great extent. The land was transferred from Adams County to Denver after a 1989 vote,^[24] increasing the city's size by 50 percent and bifurcating the western portion of the neighboring county. All freeway traffic accessing the airport from central Denver leaves the city and passes through Aurora for nearly two miles (3.2 km), making the airport a practical exclave. Similarly, the A Line rail service connecting the airport with downtown Denver has two intervening stations in Aurora.

Terminal

DIA has one terminal, named The Jeppesen Terminal after aviation safety pioneer Elrey Borge Jeppesen, and three midfield concourses, spaced far apart.^[25] Concourse A is accessible via a pedestrian bridge directly from the terminal building, as well as via the underground train system that services all three concourses. For access to Concourses B and C, passengers must utilize the train. All international arrivals without border pre-clearance are processed in Concourse A.



The pedestrian bridge connecting the Jeppesen Terminal with Concourse A



Overhead view of the Concourse C train station

- **Concourse A** has 51 gates, including several ground level boarding slips.^[25]
- **Concourse B** has 66 gates.^[25]
- **Concourse C** has 29 gates.^[25]

United operates two United Clubs in Concourse B and will be opening one in Concourse A soon.^[26] American Airlines and Delta Air Lines operate an Admirals Club and Sky Club respectively in Concourse A.^{[27][28]} American Express operates a Centurion Lounge in Concourse C.^[29]

Art & Aesthetics

The Jeppesen Terminal's internationally recognized peaked roof, designed by Fentress Bradburn Architects, resembles snow-capped mountains and evokes the early history of Colorado when Native American teepees were located across the Great Plains. The catenary steel cable system, similar to the Brooklyn Bridge design, supports the fabric roof. DIA is also known for a pedestrian bridge connecting the terminal to Concourse A that allows travelers to walk from the main Terminal to Concourse A, while viewing planes taxiing beneath them. It offers views of the Rocky Mountains to the west and the high plains to the east.



The Teflon-coated fiberglass roof of Denver International Airport resembles the Rocky Mountains.

Both during construction and after opening, DIA has set aside a portion of its construction and operation budgets for art. The corridor from the main terminal and Concourse A frequently displays temporary art exhibits. A number of public artworks are present in the underground train that links the main terminal with concourses, including art pieces from the history of Colorado.

The airport features a bronze statue of Denver native Jack Swigert in Concourse B. Swigert flew on Apollo 13 as Command Module Pilot, and was elected to the House of Representatives in 1982, but died of cancer before he was sworn in. The statue is dressed in an A7L pressure suit, and is posed holding a gold-plated helmet. It is a duplicate of a statue placed at the United States Capitol in 1997.^[30]

Denver International Airport has four murals, all of which have been the topic of conspiracy theorists and debate. The murals are ambiguous in meaning, depicting scenes including caged animals, fires, suffering people, and a soldier with a blade and a gas mask. They have been interpreted in the past by onlookers to represent war, hope, and even the New World Order.

In March 2019 the airport unveiled an animated, talking gargoyle in the middle of one of the concourses. The gargoyle interacts with passengers and jokes about the supposed conspiracies connected to the airport.^[31]

The *Blue Mustang*, by El Paso-born artist Luis Jiménez, was one of the earliest public art commissions for Denver International Airport in 1993. The 32-foot-tall (9.8 m) *Blue Mustang* is a bright blue cast-fiberglass sculpture of a horse with glowing red eyes located between the inbound and outbound lanes of Peña Boulevard.^[32] Jiménez was killed in 2006 at age 65 while creating the sculpture when the head fell on him and severed an artery in his leg. At the time of his death, Jiménez had completed painting the head of the mustang. *Blue Mustang* was completed by others, and unveiled at the airport on February 11, 2008.^[33] The statue has been the subject of considerable controversy, and has acquired the nickname *Blucifer* for its demonic appearance.^{[34][35]} The sculpture has been defended and disparaged by many people; one incident involved the vandalizing of the sculpture's hooves with orange paint.

Ground transportation

The Regional Transportation District (RTD) operates three bus routes under the frequent airport express bus service called skyRide, as well as one Express bus route and one Limited bus route, between DIA and various locations throughout the Denver-Aurora and Boulder metropolitan areas. RTD also operates the University of Colorado A Line, a commuter rail line that runs between the airport and Denver Union Station in downtown Denver.

Scheduled bus service is also available to points such as Fort Collins, and van services stretch into Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado summer and ski resort areas. Amtrak offers a Fly-Rail plan for ticketing with United Airlines for trips into scenic areas in the Western U.S. via a Denver stopover.

The Regional Transportation District's airport rail link is an electric commuter rail line that runs from Denver Union Station to the DIA Hotel and Transit Center. The A Line, sometimes called the East Rail Line, and under a sponsorship agreement called "University of Colorado A Line", connects passengers between downtown Denver and Denver International Airport in about 37 minutes. The line connects to RTD's rail service that runs throughout the metro area. The A Line is a 22.8-mile commuter rail transit corridor connecting these two important areas while serving adjacent employment centers, neighborhoods and development areas in Denver and Aurora. The A Line was constructed and funded as part of the Eagle P3 public-private partnership and opened for service on April 22, 2016. Above the station is a 519-room Westin hotel and conference center that opened in November 2015.^[36]

Airlines and destinations

Passenger

Airlines	Destinations	Refs
<u>Aeroméxico</u>	<u>Mexico City</u>	[37]
<u>Air Canada</u>	<u>Montréal–Trudeau</u> , <u>Toronto–Pearson</u>	[38]
<u>Air Canada Express</u>	<u>Vancouver</u>	[38]
<u>Air France</u>	Seasonal: <u>Paris–Charles de Gaulle</u> (begins July 2, 2021) ^[39]	[40]
<u>Alaska Airlines</u>	<u>Portland (OR)</u> , <u>Seattle/Tacoma</u> Seasonal: <u>Anchorage</u> (begins June 17, 2021) ^[41]	[42]
<u>Allegiant Air</u>	<u>Cincinnati</u> Seasonal: <u>Asheville</u> , <u>Knoxville</u> , <u>Peoria</u> , <u>Provo</u>	[43]
<u>American Airlines</u>	<u>Charlotte</u> , <u>Chicago–O'Hare</u> , <u>Dallas/Fort Worth</u> , <u>Los Angeles</u> , <u>Miami</u> , <u>New York–LaGuardia</u> , <u>Philadelphia</u> , <u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor</u>	[44]
<u>American Eagle</u>	<u>Los Angeles</u>	[44]
<u>Boutique Air</u>	<u>Chadron</u> (ends June 20, 2021), ^[45] <u>Cortez</u> , <u>McCook</u>	[46]
<u>British Airways</u>	<u>London–Heathrow</u>	[47]
<u>Cayman Airways</u>	Seasonal: <u>Grand Cayman</u>	[48]
<u>Copa Airlines</u>	<u>Panama City–Tocumen</u>	[49]
<u>Delta Air Lines</u>	<u>Atlanta</u> , <u>Cincinnati</u> , <u>Detroit</u> , <u>Los Angeles</u> , <u>Minneapolis/St. Paul</u> , <u>New York–JFK</u> , <u>New York–LaGuardia</u> , <u>Salt Lake City</u> , <u>Seattle/Tacoma</u>	[50]
<u>Delta Connection</u>	<u>Los Angeles</u> , <u>Seattle/Tacoma</u>	
<u>Denver Air Connection</u>	<u>Alliance</u> , <u>Clovis (NM)</u> , <u>Pierre</u> (begins July 1, 2021), ^[51] <u>Telluride</u> (<u>CO</u>), <u>Watertown (SD)</u> (begins July 1, 2021) ^[52]	[53]
<u>Edelweiss Air</u>	Seasonal: <u>Zürich</u>	[54]

Airlines	Destinations	Refs
<u>Frontier Airlines</u>	<p><u>Albuquerque</u>, <u>Atlanta</u>, <u>Austin</u>, <u>Billings</u>, <u>Buffalo</u>, <u>Burbank</u> (begins July 15, 2021), <u>Calgary</u>, <u>Cancún</u>, <u>Cozumel</u>, <u>Charlotte</u>, <u>Chicago–O'Hare</u>, <u>Cincinnati</u>, <u>Cleveland</u>, <u>Columbus–Glenn</u>, <u>Dallas/Fort Worth</u>, <u>Des Moines</u>, <u>El Paso</u>, <u>Fayetteville/Bentonville</u>, <u>Greenville/Spartanburg</u>, <u>Harlingen</u>, <u>Houston–Intercontinental</u>, <u>Indianapolis</u>, <u>Kansas City</u>, <u>Knoxville</u>, <u>Las Vegas</u>, <u>Little Rock</u>, <u>Los Angeles</u> (ends October 1, 2021), <u>Louisville</u>, <u>Madison</u>, <u>Memphis</u>, <u>Miami</u>, <u>Milwaukee</u>, <u>Minneapolis/St. Paul</u>, <u>Nashville</u>, <u>Newark</u>, <u>New Orleans</u>, <u>Norfolk</u>, <u>Oakland</u>, <u>Oklahoma City</u>, <u>Omaha</u>, <u>Ontario</u>, <u>Orange County</u>, <u>Orlando</u>, <u>Pensacola</u>, <u>Philadelphia</u>, <u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor</u>, <u>Portland (OR)</u>, <u>Raleigh/Durham</u>, <u>Reno/Tahoe</u>, <u>Sacramento</u>, <u>St. Louis</u>, <u>Salt Lake City</u>, <u>San Antonio</u>, <u>San Diego</u>, <u>San Francisco</u>, <u>San Jose (CA)</u>, <u>Seattle/Tacoma</u>, <u>Tampa</u>, <u>Tucson</u>, <u>Washington–Dulles</u>, <u>Washington–National</u>, <u>Wichita</u></p> <p>Seasonal: <u>Albany</u>, <u>Anchorage</u>, <u>Baltimore</u>, <u>Bismarck</u>, <u>Bloomington/Normal</u>, <u>Boise</u>, <u>Boston</u>, <u>Bozeman</u>, <u>Branson</u>, <u>Burlington (VT)</u>, <u>Cedar Rapids/Iowa City</u>, <u>Charleston (SC)</u>, <u>Detroit</u>, <u>Durango (CO)</u>, <u>Fargo</u>, <u>Fort Myers</u>, <u>Fresno</u>, <u>Grand Junction</u>,^[55] <u>Grand Rapids</u>, <u>Green Bay</u>, <u>Hartford</u>, <u>Huntsville</u>, <u>Jackson (MS)</u>, <u>Jackson Hole</u>, <u>Jacksonville (FL)</u>, <u>Kalispell</u> (begins June 17, 2021),^[55] <u>Lafayette (LA)</u>, <u>Missoula</u>, <u>Myrtle Beach</u>, <u>New York–LaGuardia</u>, <u>Palm Springs</u>, <u>Portland (ME)</u>, <u>Puerto Vallarta</u>, <u>Santa Barbara</u>, <u>Savannah</u>, <u>Sioux Falls</u>, <u>Spokane</u>, <u>Syracuse</u>, <u>Tulsa</u></p>	^[56]
<u>Icelandair</u>	<u>Reykjavík–Keflavík</u>	^[57]
<u>JetBlue</u>	<u>Boston</u> , <u>New York–JFK</u> , <u>New York–LaGuardia</u> (begins July 1, 2021) ^[58]	^[59]
<u>Lufthansa</u>	<u>Frankfurt</u> , <u>Munich</u>	^[60]
<u>Southern Airways Express</u>	<u>Chadron</u> (begins June 21, 2021) ^[61]	^[62]
<u>Southwest Airlines</u>	<p><u>Albany</u>, <u>Albuquerque</u>, <u>Atlanta</u>, <u>Austin</u>, <u>Baltimore</u>, <u>Birmingham (AL)</u>, <u>Boise</u>, <u>Boston</u>, <u>Bozeman</u>, <u>Buffalo</u>, <u>Burbank</u>, <u>Cancún</u>, <u>Charlotte</u>, <u>Chicago–Midway</u>, <u>Chicago–O'Hare</u>, <u>Cincinnati</u>, <u>Cleveland</u>, <u>Colorado Springs</u>, <u>Columbus–Glenn</u>, <u>Dallas–Love</u>, <u>Des Moines</u>, <u>Detroit</u>, <u>El Paso</u>, <u>Fort Lauderdale</u>, <u>Fresno</u>, <u>Grand Rapids</u>, <u>Hartford</u>, <u>Hayden/Steamboat Springs</u>, <u>Houston–Hobby</u>, <u>Houston–Intercontinental</u>, <u>Indianapolis</u>, <u>Jacksonville (FL)</u>, <u>Kansas City</u>, <u>Las Vegas</u>, <u>Liberia (CR)</u> (begins November 13, 2021),^[63] <u>Little Rock</u>, <u>Long Beach</u>, <u>Los Angeles</u>, <u>Louisville</u>, <u>Lubbock</u>, <u>Memphis</u>, <u>Miami</u>, <u>Milwaukee</u>, <u>Minneapolis/St. Paul</u>, <u>Montrose</u>, <u>Nashville</u>, <u>New Orleans</u>, <u>New York–LaGuardia</u>, <u>Oakland</u>, <u>Oklahoma City</u>, <u>Omaha</u>, <u>Ontario</u>, <u>Orange County (CA)</u>, <u>Orlando</u>, <u>Palm Springs</u>, <u>Panama City (FL)</u>, <u>Philadelphia</u>, <u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor</u>, <u>Pittsburgh</u>, <u>Portland (OR)</u>, <u>Puerto Vallarta</u>, <u>Raleigh/Durham</u>, <u>Reno/Tahoe</u>, <u>Richmond</u>, <u>Sacramento</u>, <u>St. Louis</u>, <u>Salt Lake City</u>, <u>San Antonio</u>, <u>San Diego</u>, <u>San Francisco</u>, <u>San Jose (CA)</u>, <u>San José del Cabo</u>, <u>Santa Barbara</u>, <u>Savannah</u>, <u>Seattle/Tacoma</u>, <u>Spokane</u>, <u>Tampa</u>, <u>Tucson</u>, <u>Tulsa</u>, <u>Washington–Dulles</u>, <u>Wichita</u></p> <p>Seasonal: <u>Belize City</u> (resumes November 20, 2021),^[63] <u>Charleston (SC)</u>, <u>Fort Myers</u>, <u>Midland/Odessa</u>, <u>Norfolk</u>, <u>Pensacola</u>, <u>Sarasota</u></p>	^[64]

Airlines	Destinations	Refs
<u>Spirit Airlines</u>	<u>Atlanta</u> , <u>Baltimore</u> , <u>Chicago–O'Hare</u> , <u>Detroit</u> , <u>Fort Lauderdale</u> , <u>Houston–Intercontinental</u> , <u>Las Vegas</u> , <u>Miami</u> (begins November 17, 2021) ^[65] Seasonal: <u>Los Angeles</u> , <u>Minneapolis/St. Paul</u>	^[66]
<u>Sun Country Airlines</u>	<u>Minneapolis/St. Paul</u>	^[67]
<u>United Airlines</u>	<u>Albuquerque</u> , <u>Anchorage</u> , <u>Atlanta</u> , <u>Austin</u> , <u>Baltimore</u> , <u>Billings</u> , <u>Boise</u> , <u>Boston</u> , <u>Bozeman</u> , <u>Burbank</u> , <u>Calgary</u> , <u>Cancún</u> , <u>Cedar Rapids/Iowa City</u> , <u>Chicago–O'Hare</u> , <u>Cincinnati</u> , <u>Cleveland</u> , <u>Colorado Springs</u> , <u>Columbus–Glenn</u> , <u>Dallas/Fort Worth</u> , <u>Des Moines</u> , <u>Detroit</u> , <u>Eugene</u> , <u>Fort Lauderdale</u> , <u>Fort Myers</u> , <u>Frankfurt</u> , <u>Fresno</u> , <u>Grand Rapids</u> , <u>Hartford</u> , <u>Honolulu</u> , <u>Houston–Intercontinental</u> , <u>Indianapolis</u> , <u>Jacksonville (FL)</u> , <u>Kahului</u> , <u>Kailua–Kona</u> , <u>Kansas City</u> , <u>Las Vegas</u> , <u>Lihue</u> , <u>London–Heathrow</u> , <u>Los Angeles</u> , <u>Madison</u> , <u>Medford</u> , <u>Memphis</u> , <u>Milwaukee</u> , <u>Minneapolis/St. Paul</u> , <u>Missoula</u> , <u>Nashville</u> , <u>Newark</u> , <u>New Orleans</u> , <u>New York–LaGuardia</u> , <u>Norfolk</u> , <u>Oklahoma City</u> , <u>Omaha</u> , <u>Ontario</u> , <u>Orange County</u> , <u>Orlando</u> , <u>Philadelphia</u> , <u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor</u> , <u>Pittsburgh</u> , <u>Portland (OR)</u> , <u>Puerto Vallarta</u> , <u>Raleigh/Durham</u> , <u>Reno/Tahoe</u> , <u>Richmond</u> , <u>Sacramento</u> , <u>St. Louis</u> , <u>Salt Lake City</u> , <u>San Antonio</u> , <u>San Diego</u> , <u>San Francisco</u> , <u>San Jose (CA)</u> , <u>San José del Cabo</u> , <u>Santa Barbara</u> , <u>Seattle/Tacoma</u> , <u>Sioux Falls</u> , <u>Spokane</u> , <u>Tampa</u> , <u>Tokyo–Narita</u> , <u>Toronto–Pearson</u> , <u>Tulsa</u> , <u>Vancouver</u> , <u>Washington–Dulles</u> , <u>Washington–National</u> , <u>Wichita</u> Seasonal: <u>Belize City</u> , <u>Burlington (VT)</u> , <u>Charlotte</u> , <u>Cozumel</u> , <u>Fairbanks</u> , <u>Jackson Hole</u> , <u>Kalispell</u> , <u>Liberia (CR)</u> , <u>Miami</u> , <u>Nassau</u> , <u>Palm Springs</u> , <u>Portland (ME)</u> , <u>Redmond/Bend</u> , <u>San Jose (CR)</u> , <u>Sarasota</u> , <u>Tucson</u>	^[68]

Airlines	Destinations	Refs
<u>United Express</u>	<u>Alamosa</u> , <u>Albuquerque</u> , <u>Amarillo</u> , <u>Appleton</u> , <u>Aspen</u> , <u>Atlanta</u> , <u>Austin</u> , <u>Bakersfield</u> , <u>Billings</u> , <u>Birmingham (AL)</u> , <u>Bismarck</u> , <u>Boise</u> , <u>Bozeman</u> , <u>Burbank</u> , <u>Calgary</u> , <u>Casper</u> , <u>Cedar Rapids/Iowa City</u> , <u>Charleston (SC)</u> , <u>Charlotte</u> , <u>Cheyenne</u> , <u>Cody</u> , <u>Colorado Springs</u> , <u>Columbia (MO)</u> , <u>Dallas/Fort Worth</u> , <u>Dayton</u> , <u>Des Moines</u> , <u>Devils Lake</u> , <u>Dickinson</u> , <u>Dodge City</u> , <u>Durango (CO)</u> , <u>Eagle/Vail</u> , <u>Edmonton</u> , <u>El Paso</u> , <u>Eugene</u> , <u>Eureka</u> , <u>Everett</u> , <u>Fargo</u> , <u>Fayetteville/Bentonville</u> , <u>Flagstaff</u> , <u>Fresno</u> , <u>Gillette</u> , <u>Grand Junction</u> , <u>Grand Rapids</u> , <u>Great Falls</u> , <u>Greenville/Spartanburg</u> , <u>Gunnison/Crested Butte</u> , <u>Hayden/Steamboat Springs</u> , <u>Hays</u> , <u>Helena</u> , <u>Hobbs</u> , <u>Huntsville</u> , <u>Idaho Falls</u> , <u>Indianapolis</u> , <u>Jackson Hole</u> , <u>Jamestown (ND)</u> , <u>Joplin</u> , <u>Kalispell</u> , <u>Kansas City</u> , <u>Kearney</u> , <u>Laramie</u> , <u>Liberal</u> , <u>Lincoln</u> , <u>Little Rock</u> , <u>Louisville</u> , <u>Lubbock</u> , <u>Madison</u> , <u>Medford</u> , <u>Memphis</u> , <u>Midland/Odessa</u> , <u>Minot</u> , <u>Missoula</u> , <u>Moab</u> , <u>Monterey</u> , <u>Moline/Quad Cities</u> , <u>Montrose</u> , <u>Nashville</u> , <u>New Orleans</u> , <u>North Platte</u> , <u>Oklahoma City</u> , <u>Omaha</u> , <u>Palm Springs</u> , <u>Pierre</u> ^[69] , <u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor</u> , <u>Prescott</u> , <u>Pueblo</u> , <u>Rapid City</u> , <u>Redmond/Bend</u> , <u>Reno/Tahoe</u> , <u>Rochester (MN)</u> , <u>Richmond</u> , <u>Riverton</u> , <u>Rock Springs</u> , <u>Sacramento</u> , <u>St. George (UT)</u> , <u>St. Louis</u> , <u>Salt Lake City</u> , <u>Salina</u> , <u>San Antonio</u> , <u>San Diego</u> , <u>San Jose (CA)</u> , <u>San Luis Obispo</u> , <u>Santa Barbara</u> , <u>Santa Fe</u> , <u>Santa Maria (CA)</u> , <u>Santa Rosa</u> (resumes September 8, 2021), <u>Savannah</u> , <u>Scottsbluff</u> , <u>Sheridan (WY)</u> , <u>Shreveport</u> , <u>Sioux City</u> , <u>Sioux Falls</u> , <u>Spokane</u> , <u>Springfield/Branson</u> , <u>Syracuse</u> , <u>Toronto–Pearson</u> , <u>Tri-Cities (WA)</u> , <u>Tucson</u> , <u>Tulsa</u> , <u>Twin Falls</u> , <u>Vernal</u> , <u>Watertown (SD)</u> , <u>Wichita</u> , <u>Williston (ND)</u> , <u>Winnipeg</u> Seasonal: <u>Destin/Fort Walton Beach</u> , <u>Mammoth Lakes</u> , <u>Norfolk</u> , <u>North Bend/Coos Bay</u> , <u>Panama City (FL)</u> , <u>Pensacola</u> , <u>Sun Valley</u> , <u>Traverse City</u> , <u>West Yellowstone</u>	^[68]
<u>Volaris</u>	<u>Chihuahua</u> , <u>Guadalajara</u> , <u>Mexico City</u>	^[70]
<u>WestJet</u>	<u>Calgary</u>	^[71]

Cargo

Airlines	Destinations
<u>AirNet Express</u>	<u>Columbus–Rickenbacker</u>
<u>Amazon Air</u>	<u>Cincinnati</u> , <u>Ontario</u>
<u>Bemidji Airlines</u>	<u>Colby</u> , <u>Goodland</u> , <u>McCook</u> , <u>North Platte</u> , <u>Sidney</u> , <u>Trinidad</u>
<u>DHL Aviation</u>	<u>Cincinnati</u> , <u>Reno/Tahoe</u>
<u>FedEx Express</u>	<u>Billings</u> , <u>Fort Worth/Alliance</u> , <u>Fresno</u> , <u>Indianapolis</u> , <u>Los Angeles</u> , <u>Memphis</u> , <u>Oakland</u> , <u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor</u> , <u>San Jose</u> Seasonal: <u>Houston– Intercontinental</u>
<u>IAG Cargo</u>	<u>London–Heathrow</u>
<u>Lufthansa Cargo</u>	<u>Frankfurt</u> , <u>Munich</u>
<u>UPS Airlines</u>	<u>Billings</u> , <u>Burbank</u> , <u>Chicago/Rockford</u> , <u>Everett</u> , <u>Louisville</u> , <u>Ontario</u> , <u>Reno/Tahoe</u> , <u>Salt Lake City</u> , <u>Seattle–Boeing</u> Seasonal: <u>Hartford</u>

Statistics

Top destinations

Busiest domestic routes from DEN (March 2020 – February 2021)^[72]

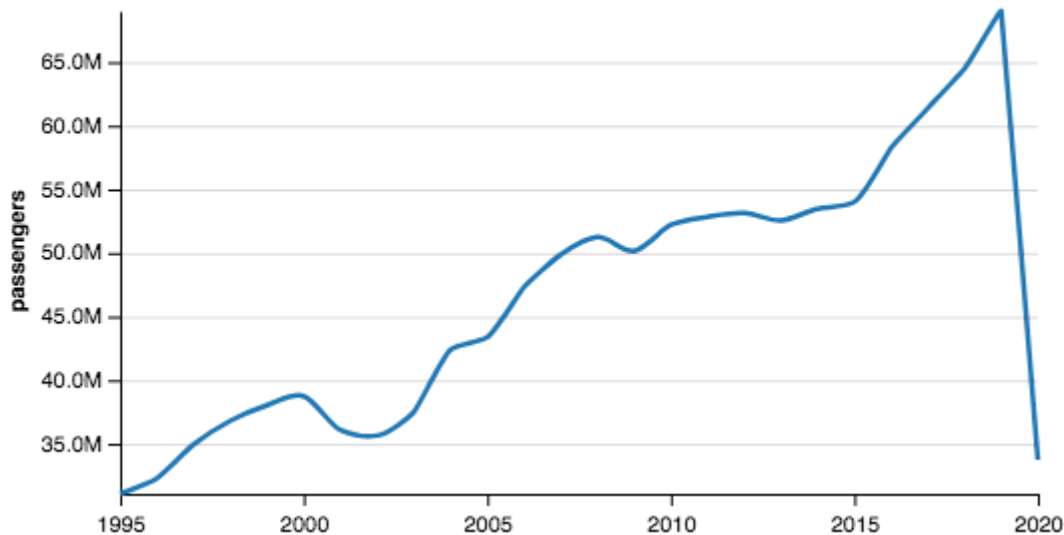
Rank	City	Passengers	Carriers
1	<u>Phoenix–Sky Harbor, Arizona</u>	569,000	American, Frontier, Southwest, United
2	<u>Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas</u>	478,000	American, Frontier, United
3	<u>Chicago–O'Hare, Illinois</u>	455,000	American, Frontier, Southwest, Spirit, United
4	<u>Los Angeles, California</u>	444,000	American, Delta, Frontier, Southwest, Spirit, United
5	<u>Las Vegas, Nevada</u>	436,000	Frontier, Southwest, Spirit, United
6	<u>Houston–Intercontinental, Texas</u>	418,000	Frontier, Spirit, United
7	<u>Atlanta, Georgia</u>	401,000	Delta, Frontier, Southwest, United
8	<u>Seattle/Tacoma, Washington</u>	354,000	Alaska, Delta, Frontier, Southwest, United
9	<u>Salt Lake City, Utah</u>	350,000	Delta, Frontier, Southwest, United
10	<u>Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota</u>	330,000	Delta, Frontier, Southwest, Spirit, Sun Country, United

Busiest international routes to and from DEN (Jan. 2018 – Dec. 2018)^[73]

Rank	Airport	2018 Passengers	Carriers
1	<u>Cancún, Mexico</u>	424,635	Frontier, Southwest, United
2	<u>London–Heathrow, United Kingdom</u>	275,554	British Airways, United
3	<u>Calgary, Canada</u>	251,585	Frontier, United, WestJet
4	<u>Frankfurt, Germany</u>	244,111	Lufthansa, United
5	<u>Toronto–Pearson, Canada</u>	244,059	Air Canada, United
6	<u>Vancouver, Canada</u>	241,300	Air Canada, United
7	<u>Munich, Germany</u>	163,900	Lufthansa
8	<u>Puerto Vallarta, Mexico</u>	163,755	Frontier, Southwest, United
9	<u>San José del Cabo, Mexico</u>	162,670	Frontier, Southwest, United
10	<u>Tokyo–Narita, Japan</u>	137,092	United

Annual traffic

Annual passenger traffic at DEN airport

[illegible]

0%28BOUND%28%3Fapplies%29%3Dfalse%20%7C%7C%20%3Fapplies%20%3D%20wd%3AQ2165236%20%29%0A%20%20%20%20MINUS%20%7B%20%3Fstatement%20wikibase%3Arank%20wikibase%3ADeprecatedRank%20%7D%0A%20%20%20%20BIND%20%28YEAR%28%3Fdate%29%20AS%20%3Fyear%29%0A%20%20%20%20FILTER%20%28%3Fyear%20%3E1949%29.%0A%20%20%20%20FILTER%20%28%3Fyear%20%3C%20YEAR%28NOW%28%29%29%29%0A%20%20%7D%0A%7D%20AS%20%25airport%0AWHERE%0A%7B%0A%20%20%7B%0A%20%20%20%20%23%20Get%20the%20sum%20of%20monthly%20values%20within%20a%20year%0A%20%20%20%20SELECT%20%3Fitem%20%3Fyear%20%28SUM%28%3Fmax_numberperperiod%29%20AS%20%3Fnumber%29%20%28SAMPLE%28%3Fmonthly_reference_URL%29%20AS%20%3Fmonthly_reference_URL2%29%0A%20%20%20%20WHERE%0A%20%20%20%20%20%7B%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%23%20Get%20the%20maximal%20value%20and%20a%20sample%20reference%20URL%20for%20each%20unique%20month%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%7B%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20SELECT%20%3Fitem%20%3Fyear%20%28MAX%28%3Fnumberperperiod%29%20AS%20%3Fmax_numberperperiod%29%20%28SAMPLE%28%3Freference_URL%29%20AS%20%3Fmonthly_reference_URL%29%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20WHERE%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%7B%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20INCLUDE%20%25airport%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%3Ftimevalue%20wikibase%3AtimePrecision%20%3Fprec.%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20FILTER%20%28%3Fprec%20%3E%209%29%23%20precision%20more%20precise%20or%20equal%20to%20month%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%7D%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20GROUP%20BY%20%3Fitem%20%3Fyear%20%3Fdate%0A%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%7D%0A%20%20%20%20%7D%0A%20%20%20%20GROUP%20BY%20%3Fitem%20%3Fyear%0A%20%20%7D%0A%20%20UNION%0A%20%20%7B%0A%20%20%20%20%20%3Ftimevalue%20wikibase%3AtimePrecision%209%20.%0A%20%20%20%20BIND%20%28%3Fnumberperperiod%20AS%20%3Fnumber%29%0A%20%20%20%20BIND%20%28%3Freference_URL%20AS%20%3Fsample_reference_URL%29%0A%20%20%20%20INCLUDE%20%25airport%0A%20%20%7D%0A%20%20SERVICE%20wikibase%3Alabel%20%7B%20bd%3AserviceParam%20wikibase%3Alanguage%20%22en%22.%20%7D%0A%7D%0AGROUP%20BY%20%3Fitem%20%3FitemLabel%20%3Fyear%0AORDER%20BY%20%3Fitem%20DESC%20%28%3Fyear%29).

Annual passenger traffic at DEN, 1995–present^{[74][75]}

Year	Passengers	Year	Passengers	Year	Passengers
1995	31,067,498 (a)	2005	43,387,369	2015	54,014,502
1996	32,296,174	2006	47,326,506	2016	58,266,515
1997	34,969,837	2007	49,863,352	2017	61,379,396
1998	36,831,400	2008	51,245,334	2018	64,494,613
1999	38,034,017	2009	50,167,485	2019	69,015,703
2000	38,751,687	2010	51,985,038	2020	33,741,129
2001	36,092,806	2011	52,849,132		
2002	35,652,084	2012	53,156,278		
2003	37,505,267	2013	52,556,359		
2004	42,275,913	2014	53,472,514		

(a) Passenger totals for first two months of 1995 reflect operations at Stapleton International Airport.

Airline market share

Largest Airlines at DEN
(September 2019 - August 2020)^[76]

Rank	Airline	Passengers	Share
1	<u>Southwest Airlines</u>	12,513,000	30.15%
2	<u>United Airlines</u>	12,257,000	29.54%
3	<u>Frontier Airlines</u>	5,534,355	13.33%
4	<u>SkyWest Airlines</u>	3,683,000	8.88%
5	<u>Delta Air Lines</u>	2,055,000	4.95%
6	Other	5,456,000	13.15%

Accidents and incidents

- On September 5, 2001, a British Airways Boeing 777 caught on fire while it was being refueled at the gate. None of the deplaning passengers or crew were injured, but the refueler servicing the aircraft died from his injuries six days after the fire. The NTSB found that the accident occurred due to a failure of the aircraft's refueling ring when the fuel hose was disconnected at an improper angle.^[77]
- On February 16, 2007, 14 aircraft suffered windshield failures within a three-and-a-half-hour period at the airport. A total of 26 windshields on these aircraft failed. The NTSB opened an investigation, determining that foreign object damage was the cause, possibly the sharp sand used earlier that winter for traction purposes combined with wind gusts of 48 mph (77 km/h).^[78]
- On December 20, 2008, a Continental Airlines Boeing 737-500 operating as Flight 1404 to Houston–Intercontinental Airport veered off the left side of runway 34R and caught fire during its takeoff roll at DIA. There was no snow or ice on the runway, however there were 31-knot (36 mph; 57 km/h) crosswinds at the time of the accident. On July 13, 2010, the NTSB published that the probable cause of this accident was the captain's cessation of right rudder input, which was needed to maintain directional control of the airplane. Of the 115 people on board, at least 38 sustained injuries, at least two critically.^{[79][80][81]}
- On April 12, 2011, a 22-year-old woman was raped in the airport near a gate by a man she met there after both missed their flights. The crime was halted by two Frontier Airlines mechanics who saw what was happening. Ex-Marine Noel Bertrand was convicted of sexual assault with force and received a life sentence with no parole for six years. His lawyer indicated Bertrand would likely remain in prison for the rest of his life as he would not confess and therefore could not attend therapy.^[82]
- On April 3, 2012, an ExpressJet Embraer ERJ-145, registration N15973, operating as Flight UA/EV-5912 from Peoria, IL to Denver, was landing on 34R when the aircraft hit the approach lights and stopped on the runway. Smoke developed inside the aircraft and passengers were evacuated onto the runway. One passenger was taken to hospital for treatment of his injuries.^[83]
- On February 20, 2021, United Airlines Flight 328, a Boeing 777-200 that was on its way from Denver to Honolulu, Hawaii, suffered engine damage just after takeoff and had to return to Denver International Airport. Debris from the damaged engine fell on a neighborhood in Broomfield, a city near the airport. The damaged airplane landed safely on runway 26 and no injuries were reported.^[84]



The wreckage of Continental Airlines Flight 1404

See also

- [Busiest airports in the United States by international passenger traffic](#)
- [Busiest airports in the United States by total passenger boardings](#)
- [List of airports in the Denver area](#)
- [List of the busiest airports in the United States](#)
- [List of longest runways](#)
- [Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition](#)
- [World's busiest airports by passenger traffic](#)
- [World's busiest airports by traffic movements](#)
- [World's busiest airports by cargo traffic](#)
- [World's busiest airports by international passenger traffic](#)

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External links

- [Denver International Airport \(http://www.flydenver.com/\)](http://www.flydenver.com/), official site
 - [Denver International Airport \(https://web.archive.org/*/http://infodenver.denver.co.us/~aviation/diaintro.html\)](https://web.archive.org/*/http://infodenver.denver.co.us/~aviation/diaintro.html) at the [Wayback Machine](#) (archive index)
- [FAA Airport Diagram \(https://aeronav.faa.gov/d-tpp/2105/09077AD.PDF\)](https://aeronav.faa.gov/d-tpp/2105/09077AD.PDF) (PDF), effective May 20, 2021
- Resources for this airport:
 - [AirNav airport information for KDEN \(http://www.airnav.com/airport/KDEN\)](http://www.airnav.com/airport/KDEN)
 - [ASN accident history for DEN \(https://aviation-safety.net/database/airport/airport.php?id=DEN\)](https://aviation-safety.net/database/airport/airport.php?id=DEN)
 - [FlightAware airport information \(https://flightaware.com/resources/airport/KDEN\)](https://flightaware.com/resources/airport/KDEN) and [live flight tracker \(https://flightaware.com/live/airport/KDEN\)](https://flightaware.com/live/airport/KDEN)
 - [NOAA/NWS weather observations: current \(https://tgftp.nws.noaa.gov/weather/current/KDEN.html\)](https://tgftp.nws.noaa.gov/weather/current/KDEN.html), [past three days \(https://w1.weather.gov/data/obhistory/KDEN.html\)](https://w1.weather.gov/data/obhistory/KDEN.html)
 - [SkyVector aeronautical chart for KDEN \(https://skyvector.com/perl/code?id=KDEN&scale=2\)](https://skyvector.com/perl/code?id=KDEN&scale=2)
 - [FAA current DEN delay information \(https://www.fly.faa.gov/flyfaa/flyfaaindex.jsp?ARPT=DEN&p=0\)](https://www.fly.faa.gov/flyfaa/flyfaaindex.jsp?ARPT=DEN&p=0)

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TWA Flight 800 conspiracy theories

TWA Flight 800 conspiracy theories are discredited alternative explanations of the crash Trans World Airlines Flight 800 (TWA 800) in 1996.^[1] The NTSB found that the probable cause of the crash of TWA Flight 800 was an explosion of flammable fuel/air vapors in a fuel tank, most likely from a short circuit. Conspiracy theories claim that the crash was due to a U.S. Navy missile test gone awry, a terrorist missile strike, or an on-board bomb. In 2013, a documentary alleging that the investigation into the crash was a cover-up made news headlines with statements from six members of the original investigation team, now retired, who also filed a petition to reopen the probe.^[2]

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Background

TWA 800, a Boeing 747-131, was a scheduled international passenger flight from New York City, New York to Rome, Italy, with a stopover in Paris, France. At about 20:31 EDT, on July 17, 1996, about 12 minutes after takeoff from John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK), TWA 800 exploded and then crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near East Moriches, New York.^{[3]:1} Of the 230 passengers and crew on board, no survivors were found, making TWA 800 the second-deadliest aircraft accident in the United States at that time.^[4]

While investigators from the NTSB arrived on scene the following day,^{[5]:313} many witnesses to the accident had seen a "streak of light" that was usually described as ascending,^{[3]:230} moving to a point where a large fireball appeared.^{[3]:3} There was intense public interest in these witness reports and much speculation that the reported streak of light was from a missile that had struck TWA 800, causing the airplane to explode.^{[3]:262} Consequently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) initiated a parallel criminal investigation alongside the NTSB's accident investigation.^[6]

Search and recovery

Pieces of the airplane wreckage were discovered floating on and beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean about eight miles south of East Moriches, New York.^{[3]:4} The main wreckage was found scattered on the ocean floor in an area about 4 miles long by 3 1/2 miles wide.^{[3]:62} In one of the largest diver-assisted salvage operations ever conducted,^[6] over 95 percent of the airplane wreckage was eventually recovered.^{[3]:65} Recovered wreckage was transported by boat to shore and then by truck to leased hangar space at the former Grumman Aircraft facility in Calverton, New York, for storage, examination, and reconstruction.^{[3]:63}

Aspects of conspiracy theories

Explosive residues

As wreckage was recovered, preliminary testing indicated the presence of explosive residue on three samples of material from three separate locations of the recovered airplane wreckage (described by the FBI as a piece of canvas-like material and two pieces of a floor panel).^{[3]:118} These samples were submitted to the FBI's laboratory in Washington, D.C., which determined that one sample contained traces of cyclotrimethylenetrinitramine (RDX), another nitroglycerin, and the third a combination of RDX and pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN).^{[3]:118} these findings received much media attention at the time.^{[7][8]} While investigators from the FBI viewed these positive tests as strong indications of a criminal act, the NTSB was more cautious, noting the lack of any patterns on the recovered wreckage characteristic of an explosion.

Ultimately, the NTSB was unable to determine the exact source of explosive residues found on the wreckage. Some of the possibilities considered were contamination from the aircraft's use in 1991 transporting troops during the Gulf War or its possible use in a dog-training explosive detection exercise about one month before the accident;^{[3]:258–259} however, the lack of any other corroborating evidence associated with a high-energy explosion led the NTSB to conclude that "the in-flight breakup of TWA flight 800 was not initiated by a bomb or missile strike".^{[3]:259}

Meanwhile, TWA chief 747 pilot Robert Terrell Stacey, who was participating in the official investigation as a TWA representative, became convinced that a reddish-brown substance observed on the backs of recovered passenger seats was suspicious, and possibly indicative of explosive residue or rocket fuel. Working with journalist James Sanders, and Sanders' wife Elizabeth, a TWA flight attendant, he removed items from the wreckage reconstruction site, specifically the samples of seat fabric as well as documents related to the investigation.^[9] In 1997 Sanders' published the book *The Downing of TWA Flight 800*, in which he proposed that TWA 800 had been downed by a missile, and that a government cover-up had taken place so as to not panic the public. Later, with the information provided by Sanders, the Riverside Press-Enterprise published a series of articles alleging that the substance was consistent with unexpended rocket fuel from a missile that struck TWA 800.^[10]

The NTSB determined the locations and appearance of the substance found on the seatbacks was consistent with adhesive used in the construction of the seats, and additional laboratory testing by NASA identified the substance as being consistent with those adhesives (results which Sanders disputed).^{[3]:118}

On December 5, 1997, federal prosecutors charged Sanders, his wife Elizabeth, and Stacey with theft of government property.^[11] The Sanders' defense attorney Bruce Maffeo described the prosecution as "extremely vindictive" and insisted that the couple had a First Amendment right to take the sample and crash-related documents to expose a cover-up.^[12] In April 1999, both were convicted of stealing evidence from civil aircraft wreckage, and were sentenced to probation (Stacey had previously pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor in the case).^[12] In 1999, James Sanders authored a second book, *Altered Evidence*.

Radar data

Unidentified radar tracks

One of the first widely reported criticisms of the official investigation was by former reporter Pierre Salinger, who held a press conference in Cannes, France on November 7, 1996. He stated he had proof that TWA 800 was shot down by friendly fire, and the incident was being covered up by the government.^[13] Salinger said "he was basing the claims on information he saw in a document given to him six weeks ago by someone in French Intelligence with close contacts to U.S. officials",^[13] but refused to name his source. CNN quickly found Salinger's document to be "a widely accessible e-mail letter that has been circulating for at least six weeks on the Internet's World Wide Web."^[13] Salinger's evidence was actually an e-mail from Richard Russell, a retired airline pilot.^[14]

Salinger's previous position as White House Press Secretary, as well as longtime correspondent for ABC News, initially gave credence to his statements, transforming them from "internet conspiracies" into the mainstream.^[14] However, under scrutiny, his allegations, and the reports issued with his collaborators, became the subject of much criticism in the media.^{[15][16]} NTSB Vice chairman Bob Francis was quoted as saying "He was an idiot, he didn't know what he was talking about, and he was totally irresponsible."^[14]

TWA 800 flightpath after explosion

Ray Lahr

Another proponent of the U.S. Navy shootdown theory and prominent critic of the zoom climb scenario was H. Ray Lahr, a retired United Airlines pilot. Lahr, recipient of the Laura Taber Barbour Air Safety Award by the Flight Safety Foundation in 1994,^[17] filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) suit in U.S. District Court, Central District of California, Western Division, on November 6, 2003, against the NTSB and CIA.^[18] Lahr sought documentation and data denied to him through previous FOIA requests that the NTSB and CIA used for their calculations of the zoom climb, which was used to produce the CIA animation.^[18] When asked for his reasons for seeking this documents, Lahr stated "I believe that I could show that the zoom climb never happened. If the zoom climb never happened then they've got to find out what the eyewitnesses saw and the only logical conclusion there is that they saw a missile."^[19]

On August 31, 2006, the District Court issued an initial ruling that the evidence submitted by Lahr as justification for his FOIA lawsuit was "sufficient for the plaintiff to proceed based on his claim that the government acted improperly,"^[20] and that Lahr should be granted access to some, but not all, of the

documents he was seeking, based on the FOIA statutes and case law.^[20] In a further ruling on October 4, 2006, the court finalized the list of documents that the NTSB and CIA must provide to Lahr (again granting some, but not all, of his FOIA requests).^[21] While the court reaffirmed its previous ruling that Lahr had provided proof "sufficient to suggest that the government acted improperly", it also clarified that this "conclusion is based on a characterization of the evidence in a light most favorable to the plaintiff, but does not reflect or constitute any finding by the court."^[21] Upon being handed this verdict by the court, the agencies involved claimed the documents had been "lost" and could not be located, according to the plaintiff.^[22]

Bolide strike

A theory was posited in 1997 by Michael Davis, an American amateur geologist, that a bolide exploded near the airplane. A bolide is a large meteoroid, explosively torn apart as it hits the atmosphere. Davis proposed that the mysterious streak observed just before the explosion was the meteoroid's entry path, moments before it blew apart. At least one of the resulting pieces of the exploding meteoroid could have penetrated the fuselage and ripped through the almost empty central wing tank, destroying the wing's structural integrity before exiting the other side. "The damage to the CWT seems to start at the center and work its way forward along a discernible path. A fuel explosion would radiate damage in all directions." The vapor in the fuel tank could have ignited due to the searing heat produced by the bolide's high velocity. Other data appear to fit the hypothesis; the sequence of multiple sonic booms heard by witnesses onshore could be explained by the explosion and subsequent scattering of the heavier bolide remnants; the estimated 200 holes in the fuselage (cited in FBI report) could be indicative of metal cut by objects traveling at extremely high speed.

Although raising an interesting possibility, other scientists dismissed this theory due to the extremely low probability of a bolide's intersecting the aircraft's flight path at precisely the required moment.^[23]

Electromagnetic interference

On April 9, 1998, Elaine Scarry's article in *The New York Review of Books*, titled "The Fall of TWA 800: The Possibility of Electromagnetic Interference", was published. Scarry, a professor of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard, proposed that electromagnetic interference, also referred to as "High Intensity Radiated Fields" (HIRF), could have been the cause of the TWA 800 crash, specifically energy emitted from a U.S. military craft.^[24] Later that year, *The New York Review of Books* published a series of letters between Scarry and NTSB Chairman James Hall discussing the possibility of HIRF being causal to the accident, and what steps the NTSB was taking in its investigation to determine if it was a factor.^{[25][26]}

After the adoption of the final report, Scarry published another article in the *New York Review of Books* titled "TWA 800 and Electromagnetic Interference: Work Already Completed and Work that Still Needs to be Done".^[27] While praising the initial research done by the NTSB into HIRFs, she also stated that much more additional research was needed.^[27] Scarry criticized what she felt was a bias in the investigation to the "meticulous" detailing of events inside the airplane, while not fully exploring the electromagnetic environment outside the airplane.^[27] Scarry focused on a U.S. Navy P-3 Orion close to TWA 800 as being a possible source of electromagnetic interference and cause of the CWT explosion on TWA 800.^[27]

Scarry has since written about Swissair Flight 111 and EgyptAir Flight 990 crashes in connection with electromagnetic radiation.^{[28][29]}

Dissenting views from the investigation

IAMAW

As an invited party to the NTSB investigation, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) submitted a report into the public docket. In this report the IAMAW disputed the NTSB's sequencing study, and proposed a breakup sequence that started on the lower left side of the airplane, when a high-pressure event "unzipped" the fuselage.^[30] The IAMAW wrote that "a major event may have occurred on the left side of the aircraft. It could have contributed to or been the cause of the destruction of Flight 800."^[30] and that "the CWT exploded, but as a result of the airplane's breakup, and was not the initial event."^[30]

The IAMAW criticized the accuracy of the "Tag database" used to document the recovered wreckage and the reliability of the witness statements.^[30] The IAMAW strongly criticized the FBI's conduct during the investigation, including the undocumented removal by FBI agents of wreckage from the hangar where it was stored.^[30] However, they also commended the NTSB staff, management and board members for their cooperation during the investigation, and stated that "The fact the media has put and other groups continue to bring pressure on the board, we find it very comforting that the focus was not changed due to these forces."^[30] They concluded that "The causes and circumstances that contributed directly to the accident are unknown."^[30]

William Donaldson

William S. Donaldson, a retired Naval officer, formed the Associated Retired Aviation Professionals (ARAP) to investigate the TWA 800 crash. He authored the "Interim Report on the Crash of TWA Flight 800 and the Actions of the NTSB and the FBI" (the "Donaldson Report"), which was released on July 17, 1998, two years before the NTSB's Final Report. In it, Donaldson stated that TWA 800 was struck by two missiles, fired from the water, most likely as a terrorist attack, and subsequently the FBI and NTSB conspired to cover up this fact due to political pressure.^[31]

Donaldson disputed the CWT fuel-air vapor explosion scenario, stating that "In the history of aviation, there has never been an in-flight explosion in any Boeing airliner of a Jet-A kerosene fuel vapor/air mixture in any tank, caused by mechanical failure."^[31] Eyewitness, debris field, metallurgical, and victim injury evidence were all cited by Donaldson as proof of the missile-attack scenario.^[31] Donaldson acknowledged James Sanders' theory of an accidental shoot-down, and did not rule out U.S. Navy involvement; however, he viewed circumstantial evidence of a terrorist attack "more compelling".^[31]

Much of the report dealt with Donaldson's assertions of a conspired cover-up by the FBI and NTSB, in co-operation with the Justice Department.^[31] Donaldson believed that the Clinton Administration wanted to hide the actual cause of the crash for political reasons, specifically the upcoming presidential elections.^[31] Donaldson concluded his report with the request that Congress hold Congressional hearings into the crash and/or request that the Justice Department appoint an Independent Counsel to investigate (neither of which happened).^[31]

Donaldson received support and funding from the advocacy group Accuracy in Media,^[31] which promoted his views. He died in 2001; the ARAP Web site is still active.^[31]

Public acceptance of conspiracy theories

As of 1998, only about half of Americans accepted the NTSB's conclusion that the crash was the result of a mechanical malfunction.^[1] According to the rhetorician Shane Miller, the widespread acceptance of conspiracy theories is a result of a lack solid evidence of the direct cause of the source of ignition for the center fuel tank explosion.^[1] The heavy redaction of FBI interviews with witnesses also contributed to public doubt of official explanation.^[32]

Documentary

On July 17, 2013, the 17th anniversary of the tragedy, the Epix premium TV channel aired the documentary *TWA Flight 800*, directed by Kristina Borjesson, which alleges that the crash investigation was a cover-up. The film highlights extensive eyewitness interviews, with many interviewees directly objecting to publicly described versions of their own descriptions of events. It also highlights interviews with investigators who had been involved in the original inquest, six of whom had filed a petition to reopen the probe. Their petition was based on eyewitness accounts, radar evidence indicating a possible missile and claims of evidence tampering. They dubbed it "The TWA 800 Project". Former NTSB investigator Henry Hughes has been quoted that he believes a bomb or a missile caused the crash.^{[33][34][35][36][37]}

See also

- Korean Air Lines Flight 007 (September 1983) alternative theories

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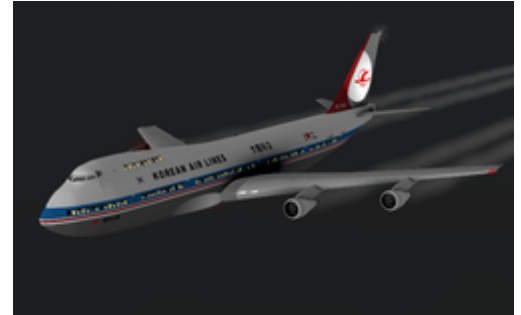
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Korean Air Lines Flight 007 alternative theories

Korean Air Lines Flight 007 alternative theories concerns the various theories put forward regarding the shooting down of Korean Air Lines Flight 007. The aircraft was en route from New York City via Anchorage to Seoul on September 1, 1983, when it strayed into prohibited Soviet airspace and was shot down by Soviet fighter jets.



KAL 007 (artist's rendition)

Flight 007 has been the subject of ongoing controversy and has spawned a number of conspiracy theories.^[1] Many of these are based on the suppression of evidence such as the flight data recorders,^[2] unexplained details such as the role of a USAF RC-135 surveillance aircraft,^{[3][4]} or merely Cold War disinformation and propaganda.^{[5][6][7]} Some commentators also felt that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) report into the incident failed to address key points adequately, such as the reason for the aircraft's deviation.^{[8][9]} The release of flight data recorder evidence by the Russian Federation in 1993, ten years after the event, seriously challenged many of these theories. Some alternative interpretations focus on evidential questions largely independent of political considerations.

One of the first theories was that Space Shuttle Challenger and a satellite were monitoring the airliner's progress over Soviet territory. *Defence Attaché*, which printed this claim, was sued by Korean Air Lines and forced to pay damages and print an apology.^[10]

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Flight crew awareness of deviation

The reasons put forward for the aircraft's deviation range from a lack of situational awareness by the pilots (ICAO), to a planned and intentional deviation (Pearson^[11]), to an Inertial Navigation system (INS) programming error by 10 degrees of longitude during the inputting of the ramp starting position by the crew.^[12] All accounts note that the pilots had several sources of information that could have alerted them to their increasing deviation from their planned route.^{[13][14]} The H/E scenario additionally suggests the flight's first officer did know they were flying away from the planned course, but the airline's culture discouraged anyone from questioning the captain's conduct of the flight, so he remained silent.^[14]

The theory that the INS system was set incorrectly gains considerable credibility if the following are considered:

1. Although there are three independent inertial platforms, when in the ramp position, the operator only inputs one initial position in order for the platform to "erect".
2. This would have been done by the Flight Engineer alone, before the other crew members arrive.
3. In order to erect properly (that is, enter gyro-compassing mode), each platform relies on the correct latitude, but not the longitude.
4. Therefore, if the longitude was incorrectly set, all three platforms would seem to erect normally, but with a position some 10 degrees in error.

Once airborne, an incorrect aircraft system position (of at higher latitudes a small amount) would immediately direct all the flight navigational displays to fly the aircraft to what it thinks is the correct track to the first way point. Once on the wrong track, all would appear normal, HSI's included. This would even be true if there were pictorial navigational displays, similar to modern aircraft.

The deviated track can be compared with the required track. As the aircraft moves south, the lines of longitude expand and the track deviation gets greater. That is the initial 10 degree error that was sent to the INS gets wider.

The horizontal situation indicator (HSI): Pearson contends that the HSI's needle could have alerted the pilots of their course deviation.^[15] He postulates that the needle of each pilot's HSI, capable of showing deviation only up to 8 nautical miles (15 km), should have been "pegged" all the way to the side. The pilots, thus, could in theory have known that they were at least 8 nautical miles (15 km) off course.^[16]

Despite this, at 1349 UTC, the pilots were reporting that they were on course ("007, Bethel at forty niner.")^[17] Fifty minutes after takeoff, military radar at King Salmon, Alaska acquired KAL 007 at more than 12.6 nautical miles (23.3 km) off course. The deviation exceeded the expected accuracy of the INS (2 nautical miles (3.7 km) an hour) by a factor of five.^[18]

Difficulties in making required reports: Pilot and copilot could also have been aware of the aircraft's serious deviation because now, much more than 12 nautical miles (22 km) off course, KAL 007 was too far off course for the pilots to make their required Very High Frequency (VHF) radio reports, and

had to relay these reports via KAL Flight 015, just minutes behind and on course (KAL 007, increasingly off course, relied on KAL 015 three times to relay its reports to Anchorage Air Traffic Control). By being forced to rely on KAL 015 to relay messages, KAL 007 should have (by definition) understood that they were well off course.^[19]

At one point in this section of its flight, (1443 UTC) KAL 007 put a call through a navigational "hookup", the International Flight Service Station on HF. Flight 007, now too distant to speak directly with Anchorage controller through VHF, was transmitting its message using HF. At another point of this section of the flight, at waypoint NABIE, KAL 007 was too far north to make radio contact with the VHF air traffic control relay station on St. Paul Island. KAL 015 relayed for KAL 007. The message was a change in the estimated time of arrival (ETA) for the next waypoint called NEEVA, delaying by four minutes the ETA that KAL 015 had previously relayed on behalf of KAL 007. Since a revised ETA could only be calculated by means of readout information presented by KAL 007's Inertial Navigation Systems Control Display unit, Pearson asserts that pilot and copilot were once again presented with the opportunity of verifying their position and becoming aware of their enormous deviation.^[20]

Contrary wind conditions of KAL 007 and KAL 015: KAL 015 had departed about 15 minutes behind KAL 007. About 23 minutes before the tragedy, the two aircraft compared the times that they expected to reach waypoint NOKKA, at which point it became apparent that KAL 015 would reach it only four minutes behind KAL 007. KAL 015 reported experiencing strong tailwinds, while KAL 007 was experiencing a headwind. The paradox of the different flying conditions experienced by two aircraft supposedly flying so close together was discussed in the cabin of KAL 007, but the crew failed to draw any conclusions from it.^[21]

Weather radar: There was one last aid to warn the crew. Displayed in consoles at the knees of both pilot and copilot, the plane's weather radar ^[Notes 1] could have alerted them, both over Kamchatka and later over Sakhalin, to the fact that they were no longer flying over water, as they should have been.^[22] Weather radar has two modes—ground mapping (when it would be possible to look down and see water or land masses as well as the contours of the coast lines) and weather surveillance mode for thunderstorm detection.^[23] In ground mapping mode, KAL 007 had only to make sure that the land mass of Kamchatka and the island string of the Kurile chain would remain to the right. That night, KAL 007's weather radar was probably not in land mapping mode, for the weather was inclement.^[24] The ICAO's meteorological analysis concluded that "there was extensive coverage of low, medium, and high level clouds over southern Kamchatka associated with an active cold front".^[24] ICAO's analysis of KAL 007's weather radar functioning would state, "it was concluded that the radar was not functioning properly or that the ground mapping capability was not used".^[25]

According to the ICAO, an indicator of pilot unawareness of the deviation from route of their flight was the bantering and casual cockpit conversation at the times that awareness of deviation into hostile airspace would have increased tension and have precluded this. (See Korean Air Lines Flight 007 transcripts.)

Planned spy mission theory

In 1994, Robert W Allardyce and James Gollin wrote *Desired Track: The Tragic Flight of KAL Flight 007*, supporting the spy mission theory.^[26] In 2007, they reiterated their position in a series of articles in *Airways Magazine*, arguing that the investigation by the International Civil Aviation Organization was a cover-up of a "carefully planned ferret mission".^[27] Furthermore, they suggested that the NSA had implemented Electronic Counter Measures to cover for the mission and that the flight recorder tapes had been planted for the Soviet recovery effort to find.^[28]

Planned spy mission theories point out the incongruity of a civilian passenger liner going accidentally astray and unnoticed precisely in one of the most militarily sensitive and well-observed areas in the Cold War. They point out that there were powerful land and sea radar arrays that could have tracked KAL 007 as it crossed through the NORAD prohibited-to-civilian flight zone and approached and entered Soviet territory. These were:

- COBRA JUDY aboard the missile range instrumentation ship USNS *Observation Island*, then off the coast of Kamchatka;
- Shemya Island's COBRA DANE line of sight radar which was capable of tracking an aircraft at up to a 30,000 feet (9,100 m) altitude through an area covering 400 miles (640 km) (the curvature of the earth being its limiting factor);
- Shemya Island's COBRA TALON, an over-the-horizon radar array with a range from 575 miles (925 km) to 2,070 miles (3,330 km). COBRA TALON operated by bouncing its emissions off the ionosphere (deflection) to the other side of the line of sight horizon, thus acquiring its targets.

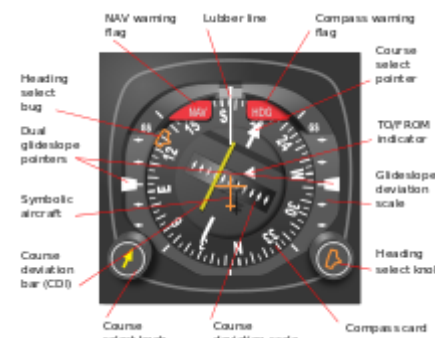


COBRA DANE, an intelligence-gathering phased array radar system specially constructed to monitor Soviet ballistic missile testing on Siberia's Kamchatka Peninsula

These radar arrays had capability for both surveillance and tracking. Whether this capability was actually used in the case of Flight 007 is currently unknown. In addition, the United States Air Force radar stations at Cape Newenham and Cape Romanzoff, two of twelve stations comprising the United States Alaskan Distant Early Warning/Aircraft Control and Warning (DEW/ACW) System, had the capability to track all aircraft heading toward the Russian Buffer Zone. Well within range of these radar sites, KAL 007 had veered directly toward Kamchatka. This theory postulates that the CIA put out disinformation about the aircraft landing at Sakhalin after their mission failed in order to buy time to construct a more credible story.^[29]

Theory of intentional deviation by pilots

This theory, promoted by David Pearson in his book *KAL 007: the Cover-up* postulates that the pilots made "a deliberate, carefully planned intrusion into Soviet territory with the knowledge of US military and intelligence agencies."^[11] He argues that it was impossible for the pilots not to know that they were off course. Various mechanisms, such as the Horizontal Situation Indicator,^[30] should, assuming that the aircraft's navigation systems were functional and correctly programmed, have alerted the pilots of their course deviation. In addition, VHF transmissions to Anchorage had to be relayed via flight KAL 015 (which should have been a few minutes behind KAL 007, had it been on course), because the plane had travelled too far off course.



Horizontal Situation Indicator (stock image)

Pearson has also questioned why, if the pilots had unintentionally strayed off course, a US RC-135 reconnaissance plane in the area did not see the jumbo jet (or pick up the Soviet radio chatter regarding it) and warn it of its danger, as well as informing its own command and civilian air traffic controllers.

The theory of intentional deviation suffered a blow in 1992 with the handover by the Russian Federation of the Cockpit Voice Recorder tape. This showed that at the times of most danger during the flight, the flight crew was relaxed speaking about currency exchange at Kimpo airport, or bored, or even bantering



USAF RC-135

with each other, indicating to ICAO analysts that the crew of KAL 007 were unaware of the danger they were then exposed to.^[31]

Murray Sayle described an earlier version of Pearson's theory published in *The Nation* as containing "schoolboy howlers, or, better, graduate-student howlers" regarding the operation of cockpit positioning monitors, and Pearson's approach in general as lacking objectivity, and the work of a conspiracy theorist.^[32]

Theory of spy mission involving USAF aircraft

Another theory was suggested by a French aeronautical expert, Michel Brun, in his book *Incident at Sakhalin: The True Mission of KAL Flight 007*. It has been supported by a former American diplomat to Moscow, John Keppel, and the American association Foundation for Constitutional Government.^[33]

According to this book, the USSR was not guilty. The massacre of Flight 007 was directly caused by the Americans or Japanese. KAL 007 was involved in a spy mission intended to trigger Soviet air defences and to cover up for the missions of several USAF surveillance aircraft. Soviet Fighters attacked these aircraft but did not destroy KAL 007 which crashed far away from Sakhalin in Japanese "friendly" territory in the Japanese sea near North Honshu.



Moneron Island

The Korean aircraft was correctly communicating with other KAL crews, forty-six minutes after the official time of the shootdown. A large air battle allegedly occurred between the Soviet Air Force and the USAF, during which the Soviets shot down several American aircraft, including an RC-135, an EF-111 and probably even an SR-71. The SU-15 pilot, Major Osipovich, flew two sorties and shot down two targets (contradicted by the 1991 interview with Osipovich^[34]). Furthermore, for a long time all the experts believed that the Soviet fighter pilot was called Major Kazmin.^[35] Michel Brun believes that Kazmin and Osipovich twice destroyed an aircraft, but absolutely not the KAL 007. According to the theory, the whereabouts of the KAL-007 wreckage is not known to anyone, but is probably 500 kilometres (310 mi) away from Moneron Island down the coast of Japan. The theory postulates further that the real cause of the destruction is not known, but could have been a surface-to-air missile fired from *USS Badger* (similar case with *USS Vincennes* shooting down of Iran Air Flight 655)^[36] or from Japanese forces, who could not identify the airliner which was keeping radio silence.

In March 1991 an anonymous Japanese pilot said on TV that he knew who was guilty: a colleague who became a taxi driver in Tokyo.^[37] The lack of bodies, body parts, and wreckage of KAL 007 around Sakhalin and Moneron Islands was an indication to Brun that KAL 007 did not come down in those locales. Sparse remains showing up on the beaches of Hokkaido, nine days after the destruction of KAL 007 south of Moneron and Sakhalin, are evidence to Brun that KAL 007 was downed further south and that these remains were brought northward by the north running Tsushima current along the west Japanese coast.^[38] This opposes the commonly held understanding that the remains were carried from the waters near the islands of Sakhalin and Moneron by the West Sakhalin current flowing south between the two islands (at 1 mile per hour (1.6 km/h)), then by the West Sakhalin convergent current (6.9–8.1 mph, 11–13 km/h) near the tip of Sakhalin (35 nautical miles away from Moneron), into the Soya Strait, and finally onto the beaches of Hokkaido. Brun also discovered that KAL 007 communicated

by radio in Korean with two other Korean aircraft after 03:27, the official time of its destruction: at 03:54 with KAL 015,^[39] 04:10 with KE50,^[40] and twice at 04:13,^[41] the true time of the aircraft crashing. This unusual last call, which was sent to the two aircraft and suddenly cut, could probably be explained by a serious problem occurring.^[42]

In his book, Brun published a photograph of a weapon found by Japanese sailors from JMSA among KAL 007 debris "north of Moneron Island on 10 September 1983",^[43] bearing the mark "N3".^[44] The letter *N* does not exist in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, suggesting that the weapon was not Soviet.^[45]

Brun's theory attempts to account for the only eyewitness report of an explosion near Moneron Island which is considered to be that of KAL 007 on its way to the water. A Japanese fisherman aboard the Chidori Maru 58 had reported to the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency (and this report was forgotten in 1984^[46] but cited by the ICAO analysis in 1993) of hearing a plane at low altitude but not seeing it. Then he heard "a loud sound followed by a bright flash of light on the horizon, then another dull sound and a less intense flash of light on the horizon"^[47] as well as smelling aviation fuel.^[48]

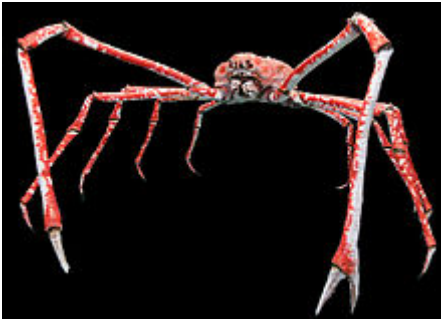
Brun maintains that the fisherman's account of the destruction of KAL 007 was not sustainable because if the aircraft exploded while low on the horizon, the sound of the explosion could not have, as reported by the fishermen, reached his ear before the flash of the explosion reached the eye, as light travels faster than sound. Brun further maintains, in accordance with his theory of an aerial combat between Russian and US aircraft, that the "loud sound" heard prior to the "flash of light on the horizon" could have been the sound of a missile fired by a military jet flying above or near the Chidori Maru 58, at an opposing military jet, the explosion of which was seen by the fisherman, and wrongly attributed by ICAO analysts to KAL 007, which Brun believes went down in Japanese waters much further south of Moneron at 04:13:16s. Among Michel Brun's supporters since 1995 is David Pearson, author of *KAL 007: the Cover-up*.^[49]

Theories about lack of human remains and luggage at impact site

These theories attempt to explain why there were no surface finds at the place postulated for the KAL 007's impact with the water. There were no bodies, body parts, or body tissues, and there was no luggage. Furthermore, on the sea bottom there was only one partial torso and 10 body parts or tissues, possibly from the same individual, noted by Soviet civilian divers who had commenced diving to the wreckage purported to be of KAL 007 just two weeks after the shootdown. Furthermore, for all of the 269 occupants, divers reported with surprise either no luggage or, in one diver's report, there were only a few pieces of luggage at the bottom. Of the thirteen body parts or tissues washed up on the Japanese Hokkaido beaches 70 miles from Soviet Moneron Island and starting eight days after the shoot down, all were unidentifiable. All the non-human items (see main article) recovered from Hokkaido's beaches were those generally coming from a passenger cabin of an aircraft and none from the cargo hold, contrary to what would be expected if there had been a total destruction from a passenger aircraft crashing into the sea.

Crab theory

In his book *The Mystery of Korean Boeing 747*, Soviet correspondent Andrey Illesh proposes that the bodies were eaten by giant crabs. The crab theory has been persistent and been echoed by the Soviet interceptor pilot Gennady Osipovich, who fired the missile that shot down the plane.



Japanese spider crab

"... I heard that they had found the 'Boeing' when I was still on Sakhalin. And even investigated it. But no one saw people there. I, however, explain that by the fact that there are crabs in the sea off Sakhalin that immediately devour everything ... I did hear that they found only a hand in a black glove. Perhaps it was the hand of the pilot of the aircraft that I shot down. You know, even now I cannot really believe that there were passengers on board. You cannot write off everyone to the crabs ... Surely something would be left? ... Nevertheless, I am a supporter of the old version: It was a spy plane. In any event, it was not happenstance that it flew towards us."^[50]

Professor William Newman, marine biologist, explains why the crab (or any other sea creature) theory is untenable: "Even if we proceed from the supposition that crustaceans, or sharks, or something else fell upon the flesh, the skeletons should have remained. In many cases, skeletons were found on the sea or ocean floor, which had sat there for many years and, even decades. In addition, the crustaceans would not have touched bones." Also, the crab theory could not account for the lack of luggage.

Decompression theory

Another explanation is provided by *Izvestiya* correspondents Shalnev and Illesh's interview of Mikhail Igorevich Girs, Captain of the Tinro 2 submersible which made most of the dives. In the May 31, 1991, edition of *Izvestiya*, Capt. Girs suggested that the passengers were sucked out of the aircraft, leaving their clothes behind.^[51]

"Something else was inexplicable to us—zipped-up clothes. For instance, a coat, slacks, shorts, a sweater with zippers—the items were different, but, zipped up. And nothing inside. We came to this conclusion then: Most likely, the passengers had been pulled out of the plane by decompression, and they fell in a completely different place from where we found the debris. They had been spread out over a much larger area. The current also did its work."^[52]

"Wind tunnel" theory

The latest reference to the decompression theory of the missing bodies was made by Lieutenant General Valeri Kamenski, most recently Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander of the Ukrainian Air Force and formerly Chief of Staff of the Soviet Far East Military District Air Defense Force. In an article dated March 15, 2001, in the Ukrainian weekly *Fakty i Kommentarii*, General Kamenski spoke about this lingering question: "It is still a mystery what happened to the bodies of the crew and passengers on the plane. According to one theory, right after the rocket's detonation, the nose and tail section of the jumbo fell off and the mid-fuselage became a sort of wind tunnel so the people were swept through it and scattered over the surface of the ocean. Yet in this case, some of the bodies were to have been found during the search operations in the area. The question of what actually happened to the people has not been given a distinct answer."

Theory of Soviet removal of bodies

This theory rests on the fact that when the Soviet civilian divers first went down to the wreck just two weeks after the shootdown, the finds they encountered were contrary to an aircraft having fallen from the sky. They reportedly corresponded more to "secondary placement" of the wreckage, and removal of both

the passengers and aircrew of KAL 007, by the Soviet navy, who they claim had been at work prior to them, using both divers and trawlers.

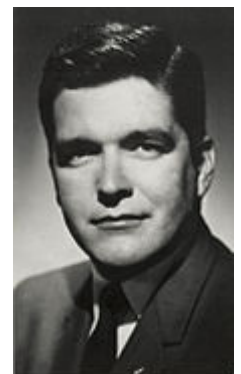
"The first submergence was on 15 September, two weeks after the aircraft had been shot down. As we learned then, before us the trawlers had done some 'work' in the designated quadrant. It is hard to understand what sense the military saw in the trawling operation. First drag everything haphazardly around the bottom by the trawls, and then send in the submersibles? ... It is clear that things should have been done in the reverse order."^[53]

Captain Mikhail Igorevich Girs: "Submergence 10 October. Aircraft pieces, wing spars, pieces of aircraft skin, wiring, and clothing. But—no people. The impression is that all of this has been dragged here by a trawl rather than falling down from the sky ..."^[51]

This was one of the theories expressed in the original *Izvestia* series of 1990–91, and the later interview of deep sea diver Vadim Kondrabayev (subsequently reprinted in English by *Roy's Russian Aircraft Review*). Kondrabayev, one of the civilian divers brought to explore the wreckage of KAL 007 in 1983, gave an interview to the Russian magazine *Itogi*, published on October 1, 2000. He points out that after he and the other civilian divers were brought to Sakhalin on September 10, 1983, they were kept there until "the end of September. ... They literally forgot about us for several days." When they did get to the wreckage, they were surprised to find neither bodies nor luggage: "... of the people who supposedly were on board, something should have remained. We worked beneath the water almost a month for five hours a day and didn't find one suitcase, not even a handle from them. After all there is baggage on any air trip. We either were able to work on the remains, which already had been filtered by the special services, or, what I also do not discount, there were no passengers at all on the airplane, and they stuffed the cabin with rubbish. ... It is quite possible that several mini-submarines with military divers went down to the Boeing even before us and collected everything, and scattered the remaining parts of the destroyed liner about or left them there where they were needed, and afterwards called us as a smoke screen."^{[54][55]}

Theory of abduction and retention of passengers and crew

The abduction theory proposes that KAL 007, having been missed by one of the missiles, landed or successfully ditched with passengers and crew surviving; they were then abducted and put into prison camps by the Soviet authorities. Among its advocates are the Israeli-American Bert Schlossberg, a son-in-law of one of the crash victims (and his organisation, the International Committee for the Rescue of KAL 007 Survivors^[56]), and Avraham Shifrin, a Soviet emigre to Israel in the 1970s and former Soviet prison camp inmate. It has received some coverage in the conservative news agency Accuracy in Media^{[57][58][59]} and also the magazine of the John Birch Society,^{[60][61]} whose second president, the Democratic representative from Georgia Larry McDonald, was a passenger on the flight.



Larry McDonald

Schlossberg, as a new citizen of Israel, met Shifrin in 1989, and through Shifrin, met and questioned one of his sources, and came to question the accepted belief that the people of KAL 007 had perished. Through his own investigation and research of newly released documents, Schlossberg became convinced that the passengers and crew of KAL 007 had been recovered by the Russians and then imprisoned. In a self-published book^[62] and on the Committee website, Schlossberg corroborates this theory with claims that Soviet military communication and cockpit voice



Guided missile cruiser *Petropavlovsk* (565) in 225-square-nautical-mile (770 km²) search area north of Moneron

recorder transcripts show a post-missile detonation flightpath at altitude 5,000 meters for almost 5 minutes until over the only land mass in the Tatar Straits and within Soviet territorial waters, where it began a slow spiral descent. He claims this indicates both the aircraft's capability of extended flight, and the pilots' intention to water land near the only point where rescue would be feasible. He furthermore claims that a lack of bodies, body parts and tissues, and luggage, both on the surface of the sea and at the bottom; the Soviet obstruction of US, Korean, and Japanese search vessels trying to enter into Soviet territorial waters around Moneron Island, near which KAL 007 was last tracked spiraling downward; previously unknown Soviet transcripts, released by the Russian Federation, of mission orders within one half hour of the shootdown, sending helicopters, KGB patrol boats, and civilian trawlers to Moneron Island; and the Russian Federation acknowledgement of Soviet deception in its part of the search for KAL 007 all indicate a Soviet recovery of passengers and crew from the damaged and downed passenger jet.



Lubyanka in 1983

Schlossberg has also claimed that a letter sent in 1991 by Senator Jesse Helms, while he was ranking minority member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, requesting information about the fate of KAL 007, indicates that Helms took the abduction theory seriously. The letter included, in a list of questions, a request to know the whereabouts of any survivors and their camp locations, and requested also to know of the fate of Larry McDonald.^[63]

Schlossberg's work has not gained mainstream media attention; in a review of the circumstances of the death of Larry McDonald, University of Georgia Law Professor Donald E. Wilkes considered the theory as "even more preposterous" than Michel Brun's theory of a Japanese locale for the shootdown and an air battle having taken place between Soviet and American aircraft.^[64]

Avraham Shifrin, a self-declared KGB expert,^[65] claimed that, according to the investigation of his research centre, KAL 007 landed on water north of Moneron, and the passengers successfully disembarked on emergency floats. The Soviets collected them and subsequently sent them to camps (with the children "separated from their parents and safely hidden in the orphan houses of one of the Soviet Middle Asian republics"). McDonald in particular was supposed to have gone through a number of prisons in Moscow, among them the Central Lubyanka, and Lefortovo.^[66]

The aeronautics journalist James Oberg, while acknowledging Shifrin's expertise on Soviet prison camps, has stated that Shifrin "got real confused" about the fate of KAL 007.^[67] Hans Ephraimson, a relative of one of the passengers, has called Shifrin a "con man who has no idea how much grief he has caused to families," having been frustrated in his attempts to meet Shifrin's sources.^[67]

According to Michel Brun this theory is not entirely preposterous. In his book he analyses the first news, communicated by CIA and South Korean government: that KAL 007 landed in Sakhalin and all passengers were safe. In his careful searches, he discovered the source of this first information. It was published in a Japanese newspaper, *Mainichi Shinbun*, on September 1, 1983.^[68] According to him, this observation came from Wakkanai radars. So, he suggests that another aircraft, probably military, landed at Sakhalin during the "Sakhalin battle" and that its passengers, American, South Korean, or both, were jailed in the Soviet Union.

Meaconing theory

Meaconing is the term to describe the interception and rebroadcasting of navigational signals in order to confuse the sending aircraft about its own true location. (There is an assumption that the target does not have secondary navigational aids such as INS or radar). This is a prelude to a deviation such as that experienced by KAL 007 on its intended course from Anchorage, Alaska, to Seoul, Korea. Meaconing was used frequently during the Cold War. The theory that meaconing was used against KAL 007 often entails the following points which are shown to be true from the transcripts or assumed to be true by the theory's proponents:

- the pilots of KAL 007 clearly believed that they were on a course different from the one that they were actually flying;
- Democratic Congressman Larry McDonald was known to be aboard KAL 007 and was considered the chief anti-Communist in Congress, and was also the second head of the John Birch Society;
- other anti-communist lawmakers were understood to have been with Larry McDonald aboard KAL 007, as it was not known that they had opted for another flight, KAL 015; these congressmen were North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms, Idaho Sen. Steven Symms, and Kentucky Rep. Carroll Hubbard. The intended destination and purpose of all these congressmen was ostensibly the Seoul celebration of the 30-year anniversary of the US–South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, but in actuality, their main purpose was to further the anti-Communist coalition and activity.



KAL 007's increasingly deviated flight

It is sometimes suggested^[69] that Soviet meaconing of KAL 007 was performed with the tacit approval or with the active participation and planning of leftist and socialist power centres in the US government.

Finally, in support of the meacon theory, this information that surfaced during the ICAO investigation and is considered indicative of purposeful intent to cause KAL 007 to go astray: At 28 minutes after takeoff, civilian radar at Kenai, on the eastern shore of Cook Inlet and 53 nautical miles (98 km) southwest of Anchorage, with a radar coverage of 175 miles (282 km) west of Anchorage, tracked KAL 007 more than six miles (10 km) north of its intended course. KAL 007 and all flights departing from Anchorage on route J501 had to pass Cairn Mountain, which was the site of a nondirectional radio beacon (NDB). An NDB navigational aid operates by transmitting a continuous three-letter identification code which is picked up by the airborne receiver, the Automatic Direction Finder (ADF). Cairn Mountain was KAL 007's first assigned navigational aid out of Anchorage Airport. That night, Douglas L. Porter was the controller at Air Route Traffic Control Center at Anchorage, assigned to monitor all flights in that sector and record their observed position in relation to the fix provided by the Cairn Mountain nondirectional beacon. Porter later testified that all had seemed normal to him.^[70] Yet he apparently failed to record,^[71] as required, the position of two flights that night: KAL 007 and KAL 015, which followed KAL 007 by several minutes. Had he done so, it would have provided an opportunity to warn KAL 007 of its deviation, resulting in the necessary correction for the rest of the flight. To holders of the meaconing theory, the above seem curious, ominous, and ancillary to their theory.

US government cover-up theory

Holders of this theory point to two sets of facts indicating that the US government had covered up the incident and had skewed the investigation for political ends. The first set of facts relate to US capability and actuality of tracking KAL 007 in its deviated flight, thus presenting the possibility of warning the aircraft in time to avert its entrance into harm's way.

The Cape Newenham and Cape Romanzoff radars monitored at the NORAD Regional Operations Command Center were but two of twelve comprising the United States Alaskan Distant Early Warning / Aircraft Control and Warning (DEW/ACW) System. These United States Air Force radar stations at Cape Newenham and Cape Romanzoff in Alaska had the capability to track all aircraft heading toward the Russian Buffer Zone, though it is not known if the radar results of such "outgoing" tracking would have been monitored in "real-time" at the facility at Elmendorf Air Force base. These tapes remain unavailable to the public for national security reasons. However, there was another location at which KAL 007 could well have been tracked in its deviation. This was at the installation at King Salmon, Alaska. It is customary for the Air Force to impound radar trackings involving possible litigation in cases of aviation accidents.^[72] In the civil litigation for damages, the United States Department of Justice explained that the tapes from the Air Force radar installation at King Salmon, pertinent to KAL 007's flight in the Bethel area had been destroyed and could therefore not be supplied to the plaintiffs. At first, Justice Department lawyer Jan Van Flatern stated that they were destroyed 15 days after the shootdown. Later, he said he had "misspoken" and changed the time of destruction to 30 hours after the event. A Pentagon spokesman concurred, saying that the tapes are re-cycled for reuse from 24 to 30 hours afterwards,^[73] however the fate of KAL 007 was known inside this timeframe.^[72]

The second set of facts relate to a series of moves taking the investigation out of the hands of the National Transportation Safety Board and in the hands of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Normally, when an airliner crashes, responsibility for the inquiry falls to the NTSB, which has the technical expertise to assess what happened. Although the downing of the Flight 007 cannot be classified as a routine aviation disaster, the NTSB office in Anchorage was notified that the plane was missing just three hours after it had come down in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) and immediately began to look into the matter. Shortly, after that, it was told to cease its investigation and forward to its headquarters in Washington all the material—originals and copies—it had gathered. From there, the information was sent to the State Department. James Michelangelo, chief of the NTSB's Anchorage office, was told by headquarters that the Board was off the case and that the State Department would handle the investigation. Eighteen months after the airliner was shot down, when asked if the State Department had ever conducted such an enquiry, a high-level State Department official, Lynn Pascoe, replied, "How is the State Department going to investigate?"^{[74][75]}

Holders of this theory ask why the effective investigation in progress, conducted by NTSB—Anchorage station chief James Michelangelo, was preempted (the very first occurrence) by the Washington-based NTSB home office under orders from the State Department, which itself did not, as originally announced, investigate the disaster, but rather referred the investigation to the political and investigatively ineffective United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization. The ICAO has no subpoena powers and, according to its mandate, can analyse only material presented to it by its constituent interested members. ICAO's final reports, it is maintained, are reflections of the politically expedient rather than of an independent investigative determination. The only other air disaster ICAO had ever investigated was the Israeli shootdown of Libyan Arab Airlines Flight 114 over the Sinai.

In January 1996, Hans Ephraimson, chairman of the "American Association for Families of KAL 007 Victims", claimed that South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan accepted \$4 million from Korean Air in order to gain "government protection" during the investigation of the shootdown.^[76]

See also

- Korean Air Lines Flight 007 transcripts
- List of airliner shootdown incidents
- Pan Am Flight 103 conspiracy theories

- TWA Flight 800 conspiracy theories
- MH17

Notes

1. KAL 007's two Bendix RDR-IF radars had a maximum range of 200 nautical miles (370 km) with a 180° scan capability. ICAO 1983, p. 14, section 1.6.4.1

Footnotes

1. Knight, p. 381
2. Bohlen, Celestine (October 16, 1992). "Tape Displays the Anguish On Jet the Soviets Downed" (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE1D91030F935A25753C1A964958260>). *New York Times*. Retrieved February 1, 2009.
3. Schultz, p. 367
4. Johnson, p. 175
5. Pry, p. 31
6. Pearson, p.17
7. Young, p. 137
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9. Johnson, pp. 230–237
10. *Time*, December 3, 1984
11. Pearson, David (1987). *KAL 007: the Cover-up* (<https://archive.org/details/kal007coverup00pear>). Summit Books.
12. Hersh pp. 199–213, the "Harold Ewing (H/E) scenario," which ICAO studied in great detail
13. Pearson, pp. 38–39
14. Hersh, pp. 199–213
15. KAL 007 Cover-Up. David Pearson, Summit Books, N.Y., Pg. 277, point 10
16. An aircraft HSI generally has an image of a plane directly above the Horizontal Situation Indicator's needle when the aircraft is on course. A needle pointing to the left or to the right of the image would indicate that the plane is deviated left or right of the course. KAL 007's HSI's needle should have been pegged all the way to the right (North). The ICAO expanded on the HSI's capability of showing course deviation. Though the HSI was primarily designed to show the aircraft's situation with regard to the horizon, the 747's HSI contained an indicator to register deviation from plotted course. "Indications [of being on course] available to the crew would have been a reducing or zero track bar displacement with the HSI display set to the INS and a similar reducing or zero cross track error on the CDUs [consoles]. There would have been a similar effect with the VOR track displacement..."—ICAO report 1993, p. 42, sect. 2.4.4.
17. Pearson, p. 40
18. Pearson, pp. 40
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20. KAL 007:the cover-up, David Pearson, Summit, New York, pg. 46
21. Kleiner, p. 198
22. ICAO '93, pg. 45,2.9.1
23. ICAO '93, pg. 45, 2.9.1.
24. ICAO 1983, section 1.7.1., p. 9.
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27. Allardyce & Gollin, 2007
28. Allardyce & Gollin, October 2007, pp 52–56.
29. The American TV picture *Shootdown*
30. An aircraft HSI generally has an image of a plane directly above the Horizontal Situation Indicator's needle when the aircraft is on course. A needle pointing to the left or to the right of the image would indicate that the plane is deviated left or right of the course. KAL 007's HSI's needle should have been pegged all the way to the right (North). The ICAO expanded on the HSI's capability of showing course deviation. Though the HSI was primarily designed to show the aircraft's situation with regard to the horizon, the 747's HSI contained an indicator to register deviation from plotted course. "Indications [of being on course] available to the crew would have been a reducing or zero track bar displacement with the HSI display set to the INS and a similar reducing or zero cross track error on the CDUs [consoles]. There would have been a similar effect with the VOR track displacement..." — ICAO report 1993, p. 42, sect. 2.4.4.
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32. Sayle, Murray (April 25, 1985). "Review: KE007 A Conspiracy of Circumstance". *The New York Review of Books*.
33. Burnett, p. 156 ; Michel Brun, *Incident at Sakalin, the true Mission of KAL Flight, 007*, translated by Robert Bonomo, 326 p., preface by John Keppel, p.XV-XXVI
34. Illesh, *The Mystery of the KAL-007*
35. M Brun, op cit, p. 285&288.
36. M Brun, op.cit. p.144 et 242-243
37. M. Brun, op cit, p.246-247
38. M.Brun, op cit, figure 5, p.36
39. Michel Brun, op cit, p. 86-87
40. M. Brun, op cit p. 88
41. M. Brun, op cit, p.90
42. M Brun p.90
43. M. Brun, *op cit*, p.46
44. M. Brun, op cit, p.245
45. M. Brun, op cit, p.63
46. In France, Michel Brun had already written three articles about the [KAL 007] affair. About the first ICAO report he published : "*KE007, The Report from ICAO (Fr)*", *Aviation magazine international*, October 15, 1990>. Like Robert Alardyce and James Gollin, he said that the ICAO report was a cover-up. He is going to say that in his book, about the second ICAO report and the Russian black boxes which were given to South Korean government by Boris Yeltsin in 1992.
47. ICAO, '93, 1.2.1, pg. 5
48. Daniloff, p. 300
49. Michel Brun, op cit, fourth page of covert
50. Izvestia, February 8, 1991, pg. 7
51. Izvestiya, May 28, 1991, p. 8
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53. Izvestia, May 27, 1991, pg. 6
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External links

- Diver Vadim Kondrabaev interview (<http://www.royfc.com/news/oct/0001oct01.html>)
- Gen. Valeri Kamenski/ Itogi interview (<http://www.rescue007.org/kaminski.htm>)

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Malaysia Airlines Flight 17

Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (**MH17**)^[a] was a scheduled passenger flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur that was shot down on 17 July 2014 while flying over eastern Ukraine. All 283 passengers and 15 crew were killed.^[3] Contact with the aircraft, a Boeing 777-200ER, was lost when it was about 50 km (31 mi) from the Ukraine–Russia border, and wreckage of the aircraft fell near Hrabove in Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, 40 km (25 mi) from the border.^[4] It was Malaysia Airlines' second aircraft loss during 2014, after the disappearance of Flight 370 on 8 March.^[5] The shoot-down occurred in the War in Donbass, during the Battle in Shakhtarsk Raion, in an area controlled by pro-Russian rebels.^[6] The Ukrainian Air Force had suffered losses from increasingly sophisticated air defence weaponry. Immediately after contact with the aircraft was lost, the rebel militia in Donetsk claimed to have shot down a Ukrainian An-26 military transport airplane.^[7] When it became apparent that the wreckage that fell near Hrabove was from a civilian airliner, the separatists withdrew this claim and denied shooting down any aircraft.^{[8][9][10]}

The responsibility for investigation was delegated to the Dutch Safety Board (DSB) and the Dutch-led joint investigation team (JIT), who concluded that the airliner was downed by a Buk surface-to-air missile launched from pro-Russian separatist-controlled territory in Ukraine.^{[11][12]} According to the JIT, the Buk that was used originated from the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade of the Russian Federation^{[13][14]} and had been transported from Russia on the day of the crash, fired from a field in a rebel-controlled area and returned to Russia afterwards.^{[1][2][13]} The findings by the DSB and JIT are consistent with the earlier claims by American and German intelligence sources^{[15][16]} and claims by the Ukrainian government.^[17] On the basis of the JIT's conclusions, the governments of the Netherlands and Australia held Russia responsible for the deployment of the Buk installation and were pursuing legal routes as of May 2018.^{[18][19]} The Russian government denied involvement in the shooting down of the airplane,^{[14][20][21]} and its account of how the aircraft was shot down has varied over time.^[22] Coverage in Russian media has also differed from that in other countries.^{[23][24]} Russia holds the Ukrainian government at fault for allowing civilian flights in a war zone.^[25]

Malaysia Airlines Flight 17



9M-MRD, the aircraft involved, 2011

Shootdown	
Date	17 July 2014
Summary	Shot down by a <u>Buk 9M83 surface-to-air missile</u> transported from <u>Russia</u> on the day of the crash ^{[1][2]}
Site	Near <u>Hrabove</u> , <u>Donetsk Oblast</u> , <u>Ukraine</u> 48°8′17″N 38°38′20″E﻿ / ﻿
Aircraft	
Aircraft type	<u>Boeing 777-200ER</u>
Operator	<u>Malaysia Airlines</u>
IATA flight No.	MH17
ICAO flight No.	MAS17
Call sign	Malaysian 17
Registration	9M-MRD
Flight origin	<u>Amsterdam Airport Schiphol</u> , the <u>Netherlands</u>
Destination	<u>Kuala Lumpur International Airport</u> , <u>Malaysia</u>
Occupants	298
Passengers	283
Crew	15
Fatalities	298

Survivors	0
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Aircraft

Flight 17, which was also marketed as KLM Flight 4103 (KL4103) through a codeshare agreement,^[26] was operated with a Boeing 777-2H6ER,^[b] serial number 28411, registration 9M-MRD.^{[11]:30} The 84th Boeing 777 produced, it first flew on 17 July 1997, exactly 17 years before the incident, and was delivered new to Malaysia Airlines on 29 July 1997.^[27] Powered by two Rolls-Royce Trent 892 engines and carrying 280 seats (33 business and 247 economy), the aircraft had recorded more than 76,300 hours in 11,430 cycles before the crash.^{[11]:30} The aircraft was in an airworthy condition at departure.^{[11]:31}

The Boeing 777, which entered commercial service on 7 June 1995, has one of the best safety records among commercial aircraft.^[28] In June 2014 there were about 1,212 aircraft in service, with 340 more on order.^[29]

Passengers and crew

The incident is the deadliest airliner shoot-down incident to date.^[32] All 283 passengers and 15 crew died.^{[11]:27} By 19 July, the airline had determined the nationalities of all 298 passengers and crew.^[5]

The crew were all Malaysian, while over two-thirds (68%) of the passengers were Dutch. Most of the other passengers were Malaysians and Australians; the remainder were citizens of seven other countries.^{[11]:27}

Among the passengers were delegates en route to the 20th International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, including Joep Lange, a former president of the International AIDS Society, which organised the conference.^[33] Many initial reports had erroneously indicated that around 100 delegates to the conference were aboard, but this was later revised to six.^[34] Also on board were Dutch Senator Willem Witteveen,^[35] Australian author Liam Davison,^[36] and Malaysian actress Shuba Jay.^[37]

At least twenty family groups were on the aircraft and eighty passengers were under the age of 18.^{[38][39]}

The flight crew were captains Wan Amran Wan Hussin and Eugene Choo Jin Leong, and first officers Ahmad Hakimi Hanapi and Muhd Firdaus Abdul Rahim.^{[40][h]}

People on board by nationality^{[11]:27}

Nation	Number
Australia	27
Belgium	4
Canada ^[c]	1
Germany ^[d]	4
Indonesia	12
Malaysia ^[e]	43
Netherlands ^[f]	193
New Zealand	1
Philippines	3
United Kingdom ^[g]	10
Total	298

Background

An armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine led some airlines to avoid eastern Ukrainian airspace in early March 2014 due to safety concerns.^{[42][43]} In the months prior to 17 July, reports circulated in the media on the presence of weapons, including surface-to-air missiles, in the hands of the rebels that were fighting the Ukrainian government in eastern Ukraine. On 26 May a spokesperson of the Ukrainian Armed Forces stated that a surface-to-air missile system that was being used by the rebels near Donetsk airport had been destroyed by a helicopter of the Ukrainian army. On 6 June 2014 *The International New York Times* reported that surface-to-air missiles had been seized from military bases. On 11 June the newspaper *Argumenty nedeli* reported that a Buk-M1 missile launcher had been present in an area under the separatists' control. On 29 June the Russian news agencies reported that insurgents had obtained a Buk missile system after having taken control of a Ukrainian military unit A-1402;^{[44][45]} the Donetsk People's Republic claimed possession of such a system in a since-deleted tweet.^{[44][46][47]} Such

air defence systems cannot reliably identify and avoid civilian aircraft.^{[48][49]} The Ukrainian authorities declared in the media that this system was not operational.^{[11]:187–188} According to the subsequent statement of the Security Service of Ukraine three Buk missile systems were located on Ukrainian territory controlled by militia at the time that Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 was shot down. On the night following the downing of MH17, two Buk launcher vehicles, one of which carried three missiles, (out of a normal complement of four), was observed moving into Russia.^{[50][51][52]}

Several aircraft from the Ukrainian Air Force were shot down in the months and days preceding the MH17 incident. On 14 June 2014, a Ukrainian Air Force Ilyushin Il-76 military transport was shot down on approach to Luhansk International Airport, with loss of nine crew members and forty troops.^{[11]:183} On 14 July 2014, a Ukrainian Air Force An-26 transport aircraft flying at 6,500 m (21,300 ft) was shot down.^{[11]:183} The militia reportedly claimed via social media that a Buk missile launcher, which they had previously seized and made operational, had been used to bring down the aircraft.^[53] American officials later said evidence suggested the aircraft had been shot down from Russian territory.^[54]

On 16 July, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine reported that at about 13:00 local time terrorists used MANPADs against a Su-25 jet which was performing a flight mission in the ATO zone. According to the report, the airplane received minor damage and was forced to make a landing.^{[55][56][57]} Later, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine reported on the second Su-25 that was attacked on the same day at about 19:00 local time near the Ukrainian-Russian border in the area of Amvrosiivka.^{[58][59]} According to the details reported by Ukraine's RNBO spokesperson Andriy Lysenko, the Ukrainian Su-25 was shot down by an R-27T medium range air-to-air missile fired by a MiG-29 jet from Russian territory while the Su-25 was at an altitude of 8,250 m.^{[11]:185[60]} The Russian Defence Ministry said that the accusations were false.^{[61][62]} In response to additional questions by the Dutch Safety Board, the Ukrainian authorities reported that a "provisional investigation" had revealed that the airplane had been shot down while flying at an altitude of 6,250 m. Ukrainian authorities also thought that the Su-25 could have been shot down with a Pantsir missile system from Russian territory, though they thought this less likely.^{[11]:185}

On 17 July, an Associated Press journalist saw a Buk launcher in Snizhne, in Donetsk Oblast, 16 kilometres (10 mi) southeast of the crash site. The reporter also saw seven separatist tanks near the town.^[63] Associated Press journalists reported that the Buk M-1 was operated by a man "with unfamiliar fatigues and a distinctive Russian accent" escorted by two civilian vehicles.^[64] The battle around Savur-Mohyla has been suggested as the possible context within which the missile that brought down MH17 was fired, as separatists deployed increasingly sophisticated anti-aircraft weaponry in this battle, and had brought down several Ukrainian jets in July.^[65]

In April, the International Civil Aviation Organization had warned governments that there was a risk to commercial passenger flights over south-eastern Ukraine.^{[11]:217} The American Federal Aviation Administration issued restrictions on flights over Crimea, to the south of MH17's route, and advised airlines flying over some other parts of Ukraine to "exercise extreme caution". This warning did not include the MH17 crash region.^{[66][67]} 37 airlines continued overflying eastern Ukraine and about 900 flights crossed the Donetsk region in the seven days before the Boeing 777 was shot down.^[68] On 17 July at 00:00 Russian air traffic controllers closed the airspace in the adjacent area over Russia below 53,000 feet (16,000 m). Long-distance flights typically travel at altitudes of 33,000 to 44,000 feet,^[69] so this restriction effectively closed their airspace to civilian overflights. The reason given was "armed conflict in Ukraine". The Dutch Safety Board asked for, but did not receive, a more detailed explanation for this restriction.^{[70][71]}

The airspace above Donetsk was managed by Ukraine. The Ukrainian authorities imposed restrictions for flights under 32,000 feet (9,800 m), but did not consider closing the airspace to civil aviation completely.^{[11]:10[72][73]} As with other countries, Ukraine receives overflight fees for commercial aircraft

that fly through their territory and this may have contributed to the continued availability of civilian flight paths through the conflict zone.^{[74][75]}

According to aviation expert Vadim Lukashevich in an interview to *Novaya Gazeta*, on the day of MH17 incident, a Ukrainian An-26 was scheduled to deliver paratroopers to the battle arena and it might have been the intended target of the attack.^{[72][76]}

Crash

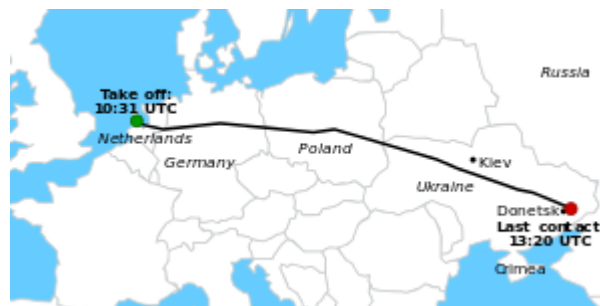
On Thursday, 17 July 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 departed from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol Gate G3 at 12:13 CEST (10:13 UTC)^{[11]:23} and took off at 12:31 local time (10:31 UTC). It was due to arrive at Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 06:10 MYT, Friday, 18 July (22:10 UTC, 17 July).^[77]

According to the original flight plan, MH17 was to fly over Ukraine at flight level 330 (33,000 feet or 10,060 metres) and then change to FL 350 around the Ukrainian city of Dnipropetrovsk. When it reached the area as planned, at 15:53 local time (12:53 UTC), Dnipropetrovsk Air Control (*Dnipro Control*) asked MH17 if they could climb to FL 350 as planned, and also to maintain separation from another flight, Singapore Airlines Flight 351 (SQ351), also at FL 330. The crew asked to remain at FL 330 and the air traffic controller approved this request, moving the other flight to FL 350. At 16:00 local time (13:00 UTC), the crew asked for a deviation of 20 nautical miles (37 km) to the left (north) off course, on airway L980, due to weather conditions. This request was also approved by *Dnipro Control* ATC. The crew then asked if they could climb to FL 340, which was rejected as this flight level was not available, so MH17 remained at FL 330. At 16:19 local time (13:19 UTC), *Dnipro Control*

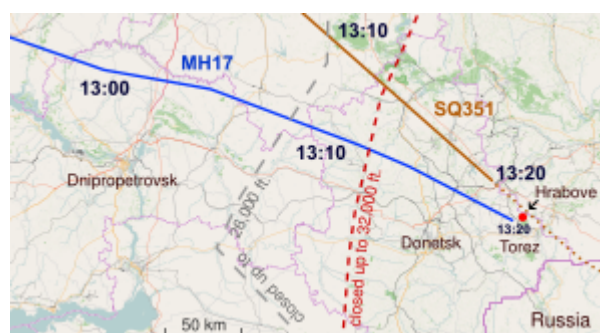
noticed that the flight was 3.6 nautical miles (6.7 km) north of the centreline of its approved airway and instructed MH17 to return to the track. At 16:19 local time (13:19 UTC), *Dnipro Control* contacted Russian ATC in Rostov-on-Don (*RND Control*) by telephone and requested clearance to transfer the flight to Russian airspace. After obtaining permission, *Dnipro Control* attempted to contact MH17 for handing them off to *RND Control* at 16:20 local time (13:20 UTC), but the aircraft did not respond. When MH17 did not respond to several calls, *Dnipro Control* contacted *RND Control* again to check if they could see the aircraft on their radar. *RND Control* confirmed that the airliner had disappeared.^[3]

The Dutch Safety Board reported a last flight data recording at 16:20 local time (13:20 UTC), located west of the urban-type settlement Rozsypne (Розсипне), near Hrabove heading east-southeast (ESE, 115°) at 494 knots (915 km/h; 568 mph).^[3]

At 16:20:03 local time (13:20:03 UTC) a Buk ground-to-air missile, which had been launched from an area east from the aircraft, detonated outside the aircraft just above the cockpit to the left. An explosive decompression occurred, resulting in both the cockpit and tail sections tearing away from the middle portion of the fuselage. All three sections disintegrated as they fell towards the ground.



Route of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17



Routes of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) and Singapore Airlines Flight 351 (SQ351), including airspace restrictions

Most of the debris landed near Hrabove, north of Torez in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk Oblast; it spread over a 50 square kilometres (19 sq mi) area to the southwest of Hrabove.^{[11]:53} The fireball on impact is believed to have been captured on video.^[78] Photographs from the site of the crash show scattered pieces of broken fuselage and engine parts, bodies, and passports.^[79] Some of the wreckage fell close to houses.^[80] Dozens of bodies fell into crop fields, and some fell into houses.^[81]

Three other commercial aircraft were in the same area when the Malaysian airliner crashed: Air India Flight 113 (AI113), a Boeing 787 en route from Delhi to Birmingham, EVA Air Flight 88 (BR88), a Boeing 777 en route from Paris to Taipei, and the closest aircraft, Singapore Airlines Flight 351 (SQ351), was 33 kilometres (21 mi) away, a Boeing 777 en route from Copenhagen to Singapore.^{[11]:41}

Recovery of bodies

A Ukraine Foreign Ministry representative said that the bodies found at the crash site would be taken to Kharkiv for identification, 270 kilometres (170 mi) to the north. By the day after the crash, 181 of the 298 bodies had been found.^[82] Some were observed being placed in body bags and loaded onto trucks.^{[83][84][85]}

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte initially complained about looting of personal belongings from the dead and the careless handling of their bodies, but later stated they had been handled with more care than originally thought.^{[86][87][88]} Other media complained that credit and debit cards were being looted,^[89] and there were accusations that evidence at the crash site had been destroyed.^{[90][91]}

The Guardian noted that tales of looting seemed to be exaggerated, but the chaos at the crash site risked the accidental destruction of evidence which, the paper contended, journalists were contributing to.^[92]

On 20 July, Ukrainian emergency workers, observed by armed separatists, began loading the remains of the passengers of MH17 into refrigerated railway wagons for transport and identification.^[93]

On 21 July, pro-Russian rebels allowed Dutch investigators to examine the bodies. By this time, 272 bodies had been recovered, according to Ukrainian officials.^[94] Remains left Torez on a train on the evening of 21 July, en route to Kharkiv to be flown to the Netherlands for identification.^[95] On the same day, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak announced that the Malaysian government had reached a tentative agreement to retrieve the remains of the Malaysians who died in the crash, following any necessary forensic work.^[96]

It was reported on 21 July that with 282 bodies and 87 body fragments found, there were still 16 bodies missing.^[97] An agreement had been reached that the Netherlands would co-ordinate the identification effort. A train carrying the bodies arrived at the Malyshev Factory, Kharkiv on 22 July.^[98] Dutch authorities stated that they found 200 bodies on the train when it arrived at Kharkiv, leaving almost 100 unaccounted for.^[99] In late July, the UK Metropolitan Police sent specialist officers to Ukraine to assist with the recovery, identification and repatriation of bodies.^[100]



First arrival of bodies at Eindhoven Airport



Convoy of 40 hearses heading to Hilversum, while other traffic stopped

The first remains were flown to Eindhoven in the Netherlands on 23 July,^[101] moved there with Dutch air force C-130 and Australian C-17 transport aircraft,^{[102][103]} which landed at Eindhoven Airport just before 16:00 local time.^[104] The day after, another 74 bodies arrived.^[105] The examination and identification of the bodies was conducted at the Netherlands Army medical regiment training facility in Hilversum and was coordinated by a Dutch forensic team.^[106]

On 1 August it was announced that a search and recovery mission, including about 80 forensic police specialists from the Netherlands, Malaysia and Australia, and led by Colonel Cornelis Kuijs of the Royal Marechaussee, would use drones, sniffer dogs, divers and satellite mapping to search for missing body parts at the crash site.^{[107][108]} Australian officials had believed that as many as 80 bodies were still at the site,^[109] but after some days of searching the international team had "found remains of only a few victims" and concluded that "the recovery effort undertaken by local authorities immediately after the crash was more thorough than initially thought."^[88]

On 6 August the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced that the recovery operation would be temporarily halted due to an upsurge in fighting around the crash site threatening the safety of crash investigators and recovery specialists, and that all international investigators and humanitarian forces conducting searches would leave the country leaving behind a small communications and liaison team.^[110]

On 22 August the bodies of 20 Malaysians (of 43 killed in the incident) arrived in Malaysia.^[111] The government announced a National Mourning Day, with a ceremony broadcast live on radio and television.^[112]

On 9 October a spokesman for the Dutch national prosecutor's office stated that one victim had been found with an oxygen mask around his neck; a forensic investigation of the mask for fingerprints, saliva and DNA did not produce any results and it is therefore not known how or when the mask got around the neck of the victim.^{[11]:99}

By 5 December 2014, the Dutch-led forensic team had identified the bodies of 292 out of 298 victims of the crash.^[113] In February and April 2015 new remains were found on the site,^{[114][115]} after which only two victims, both Dutch citizens, had not been identified.^[115]

Aftermath

About 90 minutes after the incident, Ukraine closed all routes in Eastern Ukrainian airspace, at all altitudes.^{[11]:101} The incident dramatically heightened fears about airliner shoot-downs,^[116] leading to some airlines announcing they would avoid overflying conflict zones.

Shortly after the crash, it was announced that Malaysia Airlines would retire flight number MH17 and change the Amsterdam–Kuala Lumpur route to flight number MH19 beginning on 25 July 2014, with the outbound flight unchanged.^{[117][118]} In association with the retirement of the Boeing 777 aircraft type from Malaysia Airlines' fleet, Malaysia Airlines ended its service to Amsterdam on 25 January 2016, opting to codeshare with KLM on the KUL-AMS route for the services instead.^[119] On 18 July 2014, shares in Malaysia Airlines dropped by nearly 16%.^[120]

On 23 July 2014, two Ukrainian military jets were hit by missiles at the altitude of 17,000 feet (5,200 m) close to the area of the MH17 crash. According to the Ukrainian Security Council, preliminary information indicated that the missiles came from Russia.^[121]

In July 2015, Malaysia proposed that the United Nations Security Council set up an international tribunal to prosecute those deemed responsible for the downing of the aircraft. The Malaysian resolution received the support of 11 of the 15 nation security council, with three abstentions, but the resolution was vetoed by Russia.^[122] Russia proposed an alternative draft resolution, which would not have set up a tribunal.^{[123][124][125][126][127]}

On 9 June 2016, a Russian businessman claimed that the shooting down of the airliner put an end to hopes of a Russian nation in Ukraine and prolonged the War in Donbass.^[128]

Investigation

Two parallel investigations were led by the Dutch, one into the technical cause of the crash, and a separate criminal inquiry.^[129] The technical report was released on 13 October 2015,^[130] and the criminal investigation reported some of their findings in September 2016.^{[2][131]} According to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the country in which an aviation incident occurs is responsible for the investigation, but that country may delegate the investigation to another state; Ukraine has delegated the leadership of both investigations to the Netherlands.^{[132][133][134][135]}

On-site investigation

In the hours following the crash, a meeting was convened of the Trilateral Contact Group. After they had held a video conference with representatives of insurgents affiliated with the Donetsk People's Republic (who controlled the area where the aircraft crashed), the rebels promised to "provide safe access and security guarantees" to "the national investigation commission" by co-operating with Ukrainian authorities and OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) monitors.^[136] During the first two days of investigation, the militants prevented the OSCE and the workers of Ukrainian Emergencies Ministry from freely working at the crash site. Andrei Purgin, a leader of the Donetsk People's Republic, declared later that "we will guarantee the safety of international experts on the scene as soon as Kiev concludes a ceasefire agreement".^[137]

By 18 July 2014, the flight data recorder and the cockpit voice recorder had been recovered by separatists,^[138] and three days later were handed over to Malaysian officials in Donetsk.^{[11]:44[139]} The voice recorder was damaged but there was no evidence that data had been tampered with.^{[11]:45}

The National Bureau of Air Accidents Investigation of Ukraine, which led investigations, both off- and on-site, during the first days after the crash,^[140] had by August 2014 delegated the investigation to the DSB because of the large number of Dutch passengers and the flight having originated in Amsterdam.^{[11]:14[141][142]}



Dutch and Australian police at the crash site on 3 August 2014

On 22 July 2014, a Malaysian team of 133 officials, search and recovery personnel, and forensics, technical and medical experts arrived in Ukraine.^[94] Also Australia sent a 45-member panel headed by former Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, who had earlier supervised the MH 370 probe.^[143] Approximately 200 special forces soldiers from Australia were also deployed to provide support for the JIT investigators.^[144] The United Kingdom sent six investigators from the Air

Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) and the UK Foreign Office sent extra consular staff to Ukraine.^[100] It took until late July before the full international team could start working at the crash site,^[145] under the leadership of the Dutch Ministry of Defence.^[146]

On 30 July 2014, a Ukrainian representative said that pro-Russian rebels had mined approaches to the crash site and moved heavy artillery.^[147]

On 6 August 2014, the experts left the crash site due to concerns about their safety.^[148] In mid-September they unsuccessfully attempted to regain access to the site.^{[149][150]} On 13 October 2014, a Dutch-Ukrainian team resumed recovery of victims' personal belongings.^[151] In mid-November 2014, work was undertaken to remove part of the wreckage from the crash site. Earlier efforts by the recovery team to salvage the MH17 wreckage had been frustrated by disagreements with the local rebels.^{[152][153]} The recovery operation took a week. The debris was transported to the Netherlands where investigators reconstructed parts of the aircraft.^[154]

In August 2015, possible Buk missile launcher parts were found at the crash site by the Dutch-led joint investigation team (JIT).^{[155][156]}

Cause of the crash

Soon after the crash both American and Ukrainian officials said that a 9M38 series surface-to-air missile strike was the most likely cause.^[160] If so, then the missile was fired from a mobile Soviet-designed Buk missile system (NATO reporting name: SA-11 "Gadfly"). At the time, Buk was the only surface-to-air missile system known to be deployed in the region that was capable of reaching the cruising altitude of commercial air traffic.^{[54][161][162][163][164][165]} Such systems, unless they receive information from larger networks, have limited capacity to distinguish between military and civilian aircraft.^{[166][167][168]}


According to defence analyst Reed Foster (from Jane's Information Group), the contour of the aluminium and the blistering of the paint around many of the holes on the aircraft fragments indicate that small, high-velocity fragments entered the aircraft externally, a damage pattern indicative of an SA-11.^[169] Ballistics specialist Stephan Fruhling of the Australian National University's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre concurred with this, explaining that since it struck the cockpit rather than an engine it was probably a radar guided, rather than heat seeking, missile equipped with a proximity fuzed warhead such as an SA-11.^[170]

Shortly after the crash, Igor Girkin, leader of the Donbass separatists, was reported to have posted on social media network Vkontakte, taking credit for downing a Ukrainian An-26.^{[7][171][172]} This news was repeated by channels in Russia, with LifeNews reporting "a new victory of Donetsk self-defence who shot down yet another Ukrainian airplane".^[173] Russian news agency TASS also reported eyewitness accounts claiming that the Donbass militia had just shot down a Ukrainian An-26 military aircraft with a missile.^[174] The separatists later denied involvement, saying they



A mobile Buk surface-to-air missile launcher, similar to that used in the incident

External audio

 Pro-Russian rebels discuss the shooting down of an aircraft (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbyZYgSXdyw>) on YouTube Intercepted phone calls, verified with voice recognition by the National Security Agency,^[157] between rebels discussing which rebel group shot down the aircraft and initial reports that it was a civilian aircraft. Audio (in Russian) released by Security Service of Ukraine with English subtitles.^{[158][159]}

did not have the equipment or training to hit a target at that altitude.^{[175][176][177]} Russian media also reported that Alexander Borodai called one of the Moscow media managers 40 minutes after the crash, saying that "likely we shot down a civilian airliner".^[172]

Witnesses in Torez reported sightings on the day of the incident of what appeared to be a Buk missile launcher,^[178] and AP journalists reported sightings of a Buk system in separatist controlled Snizhne.^[64] The witness reports backed up photographs and videos which had been posted online, of the Buk launcher in rebel-held territory.^[178]

On 19 July 2014, Vitaly Nayda, the chief of the Counter Intelligence Department of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), told a news conference, "We have compelling evidence that this terrorist act was committed with the help of the Russian Federation. We know clearly that the crew of this system were Russian citizens."^{[179][180][181]} He cited what he said were recorded conversations in which separatists expressed satisfaction to Russian intelligence agents that they had brought down an aircraft.^{[182][183]} One of the separatists acknowledged that the conversations had taken place, but denied that they were related to the crash of MH17 and blamed the Ukrainian government for shooting it down.^{[77][184][185]} According to Nayda, a Buk launcher used in the shoot-down was moved back into Russia the night after the attack.^[64] The SBU released another recording, which they said was of pro-Russian-separatist leader Igor Bezler being told of an approaching aircraft two minutes before MH17 was shot down. Bezler said the recording was real, but referred to a different incident.^[186] The head of the SBU, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, later claimed that rebels had intended to shoot down a Russian airliner in a false flag operation to give Russia a pretext to invade Ukraine, but shot down MH17 by mistake.^{[187][188][189]}

Journalists from the Associated Press in Snizhne, Ukraine reported seeing a Buk M-1 enter the town operated by a man "with unfamiliar fatigues and a distinctive Russian accent" escorted by two civilian vehicles, which then moved off in the direction where the shoot-down later occurred. According to Ukrainian counterterrorism chief, Vitaly Nayda, after downing the airliner under separatist direction, the launcher's Russian crew quickly moved it back across the border into Russia.^[64]

On 22 July 2014, a rebel fighter claimed that fellow separatists had told his unit that the aircraft had been shot down under the assumption that it was Ukrainian and that he had been ordered to the crash site to arrest "the pilots".^{[190][191]} Unnamed American intelligence officials stated that sensors that traced the path of the missile, shrapnel patterns in the wreckage, voice print analysis of separatists' conversations in which they claimed credit for the strike, and photos and other data from social media sites all indicated that Russian-backed separatists had fired the missile.^[16]

American officials said that satellite data from infrared sensors detected the explosion of Flight MH17.^[192] American intelligence agencies said that analysis of the launch plume and trajectory suggested the missile was fired from an area near Torez and Snizhne.^{[54][162]} *The Daily Telegraph* said: "*The Telegraph's* own inquiries suggest the missile, an SA-11 from a Buk mobile rocket launcher, was possibly fired from a cornfield about 19 kilometres (12 mi) to the south of the epicentre of the crash site."^[163] Other sources suggest the missile was launched from the separatist-controlled town of Chernukhino.^[193] Several other media outlets including *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, reported that the aircraft was believed to have been downed by a rebel-fired missile.^{[109][194][195]}

An unnamed American intelligence official stated that Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 may have been shot down in error by pro-Russian separatists, citing evidence that separatists launched an SA-11 surface-to-air missile. The official said that it was possible that the rebel was a former member of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who had defected to the pro-Russian separatists.^[15] The official dismissed Russian allegations that MH17 took evasive action and said the claim that the Ukrainian government had shot down MH17

was not realistic, as Kyiv had no such missile systems in the area, which was rebel-controlled.^[164] American intelligence officials also said that Russia was attempting to disguise the flow of weaponry it was delivering to the rebels by sending older weapons that matched Ukraine's inventory.^[16] The British Foreign Office stated that it was "highly likely" that the missile was fired from an area controlled by Russian-backed separatists.^[196]

According to the Russian military, in what *New York* magazine called "Russia's Conspiracy Theory", MH17 was shot down by the Ukrainians, using either a surface-to-air missile or a fighter aircraft.^{[197][198]} On 21 July 2014, the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) held a press conference and claimed that satellite photographs showed that the Ukrainian army moved a Buk SAM battery to the area close to the territory controlled by the rebels on the morning of 17 July, hours before the crash. They said the installation was moved away again by 18 July. The Russian MoD also claimed that they had detected a Ukrainian airforce Su-25 and that this ground-attack aircraft approached to within 3 to 5 kilometres (1.9 to 3.1 mi) of the Malaysian airliner wreckage.^[198] Although promoted by Russian media, the idea that a Su-25 could have downed the Boeing 777 with an air-to-air missile was dismissed by chief designer of the Su-25, Vladimir Babak.^{[199][200][201]} In 2015 *Bellingcat* purchased satellite photos from the same area and time as used by the MoD and demonstrated that the MoD had used older photos (May and June 2014) in their presentation, and that the presentation had been edited to make a Ukrainian Buk launcher appear as if it had been removed after the attack.^[202] In the report published by the Dutch Safety Board, an air-to-air missile strike was ruled out.^[12]

In an interview with *Reuters* on 23 July 2014, Alexander Khodakovsky, the commander of the pro-Russian Vostok Battalion, acknowledged that the separatists had an anti-aircraft missile system of the type the Americans had said was used to shoot down the aircraft, and said that it could have been sent back to Russia to remove proof of its presence;^{[203][204][205]} he later retracted his comments, saying that he had been misquoted and stating that rebels never had a Buk.^[204] In November 2014 he repeated that the separatists had a Buk launcher at the time, but stated that the vehicle, under control of fighters from Luhansk, had still been on its way to Donetsk when MH17 crashed. It was then withdrawn to avoid being blamed.^[206]

On 28 July 2014, Ukrainian security official Andriy Lysenko announced, at a press conference, that black box recorder analysis had revealed that the aircraft had been brought down by shrapnel that caused "massive explosive decompression." Dutch officials were reported to be "stunned" by what they saw as a "premature announcement" and said that they had not provided this information.^[207]

On 8 September 2014, the *BBC* released new material by John Sweeney who cited three civilian witnesses from Donbass who saw the Buk launcher in the rebel-controlled territory on the day when MH17 crashed. Two witnesses said the crew of the launcher and a military vehicle escorting it spoke with Moscow accents.^[208] On the same day Ignat Ostanin, a Russian journalist, published an analysis of photos and films of Buk units moving in Russia and Ukraine in the days before and after the MH17 crash. According to Ostanin, the markings on the specific launcher suspected of being used to shoot MH17, together with the number plates of the large goods vehicle that carried the launcher, suggested that it belonged to the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade of the Air Defence Forces of the Russian Ground Forces.^{[209][210]}

On 8 October 2014 the president of the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND) gave a presentation about MH17 to a German parliamentary committee overseeing intelligence activities. According to *Der Spiegel*, the report contained a detailed analysis which concluded that pro-Russian separatists had used a captured Ukrainian Buk system to shoot down Flight MH17. The report also noted that "Russian claims

the missile had been fired by Ukrainian soldiers and that a Ukrainian fighter jet had been flying close to the passenger jet were false".^{[211][212]} The Attorney General of Germany opened an investigation against unknown persons due to a suspected war crime.^[213]

Between November 2014 and May 2016, UK-based investigative collective Bellingcat made a series of claims, based on their examination of photos in social media and other open-source information. Bellingcat said that the launcher used to shoot down the aircraft was a Buk of the Russian 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade based in Kursk, which had been transported from Donetsk to Snizhne and was controlled by separatists in Ukraine on the day of the attack,^{[214][215][216][217]} and that the Buk launcher had a serial number 332.^[218]

On 22 December 2014 the Dutch news service RTL Nieuws published a statement from an unnamed local resident who said he had witnessed the shooting down of MH17, which he said was shot down by a missile from rebel territory. He had taken photographs which he had passed to the SBU.^{[219][220]}

In January 2015 a report produced by the German investigative team CORRECT!V concluded a Buk surface-to-air missile launcher operated by the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade shot down MH17.^[221] Other circumstantial evidence was presented separately by various parties that supported this version, identifying specific launcher vehicle, operator name, truck transporting it and its alleged route through Russia and Ukraine.^[222]

In March 2015 Reuters published statements from named witnesses from Chervonyi Zhovten (Ukrainian: Червоний Жовтень), close to Torez and Snizhne, who said they saw the Buk rocket passing over the village when it was fired from a field around 1.5 km away. It also published a statement from a witness who was said to be a separatist fighter (referred to by first name only) who confirmed that the launcher was placed in that area on the day of the Boeing crash to prevent Ukrainian airstrikes.^[223]

In July 2015, News Corp Australia published the transcript of a 17-minute video recorded at the scene shortly after the crash. The transcript and published segments of the video indicated that Russian-backed rebels arrived at the crash site expecting to find the wreckage of a military aircraft and crew who had parachuted from the aircraft.^[224]

In May 2016, Stratfor released satellite imagery taken five hours before the crash which showed a Russian Buk system travelling on a flatbed truck east through Makiivka, 40 km away from Snizhne. Stratfor's concluded that a Buk system had moved from the Russian border toward Donetsk on 15 July 2014, and then moved back to the east on the afternoon of 17 July 2014, hours before Flight MH17 was shot down.^[225]

Dutch Safety Board reports

Preliminary report

On 9 September 2014, the preliminary report was released by the Dutch Safety Board (DSB).^{[3][226]:16} This preliminary report concluded that there was no evidence of any technical or operational failure in the aircraft or from the crew prior to the ending of the CVR and FDR recordings at 13.20:03 hrs (UTC). The report also said that "damage observed on the forward fuselage and cockpit section of the aircraft appears to indicate that there were impacts from a large number of high-energy objects from outside the aircraft". According to the investigators, this damage probably led to a loss of structural integrity that caused an in-flight break-up first of the forward parts of the aircraft and then of the remainder with an expansive geographic spread of the aircraft's pieces.

Tjibbe Joustra, Chairman of the Dutch Safety Board, explained that the investigation thus far pointed "towards an external cause of the MH17 crash", but determining the exact cause required further investigation. They also said that they aimed to publish the final report within a year of the crash date.^[227]

Final report

The Dutch Safety Board (DSB) issued its final report on the crash on 13 October 2015. The report concluded that the crash was caused by a Buk 9M38-series surface-to-air missile with a 9N314M warhead. The warhead detonated outside and above the left-hand side of the cockpit. The impact killed the three people in the cockpit and caused structural damage to the airliner leading to an in-flight break-up resulting in a wreckage area of 50 square kilometres and loss of the lives of all 298 occupants.^[11]

Based on evidence they were able to exclude meteor strikes, the aircraft having technical defects, a bomb, and an air-to-air attack as causes of the crash. The DSB calculated the trajectory of the missile and found it was fired within a 320-square-kilometre (120 sq mi) area southeast of Torez. Narrowing down a specific launch site was outside the DSB's mandate.^{[11]:147} The findings did not specify who launched the Buk missile but according to the final report, the area identified by the DSB was controlled by pro-Russian separatists at the time of the downing.^[228]



Narrated reconstruction of the missile impact, produced by the Dutch Safety Board.

In addition to the technical investigation, the selection of the flight route was also investigated by the DSB.^[229] Some airlines had avoided the Eastern Ukrainian airspace prior to the MH17 disaster. Many others, including 62 operators from 32 countries, continued to use this route.^{[11]:224[230]} The DSB judged that the Ukrainian authorities should have closed the airspace above eastern Ukraine prior to the incident due to the ongoing conflict and earlier military shoot-downs,^{[11]:10[231]} but noted that states involved in armed conflicts rarely did so.^{[11]:11} It recommended that states involved in such armed conflicts should exercise more caution when evaluating their airspace, and that operators should more thoroughly assess the risks when selecting routes over conflict areas.^{[232][231]}

Criminal investigation

The criminal investigation into the downing of MH17 is being led by the Public Prosecution Service of the Dutch Ministry of Justice, and is the largest in Dutch history, involving dozens of prosecutors and 200 investigators.^[233] Investigators interviewed witnesses and examined forensic samples, satellite data, intercepted communications, and information on the Web.^[234] Participating in the investigation along with the Netherlands, are the four other members of the joint investigation team (JIT),^[235] Belgium, Ukraine, Australia, and lastly, Malaysia,^[236] which joined in November 2014.^[235] Early in the investigation, the JIT eliminated accident, internal terrorist attack or air-to-air attack from another aircraft as the cause of the crash.^[1]

In December 2014, in a letter to the Security Council, the Netherlands UN representative wrote that "The Dutch government is deliberately refraining from any speculation or accusations regarding legal responsibility for the downing of MH17."^[237] Also in December, the assistant secretary of the United States Department of State's European and Eurasian Affairs said America had given all of its information, including classified information to the Dutch investigators and to the ICAO.^[238]

On 30 March 2015, the JIT released a Russian-language video calling for witnesses in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions who might have seen a Buk missile system.^[239] The video included some previously undisclosed recordings allegedly of tapped phone conversations between rebel fighters about the Buk. In one recording, of a conversation a few hours after the aircraft was shot down, a fighter says that a member of the Buk's accompanying crew had been left behind at a checkpoint. In another recording, dated the day after the shooting down, a rebel allegedly says the Buk system and its crew had been brought from Russia by "the Librarian." The video presents a "scenario" whereby a Buk missile was transported on a Volvo low loader truck from Sievernyi (Северный), a town located within a kilometre of the Russian border (near Krasnodon), to Donetsk during the night of 16/17 July.^[240] In the week following the public appeal, the JIT received more than 300 responses resulting in dozens of "serious witnesses".^{[241][242]} In 2016 the presence of the transloader of matching colour with a Buk missile was confirmed on a satellite photo of the area taken just a few hours before the downing of the airliner, which was described as "correlating with other evidence" by Stratfor who found the photo in DigitalGlobe archive.^{[225][243]}

On 9 April 2015 Dutch authorities made available 569 documents concerning the shoot-down. Personal information and official interviews had been redacted. A further 147 documents were not made public.^[244]

Findings of the joint investigation team (JIT)

On 28 September 2016, the JIT gave a press conference in which it concluded that the aircraft was shot down with a 9M38 Buk missile fired from a rebel-controlled field near Pervomaisky (Первомайський), a town 6 km (3.7 mi) south of Snizhne.^[131] It also found the Buk missile system used had been transported from Russia into Ukraine on the day of the crash, and then back into Russia after the crash, with one missile less than it arrived with.^{[1][2]} The JIT said they had identified 100 people, witnesses as well as suspects, who were involved in the movement of the Buk launcher, though they had not yet identified a clear chain of command to assess culpability, which was a matter for ongoing investigation. The Dutch chief prosecutor said "the evidence must stand before a court" which would render final judgement.^[1] During the investigation, the JIT recorded and assessed five billion internet pages, interviewed 200 witnesses, collected half a million photos and videos, and analysed 150,000 intercepted phone calls.^{[131][245]} According to JIT head prosecutor Fred Westerbeke the criminal investigation is based on "immense body of evidence," including testimonies of live witnesses who saw the Buk launcher, primary radar data, original photos and videos.^[246]

On 24 May 2018, after extensive comparative research, the JIT concluded that the Buk that shot down the flight came from the Russian 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade in Kursk.^[247] The head of the National Investigation Service of the Dutch police asked the eyewitnesses and insiders to share information about the identities of the Buk crew members, the instruction the crew members followed and persons responsible for the operational deployment of the involved Buk on 17 July 2014.^[247] According to Dutch Public Prosecution Service, by 24 May 2018 "the authorities of the Russian Federation have ... not reported to the JIT that a Buk of the 53rd Brigade was deployed in Eastern Ukraine and that this Buk downed flight MH17."^[247] In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Russia will analyse the JIT conclusion, but will acknowledge it only if it becomes a party in the investigation.^{[248][249]} The Russian Ministry of Defence in turn stated that no Russian Buk crossed the border with Ukraine.^[249]



A Buk SAM of the type used by the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade

On 25 May 2018 the governments of the Netherlands and Australia issued a joint statement in which they laid responsibility on Russia "for its part" in the crash.^[18] The Netherlands and Australian foreign ministers stated that they would hold Russia legally responsible for shooting the airliner down. Netherlands Foreign Minister Stef Blok stated that "the government is now taking the next step by formally holding Russia accountable," and, "The Netherlands and Australia today asked Russia to enter into talks aimed at finding a solution that would do justice to the tremendous suffering and damage caused by the downing of MH17. A possible next step is to present the case to an international court or organization for their judgment."^[250]

Several other countries and international organisations expressed their support for the JIT's conclusions and the joint statement by the Netherlands and Australia.^{[251][252]} UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said the United Kingdom "fully supports Australia and the Netherlands," calling on Russia to cooperate.^[253] High Representative Federica Mogherini of the EU stated that the European Union "calls on the Russian Federation to accept its responsibility" and to cooperate as well.^[254] The German government called on Russia to "fully explain the tragedy."^[255] The US Department of State issued a statement saying that the United States "strongly support the decisions by the Netherlands and Australia," requesting Russia to acknowledge its involvement and to "cease its callous disinformation campaign."^[256] NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called on Russia to "accept responsibility and fully cooperate ... in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2166."^[257]

In response to the JIT's conclusions, Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated that the Russians are "not involved in it."^[258] Following release of the JIT report, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir said the JIT was making Russia a "scapegoat" and that he did not believe the Russians whom the JIT had charged were involved. Conversely the Malaysian prosecutor supported the investigation by saying the findings "are based on extensive investigations and also legal research".^[259]

Proposed international tribunal

In June 2015, the Netherlands, supported by the other JIT members, sought to create an international tribunal to prosecute those suspected of downing the Malaysian airliner, which would take up the case after the closing of the criminal investigation. The Dutch hoped that an international tribunal would induce Russian cooperation, which was considered critical.^[260] In late June 2015, the Russian government rejected a request by the five countries on the investigative committee to form a UN tribunal which would try those responsible for the shooting down of the aircraft, calling it "not timely and counterproductive."^[261] On 8 July 2015, Malaysia, a member of the UN Security Council, distributed a draft resolution to establish such a tribunal. This resolution was jointly proposed by the five JIT member countries. Russian UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin responded, "I don't see any future for this resolution. Unfortunately, it seems that this is an attempt to organize a grandiose, political show, which only damages efforts to find the guilty parties."^[122] Russia later circulated a rival resolution which criticised the international investigation's lack of "due transparency" and demanded those responsible be brought to justice, but which did not call for a tribunal.^[262] In a vote, Malaysia's resolution gained majority support of the UNSC, but was vetoed by Russia.^[126]

Criminal prosecution

In a statement made on 5 July 2017 by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders, it was announced that the JIT countries would prosecute any suspects identified in the downing of flight MH17 in the Netherlands and under Dutch law.^[263] A treaty between the Netherlands and Ukraine made it possible for the Netherlands to prosecute in the cases of all 298 victims, regardless of their nationality.

This treaty was signed on 7 July 2017,^[264] and went into force on 28 August 2018.^[265] On 21 March 2018, the Dutch government sent legislation to the parliament, allowing the suspects involved to be prosecuted in the Netherlands under Dutch law.^{[266][267]}

On 19 June 2019, the Dutch Public Prosecution Service charged four people with murder in connection with the shooting down of the aircraft: three Russians, Igor Girkin, Sergey Dubinsky, and Oleg Pulatov, and one Ukrainian, Leonid Kharchenko. International arrest warrants were issued in respect of each of the accused.^[268] One of the suspects, Lieutenant Colonel Oleg Pulatov, expressed his intention to join the legal process by being represented in court. Hearings in the trial began at the District Court of The Hague on 9 March 2020, with none of the accused in attendance.^{[269][270][271]} Igor Girkin gave an interview to British journalist Graham Phillips in which Girkin said that he would not attend the trial because he did not recognise the court's jurisdiction over Russian citizens. He said that he was not involved in the shoot-down, and that he considered the government of Ukraine to be responsible for the loss of life, because "only a moron or a criminal would send an airliner into a zone of active hostilities".^[272]

In July 2019 SBU arrested Vladimir Tsemakh, head of air defence in DPR-controlled Snizhne during the attack on MH17. Bellingcat described him as an important eye-witness to the events surrounding the downing of flight MH17. Bellingcat analysed his possible role and said that a video showed Tsemakh making "what appears to be a damning admission to his personal involvement in hiding the Buk missile launcher in the aftermath of its use on 17 July 2014".^[273] In August 2019 Russia reportedly added Tsemakh to its list in a previously agreed exchange of prisoners of war with Ukraine. In an article, *The Insider* website commented on Russia's motives in requesting the exchange of a Ukrainian citizen.^[274] On 4 September 2019, an appeals court in Kyiv ruled to release Tsemakh.^[275] On 7 September 2019, Volodymyr Tsemakh was released during a Ukraine-Russia prisoner exchange.^[276] According to the Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok, the exchange had been delayed for a week so that Vladimir Tsemakh could be questioned by the Dutch Public Prosecution Service as a witness about the events surrounding the downing of flight MH17.^[276] The Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the Minister of Justice and Security Ferd Grapperhaus, the JIT, and Blok added that the Netherlands regretted Tsemakh, who is a 'person of interest', being included in the exchange due to pressure on Ukraine from Russia.^{[275][276][277][278][279]} Others including Chairman Piet Ploeg of Stichting Vliegcramp MH17 which is the organisation of the victims' relatives called the release of Tsemach "unacceptable".^[278] The Dutch Public Prosecution Service (OM) requested that Tsemach, who is not a Russian citizen, be extradited from Russia to the Netherlands.^[278] On 14 November 2019 the JIT published a new witnesses appeal and simultaneously released a number of recorded conversations of rebel leaders. JIT was particularly interested in "the command structure and the role that Russian government officials may have played."^{[280][281]}

A number of witness statements, especially from the DPR armed forces, were presented anonymously due to fear of reprisal from Russia.^[282] Although the Russian secret service attempted to hack into the Malaysian Attorney-General's office, investigation files of the Australian Federal Police and offices at The Hague, prosecutors say the identities of the witnesses still remain secure.^[283] The Dutch court, on considering defendant Oleg Pulatov's appeal against anonymous testimony, allowed twelve anonymous witness statements in the trial but barred the anonymous testimony of one witness.^[284]

On 10 July 2020, the Dutch government declared that it had decided to take Russia to the European Court of Human Rights for "its role in the downing" of Flight MH17. By doing so, it said, it was "offering maximum support" to the individual cases already brought to the Court by the victims' families.^{[285][286]}

On 7 June 2021, the trial moved on to the evidence phase, during which lawyers and judges will discuss their findings. Witnesses may also be called in to supply additional information.^{[287][288]}

British ISC report

On 20 December 2017, the Intelligence and Security Committee of the UK Parliament published its annual report. It contains a section entitled "Russian objectives and activity against UK and allied interests" which quotes MI6 as stating: "Russia conducts information warfare on a massive scale... An early example of this was a hugely intensive, multichannel propaganda effort to persuade the world that Russia bore no responsibility for the shooting down of [Malaysian Airlines flight] MH-17 (an outright falsehood: we know beyond any reasonable doubt that the Russian military supplied and subsequently recovered the missile launcher)".^{[289][290]}

Identification of command figures

In December 2017, the Russian investigative portal *The Insider*, the news agency McClatchyDC, and Bellingcat performed a joint investigation that confirmed the identity of a high-ranking military officer using a call-sign "Dolphin" to be Colonel General Nikolai Fedorovich Tkachev. Tkachev is heard supervising the operation of Buk delivery and set-up in wiretaps acquired by JIT.^{[291][292]} In April 2020 the same three teams identified another high-ranking figure in the chain of command referred to by many DPR and LPR operatives as "Vladimir Ivanovich" to be FSB Colonel General Andrey Ivanovich Burlaka, first deputy chief of the Russian border service.^{[293][294]}

Civil cases

In July 2015 a writ was filed in an American court by families of 18 victims accusing the separatist leader Igor Girkin of "orchestrating the shootdown" and the Russian government of being complicit in the act. The writ was brought under the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991.^[295] In May 2016 families of 33 victims of the crash filed a claim against Russia and president Vladimir Putin in the European Court of Human Rights, arguing Russian actions violated the passengers' right to life.^{[296][297]} A group of 270 relatives of Dutch victims joined the claim in May 2018 after the JIT concluded that Russia was involved.^[298] The Dutch government supported this claim by taking Russia to the European Court of Human Rights in July 2020.^{[285][286]} In July 2016, Malaysia Airlines was sued in Malaysia by 15 passengers' families in two separate writs, each brought under the Montreal Convention, arguing that the airline should not have chosen that route.^[299] A month earlier, a separate lawsuit was brought by the families of six crew members who alleged negligence and breach of contract by the airline.^[300]

Reactions

Countries

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called the crash the result of an act of terrorism, and also called for an international investigation into the crash.^[301]

Malaysian Deputy Foreign Minister Hamzah Zainuddin said that the foreign ministry would be working with the Russian and Ukrainian governments with regard to the incident.^[302] Prime Minister Najib Razak said that Malaysia was unable yet to verify the cause of the crash but that, if the airliner was shot down, the perpetrators should be swiftly punished.^[303] The Malaysian government flew the national flag at half-mast from 18 July until 21 July.^[304]

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and King Willem-Alexander voiced their shock at the crash,^{[305][306]} and Minister of Foreign Affairs Frans Timmermans joined the Dutch investigation team sent to Ukraine.^[307] Dutch government buildings flew the flag at half-mast on 18 July.^[308] Music was cancelled and festivities were toned down on the last day of the Nijmegen Marches.^[309] On 21 July the Netherlands opened a war crimes investigation on the downing of the aircraft and a Netherlands public prosecutor went to Ukraine as part of this investigation. Rutte threatened tough action against Russia if it did not help in the investigation.^[310] On the same day, Timmermans spoke at the UN Security Council Meeting, after the council had unanimously condemned the shooting down of MH17.^[311] An increase in negative emotions and somatic complaints was observed in the Dutch population during the first four days after the MH17 crash.^[312]



Flag at half mast in front of Hoorn city hall during the national day of mourning on 23 July

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott said in an address to parliament that the aircraft was downed by a missile which seemed to have been launched by Russian-backed rebels.^[313] Julie Bishop, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, said in an interview on Australian television that it was "extraordinary" that her Russian counterparts had refused to discuss the downing of MH17 when the Russian ambassador was summoned to meet her.^[313] The Russian government was critical of Abbott's response; Abbott was one of the first world leaders to publicly connect the shoot-down to Russia.^[314] Abbott later criticised the recovery efforts as "shambolic", and "more like a garden clean-up than a forensic investigation"; Bishop publicly warned separatist forces against treating the victims' bodies as hostages.^[315] Abbott also said in an interview on 13 October 2014, in anticipation of Russia's President Vladimir Putin's attendance at the 2014 G20 summit, scheduled for mid-November 2014 in Brisbane, Australia: "Australians were murdered. They were murdered by Russian-backed rebels using Russian-supplied equipment. We are very unhappy about this."^[316]

Russian President Putin said that Ukraine bore responsibility for the incident which happened in its territory, which he said would not have happened if hostilities had not resumed in the south-east of Ukraine.^{[4][317][318]} At the end of July a Duma deputy Ilya Ponomarev said in an interview for *Die Welt* that the separatists had shot down the airliner by mistake and that Putin now realised he had supplied the weapon to the "wrong people".^[319] The Danish Institute for International Studies has pointed out to the similarities of Russian reaction to the downing of Korean Airlines flight KAL-007 in 1983 where the USSR initially denied any involvement.^[320]

United States President Barack Obama said the United States would help determine the cause.^[4] In a press statement, White House spokesman Josh Earnest called for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine to allow for a full investigation.^[321] Vice-President Joe Biden said the aircraft appeared to have been deliberately shot down, and offered American assistance for the investigation into the crash.^[318] American Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power called on Russia to end the war.^[322] The British government requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council and called an emergency Cobra meeting after the incident.^{[323][324]} Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin E. Dempsey said that instead of backing away from supporting the rebels following the shooting down, Putin had "taken a decision to escalate."^[325]

Organisations

On 17 July the European Union's representatives José Manuel Barroso and Herman Van Rompuy released a joint statement calling for an immediate and thorough investigation.^[326] The EU officials also said that Ukraine has first claim on the aircraft's black boxes.^[327]

The International Civil Aviation Organization announced, on 18 July, that it was sending its team of experts to assist the National Bureau of Air Accidents Investigation of Ukraine (NBAAI), under Article 26 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation.^[328] The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2166 on 21 July, regarding an official crime investigation into the incident. On 24 July 2014 the ICAO issued a State Letter reminding signatory states of their responsibilities with respect to the safety and security of civil aircraft operating in airspace affected by conflict.^[329]

Memorials

After the crash, memorial services were held in Australia^[330] and in the Netherlands, which declared 23 July, the day when the first victims arrived in the country, a national day of mourning, the first since 1962.^{[331][332]} The opening ceremony of the AIDS 2014 conference, on 20 July, of which several delegates had been on board Flight MH17, began with a tribute to the victims of the crash.^[333] In Malaysia, makeshift memorials were created in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur.^[334]

On 17 July 2017, exactly three years after the crash, a memorial in memory of the victims was unveiled in Vijfhuizen, the Netherlands. The opening of the memorial, which is located just outside Schiphol Airport, was attended by more than 2000 relatives of victims, King Willem-Alexander and his wife Queen Máxima, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Minister of Security and Justice Stef Blok and the speakers of the Dutch Senate and House of Representatives. The memorial includes 298 trees, one tree for each victim.^[335]

On 17 July 2015, a year after the crash, sunflowers seeds taken from a field near the crash site were grown in tribute to the 15 residents of Hilversum, including three families, who were killed.^[336] Amid the ongoing war, Fairfax chief correspondent Paul McGeough and photographer Kate Geraghty collected a keepsake of sunflower seeds from the wreck site for family and friends of the 38 Australian victims, which happened to be viable and had therefore germinated.^[337]

Russian media coverage

Coverage by the Russian media has differed from coverage in most other countries^[23] and has changed significantly over time.^{[22][24]} According to Bellingcat, these changes have usually been in response to new evidence published by DSB and the investigation team.^[22] According to a poll conducted by the Levada Center between 18 and 24 July 2014, 80% of Russians surveyed believed that the crash of MH17 was caused by the Ukrainian military. Only 3% of respondents blamed the disaster on the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.^{[338][339][340]} Researchers said views were influenced by the televisual infosphere.^[341] In the three days following the incident, the Russian Internet Research Agency "troll



A makeshift memorial at Schiphol Airport for the victims of Flight MH17



Memorial for the victims of Flight MH17 located in Vijfhuizen, the Netherlands

farm" posted 111,486 tweets from fake accounts.^[342] Mostly posted in Russian, the tweets initially said the rebels had shot down a Ukrainian airplane, but quickly switched to accusing Ukraine of carrying out the attack.^[343] This is both the largest number of tweets in any 24 hour period, and for any topic in the history of the Internet Research Agency (IRA).^[344]

Conversely, the liberal Russian opposition newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* shortly after the crash published a headline in Dutch that read "Vergeef ons, Nederland" ("Forgive Us, Netherlands").^{[293][345][346]}

In July 2014, Sara Firth, who had worked as a correspondent with RT for the previous five years, resigned in protest at the channel's coverage of the crash, which she described as "lies".^{[347][348]}

Initial reactions

On the evening of the crash, the *LifeNews* portal reported that at around 16:00 local time the separatists shot down "Ukrainian Air Force An-26 transport plane" with a missile, calling it "a new victory for the Donetsk militia".^{[173][349][350]} The news was immediately picked up and disseminated by many other news websites and the *Russia-24* TV channel.^[173] Around the same time Leonid Kharchenko, who was responsible for the Buk launcher convoy through DPR, reported to his commander Sergei Dubinsky that the launcher is "on the spot and has already downed one" Ukrainian ground-attack airplane.^[282]

Shortly after it became evident that it was a civilian aircraft which had been shot down, the separatist media denied any responsibility and denied having anti-aircraft missiles capable of reaching the cruising altitude of commercial traffic.^{[8][9][10]}

Claims of shoot-down by the Ukrainian Air Force

For the first year following the crash, Russian state media claimed that a Ukrainian Air Force Su-25 jet had shot down Flight 17.^[22] Radar data, allegedly from Russian air traffic controllers, which was leaked to a Moscow newspaper, was claimed to be proof that there were Ukrainian military jets near MH17.^[351] A Ukrainian Air Force deserter later claimed that he had overheard pilots discuss flying close to MH17 when it crashed.^[352] On 15 November 2014, Russia's *Channel One* reported on a supposedly leaked spy satellite photo which showed the airliner being shot from behind by a Ukrainian Su-25 fighter jet.^[353] Many other Russian media reprinted the photo but its authenticity was immediately dismissed as the aircraft were out of scale which indicated poor copy-and-paste.^[354] Later it was disclosed, that the photo had been initially emailed to the Vice-President of the *Russian Union of Engineers* by a self-described aviation expert who had found it on a Russian online forum.^[355] The aviation expert later apologised, saying that he was unhappy with how the information had been used.^[355] In a later interview by magazine *The New Yorker*, *Channel One* CEO Konstantin Ernst admitted that reporting on the satellite photo was a "simple error", saying that it was a human mistake not made on purpose.^[356]

On 25 December 2014, Russia's state-operated domestic news agency *RIA Novosti* quoted the leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, *Alexander Zakharchenko*, saying he saw MH17 shot out of the sky by two Ukrainian jets.^{[357][358]}

This narrative was later replaced by one in which MH17 was shot down by a Buk launcher operated by the Ukrainian military.^[22] A subsequent presentation of radar data in 2016 by the Russian military no longer showed military aircraft present in the area.^[22]

Claims of shoot-down by a Ukrainian Buk

In May 2015, *Novaya Gazeta* published a report credited to a group of Russian military engineers. Based on their analysis of debris and damage patterns on the hull of the aircraft, they concluded that the airliner was shot down by a Buk-M1 launcher with a 9M38M1 missile. They claimed that the missile could not have been fired from Snizhne, but was instead fired from Zaroshchenske and that a Ukrainian anti-air unit was located there at that time.^{[359][360]} In June 2015, the report was the subject of a press conference and was attributed to Mikhail Malisevskiy, chief engineer at Moscow-headquartered Almaz-Antey, the Buk missile manufacturer.^[361] The Security Service of Ukraine said that there were inaccuracies in this version, and called part of the report a fake.^[362] Russian military expert Vadim Lukashevich argued on TV Rain that the spatial orientation of the rocket at the moment of explosion did not exclude the possibility that it was launched from Snizhne, as the report claimed. Lukashevich also noted that the report admitted a Buk missile as the cause of the crash, discrediting the previous theories about the crash (Su-25 etc.) circulated in Russian media.^[363] *Ukrainska Pravda* questioned claims about the Ukrainian anti-aircraft unit and stated that Zaroshchenske was under control of pro-Russian forces on the day of the shoot-down.^[364] *Novaya Gazeta* published an analysis, also denying the Almaz-Antey version,^[365] which contained interviews with inhabitants of Zaroshchenske who denied claims that Ukrainian forces and Buk launchers were present in the village at that time.^{[366][367]} According to Bellingcat, Russia's satellite images were from June and showed signs of editing.^{[368][369]} *Bild* described the Russian satellite image as "fake".^[370]

On 17 September 2018, Russia's Ministry of Defence held a press conference at which Lt. Gen. Nikolai Parshin, chief of the Missile and Artillery Directorate, said that after Dutch investigators displayed parts of the missile and their serial numbers, they had studied and declassified archives at the research centre that produced the Buk missiles. Parshin said the Russian archives showed that the missile that was made from these parts was transported to a military unit in western Ukraine in 1986, and to Russia's knowledge never left Ukraine. Officials also claimed that video evidence presented by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT), in which the missile that allegedly shot down the airliner was shown being moved from Russia into Ukraine, was fabricated.^{[371][372]}

JIT responded that it had requested details about recovered missile parts from Russia in May 2018, but had received no answer. It said, information from the Russian Ministry of Defence would be carefully studied as soon as the documents were made available, as requested in May 2018 and required by UNSC in 2016. JIT stated it had always carefully analysed information provided by Russia, but information presented to the public was inaccurate on several points. Russia had given differing accounts over time of how MH17 was shot down; for example claiming to have evidence (radar images) that a Ukrainian fighter fired an air-to-air missile at MH17.^{[373][374]}

Oleksandr Turchynov, secretary of National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, said in September 2018 that Russia's claim was "yet another failed fake report that the Kremlin made up in order to cover up their crime that has been proven by the official investigation as well as independent experts."^[375]

Conspiracy theories

On 18 July, Commander of the Donbass People's Militia Igor Girkin was quoted as stating that "a significant number of the bodies weren't fresh". He followed up by saying "Ukrainian authorities are capable of any baseness"; and also claimed that blood serum and medications were found in the wreckage in large quantities.^[376] Girkin also claimed that some of the passengers had died a few days before the crash.^[377]

The Russian government-funded^[378] TV network RT initially said that the airliner may have been shot down by Ukraine in a failed attempt to assassinate Vladimir Putin, in a plot which was organised by Ukraine's "Western backers". This was quickly dismissed as Putin's flight route was hundreds of kilometres north of Ukraine.^{[379][380]}

Other conspiracy theories propagated by Russian pro-government media included claims that the Ukrainians had shot down the airliner by mistake, drawing parallels to the downing of Siberia Airlines Flight 1812 in 2001 (reported in December 2014^[381]); that Ukrainian air traffic controllers had deliberately redirected the flight to fly over the war zone; and that the Ukrainian government had organised the attack to discredit the pro-Russian rebels.^[382] The number of alternative theories disseminated in Russian mass media started growing as the DSB and JIT investigations increasingly pointed towards the separatists.^[383]

In 2017 Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* described how false stories about the MH17 crash had been propagated with the support of Christian Democratic Appeal politician Pieter Omtzigt, who introduced a Russian-speaking Ukrainian man as an "eyewitness" to the crash on a public expert debate in May 2017. The man, who was an asylum-seeker from Ukraine, did not witness the crash and his speech, texted to him by Omtzigt prior to the interview, repeated the Russian-promoted version that Ukrainian jets downed the Boeing.^[384]

Maps



Location of departure, crash site and destination



Location of departure and crash site



Presumed route ending in an area controlled by pro-Russian rebels according to *The New York Times*^{[71][i]}

In popular culture

The shootdown of MH17 was also featured in the fourth episode of eighteenth season of *Mayday*. The episode was titled "Deadly Airspace".^[385]

See also

- List of aircraft accidents and incidents resulting in at least 50 fatalities
- List of airliner shootdown incidents

Notes

- MH is the IATA designator. The flight was also marketed as **KLM** Flight 4103 (KLM4103) through a codeshare, and has been commonly referred to as "MH17", "Flight 17" or "Flight MH17".
- The aircraft is a Boeing 777-200ER (for Extended Range) model; Boeing assigns a unique customer code for each company that buys one of its aircraft, which is applied as an infix in the model number at the time the aircraft is built. The code for Malaysia Airlines is "H6", hence "777-2H6ER".
- Including:
 - 1 dual Canadian-Romanian citizen
- Including:
 - 1 dual German-Dutch citizen
- 28 passengers and 15 crew
- Including:
 - 1 dual Dutch-Belgian citizen
 - 1 dual Dutch-Israeli citizen
 - 1 dual Dutch-Italian citizen
 - 1 dual Dutch-American citizen
 - 1 dual Dutch-Malaysian citizen^[30]

- 3 Dutch-Vietnamese citizen^[31]

g. Including:

- 1 dual British-South African citizen
- 1 dual British-New Zealand citizen

h. The family name is Choo, as the Chinese name is Choo Jin Leong (**Chinese**: 朱仁隆; **pinyin**: *Zhū Rénlóng*^[41]) - note that ethnic Malays do not have family names.^{[11][40]}

i. "A United States official said the missile that shot down the plane was launched from a region near the towns of **Torez** and **Snizhne**"^[322] See also several mentions of one or both of these towns in the *Cause of crash* section and elsewhere in this article

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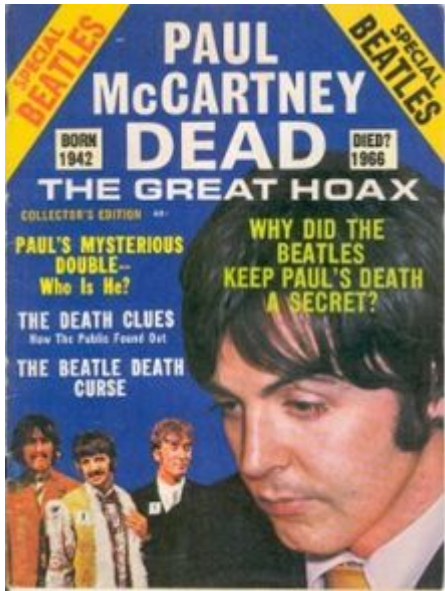
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Paul is dead

"Paul is dead" is an urban legend and conspiracy theory alleging that English musician Paul McCartney, of the Beatles, died on 9 November 1966 and was secretly replaced by a look-alike. The rumour began circulating around 1967, but grew in popularity after being reported on American college campuses in late 1969. Proponents based the theory on perceived clues found in Beatles songs and album covers. Clue-hunting proved infectious, and within a few weeks had become an international phenomenon.

According to the theory, McCartney died in a car crash and, to spare the public from grief, the surviving Beatles replaced him with the winner of a McCartney look-alike contest, sometimes identified as "William Campbell" or "Billy Shears". Afterwards, the band left messages in their music and album artwork to communicate the truth to their fans. These include the 1968 song "Glass Onion", in which Lennon sings "here's another clue for you all / the walrus was Paul", and the cover photo of their album Abbey Road, in which McCartney is shown barefoot and walking out of step with his bandmates.



A magazine discussing the rumour

Rumours declined after an interview with McCartney, who had been secluded with his family in Scotland, was published in Life magazine in November 1969. During the 1970s, the phenomenon was the subject of analysis in the fields of sociology, psychology and communications. McCartney parodied the hoax with the title and cover art of his 1993 live album, Paul Is Live. In 2009, Time magazine included "Paul is dead" in its feature on ten of "the world's most enduring conspiracy theories".

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Beginnings

In early 1967, a rumour circulated in London that Paul McCartney had been killed in a traffic accident while driving along the M1 motorway on 7 January.^[1] The rumour was acknowledged and rebutted in the February issue of *The Beatles Book*, a fanzine.^[1] McCartney then alluded to the rumour during a press conference held around the release of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in May.^[2] By 1967, the Beatles were known for sometimes including backmasking in their music.^[3] Analysing their lyrics for hidden meaning had also become a popular trend in the US.^[4] In November 1968, their self-titled double LP (also known as the "White Album") was released containing the track "Glass Onion". John Lennon wrote the song in response to "gobbledygook" said about *Sgt. Pepper*. In a later interview, he said that he was purposely confusing listeners with lines such as "the Walrus was Paul" – a reference to his song "I Am the Walrus" from the 1967 EP and album *Magical Mystery Tour*.^[5]

On 17 September 1969, Tim Harper, an editor of the *Drake Times-Delphic*, the student newspaper of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, published an article titled "Is Beatle Paul McCartney Dead?" The article addressed a rumour being circulated on campus that cited clues from recent Beatles albums, including a message interpreted as "Turn me on, dead man", heard when the White Album track "Revolution 9" is played backwards. Also referenced was the back cover of *Sgt. Pepper*, where every Beatle except McCartney is photographed facing the viewer, and the front cover of *Magical Mystery Tour*, which depicts one unidentified band member in a differently coloured suit from the other three.^[6] According to music journalist Merrell Noden, Harper's *Drake Times-Delphic* was the first to publish an article on the "Paul is dead" theory.^{[7][nb 1]} Harper later said that it had become the subject of discussion among students at the start of the new academic year, and he added: "A lot of us, because of Vietnam and the so-called Establishment, were ready, willing and able to believe just about any sort of conspiracy."^[7]

In late September 1969, the Beatles released the album *Abbey Road* as they were in the process of disbanding.^[9] On 10 October, the Beatles' press officer, Derek Taylor, responded to the rumour stating: "Recently we've been getting a flood of inquiries asking about reports that Paul is dead. We've been getting questions like that for years, of course, but in the past few weeks we've been getting them at the office and home night and day. I'm even getting telephone calls from disc jockeys and others in the United States."^{[10][11]} Throughout this period, McCartney felt isolated from his bandmates in his opposition to their choice of business manager, Allen Klein, and distraught at Lennon's private announcement that he was leaving the group.^{[12][13]} With the birth of his daughter Mary in late August, McCartney had withdrawn to focus on his family life.^[14] On 22 October, the day that the "Paul is dead" rumour became an international news story,^[15] McCartney, his wife Linda and their two daughters travelled to Scotland to spend time at his farm near Campbeltown.^[16]

Growth

On 12 October 1969, a caller to Detroit radio station WKNR-FM told disc jockey Russ Gibb about the rumour and its clues.^[7] Gibb and other callers then discussed the rumour on air for the next hour,^[17] during which Gibb offered further potential clues.^[18] Two days later, *The Michigan Daily* published a satirical review of *Abbey Road* by University of Michigan student Fred LaBour, who had listened to the exchange on Gibb's show,^[7] under the headline "McCartney Dead; New Evidence Brought to Light".^{[19][20]} It identified various clues to McCartney's death on Beatles album covers, particularly on the *Abbey Road* sleeve. LaBour later said he had invented many of the clues and was astonished when the story was picked up by newspapers across the United States.^[21] Noden writes that "Very soon, every college campus, every radio station, had a resident expert."^[7] WKNR fuelled the rumour further with its two-hour programme *The Beatle Plot*, which first aired on 19 October.

The story was soon taken up by more mainstream radio stations in the New York area, WMCA and WABC.^[22] In the early hours of 21 October, WABC disc jockey Roby Yonge discussed the rumour on-air for over an hour before being pulled off the air for breaking format. At that time of night, WABC's signal covered a wide listening area and could be heard in 38 US states and, at times, in other countries.^[23] Although the Beatles' press office denied the rumour, McCartney's atypical withdrawal from public life contributed to its escalation.^[24] Vin Scelsa, a student broadcaster in 1969, later said that the escalation was indicative of the countercultural influence of Bob Dylan, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, since: "Every song from them – starting about late 1966 – became a personal message, worthy of endless scrutiny ... they were guidelines on how to live your life."^[7]

WMCA dispatched Alex Bennett to the Beatles' Apple Corps headquarters in London on 23 October,^[25] to further his extended coverage of the "Paul is dead" theory.^{[22][26]} There, Ringo Starr told Bennett: "If people are gonna believe it, they're gonna believe it. I can only say it's not true."^[25] In a radio interview with John Small of WKNR, Lennon said that the rumour was "insane" but good publicity for *Abbey Road*.^{[27][nb 2]} On Halloween night 1969, WKBW in Buffalo, New York broadcast a program titled *Paul McCartney Is Alive and Well – Maybe*, which analysed Beatles lyrics and other clues. The WKBW DJs concluded that the "Paul is dead" hoax was fabricated by Lennon.^[29]

Before the end of October 1969, several record releases had exploited the phenomenon of McCartney's alleged demise.^[22] These included "The Ballad of Paul" by the Mystery Tour;^[30] "Brother Paul" by Billy Shears and the All Americans; "So Long Paul" by Werbley Finster, a pseudonym for José Feliciano;^[31] and Zacharias and His Tree People's "We're All Paul Bearers (Parts One and Two)".^[32] Another song was Terry Knight's "Saint Paul",^[22] which had been a minor hit in June that year and was subsequently adopted by radio stations as a tribute to "the late Paul McCartney".^{[33][nb 3]} According to a report in *Billboard* magazine in early November, Shelby Singleton Productions planned to issue a documentary LP of radio segments discussing the phenomenon.^[35] In Canada, Polydor Records exploited the rumour in their artwork for *Very Together*, a repackaging of the Beatles' pre-fame recordings with Tony Sheridan, using a cover that showed four candles, one of which had just been snuffed out.^[36]

Premise

Proponents of the theory maintained that, on 9 November 1966, McCartney had an argument with his bandmates during a Beatles recording session and drove off angrily in his car, crashed, and was decapitated.^{[22][37]} To spare the public from grief, or simply as a joke, the surviving Beatles replaced him with the winner of a McCartney look-alike contest.^[22] This scenario was facilitated by the Beatles' recent retirement from live performance and by their choosing to present themselves with a new image for their next album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.^[38]

In LaBour's telling, the stand-in was an "orphan from Edinburgh named William Campbell" whom the Beatles then trained to impersonate McCartney.^[7] Others contended that the man's name was William Shears Campbell, later abbreviated to Billy Shears,^[39] and the replacement was instigated by Britain's MI5 out of concern for the severe distress McCartney's death would cause the Beatles' audience.^[40] In this latter telling, the surviving Beatles were said to be wracked by guilt at their duplicity, and therefore left messages in their music and album artwork to communicate the truth to their fans.^{[40][41]}



The "funeral procession" on the cover of *Abbey Road*

A DJ put all those signs together: Paul with no shoes [on the cover of *Abbey Road*] ... and the Volkswagen Beetle. Then there was *Magical Mystery Tour*, where we three had red roses and he had a black one. It was just madness ... There was no way we could *prove* he was alive.^[28]

– Ringo Starr

Dozens of supposed clues to McCartney's death have been identified by fans and followers of the legend. These include messages perceived when listening to songs being played backwards and symbolic interpretations of both lyrics and album cover imagery.^{[42][43]} One frequently cited example is the suggestion that the words "I buried Paul" are spoken by Lennon in the final section of the song "Strawberry Fields Forever", which the Beatles recorded in November and December 1966. Lennon later said that the words were actually "Cranberry sauce".^{[44][45]}

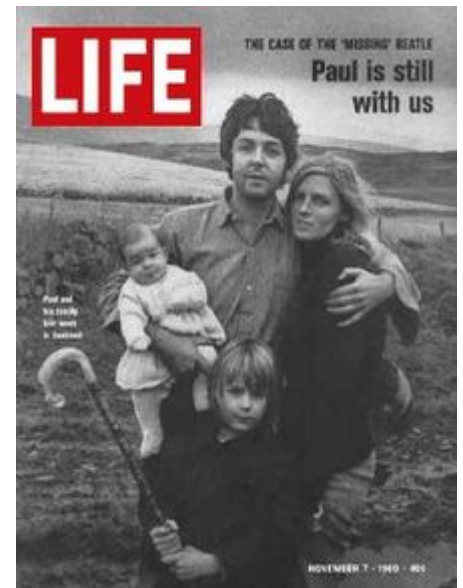
Another example is the interpretation of the *Abbey Road* album cover as depicting a funeral procession. Lennon, dressed in white, is said to symbolise the heavenly figure; Starr, dressed in black, symbolises the undertaker; George Harrison, in denim, represents the gravedigger; and McCartney, barefoot and out of step with the others, symbolises the corpse.^[19] The number plate of the white Volkswagen Beetle in the photo – containing the characters LMW 28IF – was identified as further

"evidence".^{[7][46]} "28IF" represented McCartney's age "if" he had still been alive (although McCartney was 27 when the album was recorded and released)^[24] while "LMW" stood for "Linda McCartney weeps" or "Linda McCartney, widow".^{[47][nb 4]} That the left-handed McCartney held a cigarette in his right hand was also said to support the idea that he was an impostor.^[22]

Rebuttal

On 21 October 1969, the Beatles' press office again issued statements denying the rumour, deeming it "a load of old rubbish"^[48] and saying that "the story has been circulating for about two years – we get letters from all sorts of nuts but Paul is still very much with us".^[49] On 24 October, BBC Radio reporter Chris Drake was granted an interview with McCartney at his farm.^[16] McCartney said that the speculation was understandable, given that he normally did "an interview a week" to ensure he remained in the news.^[50] Part of the interview was first broadcast on Radio 4, on 26 October,^[51] and subsequently on WMCA in the US.^[50] According to author John Winn, McCartney had conceded to the interview "in hopes that people hearing his voice would see the light", but the ploy failed.^{[50][nb 5]}

McCartney was secretly filmed by a CBS News crew as he worked on his farm. As in his and Linda's segment in the Beatles' promotional clip for "Something", which the couple filmed privately around this time, McCartney was unshaven and unusually scruffy-looking in his appearance.^[52] His next visitors were a reporter and photographer from *Life* magazine. Irrate at the intrusion, he swore at the pair, threw a bucket of water over them and was captured on film attempting to hit the photographer. Fearing that the photos would damage his image, McCartney then approached the pair and agreed to pose for a photo with his family and answer the reporter's questions, in exchange for the roll of film containing the offending pictures.^[53] In Winn's description, the family portrait used for *Life*'s cover shows McCartney no longer "shabbily attired", but "clean-shaven and casually but smartly dressed".^[52]



The magazine report that rebutted the rumour

Following the publication of the article and the photo, in the issue dated 7 November,^[52] the rumour started to decline.^[7] In the interview, McCartney was quoted as saying:

Perhaps the rumour started because I haven't been much in the press lately. I have done enough press for a lifetime, and I don't have anything to say these days. I am happy to be with my family and I will work when I work. I was switched on for ten years and I never switched off. Now I am switching off whenever I can. I would rather be a little less famous these days.^[54]

Aftermath

In November 1969, Capitol Records sales managers reported a significant increase in sales of Beatles catalogue albums, attributed to the rumour.^[55] Rocco Catena, Capitol's vice-president of national merchandising, estimated that "this is going to be the biggest month in history in terms of Beatles sales".^{[22][55]} The rumour benefited the commercial performance of *Abbey Road* in the US, where it comfortably outsold all of the band's previous albums.^[56] *Sgt. Pepper* and *Magical Mystery Tour*, both of which had been off the charts since February, re-entered the *Billboard* Top LPs chart,^[22] peaking at number 101 and number 109, respectively.^[57]

A television special dedicated to "Paul is dead" was broadcast on WOR in New York on 30 November.^[21] Titled *Paul McCartney: The Complete Story, Told for the First and Last Time*, it was set in a courtroom and hosted by celebrity lawyer F. Lee Bailey,^[31] who cross-examined LaBour,^[21] Gibb and other proponents of the theory, and heard opposing views from "witnesses" such as McCartney's friend Peter Asher and Allen Klein.^[22] Bailey left it to the viewer to determine a conclusion.^[22] Before the recording, LaBour told Bailey that his article had been intended as a joke, to which Bailey sighed and replied, "Well, we have an hour of television to do; you're going to have to go along with this."^[21]

McCartney returned to London in December. Bolstered by Linda's support, he began recording his debut solo album at his home in St John's Wood.^[58] Titled *McCartney*, and recorded without his bandmates' knowledge,^{[59][60]} it was "one of the best-kept secrets in rock history" until shortly before its release in April 1970, according to author Nicholas Schaffner, and led to the announcement of the Beatles' break-up.^[61] In his 1971 song "How Do You Sleep?", in which he attacked McCartney's character,^[62] Lennon described the theorists as "freaks" who "were right when they said you was dead".^[63] The rumour was also cited in the hoax surrounding the Canadian band Klaatu,^[64] after a January 1977 review of their debut album *3:47 EST* sparked rumours that the group were in fact the Beatles.^[65] In one telling, this theory contended that the album had been recorded in late 1966 but then mislaid until 1975, at which point Lennon, Harrison and Starr elected to issue it in McCartney's memory.^[64]

It was a bit weird meeting people shortly after that, because they'd be looking at the back of my ears, looking a bit through me. And it was weird doing the "I really *am* him" stuff.^[28]

– Paul McCartney

LaBour later became notable as the bassist for the western swing group Riders in the Sky, which he co-founded in 1977. In 2008, he joked that his success as a musician had extended his fifteen minutes of fame for his part in the rumour to "seventeen minutes".^[66] In 2015, he told *The Detroit News* that he is still periodically contacted by conspiracy theorists who have attempted to present him with supposed new developments on the McCartney rumours.^[67]

Analysis and legacy

Author Peter Doggett writes that, while the theory behind "Paul is dead" defied logic, its popularity was understandable in a climate where citizens were faced with conspiracy theories insisting that the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 was in fact a coup d'état.^[68] Schaffner said that, given its origins as an item of gossip and intrigue generated by a select group in the "Beatles cult", "Paul is dead" serves as "a genuine folk tale of the mass communications era".^[8] He also described it as "the most monumental hoax since Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* broadcast persuaded thousands of panicky New Jerseyites that Martian invaders were in the vicinity".^[8] In his book *Revolution in the Head*, Ian MacDonald says that the Beatles were partly responsible for the phenomenon due to their incorporation of "random lyrics and effects", particularly in the White Album track "Glass Onion" in which Lennon invited clue-hunting by including references to other Beatles songs.^[3] MacDonald groups it with the "psychic epidemics" that were encouraged by the rock audience's use of hallucinogenic drugs and which escalated with Charles Manson's homicidal interpretation of the White Album and Mark David Chapman's religion-motivated murder of Lennon in 1980.^[69]

During the 1970s, the phenomenon became a subject of academic study in America in the fields of sociology, psychology and communications.^[70] Among sociological studies, Barbara Suczek recognised it as, in Schaffner's description, a contemporary reading of the "archetypal myth wherein the beautiful youth dies and is resurrected as a god".^[8] Psychologists Ralph Rosnow and Gary Fine attributed its popularity partly to the shared, vicarious experience of searching for clues without consequence for the participants. They also said that for a generation distrustful of the media following the Warren Commission's report, it was able to thrive amid a climate informed by "The credibility gap of Lyndon Johnson's presidency, the widely circulated rumors after the Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy assassinations, as well as attacks on the leading media sources by the yippies and Spiro Agnew".^[8] American social critic Camille Paglia locates the "Paul is dead" phenomenon to the Ancient Greek tradition symbolised by Adonis and Antinous, as represented in the cult of rock music's "pretty, long-haired boys who mesmerize both sexes", and she adds: "It's no coincidence that it was Paul McCartney, the 'cutest' and most girlish of the Beatles, who inspired a false rumor that swept the world in 1969 that he was dead."^[71]

"Paul is dead" has continued to inspire analysis into the 21st century, with published studies by Andru J. Reeve, Nick Kollerstrom and Brian Moriarty, among others, and exploitative works in the mediums of mockumentary and documentary film.^[40] Writing in 2016, Beatles biographer Steve Turner said, "the theory still has the power to flare back into life."^[39] He cited a 2009 *Wired Italia* magazine article that featured an analysis by two forensic research consultants who compared selected photographs of McCartney taken before and after his alleged death by measuring features of the skull.^[39] According to the scientists' findings, the man shown in the post-November 1966 images was not the same.^{[39][72][nb 6]}

Similar rumours concerning other celebrities have been circulated, including the unsubstantiated allegation that Canadian singer Avril Lavigne died in 2003 and was replaced by a person named Melissa Vandella.^{[73][74]} In an article on the latter phenomenon, *The Guardian* described the 1969 McCartney hoax as "Possibly the best known example" of a celebrity being the focus of "a (completely unverified) cloning conspiracy theory".^[73] In 2009, *Time* magazine included "Paul is dead" in its feature on ten of "the world's most enduring conspiracy theories".^[41]

In popular culture

There have been many references to the legend in popular culture, including the following examples.

- In the Rutles' 1978 television film satirising the Beatles' history, *All You Need Is Cash*, the identity of the alleged dead band member was transferred to the George Harrison character, Stig O'Hara, who was supposed to have died "in a flash fire at a water bed shop" and been replaced by a Madame Tussauds wax model. Building on Harrison's reputation as the "Quiet Beatle", the "Stig is dead" theory was supported by his lack of dialogue in the film^[75] and clues such as his trouser-less appearance on the cover of the Rutles' *Shabby Road* album.^[76]
- McCartney titled his 1993 live album *Paul Is Live* in reference to the hoax.^[77] He also presented it in a sleeve that parodied the *Abbey Road* cover and its clues.^[78]
- The 1995 video for "Free as a Bird" – a song recorded by Lennon in the late 1970s and completed by McCartney, Harrison and Starr for the band's *Anthology* project – references "Paul is dead", among other myths relating to the Beatles' impact during the 1960s. According to author Gary Burns, the video indulges in the same "semiological excess" as the 1969 hoax and thereby "spoof[s]" obsessive clue-hunting.^[79]
- In 2010, American author Alan Goldsher published the mashup novel *Paul Is Undead: The British Zombie Invasion*, which depicts all of the Beatles as zombies except Ringo Starr.^[80]
- In 2015, the indie rock band EL VY released a song called "Paul Is Alive", which contains lyrics referencing Beatlemania^[81] and partly addresses the 1969 rumour.^[82]
- A 2018 comedy short film, *Paul Is Dead*, depicts a version of events where McCartney dies during a musical retreat and is replaced by a look-alike named Billy Shears.^[83]
- In 2020, German techno band Scooter collaborated with Timmy Trumpet and released the song "Paul is Dead".

Notes

1. Writing in 1977, author Nicholas Schaffner said the theory has been traced to a student thesis at Ohio Wesleyan University and to a prank article published in the student newspaper for Illinois University.^[8]
2. Estranged from McCartney, Lennon said: "Paul McCartney couldn't die without the world knowing it. The same as he couldn't get married ... [or] go on holiday without the world knowing it. It's just insanity – but it's a great plug for *Abbey Road*."^[28]
3. A Capitol Records recording artist, Knight had been present during the White Album session when Starr temporarily left the band,^[33] in August 1968.^[34] In the song, the singer conveys his fears that the Beatles were about to disband.^[33]
4. The fact that he would have been 27 in late 1969, rather than 28, was dismissed with the rationale that, in the Hindu tradition, infants were one year old at birth.^[7]
5. In the 2000 book *The Beatles Anthology*, McCartney says that his reaction to the rumour's growth had been: "Well, we'd better play it for all it's worth. It's publicity, isn't it?"^[28]
6. In his article on the legacy of "Paul is dead", for *Dawn* in January 2017, Anis Shivani wrote that the narrative has grown, in the manner of JFK's assassination, to incorporate related conspiracy theories. In this expanded narrative, Lennon's murder in 1980, Harrison's near-fatal stabbing in 1999, and the death of Beatles associate Mal Evans in 1976 are all credited to forces protecting the "truth" behind "Paul is dead".^[40]

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External links

- *National Post's* guide to "Paul is dead" clues, May 2017 (<https://nationalpost.com/news/world/i-buried-paul-your-guide-to-the-convoluted-conspiracy-that-paul-mccartney-died-in-1966>)
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New Coke

In April 1985, the Coca-Cola Company introduced a new formula for its Coca-Cola soda, known informally as **New Coke**. It was renamed **Coke II** in 1992,^[1] and was discontinued in July 2002.

By 1985, Coca-Cola had been losing market share to diet soft drinks and non-cola beverages for several years. Blind taste tests indicated that consumers seemed to prefer the sweeter taste of rival Pepsi-Cola, and so the Coca-Cola recipe was reformulated. The American public reacted negatively, and New Coke was considered a major failure.

The company reintroduced the original Coke formula within three months, rebranded "Coca-Cola Classic", resulting in a significant sales boost; this led to speculation that the New Coke formula had been a marketing ploy to stimulate sales of the original Coca-Cola, which the company has denied.^[2] The story of New Coke remains influential as a cautionary tale against tampering with a well-established and successful brand.

New Coke



Type	<u>Cola</u>
Manufacturer	<u>The Coca-Cola Company</u>
Distributor	<u>Coca-Cola Enterprises</u>
Country of origin	<u>U.S.</u>
Introduced	April 23, 1985 May 23, 2019 (limited re-release)
Discontinued	July 10, 2002 (original run)
Color	<u>Caramel</u>
Variants	<u>Coke II</u>

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Background

After World War II, Coca-Cola held 60 percent of the market share. By 1983, it had declined to under 24 percent, largely because of competition from Pepsi-Cola. Pepsi had begun to outsell Coke in supermarkets; Coke maintained its lead only through venues such as soda vending machines and fast food restaurants.^[2]

Market analysts believed baby boomers were more likely to purchase diet drinks as they aged and remained health- and weight-conscious. Growth in the full-calorie segment would come from younger drinkers, who at that time favored Pepsi by increasing margins.^[3] Meanwhile, the overall market for colas steadily declined in the early 1980s, as consumers increasingly purchased diet and non-cola soft drinks, many of which sold by Coca-Cola; this further eroded Coca-Cola's market share.^{[4][5]} When Roberto Goizueta became Coca-Cola CEO in 1980, he told employees there would be no "sacred cows" in how the company did business, including how it formulated its drinks.^[6]

Development

Coca-Cola's senior executives commissioned a secret project headed by marketing vice president Sergio Zyman and Coca-Cola USA president Brian Dyson to create a new flavor for Coke. This project was named "Project Kansas", from a photo of Kansas journalist William Allen White drinking a Coke; the image had been used extensively in Coca-Cola advertising and hung on several executives' walls.^{[7]:114}

The sweeter cola overwhelmingly beat both regular Coke and Pepsi in taste tests, surveys, and focus groups. In the South, one of Coca Cola's strongest and most reliable markets, narrowly preferred the new flavor; this preference widened once the testers revealed the new taste was also a Coca-Cola product. One bottling company threatened to sue the company if it did not put the drink on the market.^[8]

Asked if they would buy and drink the product if it were Coca-Cola, most testers said they would, although said it would take some getting used to. About 10–12 percent of testers felt angry and alienated at the thought, and said they might stop drinking Coke. Their presence in focus groups tended to negatively skew results as they exerted indirect peer pressure on other participants.^{[9]:355}

The surveys, which were given more significance by standard marketing procedures of the era, were less negative than the taste tests and were key in convincing management to change the formula in 1985, to coincide with the drink's centenary. However, the groups had provided a clue as to how the change would play out in the public, a finding the company downplayed.^[10]

Management rejected an idea to make and sell the new flavor as a separate variety of Coca-Cola. The company's bottlers were already complaining about absorbing other recent additions into the product line since 1982, after the introduction of Diet Coke; Cherry Coke was launched nationally nearly concurrently with New Coke during 1985. Many bottling companies had sued over the company's syrup pricing policies. A new variety of Coke in competition with the main variety could also have cannibalized Coke's sales and increased the proportion of Pepsi drinkers relative to Coke drinkers.

Early in his career with Coca-Cola, Goizueta had been in charge of the Bahamas subsidiary. He had improved sales by tweaking the drink's flavor slightly, and so was receptive to the idea that changing the flavor of Coke could boost profits. He believed it would be "New Coke or no Coke",^{[7]:106} and that the

change must take place openly. He insisted that the containers carry the "New!" label, which gave the drink its popular name.^{[9]:358}

Goizueta also made a visit to his mentor and predecessor as the company's chief executive, the ailing Robert W. Woodruff, who had built Coke into an international brand following World War II. Goizueta claimed he had secured Woodruff's blessing for the reformulation, but many of Goizueta's closest friends within the company doubted that Woodruff understood Goizueta's intentions. Woodruff died in March 1985, a month before New Coke was launched.^{[9]:356}^{[7]:115}

Launch

New Coke was introduced on April 23, 1985. Production of the original formulation ended later that week. In many areas, New Coke was initially introduced in "old" Coke packaging; bottlers used up remaining cans, cartons and labels before new packaging was widely available. Old cans containing New Coke were identified by their gold colored tops, while glass and plastic bottles had red caps instead of silver and white, respectively. Bright yellow stickers indicating the change were placed on the cartons of multi-packs.

The press conference at New York City's Lincoln Center to introduce the new formula did not go well. Reporters had already been fed questions by Pepsi,^[11] which was worried that New Coke would erase its gains. Goizueta, Coca-Cola's CEO, described the new flavor as "bolder", "rounder", and "more harmonious",^{[9]:352} and defended the change by saying that the drink's secret formula was not sacrosanct and inviolable. As far back as 1935, Coca-Cola sought kosher certification from Atlanta rabbi Tobias Geffen, and made two changes to the formula so the drink could be considered kosher (as well as halal and vegetarian).^[12] Goizueta also refused to admit that taste tests had led the change, calling it "one of the easiest decisions we've ever made".^{[7]:117} A reporter asked whether Diet Coke would also be reformulated "assuming [New Coke] is a success," to which Goizueta curtly replied, "No. And I didn't assume that this is a success. This is a success."^{[9]:352}

The emphasis on the new formula's sweeter taste also ran contrary to previous Coke advertising, in which spokesman Bill Cosby had touted the original Coke's less-sweet taste as a reason to prefer it over the sweeter taste of Pepsi.^{[11]:136} The company's stock went up after the announcement, and market research showed 80 percent of the American public was aware of the change within days.^{[7]:119}^[13]

Initial success

Coca-Cola introduced the new formula with marketing pushes in New York, where workers renovating the Statue of Liberty for its 1986 centenary were given cans,^[13] and Washington, D.C., where thousands of cans were given away in Lafayette Park. As soon as New Coke was introduced, the new formula was available at McDonald's and other drink fountains in the United States.^[6] Sales figures from those cities, and other areas where it had been introduced such as Miami and Detroit,^[8] showed a reaction that went as the market research had predicted. In fact, Coke's sales were up 8 percent over the same period as the year before.^[6]

Most Coke drinkers resumed buying the new Coke at much the same level as they had the old one. Surveys indicated that the majority of regular Coke drinkers liked the new flavoring.^{[11]:153} Three quarters of the respondents said they would buy New Coke again.^[6] The big test, however, remained in the South, where Coke had first been tasted and bottled.

Backlash

Though New Coke was accepted by many Coca-Cola drinkers, many more resented the change, as had happened in the focus groups. Many critics were from the southern US states, some of whom considered Coca-Cola part of their regional identity; some viewed the change through the prism of the Civil War as a surrender to the "Yankees"^{[11]:149–151} as Pepsi, the company's archrival, is based in Purchase, New York.^[8]

To hear some tell it, April 23, 1985, was a day that will live in marketing infamy ... spawning consumer angst the likes of which no business has ever seen.

— The Coca-Cola Company, on the New Coke announcement^[5]

In a *Chicago Tribune* story about reaction in the South, a professor at the University of Mississippi observed that "changing Coca-Cola is an intrusion on tradition" and thus would not be well-received in that region. An Alabama resident wondered why the company had introduced the new flavor in New York; elsewhere in the state an *Anniston Star* columnist, noting Goizueta's Cuban origins, insinuated that the flavor change was a Communist plot. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* found a majority of patrons at The Varsity, a popular local restaurant in that city, favored the old formula. "Why didn't they test anybody here?" the co-owner asked.^[8]

The company received over 40,000 calls and letters expressing anger or disappointment,^{[7]:119} including one letter, delivered to Goizueta, addressed to "Chief Dodo, The Coca-Cola Company". Another letter asked for his autograph, as the signature of "one of the dumbest executives in American business history" would likely become valuable in the future. The company hotline, 1-800-GET-COKE, received over 1,500 calls a day compared to around 400 before the change.^[5] A psychiatrist whom Coke had hired to listen in on calls told executives that some people sounded as if they were discussing the death of a family member.^{[11]:163}

There were critics from outside the region. *Tribune* columnist Bob Greene wrote some widely reprinted pieces ridiculing the new flavor and expressing anger at Coke's executives for having changed it. Comedians and talk show hosts, including Johnny Carson and David Letterman, made regular jokes mocking the switch. Ads for New Coke were booed heavily when they appeared on the scoreboard at the Houston Astrodome.^[13] Even Fidel Castro, a longtime Coca-Cola drinker, contributed to the backlash, calling New Coke a sign of American capitalist decadence.^{[9]:362} Goizueta's father expressed similar misgivings to his son, who later recalled that it was the only time his father had agreed with Castro, whose rule he had fled Cuba to avoid.^{[7]:118}

Gay Mullins, a Seattle retiree looking to start a public relations firm with \$120,000 of borrowed money, formed the Old Cola Drinkers of America on May 28 to lobby Coca-Cola to either reintroduce the old formula or sell it to someone else. His organization eventually received over 60,000 phone calls. He also filed a class action lawsuit against the company (which was quickly dismissed by a judge who said he preferred the taste of Pepsi),^[14] while nevertheless expressing interest in securing The Coca-Cola Company as a client of his new firm should it reintroduce the old formula.^{[11]:160} In two informal blind taste tests, Mullins either failed to distinguish New Coke from old or expressed a preference for New Coke.^{[11]:162}

Despite ongoing resistance in the South, New Coke continued to do well in the rest of the country.^{[11]:149–151} But executives were uncertain of how international markets would react. Executives met with international Coke bottlers in Monaco; to their surprise, the bottlers were not interested in selling New Coke.^[15] Zyman also heard doubts and skepticism from his relatives in Mexico, where New Coke was scheduled to be introduced later that summer, when he went there on vacation.

Goizueta stated that Coca-Cola employees who liked New Coke felt unable to speak up due to peer pressure, as had happened in the focus groups. Donald Keough, the Coca-Cola president and chief operating officer at the time, reported overhearing someone say at his country club that they liked New Coke, but they would be "damned if I'll let Coca-Cola know that".^{[11]:154}

Response by Pepsi

Pepsi-Cola took advantage of the situation, running ads in which a first-time Pepsi drinker exclaimed, "Now I know why Coke did it!"^{[11]:148–9} Even amidst consumer anger and several Pepsi ads mocking Coca-Cola's debacle, Pepsi actually gained very few long-term converts over Coke's switch, despite a 14 percent sales increase over the same month the previous year, the largest sales growth in the company's history.^[6] Coca-Cola's director of corporate communications, Carlton Curtis, realized over time that consumers were more upset about the withdrawal of the old formula than the taste of the new one.^{[11]:175}

Roger Enrico, then director of Pepsi's North American operations, declared a company-wide holiday and took out a full-page ad in *The New York Times* proclaiming that Pepsi had won the long-running "Cola Wars".^{[7]:115} ^{[9]:359} Since Coke officials were preoccupied over the weekend with preparations for the announcement, their Pepsi counterparts had time to cultivate skepticism among reporters, sounding themes that would later come into play in the public discourse over the changed drink.^{[11]:125} After the announcement on April 23, PepsiCo gave its employees the day off saying, "By today's action, Coke has admitted that it's *not* the real thing."

Company dissatisfaction

Some Coca-Cola executives had quietly been arguing for a reintroduction of the old formula as early as May.^{[11]:157} By mid-June, when soft drink sales usually start to rise, the numbers showed that new Coke was leveling among consumers. Executives feared social peer pressure was now affecting their bottom line. Some consumers even began trying to obtain "old" Coke from overseas, where the new formula had not yet been introduced, as domestic stocks of the old drink were exhausted.^{[11]:158} Over the course of the month, Coca-Cola's chemists also quietly reduced the acidity level of the new formula, hoping to assuage complaints about the flavor and allow its sweetness to be better perceived (advertisements pointing to this change were prepared, but never used).^{[9]:364}

In addition to the noisier public protests, boycotts, and bottles being emptied into the streets of several cities, the company had more serious reasons to be concerned. Its bottlers, and not just the ones still suing the company over syrup pricing policies, were expressing concern. While they had given Goizueta a standing ovation when he announced the change at an April 22 bottlers' meeting at Atlanta's Woodruff Arts Center, glad the company had finally taken some initiative in the face of Pepsi's advances,^[13] they were less enthusiastic about the taste.^{[9]:364} ^{[7]:106,116} Most of them saw great difficulty having to promote and sell a drink that had long been marketed as "The Real Thing", constant and unchanging, now that it had been changed.

The 20 bottlers still suing Coca-Cola made much of the change in their legal arguments. Coca-Cola had argued in its defense when the suit was originally filed that the formula's uniqueness and difference from Diet Coke justified different pricing policies from the latter – but if the new formula was simply an HFCS-sweetened Diet Coke, Coca-Cola could not argue the formula was unique. Bottlers, particularly in the South, were also tired of facing personal opprobrium over the change. Many reported that some acquaintances and even friends and relatives had ostracized them, or had expressed displeasure in other

emotionally hurtful ways. On June 23, several of the bottlers took these complaints to Coca-Cola executives in a private meeting.^{[7]:121} With the company now fearing boycotts not only from its consumers but its bottlers, talks about reintroducing the old formula moved from "if" to "when".

Finally, the Coca-Cola board decided that enough was enough, and plans were set in motion to bring back the old Coke. Company president Donald Keough revealed years later, in the documentary *The People vs. Coke* (2002), that they realized this was the only right thing to do when they visited a small restaurant in Monaco and the owner proudly said they served "the real thing, it's a real Coke", offering them a chilled 6½ oz. glass bottle of original Coca-Cola.^[15]

Reversal

On the afternoon of July 11, 1985, Coca-Cola executives announced the return of the original formula, 79 days after New Coke's introduction. ABC News' Peter Jennings interrupted *General Hospital* with a special bulletin to share the news with viewers.^[16] On the floor of the U.S. Senate, David Pryor called the reintroduction "a meaningful moment in U.S. history".^[9] The company hotline received 31,600 calls in the two days after the announcement.^[5]

The new product continued to be marketed and sold as *Coke* (until 1992, when it was renamed *Coke II*) while the original formula was named *Coca-Cola Classic*, and for a short time it was referred to by the public as *Old Coke*. Some who tasted the reintroduced formula were not convinced that the first batches really were the same formula that had supposedly been retired that spring. This was true for a few regions, because Coca-Cola Classic differed from the original formula in that all bottlers who had not already done so were using high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) instead of cane sugar to sweeten the drink, though most had by this time.^{[11]:183}

"There is a twist to this story which will please every humanist and will probably keep Harvard professors puzzled for years," said Keough at a press conference. "The simple fact is that all the time and money and skill poured into consumer research on the new Coca-Cola could not measure or reveal the deep and abiding emotional attachment to original Coca-Cola felt by so many people."

Gay Mullins, founder of the organization *Old Cola Drinkers of America* (which had lobbied Coca-Cola to either reintroduce the old formula or sell it to someone else), was given the first case of Coca-Cola Classic.^[13] Later he complained that the drink now made him sick, which he blamed on the drink's use of HFCS; he also claimed that had dulled his taste buds, accounting for him picking New Coke in taste tests.^[8]

Aftermath and legacy

By the end of 1985, Coca-Cola Classic was substantially outselling both New Coke and Pepsi. Six months after the rollout, Coke's sales had increased at more than twice the rate of Pepsi's.^[17]

New Coke's sales dwindled to a three percent share of the market, although it was selling quite well in Los Angeles and some other key markets.^[17] Later research, however, suggested that it was not the return of Coca-Cola Classic, but instead the nearly unnoticed introduction of Cherry Coke, which appeared almost simultaneously with New Coke, that can be credited with the company's success in 1985.^{[11]:187}

The Coca-Cola Company spent a considerable amount of time trying to figure out where it had made a mistake, ultimately concluding that it had underestimated the public reaction of the portion of the customer base that would be alienated by the switch. This would not emerge for several years afterward, however, and in the meantime the public simply concluded that the company had, as Keough suggested, failed to consider the public's attachment to the idea of what Coke's old formula represented. While that has become conventional wisdom in the ensuing years, some analyses have suggested otherwise.

This populist version of the story served Coke's interests, however, as the episode did more to position and define Coca-Cola as a brand embodying values distinct from Pepsi. Allowing itself to be portrayed as a somewhat clueless large corporation forced to withdraw from a big change by overwhelming public pressure flattered customers, as Keough put it, "We love any retreat which has us rushing toward our best customers with the product they love the most."^{[9]:360} Bottles and cans continued to bear the "Coca-Cola Classic" title until January 2009, when the company announced it would stop printing the word "Classic" on the labels of 16-US-fluid-ounce (470 ml) bottles sold in parts of the southeastern United States.^[18] The change was part of a larger strategy to rejuvenate the product's image.^[18]

Bill Cosby ended his long-time advertising for Coca-Cola, claiming that his commercials praising the superiority of the new formula had hurt his credibility. No one at Coca-Cola was fired for the change. When Goizueta died in 1997, the company's share price was well above what it was when he had taken over 16 years earlier and its position as market leader even more firmly established. At the time, Roger Enrico, then head of Pepsi's American operations, likened New Coke to the Edsel.^{[19][20]} Later, when he became PepsiCo's CEO, he modified his assessment of the situation, saying that had people been fired or demoted over New Coke, it would have sent a message that risk-taking was strongly discouraged at the company.^[21]

In the late 1990s, Zyman summed up the New Coke experience thus:

Yes, it infuriated the public, cost us a ton of money and lasted for only 77 days before we reintroduced Coca-Cola Classic. Still, New Coke was a success because it revitalized the brand and reattached the public to Coke.^[22]

New Coke continued to do what it had originally been designed to do: win taste tests. In 1987, *The Wall Street Journal* surveyed 100 randomly selected cola drinkers, the majority of whom indicated a preference for Pepsi, with Classic Coke accounting for the remainder save two New Coke loyalists. When this group was given a chance to try all three in a blind test, New Coke slightly edged out Pepsi, but many drinkers reacted angrily to finding they had chosen a brand other than their favorite.^[23]

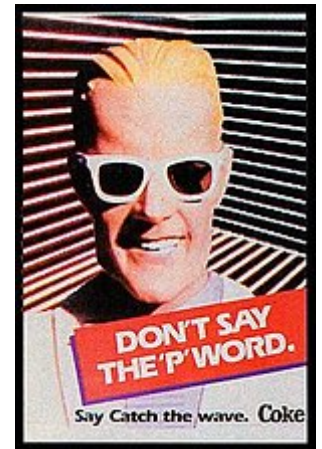
Goizueta claimed that he never once regretted the decision to change Coca-Cola. He even threw a tenth anniversary party for New Coke in 1995 and continued to drink it until his death in 1997.^[13]

After Coca-Cola Classic

In the short run, the reintroduction of original Coca-Cola saved Coke's sales figures and brought it back in the good graces of many customers and bottlers. Phone calls and letters to the company were as joyful and thankful as they had been angry and depressed. "You would have thought we'd cured cancer," said one executive.^{[11]:181}

But confusion reigned at the company's marketing department, which had to design a plan to market two Coca-Colas where such plans were inconceivable just a few months before. Coca-Cola Classic did not need much help, with a "Red, White and You" campaign showcasing the American virtues many of those who had clamored for its reintroduction had pointedly reminded the company that it embodied. But the company was at a loss to sell what was now just "Coke". Obviously, "The Best Just Got Better" could no longer be used. Marketers fumbled for a strategy for the rest of the year.^{[9]:366} Matters were not helped when McDonald's announced shortly after the reintroduction of Coca-Cola Classic, that it was immediately switching from New Coke back to original Coca-Cola at all of its restaurants.^{[9]:369}

At the beginning of 1986, however, Coke's marketing team found a strategy by returning to one of their original motives for changing the formula: the youth market that preferred Pepsi. Max Headroom, the purportedly computer-generated media personality played by Matt Frewer, was chosen to replace Cosby as the spokesman for Coke's new "Catch the wave" campaign. With his slicked-back hair and sunglasses, he was already known to much of the U.S. youth audience through appearances on MTV and Cinemax. The campaign was launched with a television commercial produced by McCann Erickson New York, with Max saying in his trademark stutter, "C-c-c-catch the wave!" and referring to his fellow "Cokeologists".^[24] In a riposte to Pepsi's televisual teasings, one showed Headroom asking a Pepsi can he was "interviewing" how it felt about more drinkers preferring Coke to it and then cut to the condensation forming on, and running down, the can. "S-s-s-sweating?" he asked.



Max Headroom print ad from the "Catch the wave" campaign

The campaign was a huge success, and surveys likewise showed that more than three-quarters of the target market were aware of the ads within two days. Coke's consumer hotline received more calls about Max than any previous spokesperson, some even asking if he had a girlfriend.^[25] The ads and campaign continued through 1987, and were chosen as best of 1986 by Video Storyboard of New York.^[25]

Coke II

In 1985, New Coke was sold only in the United States, United States territories, and Canada while the original formula continued to be sold in the rest of the world. New Coke was eventually returned to the company's product portfolio; it was test-marketed in certain U.S. cities under the name Coke II in 1990,^[1] which was taken national in late 1992, despite the company's original intention not to create a second brand. Filmmaker Miranda July suggested the name of Coke II while working as a tastemaker for an ad agency.^[26]



A can of Coke II

The Coca-Cola Company did practically nothing to promote or otherwise distinguish it. In a market already offering several choices of drinks calling themselves "Coke" in some fashion or another, the public saw little reason to embrace a product they had firmly rejected seven years earlier, and within about a year, Coke II was largely off the American shelves again. By 1998, it could only be found in a few scattered markets in the northwest, midwest and some overseas territories. In July 2002, Coca-Cola announced that Coke II would be discontinued entirely.^[27]

On August 16, 2002, The Coca-Cola Company announced a change of the label of Coke Classic in which the word "Classic" was no longer so prominent, leading to speculation that it would eventually be removed and the last traces of New Coke eliminated.^[27] In 2009, Coca-Cola permanently removed

"Classic" from its North American packaging.^[28]

Commercial legacy

"For a product so widely despised," noted *AdWeek* blogger Tim Nudd in 2006, "New Coke (a.k.a. Coke II) still gets an admirable amount of ink." He noted *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (2005) by Malcolm Gladwell, and *Why Most Things Fail: Evolution, Extinction and Economics* (2005) by Paul Ormerod, that dealt with it at some length, as well as two recent mentions in *Forbes* and *Sports Illustrated*.^[29]

Within Coca-Cola, the role the company's bottlers had played in forcing its hand led executives to create a new subsidiary, Coca-Cola Enterprises, which bought out several of the larger bottlers and placed distribution and marketing efforts more tightly under Coca-Cola's control.

Conspiracy theories

The Coca-Cola Company's apparently sudden reversal on New Coke led to conspiracy theories, including:

- The company intentionally changed the formula, hoping consumers would be upset with the company, and demand the original formula to return, which in turn would cause sales to spike.^[2] Keough answered this speculation by saying "We're not that dumb, and we're not that smart."^{[2][15]}
- The putative switch was planned all along to cover the change from sugar-sweetened Coke to much less expensive HFCS, a theory that was supposedly given credence by the apparently different taste of Coke Classic when it first hit the market (the U.S. sugar trade association took out a full-page ad lambasting Coke for using HFCS in all bottling of the old formula when it was reintroduced).^[11] In fact, Coca-Cola began allowing bottlers to remove up to half of the product's cane sugar as early as 1980, five years before the introduction of New Coke. By the time the new formula was introduced, most bottlers had already sweetened Coca-Cola entirely with HFCS.^[2]
- It provided cover for the final removal of all coca derivatives from the product to placate the Drug Enforcement Administration, which was trying to eradicate the plant worldwide to combat an increase in cocaine trafficking and consumption. While Coke's executives were indeed relieved the new formula contained no coca and concerned about the long-term future of the Peruvian government-owned coca fields that supplied it in the face of increasing DEA pressure to end cultivation of the crop, according to author Mark Pendergrast there was no direct pressure from the DEA on Coca-Cola to do so.^[9] This theory was endorsed in a *Time* article, as well as by historian Bartow Elmore, who claims the reformulation was made in response to the escalating War on Drugs by the Reagan Administration.^[30]

Taste test problems

In his book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (2005), Malcolm Gladwell relates his conversations with market researchers in the food industry who put most of the blame for the failure of New Coke on the flawed nature of taste tests. They claim most are subject to systematic biases. Tests such as the Pepsi Challenge were "sip tests", meaning that drinkers were given small samples (less than a can or bottle's worth) to try. Gladwell contends that what people say they like in these tests may not reflect what they actually buy to drink at home over several days.^[31] Carol Dollard, who once worked in product development for Pepsi, told Gladwell: "I've seen many times where the sip test will give you one result and the home-use test will give you the exact opposite."^{[31]:159} For example, although many

consumers react positively to the sweeter taste of Pepsi in small volumes, it may become unattractively sweet when drunk in quantity. A more comprehensive testing regimen could possibly have revealed this, Gladwell's sources believe.^[31]

Gladwell reports that other market researchers have criticized Coke for not realizing that much of its success as a brand came from what they call sensation transference, a phenomenon first described by marketer Louis Cheskin in the late 1940s: tasters unconsciously add their reactions to the drink's packaging into their assessment of the taste.^[32] For example, one of the researchers told Gladwell that his firm's research found 7-Up drinkers believed a sample from a bottle with a more yellow label was more "lemony", although the flavor was identical.^{[31]:163} In Coke's case, it is alleged that buyers, subject to sensation transference, were also "tasting" the red color of the container and distinctive Coca-Cola script. It was therefore, in their opinion, a mistake to focus solely on the product and its taste. "The mistake Coke made was in attributing their loss in share entirely to the product," said Darrel Rhea, an executive with the firm Cheskin founded. He points to Pepsi's work in establishing a youth-oriented brand identity from the 1960s as having more bearing on its success.^[33]

Coke considered but rejected gradually changing the drink's flavor incrementally, without announcing they were doing so. Executives feared the public would notice and exaggerate slight differences in taste. In 1998, Joel Dubow, a professor of food marketing at St. Joseph's University, tested this "flavor balance hypothesis" and argued that it was not true. He and fellow researcher Nancy Childs tested mixtures of Coca-Cola Classic and Coke II and found that the gradual changes of taste were not noticed by a significant number of tasters. Coke, he said, would have succeeded had it chosen this strategy.^[34]

2019 comeback

On May 21, 2019, Coca-Cola announced that the 1985 reformulation (once again bearing the name "New Coke") would be reintroduced in limited quantities to promote the third season of the Netflix series *Stranger Things*.^[35] The show, set in 1985, included cans of New Coke in three of the season's episodes.^[36]

About 500,000 cans of New Coke were produced for the promotion,^[37] to be sold mostly online.^[38] So many people were eager to buy it, however, that the volume of orders crashed the Coca-Cola website. Many fans complained because they wanted to order some, and the company apologized for the delays on social media platforms. It was also available in select vending machines in cities such as New York and Los Angeles.^[38]

The reintroduced drink got friendlier reviews than it had in 1985. A writer at *BuzzFeed* said it was "nice and refreshing", lacking the lingering aftertaste of Classic Coke. "I would take this over other colas," said a colleague.^[39] *Food & Wine* staffers also had favorable impressions: "sweeter and smoother than regular Coke", "almost syrupy in a pleasant way", although an older one who recalled the original rollout said it had not improved for them.^[40]

Tim Murphy, a reporter for the progressive magazine *Mother Jones*, suggested that, in ultimately overcoming an initial resistance that he saw as reactionary, New Coke had won the war after losing the battle. "Soft-drink trends have also proven Coke right about a willingness to adapt to new tastes: A majority of Coke sales today are non-Classic products, such as Diet and Coke Zero," he wrote. This explained the favorable response from tasters. "It tasted weird then; it tastes like what's normal now."^[8]

See also

- List of defunct consumer brands
- List of Coca-Cola brands

Other soft drink failures

- Crystal Pepsi, early 1990s failure for that company that is occasionally reintroduced for limited periods
- Dasani, bottled water brand produced by Coca-Cola that failed in the United Kingdom despite huge marketing push; seen as UK equivalent of New Coke
- MagiCan, failed Coca-Cola promotion in 1986
- OK Soda, Coca-Cola brand intended to appeal to Generation X drinkers in early 1990s known for its counterintuitive marketing, managed by Sergio Zyman

Also

- Disco Demolition Night, 1979 baseball promotion that led to riot, also linked to reaction against social change

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George Soros

George Soros^[a] HonFBA (born **György Schwartz**, August 12, 1930)^{[1][2]} is a Hungarian-born American^[b] billionaire investor and philanthropist.^{[10][11]} As of March 2021, he had a net worth of US\$8.6 billion,^{[6][12]} having donated more than \$32 billion to the Open Society Foundations,^[13] of which \$15 billion have already been distributed, representing 64% of his original fortune, making him the "most generous giver" (in terms of percentage of net worth) according to *Forbes*.^[14]

Born in Budapest, Soros survived the German occupation of Hungary and moved to the United Kingdom in 1947. He studied at the London School of Economics and was awarded a bachelor's, then obtaining a master's, and eventually a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from University of London.^{[4][5]} Soros began his business career by taking various jobs at merchant banks in the United Kingdom and then the United States, before starting his first hedge fund, Double Eagle, in 1969. Profits from his first fund furnished the seed money to start Soros Fund Management, his second hedge fund, in 1970. Double Eagle was renamed to Quantum Fund and was the principal firm Soros advised. At its founding, Quantum Fund had \$12 million in assets under management, and as of 2011 it had \$25 billion, the majority of Soros's overall net worth.^[15]

Soros is known as "The Man Who Broke the Bank of England" because of his short sale of US\$10 billion worth of pounds sterling, which made him a profit of \$1 billion during the 1992 Black Wednesday UK currency crisis.^[16] Based on his early studies of philosophy, Soros formulated the General Theory of Reflexivity for capital markets, which he says renders a clear picture of asset bubbles and fundamental/market value of securities, as well as value discrepancies used for shorting and swapping stocks.^[17]

Soros is a supporter of progressive and liberal political causes, to which he dispenses donations through his foundation, the Open Society Foundations.^[18] Between 1979 and 2011, he donated more than \$11 billion to various philanthropic causes;^{[19][20]} by 2017, his donations "on civil initiatives to reduce poverty and increase transparency, and on scholarships and universities around the world" totaled \$12 billion.^[21] He influenced the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s,^[22] and provided one of Europe's largest higher education endowments to the Central European University in his Hungarian hometown.^[23]

<div>George Soros</div> <div>HonFBA</div>	
	
Soros at the 2011 <u>Munich Security Conference</u>	
Born	György Schwartz ^{[1][2]} August 12, 1930 <u>Budapest</u> , <u>Kingdom of Hungary</u>
Citizenship	Hungary United States ^[3]
Education	<u>London School of Economics</u> (<u>BA</u> , <u>MA</u> , <u>DPhil</u>) ^{[4][5]}
Occupation	Investor, hedge fund manager, author, and philanthropist
Known for	Philanthropy Managing <u>Soros Fund Management</u> Founding the <u>Open Society Foundations</u> Advising the <u>Quantum Fund</u>
Net worth	US\$8.6 billion (March 2021) ^[6]

His extensive funding of political causes has made him a "bugaboo of European nationalists".^[24] *The New York Times* reported in October 2018 that "conspiracy theories about him have gone mainstream, to nearly every corner of the Republican Party".^[25] Numerous American conservatives have promoted false claims that characterize Soros as a singularly dangerous "puppet master" behind many alleged global plots.^{[25][26][27][28]} Conspiracy theories targeting Soros, who is of Jewish descent, have often been described as antisemitic.^{[29][30][31]}

Spouse(s)	<div>Annaliese Witschak</div> <div>(m. 1960; div. 1983)</div> <div>Susan Weber</div> <div>(m. 1983; div. 2005)</div> <div>Tamiko Bolton (m. 2013)</div>
Children	5, including Jonathan and Alexander
Relatives	Paul Soros (brother)
Website	Official website (http://georgesoros.com)

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Early life and education

Soros was born in Budapest in the [Kingdom of Hungary](#) to a prosperous non-observant Jewish family, who, like many upper-middle class Hungarian Jews at the time, were uncomfortable with their roots. Soros has wryly described his home as a Jewish antisemitic home.^[32] His mother Erzsébet (also known as Elizabeth) came from a family that owned a thriving silk shop. His father [Tivadar](#) (also known as Teodoro Švarc) was a lawyer^[33] and a well-known [Esperanto](#)-speaker who edited the Esperanto literary magazine *Literatura Mondo* and raised his son to speak the language.^[34] Tivadar had also been a prisoner of war during and after [World War I](#) until he escaped from Russia and rejoined his family in Budapest.^{[35][36]} The two married in 1924. In 1936, Soros's family changed their name from the German-Jewish Schwartz to Soros, as protective camouflage in increasingly antisemitic Hungary.^{[37][38]} Tivadar liked the new name because it is a [palindrome](#) and because of its meaning. In Hungarian, *soros* means "next in line," or "designated successor"; in [Esperanto](#) it means "will soar."^{[39][40][41]}

Soros was 13 years old in March 1944 when [Nazi Germany](#) occupied Hungary.^[42] The Nazis barred Jewish children from attending school, and Soros and the other schoolchildren were made to report to the Judenrat ("Jewish Council"), which had been established during the occupation. Soros later described this time to writer [Michael Lewis](#): "The Jewish Council asked the little kids to hand out the deportation notices. I was told to go to the Jewish Council. And there I was given these small slips of paper ... I took this piece of paper to my father. He instantly recognized it. This was a list of Hungarian Jewish lawyers. He said, 'You deliver the slips of paper and tell the people that if they report they will be deported.'"^{[43][44]}

Soros did not return to that job; his family survived the war by purchasing documents to say that they were Christians. Later that year at age 14, Soros posed as the Christian godson of an official of the collaborationist Hungarian government's Ministry of Agriculture, who himself had a Jewish wife in hiding. On one occasion, rather than leave the 14-year-old alone, the official took Soros with him while completing an inventory of a Jewish family's confiscated estate. Tivadar saved not only his immediate family but also many other Hungarian Jews, and Soros later wrote that 1944 had been "the happiest [year] of his life," for it had given him the opportunity to witness his father's heroism.^{[45][46]} In 1945, Soros survived the [Siege of Budapest](#), in which Soviet and German forces fought house-to-house through the city.

In 1947, Soros moved to England and became a student at the London School of Economics.^[47] While a student of the philosopher Karl Popper, Soros worked as a railway porter and as a waiter, and once received £40 from a Quaker charity.^[48] Soros would sometimes stand at Speakers' Corner lecturing about the virtues of internationalism in Esperanto, which he had learned from his father.^[49]

From the London School of Economics, Soros graduated as a Bachelor of Science in philosophy in 1951, and a Master of Science in philosophy in 1954.^{[4][5][50]} He later received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of London.

Investment career

Early business experience

In a discussion at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council in 2006, Alvin Shuster, former foreign editor of the Los Angeles Times, asked Soros, "How does one go from an immigrant to a financier? ... When did you realize that you knew how to make money?" Soros replied, "Well, I had a variety of jobs and I ended up selling fancy goods on the seaside, souvenir shops, and I thought, that's really not what I was cut out to do. So, I wrote to every managing director in every merchant bank in London, got just one or two replies, and eventually that's how I got a job in a merchant bank."^[51]

Singer and Friedlander

In 1954, Soros began his financial career at the merchant bank Singer & Friedlander of London. He worked as a clerk and later moved to the arbitrage department. A fellow employee, Robert Mayer, suggested he apply at his father's brokerage house, F.M. Mayer of New York.^[52]

F. M. Mayer

In 1956, Soros moved to New York City, where he worked as an arbitrage trader for F. M. Mayer (1956–59). He specialized in European stocks, which were becoming popular with U.S. institutional investors following the formation of the Coal and Steel Community, which later became the Common Market.^[53]

Wertheim and Co.

In 1959, after three years at F. M. Mayer, Soros moved to Wertheim & Co.. He planned to stay for five years, enough time to save \$500,000, after which he intended to return to England to study philosophy.^[54] He worked as an analyst of European securities until 1963.

During this period, Soros developed the theory of reflexivity to extend the ideas of his tutor at the London School of Economics, Karl Popper. Reflexivity posits that market values are often driven by the fallible ideas of participants, not only by the economic fundamentals of the situation. Ideas and events influence each other in reflexive feedback loops. Soros argued that this process leads to markets having procyclical "virtuous" or "vicious" cycles of boom and bust, in contrast to the equilibrium predictions of more standard neoclassical economics.^{[55][56]}

Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder

From 1963 to 1973, Soros's experience as a vice president at Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder resulted in little enthusiasm for the job; business was slack following the introduction of the Interest Equalization Tax, which undermined the viability of Soros's European trading. He spent the years from 1963 to 1966 with his main focus on the revision of his philosophy dissertation. In 1966 he started a fund with \$100,000 of the firm's money to experiment with his trading strategies.

In 1969, Soros set up the Double Eagle hedge fund with \$4m of investors' capital including \$250,000 of his own money.^[57] It was based in Curaçao, Dutch Antilles.^[58] Double Eagle itself was an offshoot of Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder's First Eagle fund established by Soros and that firm's chairman Henry H. Arnhold in 1967.^[59] ^[60]

In 1973, the Double Eagle Fund had \$12 million and formed the basis of the Soros Fund. George Soros and Jim Rogers received returns on their share of capital and 20 percent of the profits each year.^[53]

Soros Fund Management

In 1970, Soros founded Soros Fund Management and became its chairman. Among those who held senior positions there at various times were Jim Rogers, Stanley Druckenmiller, Mark Schwartz, Keith Anderson, and Soros's two sons.^[61]^[62]^[63]

In 1973, due to perceived conflicts of interest limiting his ability to run the two funds, Soros resigned from the management of the Double Eagle Fund. He then established the Soros Fund and gave investors in the Double Eagle Fund the option of transferring to that or staying with Arnhold and S. Bleichroeder.

It was later renamed the Quantum Fund, after the physical theory of quantum mechanics. By that time the value of the fund had grown to \$12m, only a small proportion of which was Soros's own money. He and Jim Rogers reinvested their returns from the fund, and also a large part of their 20% performance fees, thereby expanding their stake.^[52]

By 1981, the fund had grown to \$400m, and then a 22% loss in that year and substantial redemptions by some of the investors reduced it to \$200m.^[64]

In July 2011, Soros announced that he had returned funds from outside investors' money (valued at \$1 billion) and instead invested funds from his \$24.5 billion family fortune, due to changes in U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission disclosure rules, which he felt would compromise his duties of confidentiality to his investors. The fund had at that time averaged over 20% per year compound returns.^[65]

In 2013, the Quantum Fund made \$5.5 billion, making it again the most successful hedge fund in history. Since its inception in 1973, the fund has generated \$40 billion.^[66]

The fund announced in 2015 that it would inject \$300 million to help finance the expansion of Fen Hotels, an Argentine hotel company. The funds will develop 5,000 rooms over the next three years throughout various Latin American countries.^[67]

Economic crisis in the 1990s and 2000s

Soros had been building a huge short position in pounds sterling for months leading up to September 1992. Soros had recognized the unfavorable position of the United Kingdom in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. For Soros, the rate at which the United Kingdom was brought into the European

Exchange Rate Mechanism was too high, their inflation was also much too high (triple the German rate), and British interest rates were hurting their asset prices.^[68]

By September 16, 1992, the day of Black Wednesday, Soros's fund had sold short more than \$10 billion in pounds,^[61] profiting from the UK government's reluctance to either raise its interest rates to levels comparable to those of other European Exchange Rate Mechanism countries or float its currency.

Finally, the UK withdrew from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, devaluing the pound. Soros's profit on the bet was estimated at over \$1 billion.^[69] He was dubbed "the man who broke the Bank of England".^[70] The estimated cost of Black Wednesday to the UK Treasury was £3.4 billion.^[71] Stanley Druckenmiller, who traded under Soros, originally saw the weakness in the pound and stated: "[Soros's] contribution was pushing him to take a gigantic position."^{[72][73]}

On October 26, 1992, *The New York Times* quoted Soros as saying: "Our total position by Black Wednesday had to be worth almost \$10 billion. We planned to sell more than that. In fact, when Norman Lamont said just before the devaluation that he would borrow nearly \$15 billion to defend sterling, we were amused because that was about how much we wanted to sell."

Soros was believed to have traded billions of Finnish markkas on February 5, 1996, in anticipation of selling them short. The markka had been put floating as a result of the early 1990s depression. The Bank of Finland and the Finnish Government commented at the time they believed that a "conspiracy" was impossible.^[74]

In 1997, during the Asian financial crisis, the prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, accused Soros of using the wealth under his control to punish the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for welcoming Myanmar as a member. With a history of antisemitic remarks, Mahathir made specific reference to Soros's Jewish background ("It is a Jew who triggered the currency plunge")^[75] and implied Soros was orchestrating the crash as part of a larger Jewish conspiracy. Nine years later, in 2006, Mahathir met with Soros and afterward stated that he accepted that Soros had not been responsible for the crisis.^[76] In 1998's *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered*, Soros explained his role in the crisis as follows:

The financial crisis that originated in Thailand in 1997 was particularly unnerving because of its scope and severity ... By the beginning of 1997, it was clear to Soros Fund Management that the discrepancy between the trade account and the capital account was becoming untenable. We sold short the Thai baht and the Malaysian ringgit early in 1997 with maturities ranging from six months to a year. (That is, we entered into contracts to deliver at future dates Thai baht and Malaysian ringgit that we did not currently hold.) Subsequently, Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia accused me of causing the crisis, a wholly unfounded accusation. We were not sellers of the currency during or several months before the crisis; on the contrary, we were buyers when the currencies began to decline—we were purchasing ringgits to realize the profits on our earlier speculation. (Much too soon, as it turned out. We left most of the potential gain on the table because we were afraid that Mahathir would impose capital controls. He did so, but much later.)^[77]

In 1999, economist Paul Krugman was critical of Soros's effect on financial markets.

[N]obody who has read a business magazine in the last few years can be unaware that these days there really are investors who not only move money in anticipation of a currency crisis, but actually do their best to trigger that crisis for fun and profit. These new actors on the scene do not yet have a standard name; my proposed term is 'Soroi'.^[78]

In an interview concerning the late-2000s recession, Soros referred to it as the most serious crisis since the 1930s. According to Soros, market fundamentalism with its assumption that markets will correct themselves with no need for government intervention in financial affairs has been "some kind of an ideological excess." In Soros's view, the markets' moods—a "mood" of the markets being a prevailing bias or optimism/pessimism with which the markets look at reality—"actually can reinforce themselves so that there are these initially self-reinforcing but eventually unsustainable and self-defeating boom/bust sequences or bubbles."^[79]

In reaction to the late-2000s recession, he founded the Institute for New Economic Thinking in October 2009. This is a think tank composed of international economic, business, and financial experts, who are mandated to investigate radical new approaches to organizing the international economic and financial system.

Société Générale insider trade

In 1988, Soros was contacted by a French financier named Georges Pébereau, who asked him to participate in an effort to assemble a group of investors to purchase a large number of shares in Société Générale, a leading French bank that was part of a privatization program (something instituted by the new government under Jacques Chirac).^[80] Soros eventually decided against participating in the group effort, opting to personally move forward with his strategy of accumulating shares in four French companies: Société Générale, as well as Suez, Paribas, and the Compagnie Générale d'Électricité.

In 1989, the Commission des Opérations de Bourse (COB, the French stock exchange regulatory authority) conducted an investigation of whether Soros's transaction in Société Générale should be considered insider trading. Soros had received no information from the Société Générale and had no insider knowledge of the business, but he did possess knowledge that a group of investors was planning a takeover attempt. Initial investigations found Soros innocent, and no charges were brought forward.^[81] However, the case was reopened a few years later, and the French Supreme Court confirmed the conviction on June 14, 2006,^[82] although it reduced the penalty to €940,000.^[82]

Soros denied any wrongdoing, saying news of the takeover was public knowledge^[83] and it was documented that his intent to acquire shares of the company predated his own awareness of the takeover.^[82] In December 2006, he appealed to the European Court of Human Rights on various grounds, including that the 14-year delay in bringing the case to trial precluded a fair hearing.^[84] On the basis of Article 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights, stating that no person may be punished for an act that was not a criminal offense at the time that it was committed, the court agreed to hear the appeal.^[80] In October 2011, the court rejected his appeal in a 4–3 decision, saying that Soros had been aware of the risk of breaking insider trading laws.^[85]

Personal life

Soros has been married three times and divorced twice. In 1960, he married Annaliese Witschak (born January 3, 1934). Annaliese was an ethnic German immigrant, who had been orphaned during the war. Although she was not Jewish, she was well-liked by Soros's parents as she had also experienced the

privation and displacement brought about by World War II.^[86] They divorced in 1983. They had three children:

- Robert Daniel Soros (born 1963): The founder of the Central European University in Budapest, as well as a network of foundations in Eastern Europe. In 1992, he married Melissa Robin Schiff at the Temple Emanu-El in New York City. The Rabbi Dr. David Posner officiated the ceremony.^[87]
- Andrea Soros Colombel (born June 11, 1965): The founder and president of Trace Foundation, established in 1993 to promote the cultural continuity and sustainable development of Tibetan communities within China. She is also a founding partner and member of the board of directors of the Acumen Fund, a global venture fund that employs an entrepreneurial approach in addressing the problems of global poverty.^[88] She is married to Eric Colombel (born October 26, 1963).
- Jonathan Tivadar Soros (born September 10, 1970): A hedge fund manager and political donor. In 2012, he co-founded Friends of Democracy, a super PAC dedicated to reducing the influence of money in politics. In 1997, he married Jennifer Ann Allan (born November 26, 1969).^[89]

In 1983, George Soros married Susan Weber. They divorced in 2005. They have two children:

- Alexander Soros (born 1985): Alexander has gained prominence for his donations to social and political causes, focusing his philanthropic efforts on "progressive causes that might not have widespread support."^[90] Alexander led the list of student political donors in the 2010 election cycle.^[91]
- Gregory James Soros (born 1988), artist.

In 2008, Soros met Tamiko Bolton;^[92] they married September 21, 2013.^[93] Bolton is the daughter of a Japanese-American nurse and a retired naval commander, Robert Bolton. She was raised in California, earned an MBA from the University of Miami, and runs an Internet-based dietary supplement and vitamin-sales company.^[94]

Soros's older brother Paul Soros, a private investor and philanthropist, died on June 15, 2013.^[95] Also an engineer, Paul headed Soros Associates and established the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowships for Young Americans.^{[96][97]} He was married to Daisy Soros (née Schlenger), who, like her husband, was a Hungarian Jewish immigrant,^[98] and with whom he had two sons, Peter and Jeffrey.^[99] Peter Soros was married to the former Flora Fraser, a daughter of Lady Antonia Fraser and the late Sir Hugh Fraser and a stepdaughter of the late 2005 Nobel Laureate Harold Pinter. Fraser and Soros separated in 2009.^[100]

In 2005, Soros was a minority partner in a group that tried to buy the Washington Nationals, a Major League baseball team. Some Republican lawmakers suggested that they might move to revoke Major League Baseball's antitrust exemption if Soros bought the team.^[101] In 2008, Soros's name was associated with AS Roma, an Italian association football team, but the club was not sold. Soros was a financial backer of Washington Soccer L.P., the group that owned the operating rights to Major League Soccer club D.C. United when the league was founded in 1995, but the group lost these rights in 2000.^[102] On August 21, 2012, BBC reported SEC filings showing Soros acquired roughly a 1.9 percent stake in English football club Manchester United through the purchase of 3.1 million of the club's Class-A shares.^[103]

Political involvement

Until the 2004 presidential election, Soros had not been a large donor to U.S. political campaigns. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, during the 2003–2004 election cycle, Soros donated \$23,581,000 to various 527 Groups (tax-exempt groups under the United States tax code, 26 U.S.C. §

527). The groups aimed to defeat President George W. Bush. After Bush's reelection, Soros and other donors backed a new political fundraising group called Democracy Alliance, which supports progressive causes and the formation of a stronger progressive infrastructure in America.^[104]

In August 2009, Soros donated \$35 million to the state of New York to be earmarked for underprivileged children and given to parents who had benefit cards at the rate of \$200 per child aged 3 through 17, with no limit as to the number of children that qualified. An additional \$140 million was put into the fund by the state of New York from money they had received from the 2009 federal recovery act.^[48]

Soros was an initial donor to the Center for American Progress, and he continues to support the organization through the Open Society Foundations.

In October 2011, a Reuters story, "Soros: Not a funder of Wall Street Protests," was published after several commentators pointed out errors in an earlier Reuters story headlined "Who's Behind the Wall St. Protests?" with a lead stating that the Occupy Wall Street movement "may have benefited indirectly from the largesse of one of the world's richest men [Soros]." Reuters's follow-up article also reported a Soros spokesman and Adbusters' co-founder Kalle Lasn both saying that Adbusters—the reputed catalyst for the first Occupy Wall Street protests—had never received any contributions from Soros, contrary to Reuters's earlier story that reported that "indirect financial links" existed between the two as late as 2010.^{[105][106]}

On September 27, 2012, Soros announced that he was donating \$1 million to the super PAC backing President Barack Obama's reelection Priorities USA Action.^[107] In October 2013, Soros donated \$25,000 to Ready for Hillary, becoming a co-chairman of the super PAC's national finance committee.^[108] In June 2015, he donated \$1 million to the Super PAC Priorities USA Action, which supported Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential race. He donated \$6 million to the PAC in December 2015 and \$2.5 million in August 2016.^[109] Soros launched a new super PAC called *Democracy PAC* for the 2020 election cycle. By July 2019, he had donated \$5.1 million to it.^[110]

Since 2016, Soros has been donating sums exceeding \$1 million to the campaigns of progressive criminal justice reform proponents through the *Safety and Justice* PAC in local district attorney elections. In many districts, such large contributions were unprecedented and the campaigning strategy was "turned on its head" with a focus on incarceration, police misconduct and bail system, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.^{[111][112]} Larry Krasner was elected as the District Attorney of Philadelphia with the help of a \$1.5 million ad campaign funded by Soros in 2017.^[113]

In the second quarter of 2020, Soros gave at least \$500,000 to presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, becoming one of the campaign's largest donors.^[114]

Central and Eastern Europe

According to Waldemar A. Nielsen, an authority on American philanthropy,^[115] "[Soros] has undertaken ... nothing less than to open up the once-closed communist societies of Eastern Europe to a free flow of ideas and scientific knowledge from the outside world."^[116] From 1979, as an advocate of 'open societies', Soros financially supported dissidents including Poland's Solidarity movement, Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and Andrei Sakharov in the Soviet Union.^[117] In 1984, he founded his first Open Society Institute in Hungary with a budget of \$3 million.^[118]

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Soros' funding has played an important role in the newly independent countries. A 2017 study found that a grant program by George Soros which awarded funding to over 28,000 scientists in the former Soviet republics shortly after the end of the Soviet Union "more than

doubled publications on the margin, significantly induced scientists to remain in the science sector, and had long-lasting [beneficial] impacts."^[119] His funding of pro-democratic programs in Georgia was considered by Georgian nationalists to be crucial to the success of the Rose Revolution, although Soros has said that his role has been "greatly exaggerated."^[120] Alexander Lomaia, Secretary of the Georgian Security Council and former Minister of Education and Science, is a former Executive Director of the Open Society Georgia Foundation (Soros Foundation), overseeing a staff of 50 and a budget of \$2.5 million.^[121]

Former Georgian foreign minister Salomé Zourabichvili wrote that institutions like the Soros Foundation were the cradle of democratization and that all the NGOs that gravitated around the Soros Foundation undeniably carried the revolution. She opines that after the revolution the Soros Foundation and the NGOs were integrated into power.^[122]

Some Soros-backed pro-democracy initiatives have been banned in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.^[123] Ercis Kurtulus, head of the Social Transparency Movement Association (TSHD) in Turkey, said in an interview 2006 that "Soros carried out his will in Ukraine and Georgia by using these NGOs ... Last year Russia passed a special law prohibiting NGOs from taking money from foreigners. I think this should be banned in Turkey as well."^[124] In 1997, Soros closed his foundation in Belarus after it was fined \$3 million by the government for "tax and currency violations." According to *The New York Times* 1997, the Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko has been widely criticized in the West and in Russia for his efforts to control the Belarus Soros Foundation and other independent NGOs and to suppress civil and human rights. Soros called the fines part of a campaign to "destroy independent society."^[125]

In June 2009, Soros donated \$100 million to Central Europe and Eastern Europe to counter the impact of the economic crisis on the poor, voluntary groups and non-government organisations.^[126]

Since 2012, the Hungarian Fidesz government has labelled George Soros as an enemy of the state, due to his humanitarian and political involvement in the European refugee crisis. The government has attacked OSF, the international civil support foundation created by George Soros, and tried to revoke the licence of Central European University (Budapest) (which failed mostly due to significant public outrage).^[127] In response, Soros called the government "a mafia state".^[128]

As the 2018 election period started, the government introduced public posters with a photo of Soros^[129] to create hostility in the general public towards him, using statements such as "Soros wants millions of migrants to live in Hungary", and "Soros wants to dismantle the border fence". The government also prepared a three-part law plan called the "Stop Soros package" (which followed other various law changes^[130] in the same year, hindering the workings of several international NGOs in Hungary), which would include various steps against NGOs doing volunteer work related to the refugee crisis.

In March 2017, six US senators sent a letter to then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson^[131] asking that he look into several grants the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) have given to groups funded by "left-wing" Soros. According to the Heritage Foundation, the letter expressed specific concern about Soros' influence on Macedonian politics, a concern which has also been expressed by members of the conservative Macedonian government.^[132] In the same context, the conservative group Judicial Watch has filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit against the U.S. Department of State and USAID compelling them to release records regarding \$5 million transferred from USAID to Soros' Open Society branch in Macedonia. The suit alleges that the money



Protesters in Tbilisi with flag of the Democratic Republic of Georgia blocking the way from the Open Society Institute office, 2005

was deliberately used to destabilize the Macedonian government.^[133] The Open Society Foundation has said its activities in Macedonia were aimed at ethnic reconciliation with the Albanian minority and other forms of assistance since the collapse of Yugoslavia.^[134]

In January 2017, the "Stop Operation Soros" (SOS) initiative was launched in Macedonia. SOS seeks to present "questions and answers about the way Soros operates worldwide" and invites citizens to contribute to the research. In a press conference held during the same month, Nenad Mircevski, one of the founders of the initiative, stated that SOS would work towards the "de-Soros-ization" of Macedonia.^[135]



Anti George Soros sentiment graffiti in Resen, Macedonia (2018). It reads: #Stop Soros #I will profit

On May 16, 2018, Soros' Open Society Foundations announced they would move its office from Budapest to Berlin, blaming the move on an "increasingly repressive" environment in Hungary.^{[136][137][138]}

Africa

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa is a Soros-affiliated organization.^[139]

Support of separatist movements

In November 2005, Soros said: "My personal opinion is there's no alternative but to give Kosovo independence."^[140] Soros has helped fund the non-profit group called Independent Diplomat.^[141] It represented Kosovo, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (under military occupation by Turkey since 1974),^[142] Somaliland and the Polisario Front of Western Sahara.^[141]

Drug policy reform

Soros has funded worldwide efforts to promote drug policy reform. In 2008, Soros donated \$400,000 to help fund a successful ballot measure in Massachusetts known as the Massachusetts Sensible Marijuana Policy Initiative which decriminalized possession of less than 1 oz (28g) of marijuana in the state. Soros has also funded similar measures in California, Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Nevada and Maine.^[143] Among the drug decriminalization groups that have received funding from Soros are the Lindesmith Center and Drug Policy Foundation.^[144] Soros donated \$1.4 million to publicity efforts to support California's Proposition 5 in 2008, a failed ballot measure that would have expanded drug rehabilitation programs as alternatives to prison for persons convicted of non-violent drug-related offenses.^[145]

In October 2010, Soros donated \$1 million to support California's Proposition 19.^[146]

According to remarks in an interview in October 2009, it is Soros' opinion that marijuana is less addictive but not appropriate for use by children and students. He himself has not used marijuana for years.^[147] Soros has been a major financier of the Drug Policy Alliance – an organization that promotes cannabis legalization – with roughly \$5 million in annual contributions from one of his foundations.^[148]

Death and dying

The Project on Death in America, active from 1994 to 2003,^[149] was one of the Open Society Institute's projects, which sought to "understand and transform the culture and experience of dying and bereavement."^[150] In 1994, Soros delivered a speech in which he reported that he had offered to help his mother, a member of the right-to-die advocacy organization Hemlock Society, commit suicide.^[151] In the same speech, he also endorsed the Oregon Death with Dignity Act,^[152] proceeding to help fund its advertising campaign.^[153]

Conspiracy theories and threats

Soros' philanthropy and support for progressive causes has made him the object of many conspiracy theories, most of them originating from the political right.^{[154][155]} Veronika Bondarenko, writing for *Business Insider* said that "For two decades, some have seen Soros as a kind of puppet master secretly controlling the global economy and politics."^[156] *The New York Times* describes the allegations as moving "from the dark corners of the internet and talk radio" to "the very center of the political debate" by 2018.^[25]

Soros has become a magnet for such theories, with opponents claiming that he is behind such diverse events as the 2017 Women's March, the fact-checking website Snopes, the gun-control activism engaged in by the survivors of the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting,^{[157][158][159]} the October 2018 immigrant caravans, and the protests against then– Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh.^{[25][160]} President Donald Trump in a tweet also claimed Soros was backing the protests against Kavanaugh's nomination.^[161]

Conservatives picked up on the thread in the late 2000s, spearheaded by Fox News. Bill O'Reilly gave an almost ten-minute monologue on Soros in 2007, calling him an "extremist" and claiming he was "off-the-charts dangerous".^[158] *Breitbart News*, according to the London *Times* journalist David Aaronovitch, has regularly published articles blaming Soros for anything of which it disapproves.^[162]

Soros' opposition to Brexit (in the United Kingdom) led to a front page on the British Conservative supporting newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, in February 2018, which was accused of antisemitism for claiming he was involved in a supposed "secret plot" for the country's voters to reverse their decision to leave the European Union.^[29] While *The Daily Telegraph* did not mention Soros is Jewish, his opposition to Britain leaving the European Union had been reported elsewhere in less conspiratorial terms.^[30] Stephen Pollard, editor of *The Jewish Chronicle*, said on Twitter: "The point is that language matters so much and this is *exactly* the language being used by antisemites here and abroad".^{[31][163]} In October 2019, Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg accused Soros of being the "funder-in-chief" of the Remain campaign, and was subsequently accused of anti-semitism by opposition MPs.^[164]

After being ousted from office in the wake of the Panama Papers scandal of 2016, Icelandic Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson accused Soros of having bankrolled a conspiracy to remove him from power.^{[165][166]} It was later pointed out that Soros himself had also been implicated in the Panama Papers, casting doubt on the prime minister's theory.^[167]

Following a December 20, 1998 *60 Minutes* interview^[168] in which Soros related his experiences when at the age of 13, the Nazis occupied his native Hungary,^[169] right-wing figures such as Alex Jones, Dinesh D'Souza, Glenn Beck, Roseanne Barr,^[170] James Woods, Ann Coulter,^[169] Louie Gohmert,^[168] Marjorie Taylor Greene,^[171] and Donald Trump Jr.,^[172] promulgated the false conspiracy theory, which has been described as anti-Semitic, that Soros was a Nazi collaborator who turned in other Jews and stole their property during the occupation.^{[173][174][175][176][177][178][179][180]}

In October 2018, Soros was accused of funding a Central American migrant caravan heading toward America.^{[181][182][183]} The theory that Soros was somehow causing Central American migration at the southern US border apparently dates back to late March 2018, however.^[184] The October 2018 strain of the theory has been described to combine anti-semitism, anti-immigrant sentiment and "the specter of powerful foreign agents controlling major world events in pursuit of a hidden agenda", connecting Soros and other wealthy individuals of Jewish faith or background to the October caravan.^[184] Donald Trump was among those promoting the conspiracy theory.^[185] Both Cesar Sayoc, the perpetrator of the October 2018 attempted bombings of prominent Democrats, and Robert Bowers, the perpetrator of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, referred to this conspiracy theory on social media before their crimes.^{[186][187]}

In November 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan denounced Soros while speaking about Turkey's political purges, saying: "The person who financed terrorists during the Gezi incidents is already in prison. And who is behind him? The famous Hungarian Jew Soros. This is a man who assigns people to divide nations and shatter them."^[188]

In November 2019, attorney Joseph diGenova, who is known for promoting conspiracy theories about the Department of Justice and the FBI,^[197] asserted on Fox News without evidence that Soros "controls a very large part of the career foreign service of the United States State Department" and "also controls the activities of FBI agents overseas who work for NGOs – work with NGOs. That was very evident in Ukraine."^[198] Soros's Open Society Foundation described diGenova's claims as "beyond rhetorical ugliness, beyond fiction, beyond ludicrous" and requested that Fox News provide an on-air retraction of diGenova's claims, and stop providing diGenova with a platform.^[199] Although the network never publicly announced it had banned him, diGenova has not appeared on Fox following the incident.^[200] In September 2020, diGenova suggested that Fox News is also controlled by Soros.^[200]

A study by Zignal Labs found that unsubstantiated claims of involvement by Soros were one of three dominant themes in misinformation and conspiracy theories around the 2020 George Floyd protests, alongside claims that Floyd's death had been faked and claims of involvement by antifa groups.^[201] The Anti-Defamation League estimated that over four days after Floyd's death, negative Twitter messages about Soros increased from about 20,000 per day to about 500,000 per day.^[202]

In July 2020, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, after the border clashes with Armenia, stated that the 2018 Armenian revolution was "another provocation by Soros and his entourage", and called the government of the Armenian prime minister Nikol Pashinyan the "agents of the Soros Foundation",^[203] pointing out the COVID-19 pandemic related aid to Armenia by the Soros Foundation.^[204] Aliyev added that there were "no traces of the Soros Foundation in Azerbaijan", because it had had "cut off their legs" as they were "poisoning the minds of youth", turning them "against their state."^{[205][206]} In October 2020, during the height of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, Aliyev labelled Soros's activities a "destructive, movement, and a colonial movement." He also added that Soros "came to power in Armenia today, but failed."^[207]

Attempted assassination

A pipe bomb was placed in the mailbox at Soros's Katonah, New York, home on October 22, 2018, as part of the October 2018 United States mail bombing attempts. The package was discovered by a caretaker,^[208] who removed it and notified authorities. It was photographed and exploded by the FBI, which launched an investigation.^{[209][210]} For several days afterward, similar bombs were mailed to Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and other Democrats and liberals.^[211]

On October 26, 2018, Cesar Sayoc was arrested in Aventura, Florida, on suspicion of mailing the bombs.^[212] In August 2019, Sayoc was sentenced to 20 years in prison for mailing 16 pipe bombs to 13 victims. None of the devices had exploded.^[213]

Political and economic views

Reflexivity, financial markets, and economic theory

Soros's writings focus heavily on the concept of reflexivity, where the biases of individuals enter into market transactions, potentially changing the fundamentals of the economy. Soros argues that different principles apply in markets depending on whether they are in a "near to equilibrium" or a "far from equilibrium" state. He argues that, when markets are rising or falling rapidly, they are typically marked by disequilibrium rather than equilibrium, and that the conventional economic theory of the market (the "efficient market hypothesis") does not apply in these situations. Soros has popularized the concepts of dynamic disequilibrium, static disequilibrium, and near-equilibrium conditions.^[56] He has stated that his own financial success has been attributable to the edge accorded by his understanding of the action of the reflexive effect. Reflexivity is based on three main ideas:^[56]

1. Reflexivity is best observed under special conditions where investor bias grows and spreads throughout the investment arena. Examples of factors that may give rise to this bias include (a) equity leveraging or (b) the trend-following habits of speculators.
2. Reflexivity appears intermittently since it is most likely to be revealed under certain conditions; i.e., the character of the equilibrium process is best considered in terms of probabilities.
3. Investors' observation of and participation in the capital markets may at times influence valuations and fundamental conditions or outcomes.

A recent example of reflexivity in modern financial markets is that of the debt and equity of housing markets.^[56] Lenders began to make more money available to more people in the 1990s to buy houses. More people bought houses with this larger amount of money, thus increasing the prices of these houses. Lenders looked at their balance sheets which not only showed that they had made more loans, but that the collaterals backing the loans – the value of the houses – had gone up (because more money was chasing the same amount of housing, relatively). Thus they lent out more money because their balance sheets looked good, and prices rose higher still.

This was further amplified by public policy. In the US, home loans were guaranteed by the Federal government. Many national governments saw home ownership as a positive outcome and so introduced grants for first-time home buyers and other financial subsidies, such as the exemption of a primary residence from capital gains taxation. These further encouraged house purchases, leading to further price rises and further relaxation of lending standards.

External video



George Soros

The Lecture Series: Introduction (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-XT1hmkXZY>), 2:56

General Theory of Reflexivity (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCaCrWzFPYY>), 52:00

Financial Markets (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHSEEJDKJho>), 43:59

Open Society (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFyfYBcbbac>), 43:39

Capitalism vs. Open Society (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDrTkVFB6Zk>), 47:38 all by the Open Society Foundations

The concept of reflexivity attempts to explain why markets moving from one equilibrium state to another tend to overshoot or undershoot. Soros's theories were originally dismissed by economists,^[214] but have received more attention after the 2008 crash including becoming the focus of an issue of the *Journal of Economic Methodology*.^[215]

The notion of reflexivity provides an explanation of the theories of complexity economics, as developed at the Santa Fe Institute, although Soros had not publicized his views at the time the discipline was originally developed there in the 1980s.^{[216][217][218][219]}

Reflexivity in politics

Although the primary manifestation of the reflexive process that Soros discusses is its effects in the financial markets, he has also explored its effects in politics. He has stated that whereas the greatest threats to the "open society" in the past were from communism and fascism (as discussed in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* by his mentor Karl Popper), the largest current threat is from market fundamentalism.

He has suggested that the contemporary domination of world politics and world trade by the United States is a reflexive phenomenon, insofar as the success of military and financial coercion feeds back to encourage increasingly intense applications of the same policies to the point where they will eventually become unsustainable.^[220]

View of problems in the free market system

Soros argues that the current system of financial speculation undermines healthy economic development in many underdeveloped countries. He blames many of the world's problems on the failures inherent in what he characterizes as market fundamentalism.^[221]

Market predictions

Soros's book *The New Paradigm for Financial Markets* (May 2008), described a "superbubble" that had built up over the past 25 years and was ready to collapse. This was the third in a series of books he has written that have predicted disaster. As he states:

I have a record of crying wolf ... I did it first in *The Alchemy of Finance* (in 1987), then in *The Crisis of Global Capitalism* (in 1998), and now in this book. So it's three books predicting disaster. [After] the boy cried wolf three times ... the wolf really came.^[222]

He ascribes his own success to being able to recognize when his predictions are wrong.

I'm only rich because I know when I'm wrong ... I basically have survived by recognizing my mistakes. I very often used to get backaches due to the fact that I was wrong. Whenever you are wrong you have to fight or [take] flight. When [I] make the decision, the backache goes away.^[222]

In February 2009, Soros said the world financial system had in effect disintegrated, adding that there was no prospect of a near-term resolution to the crisis.^[223] "We witnessed the collapse of the financial system ... It was placed on life support, and it's still on life support. There's no sign that we are anywhere near a bottom."

In January 2016, at an economic forum in Sri Lanka, Soros predicted a financial crisis akin to 2008 based on the state of the global currency, stock and commodity markets as well as the sinking Chinese yuan.^{[224][225]}

Views on antisemitism and Israel

When asked about what he thought about Israel, in *The New Yorker*, Soros replied: "I don't deny the Jews to a right to a national existence – but I don't want anything to do with it."^[226] According to hacked emails released in 2016, Soros's Open Society Foundation has a self-described objective of "challenging Israel's racist and anti-democratic policies" in international forums, in part by questioning Israel's reputation as a democracy.^[227] He has funded NGOs which have been actively critical of Israeli policies^{[228][229][230]} including groups that campaign for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel.^[228]

Speaking before a 2003 conference of the Jewish Funders Network, Soros said that the administrations of George W. Bush in the U.S. and Ariel Sharon in Israel, and even the unintended consequences of some of his own actions, were partially contributing to a new European antisemitism. Soros, citing accusations that he was one of the "Jewish financiers" who, in antisemitic terms, "ruled the world by proxy", suggested that if we change the direction of those policies, then anti-Semitism also will diminish. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League later said that Soros's comments held a simplistic view, were counterproductive, biased and a bigoted perception of what's out there, and "blamed the victim" when holding Jews responsible for antisemitism. Jewish philanthropist Michael Steinhardt, who arranged for Soros's appearance at the conference, clarified, "George Soros does not think Jews should be hated any more than they deserve to be."^[231] Soros has also said that Jews can overcome antisemitism by "giv[ing] up on the tribalness".^[232]

In a subsequent article for *The New York Review of Books*, Soros emphasized that

I do not subscribe to the myths propagated by enemies of Israel and I am not blaming Jews for anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism predates the birth of Israel. Neither Israel's policies nor the critics of those policies should be held responsible for anti-Semitism. At the same time, I do believe that attitudes toward Israel are influenced by Israel's policies, and attitudes toward the Jewish community are influenced by the pro-Israel lobby's success in suppressing divergent views.^[233]

In 2017, Israeli businessman Beny Steinmetz filed a \$10-million lawsuit against Soros, alleging that Soros had influenced the government of Guinea to freeze Steinmetz's company BSG Resources out of iron ore mining contracts in the African country due to "long-standing animus toward the state of Israel".^{[234][235][236]} Steinmetz claims that Soros engaged in a "smear" campaign against him and his companies and blames Soros for scrutiny of him by American, Israeli, Swiss, and Guinean authorities.^[237] Soros called Steinmetz's suit "frivolous and entirely false" and said that it was "a desperate PR stunt meant to deflect attention from BSGR's mounting legal problems across multiple jurisdictions".^[238]

During an award ceremony for Imre Kertész, Soros said that the victims of violence and abuse were becoming "perpetrators of violence", suggesting that this model explained Israel's behavior towards the Palestinians, which led to walkouts and Soros being booed.^[239]

In July 2017, a Hungarian billboard campaign backed by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, which was considered to be anti-semitic by the country's Jewish groups, vilified Soros as an enemy of the state, using the slogan "Let's not allow Soros to have the last laugh".^[240] The campaign was estimated to have cost 5.7bn forints (then US\$21 million).^[241] According to the Israeli ambassador the campaign "evokes sad memories but also sows hatred and fear", a reference to Hungary's role in the deportation of 500,000 Jews during the Holocaust.^[242] Lydia Gall of Human Rights Watch asserted that it was reminiscent of Nazi posters during the Second World War featuring "'the laughing Jew'".^[243] Orbán and his government's representative said they had a "zero tolerance" of antisemitism, explaining the posters were aiming to persuade voters Soros was a "national security risk".^[240]

Hours later, in an apparent attempt to ally Israel with Hungary, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a "clarification", denouncing Soros, stating that he "continuously undermines Israel's democratically elected governments by funding organizations that defame the Jewish state and seek to deny it the right to defend itself".^[244]

Soros' son Alexander said in an interview that his father cares about Israel, and that he "would like to see Israel in Yitzhak Rabin's image. His views are more or less the common views in Meretz and in the Labor Party." According to Alexander, Soros supports a two-state solution. The younger Soros recounts that after his bar mitzvah in 1998, his father told him: "If you're serious about being Jewish, you might want to consider immigrating to Israel."^[245]

In a 2018 interview with *The New York Times*, Alex Soros, the son of George Soros, when asked about why his father fights for an open society, Soros replied that in a non-Jewish state, a Jew can only feel safe when other minorities are protected, which is one of most important driving forces why his father has been active in his philanthropy:

But he had always “identified firstly as a Jew,” and his philanthropy was ultimately an expression of his Jewish identity, in that he felt a solidarity with other minority groups and also because he recognized that a Jew could only truly be safe in a world in which all minorities were protected. Explaining his father’s motives, he said, “The reason you fight for an open society is because that’s the only society that you can live in, as a Jew — unless you become a nationalist and only fight for your own rights in your own state.”^[246]


Views on the U.S.

On November 11, 2003, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, Soros said that removing President George W. Bush from office was the "central focus of my life" and "a matter of life and death". He said he would sacrifice his entire fortune to defeat Bush "if someone guaranteed it".^{[247][248]} Soros gave \$3 million to the Center for American Progress, \$2.5 million to MoveOn.org, and \$20 million^[249] to America Coming Together. These groups worked to support Democrats in the 2004 election. On September 28, 2004, he dedicated more money to the campaign and kicked off his own multistate tour with a speech, "Why We Must Not Re-elect President Bush",^[250] delivered at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The online transcript of this speech received many views after Dick Cheney accidentally referred to FactCheck.org as "factcheck.com" in the vice presidential debate, causing the owner of that domain to redirect all traffic to Soros's site.^[251]

His 2003 book, *The Bubble of American Supremacy*^[252], was a forthright critique of the Bush administration's "War on Terror" as misconceived and counterproductive, and a polemic against the re-election of Bush. He explains the title in the closing chapter by pointing out the parallels in this political context with the self-reinforcing reflexive processes that generate bubbles in stock prices.

When Soros was asked in 2006 about his statement in *The Age of Fallibility* that "the main obstacle to a stable and just world order is the United States", he responded that "it happens to coincide with the prevailing opinion in the world. And I think that's rather shocking for Americans to hear. The United States sets the agenda for the world. And the rest of the world has to respond to that agenda. By declaring a 'war on terror' after September 11, we set the wrong agenda for the world ... When you wage war, you inevitably create innocent victims."^[253]

In 2017, Soros described Donald Trump as a con man, and predicted Trump would fail because he believed Trump's ideas were self-contradictory.^[254] Soros also said he believed Trump was preparing for a trade war and expected financial markets to do poorly.^[255]

External video
 Booknotes interview with Soros on <i>The Bubble of American Supremacy</i>, February 29, 2004 (https://www.c-span.org/video/?180744-1/the-bubble-american-supremacy), C-SPAN

Views on Europe

In October 2011, Soros drafted an open letter entitled "As concerned Europeans we urge Eurozone leaders to unite",^[256] in which he calls for a stronger economic government for Europe using federal means (Common EU treasury, common fiscal supervision, etc.) and warns against the danger of nationalistic solutions to the economic crisis. The letter was co-signed by Javier Solana, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Andrew Duff, Emma Bonino, Massimo D'Alema, and Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga.

Soros criticized Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his handling of the European migrant crisis in 2015: "His plan treats the protection of national borders as the objective and the refugees as an obstacle. Our plan treats the protection of refugees as the objective and national borders as the obstacle."^[257]

Soros expected that Brexit would fail and the Premiership of Theresa May would last only a short time.^[255] Soros is opposed to Brexit and donated £400,000 to the anti-Brexit 'Best for Britain' group.^[258] Soros also hosted a dinner for Conservative donors at his London home to encourage them to follow his lead. Soros's Open Society Foundations also donated a total of £303,000 to two pro-EU organizations, the European Movement UK and Scientists for EU, and a center-right think-tank, Bright Blue.^[259]

In 2018, Soros highlighted that Europe faces major challenges related to immigration, austerity, and nations leaving the EU.^[260] He holds that Europe is facing an existential crisis, in view of the rise of populism, the refugee crisis and a growing rift between Europe and the United States.^[261] Soros has also stated that "the euro has many unresolved problems" which "must not be allowed to destroy the European Union". He advocated replacing the notion of a multi-speed Europe by the aim of a "multi-track Europe" that would allow member states a wider variety of choices.^[262]

Views on relations between Europe and Africa

In view of the possibility of a further increase of the number of refugees from Africa to Europe, Soros proposes that the European Union devise a "Marshall Plan for Africa" (see *Marshall Plan*), fostering education and employment in Africa in order to reduce emigration.^{[260][262]}

Views on China

Soros has expressed concern about the growth of Chinese economic and political power, saying, "China has risen very rapidly by looking out for its own interests ... They have now got to accept responsibility for world order and the interests of other people as well." Regarding the political gridlock in America, he said, "Today, China has not only a more vigorous economy but actually a better functioning government than the United States."^[263] In July 2015, Soros stated that a "strategic partnership between the US and China could prevent the evolution of two power blocks that may be drawn into military conflict".^[264] In January 2016, during an interview at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Soros stated that "[a] hard landing is practically unavoidable". Chinese state media responded by stating "Soros' challenge to the RMB and Hong Kong dollar are doomed to fail, without any doubt."^[265]

In January 2019, Soros used his annual speech at the World Economic Forum, in Davos, to label Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China and President of China, as the "most dangerous opponent of open societies", saying: "China is not the only authoritarian regime in the world but it is the wealthiest, strongest and technologically most advanced". He also urged the United States not to allow the Chinese technology companies Huawei and ZTE to dominate the 5G telecommunications market as this would present an "unacceptable security risk for the rest of the world".^{[266][267]} Soros also criticized the newest form of China's Big Brother-like system of mass surveillance called the Social Credit System, saying it would give Xi, "total control" over the people of China."^[268]

Views on Russia and Ukraine

In May 2014, Soros told CNN's Fareed Zakaria: "I set up a foundation in Ukraine before Ukraine became independent from Russia. And the foundation has been functioning ever since and played an important part in events now."^[269]

In January 2015, Soros said that "Europe needs to wake up and recognize that it is under attack from Russia." He also urged Western countries to expand economic sanctions against Russia for its support of separatists in eastern Ukraine.^[270]

In January 2015, Soros called on the European Union to give \$50 billion of bailout money to Ukraine.^[271]

In July 2015, Soros stated that Putin's annexation of Crimea was a challenge to the "prevailing world order," specifically the European Union. He hypothesized that Putin wants to "destabilize all of Ukraine by precipitating a financial and political collapse for which he can disclaim responsibility, while avoiding occupation of a part of eastern Ukraine, which would then depend on Russia for economic support."^[264] In November 2015, Russia banned the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the Open Society Institute (OSI)-- two pro-democracy charities founded by Soros--stating they posed a "threat to the foundations of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation and the security of the state."^{[272][273]} In January 2016, 53 books related to Soros's "Renewal of Humanitarian Education" program were withdrawn at the Vorkuta Mining and Economic College in the Komi Republic, with 427 additional books seized for shredding. A Russian intergovernmental letter released in December 2015 stated that Soros's charities were "forming a perverted perception of history and making ideological directives, alien to Russian ideology, popular". Most of these books were published with funds donated by Soros's charities.^{[274][275]}

Wealth and philanthropy

As of March 2020, *Forbes* magazine listed Soros as the 162nd richest person in the world, with a net worth of \$8.3 billion.^[276] He has also donated 64% of his original fortune, making him the most generous giver (when measured as a percentage of net worth), and distributed more than \$15 billion through his Open Society Foundations (an international grantmaking network that supports advancing justice, education, public health and independent media).^[14]

Soros has been active as a philanthropist since the 1970s, when he began providing funds to help black students attend the University of Cape Town in apartheid South Africa,^[117] and began funding dissident movements behind the Iron Curtain.



George Soros speaks to the LSE alumni society in Malaysia.

Soros's philanthropic funding includes efforts to promote non-violent democratization in the post-Soviet states. These efforts, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, occur primarily through the Open Society Foundations (originally Open Society Institute or OSI) and national Soros Foundations, which sometimes go under other names (such as the Stefan Batory Foundation in Poland). As of 2003, PBS estimated that he had given away a total of \$4 billion.^[83] The OSI says it has spent about \$500 million annually in recent years.

In 2003, former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker wrote in the foreword of Soros's book *The Alchemy of Finance*:

George Soros has made his mark as an enormously successful speculator, wise enough to largely withdraw when still way ahead of the game. The bulk of his enormous winnings is now devoted to encouraging transitional and emerging nations to become "open societies", open not only in the sense of freedom of commerce but—more important—tolerant of new ideas and different modes of thinking and behavior.^[277]

Time magazine in 2007 cited two specific projects—\$100 million toward Internet infrastructure for regional Russian universities, and \$50 million for the Millennium Promise to eradicate extreme poverty in Africa—noting that Soros had given \$742 million to projects in the U.S., and given away a total of more than \$7 billion.^[278]

Other notable projects have included aid to scientists and universities throughout central and eastern Europe, help to civilians during the siege of Sarajevo, and Transparency International. Soros also pledged an endowment of €420 million to the Central European University (CEU).

According to *National Review Online*^[279] the Open Society Institute gave \$20,000 in September 2002 to the Defense Committee of Lynne Stewart, the lawyer who has defended controversial, poor, and often unpopular defendants in court and was sentenced to 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ years in prison for "providing material support for a terrorist conspiracy" via a press conference for a client. An OSI spokeswoman said "it appeared to us at that time that there was a right-to-counsel issue worthy of our support" but claimed later requests for support were declined.

In September 2006, Soros pledged \$50 million to the Millennium Promise, led by economist Jeffrey Sachs to provide educational, agricultural, and medical aid to help villages in Africa enduring poverty. The New York Times termed this endeavor a "departure" for Soros whose philanthropic focus had been on fostering democracy and good government, but Soros noted that most poverty resulted from bad governance.^[280]

Soros played a role in the peaceful transition from communism to democracy in Hungary (1984–89)^[22] and provided a substantial endowment to Central European University in Budapest.^[281] The Open Society Foundations has active programs in more than 60 countries around the world with total expenditures currently averaging approximately \$600 million a year.^{[3][282]}

On October 17, 2017, it was announced that Soros had transferred \$18 billion to the Open Society Foundations.^[283]

In October 2018, Soros donated \$2 million to the Wikimedia Foundation via the Wikimedia Endowment program.^[284]

In July 2020, Soros's Foundations announced plans to give \$220 million in grants for racial justice groups, criminal justice reform and civic engagement.^[285]

Honors and awards

Soros received honorary doctoral degrees from the New School for Social Research (New York), the University of Oxford in 1980, the Corvinus University of Budapest, and Yale University in 1991. He received an honorary degree in economics from the University of Bologna in 1995.^[286]

In 2008, he was inducted into Institutional Investors Alpha's Hedge Fund Manager Hall of Fame along with Alfred Jones, Bruce Kovner, David Swensen, Jack Nash, James Simons, Julian Roberston, Kenneth Griffin, Leon Levy, Louis Bacon, Michael Steinhardt, Paul Tudor Jones, Seth Klarman and Steven A. Cohen.^[287]

In January 2014, Soros was ranked number 1 in LCH Investments list of top 20 managers having posting gains of almost \$42 billion since the launch of his Quantum Endowment Fund in 1973.^[288]

In July 2017, Soros was elected an Honorary Fellow of the British Academy (HonFBA), the United Kingdom's national academy for the humanities and social sciences.^[289]

Soros was the *Financial Times* Person of the Year for 2018, with the *FT* describing him as "a standard bearer for liberal democracy, an idea under siege from populists".^[290]

In April 2019, Soros was awarded the Ridenhour Prize for Courage.^[291] In his acceptance address Soros said: "In my native Hungary, the government of [Prime Minister] Viktor Orbán has turned me into the super villain of an alleged plot to destroy the supposed Christian identity of the Hungarian nation... [I] donate the prize money associated with this award to the Hungarian Spectrum, an online English-language publication that provides daily updates on Hungarian politics. It renders an important service by exposing to the world [in English] what Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is telling his own people [in Hungarian]. It [Hungarian Spectrum] deserves to be better known and supported."^[292]

Publications and scholarship

George Soros has written many books, articles, and papers on economics, finance, stock trading, and geopolitics.

Books authored or co-authored

- *The Tragedy of the European Union: Disintegration or Revival?* (PublicAffairs, 2014). ISBN 978-1-61039-421-5.
- *Financial Turmoil in Europe and the United States: Essays* (PublicAffairs, 2012). ISBN 978-1-61039-161-0.
- *The Soros Lectures at the Central European University* (PublicAffairs, 2010) ISBN 978-1-58648-885-7.
- *The New Paradigm for Financial Markets: The Credit Crisis of 2008 and What it Means* (PublicAffairs, 2008). ISBN 978-1-58648-683-9.
- *The Age of Fallibility: Consequences of the War on Terror* (PublicAffairs, 2006) ISBN 978-1-58648-359-3.
- *Underwriting Democracy: Encouraging Free Enterprise and Democratic Reform Among the Soviets and in Eastern Europe* (Free Press, 1991) ISBN 978-0-02-930285-9 (paperback; PublicAffairs, 2004; ISBN 978-1-58648-227-5)
- *George Soros on Globalization* (PublicAffairs, 2002) ISBN 978-1-58648-125-4 (paperback; PublicAffairs, 2005; ISBN 978-1-58648-278-7)
- *The Bubble of American Supremacy: Correcting the Misuse of American Power* (PublicAffairs, 2003) ISBN 978-1-58648-217-6 (paperback; PublicAffairs, 2004; ISBN 978-1-58648-292-3)
- *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism* (PublicAffairs, 2001) ISBN 978-1-58648-019-6.
- With Mark Amadeus Notturmo, *Science and the Open Society: The Future of Karl Popper's Philosophy* (Central European University Press, 2000) ISBN 978-963-9116-69-6 (paperback: Central European University Press, 2000; ISBN 978-963-9116-70-2)
- *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered* (PublicAffairs, 1998) ISBN 978-1-891620-27-0.
- *Soros on Soros: Staying Ahead of the Curve* (John Wiley, 1995) ISBN 978-0-471-12014-8 (paperback; Wiley, 1995; ISBN 978-0-471-11977-7)
- *Opening the Soviet System* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990) ISBN 978-0-297-82055-0 (paperback: Perseus Books, 1996; ISBN 978-0-8133-1205-7)
- *The Alchemy of Finance* (Simon & Schuster, 1988) ISBN 978-0-671-66238-7 (paperback: Wiley, 2003; ISBN 978-0-471-44549-4)

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- George Soros, "Why I support legal marijuana (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303467004575574450703567656>)", *The Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2010.
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- George Soros, "On Israel, America and AIPAC", *The New York Review of Books*, April 12, 2007.
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- George Soros, "The Capitalist Threat" (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1997/02/the-capitalist-threat/376773/>), *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1997.
- A half-hour *Opinions* television lecture by Soros was transmitted by Channel 4 on August 1, 1993 and published the following day in *The Times* as "Why Appeasement Must Not Have Another Chance"^[293]

See also

- Scott Bessent, former chief investment officer of Soros Fund Management
- Forbes 400
- Open Society Foundations
- Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Notes

- ^[7] [/]ˈsɒroʊs/, [/]sɒrɒs/; Hungarian: *Soros György*, pronounced [ˈʃorɒʃ ˈjörɟ]
- Soros was naturalized as an American citizen on December 18, 1961.^{[8][9]}

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Murder of Seth Rich

The **murder of Seth Rich** occurred on Sunday, July 10, 2016, at 4:20 a.m. in the Bloomingdale neighborhood of Washington, D.C.^[2] Rich died about an hour and a half after being shot twice in the back. He was murdered by unknown perpetrators for unknown reasons, but police suspected he had been the victim of an attempted robbery.^{[1][3]}

The 27-year-old Rich was an employee of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and his murder spawned several right-wing conspiracy theories,^{[1][4]} including the false claim, contradicted by the law enforcement branches that investigated the murder, that Rich had been involved with the leaked DNC emails in 2016.^{[5][6]} It was also contradicted by the July 2018 indictment of 12 Russian military intelligence agents for hacking the e-mail accounts and networks of Democratic Party officials^[7] and by the U.S. intelligence community's conclusion the leaked DNC emails were part of Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections.^{[5][6][8]} Fact-checking websites like PolitiFact,^{[6][9]} Snopes,^[10] and FactCheck.org stated that the theories were false and unfounded.^[5] The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times and The Washington Post wrote that the promotion of these conspiracy theories was an example of fake news.^{[11][12][13]}

Rich's family denounced the conspiracy theorists and said that those individuals were exploiting their son's death for political gain, and their spokesperson called the conspiracy theorists "disgusting sociopaths".^{[14][15][16]} They requested a retraction and apology from Fox News after the network promoted the conspiracy theory,^[17] and sent a cease and desist letter to the investigator Fox News used.^{[6][16][17]} The investigator stated that he had no evidence to back up the claims which Fox News attributed to him.^{[5][6][18]} Fox News issued a retraction, but did not apologize or publicly explain what went wrong.^[19] In response, the Rich family sued Fox News in March 2018 for having engaged in "extreme and outrageous conduct" by fabricating the story defaming their son and thereby intentionally inflicting emotional distress on them.^{[20][21]} The judge initially dismissed the suit but the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit allowed the case to proceed in September 2019.^[22] Fox News reached a seven-figure settlement with the Rich family in October 2020.^{[23][24]}

Murder of Seth Rich

Date	July 10, 2016
Time	4:20 a.m. EST (approximate)
Location	<u>Bloomingdale</u> neighborhood (Ward 5, <u>Washington, D.C.</u>)
Cause	Shooting
Inquiries	<u>Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia</u>
Coroner	Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Washington D.C.
Suspects	Unknown ^[1]

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Seth Rich

Early life and career

Rich grew up in a Jewish family in Omaha, Nebraska.^{[25][26][27]} He volunteered for the Nebraska Democratic Party, interned for Senator Ben Nelson, was active in Jewish outreach,^[28] and worked with the United States Census Bureau.^{[29][30]} In 2011, he graduated from Creighton University with a degree in political science.^{[30][31]} He moved to Washington, D.C., to work for pollster Greenberg Quinlan Rosner.^[30] In 2014, he began working for the Democratic National Committee (DNC) as the voter expansion data director. One of his tasks at the DNC was the development of a computer application to help voters locate polling stations.^{[32][33][34]}

Shooting and death

On Sunday, July 10, 2016, at 4:20 a.m., Rich was shot about a block from his apartment at the southwest corner of Flagler Place and W Street Northwest^[35] in the Bloomingdale neighborhood of Washington, D.C.^{[36][37]}

Earlier that night he had been at Lou's City Bar, a sports pub 1.8 miles (2.9 km) from his apartment, in Columbia Heights, where he was a regular customer. He left when the bar was closing, at about 1:30 or 1:45 a.m.^[38] Police were alerted to gunfire at 4:20 a.m. by an automated gunfire locator.^[39] Within about one minute after the gun shots, police officers found Rich conscious with multiple gunshot wounds.^[40] He was transported to a nearby hospital, where he died^{[41][42][43]} over 1½ hours after being

shot.^[3] That he was not shot in the head is seen as evidence against the shooting having been an "assassination".^[3] According to police, he died from two shots to the back^{[36][37]} and may have been killed in an attempted robbery. Residents noted the neighborhood had been plagued by robberies.^[36]

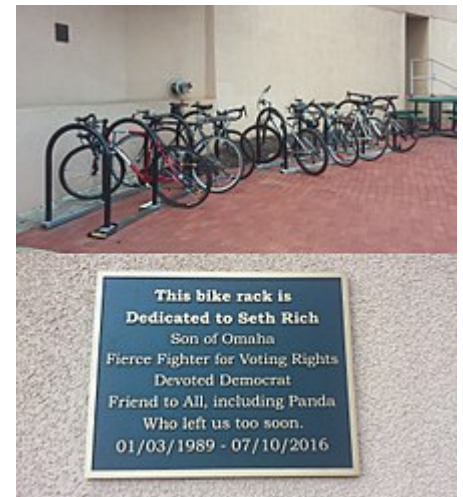
Rich's mother told NBC's Washington affiliate WRC-TV: "There had been a struggle. His hands were bruised, his knees are bruised, his face is bruised, and yet he had two shots to his back, and yet they never took anything ... They didn't finish robbing him, they just took his life."^[44] The police told the family they had found a surveillance recording showing a glimpse of the legs of two people who could be the killers.^[45]

Aftermath

On the day after the shooting, DNC chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz issued a statement mourning his loss and praising Rich's work to support voter rights.^{[39][46]} Two days after the shooting, Hillary Clinton spoke of his death during a speech advocating limiting the availability of guns.^{[26][32]}

In September 2016, Rich's parents and girlfriend appeared on the syndicated television show *Crime Watch Daily* to speak about the murder case.^{[47][48]} In October 2016, a plaque and bike rack outside the DNC headquarters were dedicated to Rich's memory.^[46] In February 2017, the Beth El Synagogue in Omaha named after Rich an existing scholarship that helps Jewish children attend summer camps.^[49]

The Rich family accepted the *pro bono* public relations services of Republican lobbyist Jack Burkman in September 2016.^[12] The Rich family and Burkman held a joint press conference on the murder in November 2016.^{[12][50]} In January 2017, Burkman launched an advertising campaign in Northwest D.C. searching for information regarding Seth's death. This included billboard advertisements and canvassing with flyers.^{[51][52]} In late February, Burkman told media outlets he had a lead that the Russian government was involved in Rich's death,^[53] and the Rich family then distanced itself from Burkman.^[54] On March 19, 2017, Rich's brother, Aaron, started a GoFundMe campaign to try to raise \$200,000 for private investigation, public outreach activities, and a reward fund.^[55]



Bike rack and plaque outside the DNC headquarters

The Rich family was approached by Ed Butowsky (a friend of Trump advisor Steve Bannon and a frequent Fox News contributor), who recommended having Fox News contributor and former homicide detective Rod Wheeler investigate Seth's murder. Butowsky said Wheeler had been recommended to him. The family gave Wheeler permission to investigate, though they did not hire him.^{[16][56]} When questioned by CNN, Butowsky denied involvement in the case, but later admitted he was involved and had offered to pay Wheeler's fees.^{[57][58]} After Wheeler asserted links between Rich and Wikileaks in a Fox affiliate interview on May 15, 2017—an assertion he later backpedaled from^[59]—the family spokesman said that the family regretted working with Wheeler.^[4] Wheeler then sued Fox News on August 1, 2017, for mental anguish and emotional distress, alleging that he had been misquoted in a story that was then published on the urging of Trump.^[60]

Rewards

The Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia (MPDC) posted its customary reward of \$25,000 for information about the death.^{[32][40]}

On August 9, 2016, WikiLeaks announced a \$20,000 reward for information about Rich's murder leading to a conviction, which was subsequently increased to \$125,000.^{[61][62][63][64]} Rich's family said they were unable to verify this reward offer.^[61] WikiLeaks stated that this offer should not be taken as implying Rich had been involved in leaking information to it.^[32]

In November 2016, Republican lobbyist Jack Burkman said he was personally offering a \$100,000 reward in addition to those announced by the police department and WikiLeaks, and he added another \$5,000 to his offer in December and another \$25,000 in January.^{[45][61][65]} Burkman said he hoped the money would help "get to the truth of what happened here and will either debunk the conspiracy theories or validate them."^[66]

In total, these 3 rewards add up to \$280,000.

Conspiracy theories

Origins

Beginnings on social media

Political conspiracy theories and racially charged comments started to appear on social media the day after Rich's death.^{[67][68]} Within days, right-wing conspiracy theories began circulating,^{[69][70][71]} including false claims that his murder was connected to the DNC email leak of 2016,^[4] or the FBI's investigation of the Clinton Foundation.^{[71][72]}

A post on Twitter before Rich's memorial service spread the idea that his killing was a political assassination.^[69] Subsequently, the conspiracy theory was spread on the subreddit /r/The Donald, and on July 29, 2016, the website *Heat Street* reported on these Reddit posts.^{[72][73]} Reddit users attempted to tie the homicide to prior "Clinton Body Count" conspiracy theories.^[70] The conspiracy theory was later popularized by Donald Trump political adviser Roger Stone via his Twitter account.^[69]

According to British journalist Duncan Campbell, the Russian intelligence agency, GRU, tried to implicate Rich as the source of the stolen DNC emails, in order to draw attention away from themselves as the real perpetrators of the theft.^[74] Datestamps on the DNC files were altered to show the data had been obtained on July 5, 2016, five days before Rich's death, and the time zone was changed to Eastern Time, within which Washington, D.C., falls. Guccifer 2.0, the alleged GRU front that provided the emails to Wikileaks, then reported that Rich had been their source. Based partly on their acceptance of the false dates, some experts then concluded that the emails had been copied in the DNC offices, and had not been hacked from outside.^[75]

WikiLeaks statements

Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, fueled the speculation in an interview with Nieuwsuur published on August 9, 2016, which touched on the topic of risks faced by WikiLeaks' sources.^[76] Unbidden, Assange brought up the case of Seth Rich. When asked directly whether Rich was a source, Assange said "we don't comment on who our sources are".^[77] Subsequent statements by WikiLeaks

emphasized that the organization was not naming Rich as a source, as they do with other leaks.^[32] It subsequently came to light that WikiLeaks communicated with the Trump campaign over other issues.^[78]

According to the Mueller Report, WikiLeaks had received an email containing an encrypted file named "wk dnc link I .txt.gpg" from the Guccifer 2.0 GRU persona on July 14, which was four days after Seth Rich died.^{[79][80][81]} In April 2018, Twitter direct messages revealed that even as Assange was suggesting publicly that WikiLeaks had obtained emails from Seth Rich, Assange was trying to obtain more emails from Guccifer 2.0, who was at the time already suspected of being linked to Russian intelligence.^[82] *BuzzFeed* described the messages as "the starkest proof yet that Assange knew a likely Russian government hacker had the Democrat leaks he wanted. And they reveal the deliberate bad faith with which Assange fed the groundless claims that Rich was his source, even as he knew the documents' origin."^[82] Mike Gottlieb, a lawyer for Rich's brother, noted that WikiLeaks received the file of stolen documents from the Russian hackers on July 14, four days after Rich was shot. Gottlieb described the chronology as "damning".^[83]

Propagation by right-wing media and venues

The conspiracy theories were promoted by Mike Cernovich, Sean Hannity, Geraldo Rivera, Kim Dotcom, Paul Joseph Watson, Newt Gingrich, Jack Posobiec, and others.^{[84][85][86]}

The same venues that fomented the false Pizzagate conspiracy theory helped to promulgate the Seth Rich murder conspiracy theories,^{[12][87][88]} and each shared similar features.^{[89][90][91]} Both were promoted by individuals subscribing to far-right politics,^[92] and by campaign officials and individuals appointed to senior-level national security roles by Donald Trump.^{[93][94][95]} After prior coordination on Facebook, each theory was spread on Twitter by automated bots using a branded hashtag, with the goal of becoming a trending topic.^[87] Both the Pizzagate conspiracy theory and the Seth Rich murder conspiracy theory were spread in the subreddit forum /r/The_Donald.^[96] In both conspiracy theories, the promoters attempted to shift the burden of proof — asking others to attempt to disprove their claims, without citing substantiated evidence.^[97] *Slate*'s Elliot Hannon called the claims about Seth Rich a "PizzaGate-like conspiracy theory surrounding Rich's death",^[98] *The Huffington Post* described it as "the 'alt-right' idiocy of Pizzagate all over again",^[91] *NPR*'s David Folkenflik said Fox News coverage of it "evokes the pizza-gate terrible allegations utterly unfounded",^[99] and Margaret Sullivan wrote for *The Washington Post*: "The Seth Rich lie has become the new Comet Ping Pong ... Crazy, baseless and dangerous."^[100]

On July 9, 2019, a Yahoo! News article stated that an alleged Russian Foreign Intelligence Service bulletin dated July 13, 2016, was the original source of the conspiracy theory.^[101] An analysis by the *Washington Post* disputed the conclusion while crediting the report for highlighting the roles played by InfoWars, FoxNews, and Hannity in promoting the misinformation.^[68]

Debunking

Law enforcement stated that the conspiracy theories were unfounded,^{[5][6]} while fact-checking websites like PolitiFact.com,^{[6][9]} Snopes.com,^[10] and FactCheck.org^[5] came to the conclusion that the theories were false and baseless.

The Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia described the murder as related to a bungled attempted robbery,^[5] and said "the assertions put forward by Mr. Wheeler are unfounded."^[5] The FBI told PolitiFact.com that the MPD was investigating the homicide.^[9]

Assistant Police Chief Peter Newsham said the police had no information suggesting a connection between Rich's death and data obtained by WikiLeaks.^[32]

People who worked with Rich said he was not an expert computer hacker helping to leak information to foreigners. Andrew Therriault, a data scientist who had mentored Rich, said although he had recently been working as a programmer, this "wasn't his background", and another co-worker said Rich was very upset when he heard hackers associated with Russian intelligence services had broken into the DNC computers and could be interfering with the election.^[45]

Rich family representative, Brad Bauman, responding to the conspiracy theorists' claim that the FBI was investigating the case said, "The FBI is not now and has never been a party to this investigation."^[5]

FactCheck.org analyzed statements by Newt Gingrich related to the conspiracy theory, where Gingrich said Rich "apparently was assassinated" subsequent to "having given WikiLeaks something like ... 53,000 [DNC] emails and 17,000 attachments".^[5] FactCheck.org determined this claim was "unsupported" and determined "there's no evidence for his claim."^[5]

PolitiFact.com said the assertion that Rich gave emails to WikiLeaks is a "baseless claim", concluding "Gingrich and others are talking about an unfounded conspiracy theory as if it's a matter of fact. It is far from it. We rate his claim Pants on Fire."^[6] In a separate analysis, PolitiFact.com concluded: "There's no evidence there's any link between Rich and WikiLeaks. The FBI has indirectly denied investigating the case, which Washington police consider a robbery gone wrong."^[9]

Snopes.com looked into the matter and stated: "We were able to confirm the FBI is not investigating Rich's murder – it is an MPD investigation." Snopes contacted a spokesman for the Washington, D.C., mayor's office, who said, "All claims made by Mr. Wheeler are false and take fake news to a whole new level. The family deserves better and everyday MPD continues to work diligently to solve this case."^[10] Snopes rated the claim "DNC staffer Seth Rich sent 'thousands of leaked e-mails' to WikiLeaks before he was murdered" as "False".^[10]

The fabrications were described as fake news and falsehoods by *The New York Times*.^[11] *The New York Times* cited the conspiracy theories as an example of the persistence of false claims, concluding: "fake news dies hard".^[11] The *Los Angeles Times* called the conspiracy theories "unsubstantiated rumors".^[12]

The Washington Post cited the conspiracy theories as an example of the power of fake news to spread virally online.^[13] The paper used the example as a case study of the persistence of fake news, and found that television news media can be a soft target for such false stories.^[13] *The Washington Post* further found that the proliferation of fake news via Facebook had decreased, but remained powerful on Twitter due to spread via online bots.^[13] They found that the conspiracy theories with the largest potential to spread on the Internet were those that held attraction for both the alt-right movements and the political left wing.^[13] *The Washington Post* concluded that even if a particular false story had been sufficiently debunked, such fact-checking was unable to stop the spread of the falsehoods online.^[13]

Fox News retracted reporting

Uncorroborated story

On May 15, 2017, Fox 5 DC (WTTG) reported the uncorroborated and later largely retracted^[102] claims by Rod Wheeler, a Fox News contributor and former homicide detective, that there was evidence Seth Rich had contacted WikiLeaks and that law enforcement were covering this up,^{[102][103]} claims that were

never independently verified by Fox.^[104] The next day, Fox News published a lead story on its website and provided extensive coverage on its cable news channel about what it later said were Wheeler's uncorroborated claims about the murder of Seth Rich.^{[105][106][107]} In the lead story Fox News removed from their website a few days later, they stated that Wheeler's claims had been "corroborated by a federal investigator who spoke to Fox News."^{[108][109][110]} In reporting these claims, the Fox News report reignited conspiracy theories about the killing.^{[89][111][112]} According to NPR, within a day of the original Fox report, "Google searches for Rich had overtaken searches for James Comey, even amid continuous news about the former FBI director's conversations with Trump."^[97] *The Washington Post's* Callum Borchers noted Fox News chose to lead with this story at a time when most other media outlets were covering Donald Trump's disclosure of classified information to Russia.^[106]

Other news organizations revealed Wheeler was a Donald Trump supporter, a paid Fox News contributor, and according to NBC News had "developed a reputation for making outlandish claims, such as one appearance on Fox News in 2007 in which he warned that underground networks of pink pistol-toting lesbian gangs were raping young women".^{[4][111][113]} *The Washington Post* noted it is "rare for a news organization to have such a close relationship with the people it is covering", as Wheeler was "playing three roles at once: as a Fox source, as a paid contributor to the network and as a supposedly independent investigator of the murder".^[89] When Wheeler appeared on Sean Hannity's Fox News shows, these multiple roles were not disclosed to viewers.^[89] After Wheeler's Fox News interview on May 15, 2017, Brad Bauman, a communications professional and spokesman for the Rich family, said the family was asking Fox News and the Fox affiliate to retract their reports and apologize for damaging their son's legacy.^[4]

The family spokesperson, the Washington, D.C., police department, the Washington, D.C., mayor's office, the FBI, and law enforcement sources familiar with the case all disputed Wheeler's claims.^{[111][114]} The family said, "We are a family who is committed to facts, not fake evidence that surfaces every few months to fill the void and distract law enforcement and the general public from finding Seth's murderers."^[111] Bauman criticized Fox News for its reporting, saying he believed that the outlet was motivated by a desire to deflect attention from the Trump-Russia story: "I think there's a very special place in hell for people that would use the memory of a murder victim in order to pursue a political agenda."^[10]

Later that day, Wheeler told CNN he had no evidence that Rich had contacted Wikileaks.^[102] Wheeler claimed that Fox had presented his quotes misleadingly and that he only learned about the possible existence of the evidence from a Fox News reporter.^{[97][102]} Despite this, Sean Hannity's show and *Fox & Friends* continued to promote the conspiracy theory for the remainder of the week.^{[115][116]} On May 18, 2016, Hannity's guest on the show was Jay Sekulow who said that Rich's killing "... undercuts this whole Russia argument;" neither one mentioned that Sekulow had just been hired as one of Trump's lead lawyers in the Mueller investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections.^[101] Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Geraldo Rivera took part in spreading the conspiracy.^{[116][117][118]} Hannity had on his program Tom Fitton of Judicial Watch, who said the organization filed Freedom of Information Act requests for documents from Washington, D.C., mayor Muriel E. Bowser, and from the Metropolitan Police.^[119] Sean Hannity furthermore promoted the uncorroborated claims of Kim Dotcom, a New Zealand resident sought by the United States on fraud charges who claimed without evidence that Rich had been in contact with him before his death.^[120] Fox News host Julie Roginsky was critical of the conspiracy theory peddlers, stating on Twitter and on her television show: "The exploitation of a dead man whose family has begged conspiracy theorists to stop is really egregious. Please stop."^[121] Fox News was also criticized by conservative outlets, such as the *Weekly Standard*,^[122] *National Review*,^{[123][124]} and *Red State*,^{[125][126][127]} and conservative columnists, such as Jennifer Rubin,^[128] Michael Gerson,^[129] and John Podhoretz.^[130] In September

2017, *NPR* noted that Fox News had yet to apologize for its false story or explain what went wrong; "When a story of this scale crumbles, most news organizations feel obligated to explain what happened and why. Not so far at Fox."^[19]

By August 2020, Malia Zimmermann, the reporter behind the retracted Fox News story, was still working at Fox News, although no stories had appeared under her byline since August 2017.^[131]

Cease and desist letter and retraction

On May 19, 2017, an attorney for the Rich family sent a cease and desist letter to Wheeler.^[17]

Fox News issued a retraction of the story on May 23, 2017 and removed the original article and did not apologize or specify what went wrong or how it did so.^{[18][132][133]} Despite this, Hannity, who pushed the theory, remained unapologetic, saying "I retracted nothing" and "I am not going to stop trying to find the truth."^{[120][133][134]} In their May 23 statement, Fox News said, "The article was not initially subjected to the high degree of editorial scrutiny we require for all our reporting. Upon appropriate review, the article was found not to meet those standards and has since been removed."^[134] Media ethics writer Kelly McBride criticized the retraction as "woefully inadequate", writing that it did not specify exactly what was inaccurate or provide correct information in place of the retracted story.^[135]

The same day, Hannity stated on his show that he would cease discussing the issue.^[136] Hannity said his decision to cease commenting on the matter was related to the family of the murder victim: "Out of respect for the family's wishes, for now, I am not discussing the matter at this time."^[136] In the same statement wherein he promised to cease discussion of the topic, he vowed to pursue facts in the future: "I promise you I am not going to stop trying to find the truth."^[136] Several advertisers including Crowne Plaza Hotels, Cars.com, Leesa Mattress, USAA, Peloton and Casper Sleep pulled their marketing from his program on Fox News.^{[137][138][139]} Crowne Plaza Hotels later said that it was not their policy to advertise on political commentary shows and that they had not been aware of their sponsorship of the show.^[140] USAA soon returned to advertising on Fox News after receiving customer input.^[141]

Wheeler lawsuit

On August 1, 2017, Rod Wheeler, the private investigator hired by Butowsky who was the first to claim links between Seth Rich's murder and the DNC hack on Fox, but who later appeared to retract his claims, filed a lawsuit (Case 1:17-cv-05807 Southern District of New York) in which 21st Century Fox, the Fox News Channel, Fox News reporter Malia Zimmerman and Ed Butowsky were named as defendants, stating that quotes attributed to him in the original Fox News piece were fabricated. The lawsuit also alleged that the fabricated quotes were included in the Fox News story at the urging of the Trump White House.^{[142][143]}

Text messages and audio apparently supporting this assertion were included in the filing of the lawsuit. About a month before the story was aired on Fox News, Wheeler and Butowsky met at the White House with the White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, to review the planned story on Seth Rich's murder. After talking to Wheeler and Butowsky, Zimmerman sent Wheeler a draft of a story without any quotes from Wheeler on May 11. On May 14, Butowsky texted Wheeler saying "Not to add any more pressure but the president just read the article. He wants the article out immediately. It's now all up to you. But don't feel the pressure." Butowsky also left a voicemail for Wheeler which said "We have the full, uh, attention of the White House on this. And tomorrow, let's close this deal, whatever we've got to do."^[143] Butowsky said Seymour Hersh confirmed a link between Rich and the FBI. Hersh confirmed the conversation with Butowsky but told NPR the link was "gossip" and that Butowsky exaggerated its significance.^[142]

In an email to Fox News, Butowsky also wrote about the purpose behind the Seth Rich story: "One of the big conclusions we need to draw from this is that the Russians did not hack our computer systems and steal emails and there was no collusion (between) Trump and the Russians." He also instructed Wheeler that "[T]he narrative in the interviews you might use is that you and [Zimmerman's] work prove that the Russians didn't hack into the DNC and steal the emails and impact our elections ... If you can, try to highlight this puts the Russian hacking story to rest."^[143]

When the story aired on Fox News, it included supposed quotes from Wheeler and was written as if the accusations against the DNC came from him. Wheeler alleges that the quotes were fabricated and should not have been attributed to him.^[142]

In later recordings Butowsky told Wheeler that the claims being attributed to him were false but says that "One day you're going to win an award for having said those things you didn't say." He also says "I know that's not true, if I'm under oath, I would say I never heard him say that."^[143]

The lawsuit was dismissed in August 2018, alongside Rich's family lawsuit against Fox, with the presiding judge ruling that there was no evidence that Fox has manipulated claims he had made on recordings, while other statements that Wheeler claimed were defamatory were considered opinion.^[144] However, information learned from the discovery phase of the lawsuit on how Fox News was handling the story were subsequently used by Rich's family in its lawsuit against the network after they successfully appealed the dismissal.^[145]

Family's reactions

In May 2017, Seth Rich's brother Aaron Rich issued a statement saying, "We simply want to find his killers and grieve. Instead, we are stuck having to constantly fight against non-facts, baseless allegations, and general stupidity to defend my brother's name and legacy."^[4] The family spokesperson said "At this point, only people with transparent political agendas or sociopaths are still perpetuating Seth Rich conspiracies."^[146]

His parents authored a piece in *The Washington Post* on May 23, 2017 titled: "We're Seth Rich's parents. Stop politicizing our son's murder," in which they wrote:

We are asking you to please consider our feelings and words. There are people who are using our beloved Seth's memory and legacy for their own political goals, and they are using your outrage to perpetuate our nightmare. We ask those purveying falsehoods to give us peace, and to give law enforcement the time and space to do the investigation they need to solve our son's murder.^[14]

In March 2018, Aaron Rich filed a lawsuit against Butowsky, Couch, America First Media, and *The Washington Times* for suggesting he had played a role in the purported theft of emails from the DNC.^[147] On October 1, 2018, as part of a settlement they had reached with Aaron Rich, *The Washington Times* retracted the relevant articles and issued an apology to Rich and his family.^[148]

Lawsuit against Fox News

In March 2018, Rich's family filed a lawsuit against Fox News, Fox reporter Malia Zimmerman, and Fox contributor Ed Butowsky, for publishing a news report about Seth Rich. The suit alleges that the report fueled conspiracy theories about Rich's death and caused the family emotional distress.^[149] Judge George B. Daniels dismissed the lawsuit in August 2018 alongside the case against Fox News from Wheeler. Judge Daniels ruled that, although it was reasonable for plaintiffs to believe their son's death was being used for political purposes, the plaintiffs failed to allege "intentional infliction" of emotional distress on the part of defendants, as that standard is determined under New York state law: "defamatory statements to news outlets 'fall well short of meeting the high standards for extreme and outrageous conduct.' They would have had to prove more extreme and persistent distress under the law."^[150]

The United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit overturned the dismissal in September 2019 saying, "the Riches plausibly alleged what amounted to a campaign of emotional torture."^[22] In subsequent proceedings, the Rich family used information from the failed Wheeler lawsuit to support further allegations towards Fox News. Among that information included the level of involvement that Butowsky had in preparing and coaching the Fox News hosts in the days before they broke their version of the Seth Rich story, his hiring of Wheeler, and his meeting with Spicer.^[145] On October 12, 2020, Fox News reached a settlement with the Rich family.^[24] The terms of the settlement were not disclosed, but were reported to be in the seven figures.^{[151][152]} The settlement did also dismissed the actions against Zimmerman and Butowsky, which eliminated the need for Fox News hosts like Hannity and Dobbs to give testimony.^[145] The settlement contained the provision that it had to be kept secret for a month.^[24]

Documentary

In April 2018, the BBC broadcast the documentary *Conspiracy Files: Murder in Washington* examining the death of Rich and subsequent theories about the death.^[153]

See also

- Crime in the District of Columbia
- Fake news in the United States
- Fringe theory
- Furtive fallacy
- List of conspiracy theories
- List of unsolved deaths

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QAnon

QAnon^[a] (/ˌkjuːəˈnɒn/), or simply **Q**, is a discredited far-right conspiracy theory alleging that a cabal of Satanic,^[1] cannibalistic pedophiles run a global child sex trafficking ring and conspired against former President Donald Trump during his term in office.^{[2][3][4][5]} QAnon is commonly described as a cult.^{[6][7][8]}

QAnon commonly asserts that Trump has been planning a day of reckoning known as the "Storm", when thousands of members of the cabal will be arrested.^{[9][10]} QAnon supporters have accused many liberal Hollywood actors, Democratic politicians, and high-ranking government officials of being members of the cabal.^[11] They have also claimed that Trump feigned conspiracy with Russians to enlist Robert Mueller to join him in exposing the sex trafficking ring and preventing a coup d'état by Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and George Soros.^{[12][13]} The QAnon conspiracy theories have been amplified by Russian state-backed troll accounts on social media,^[20] as well as Russian state-backed traditional media^{[14][21]} and networks associated with Falun Gong.^[22]



QAnon flag at a Second Amendment rally in Richmond, Virginia, in 2020

Although preceded by similar viral conspiracy theories such as Pizzagate,^{[23][24]} which has since become part of QAnon, the conspiracy theory began with an October 2017 post on the anonymous imageboard website 4chan, by "Q" (or "QAnon"), who was presumably an American individual;^[25] it is now more likely that "Q" has become a group of people acting under the same name.^{[26][27]} A stylometric analysis of Q posts claims to have uncovered that at least two people wrote as "Q" in different periods.^{[28][29]} Q claimed to be a high-level government official with Q clearance, who has access to classified information involving the Trump administration and its opponents in the United States.^[30] NBC News reported that three people took the original Q post and shortly thereafter spread it across multiple media platforms to build an Internet following for profit. QAnon was preceded by several similar anonymous 4chan posters, such as FBIAnon, HLIAnon (High-Level Insider), CIAAnon, and WH Insider Anon.^[31] Although American in origin, there is now a considerable QAnon movement outside of the United States, including in the United Kingdom and France since 2020,^[32] with a "particularly strong and growing" movement in Germany and Japan.^[33] Japanese QAnon adherents are also known as "JAnon" (Japanese: ジアノン).^[34]

QAnon adherents began appearing at Trump reelection campaign rallies in August 2018.^[35] Bill Mitchell, a broadcaster who has promoted QAnon, attended a White House "social media summit" in July 2019.^{[36][37]} QAnon believers commonly tag their social media posts with the hashtag #WWG1WGA, signifying the motto "Where We Go One, We Go All".^[38] At an August 2019 Trump rally, a man warming up the crowd used the QAnon motto, later denying that it was a QAnon reference. This occurred hours after the FBI published a report calling QAnon a potential source of domestic terrorism, the first time the agency had so rated a fringe conspiracy theory.^{[39][40]} According to analysis by Media Matters for America, as of October 2020, Trump had amplified QAnon messaging at least 265 times by retweeting or mentioning 152 Twitter accounts affiliated with QAnon, sometimes multiple times a day.^{[41][42]} QAnon followers came to refer to Trump as "Q+".^[43]

The number of QAnon adherents is unclear,^[44] but the group maintains a large online following. The imageboard website 8chan, rebranded to 8kun in 2019, is QAnon's online home, as it is the only place Q posts messages.^{[5][45][46][47]} In June 2020, Q exhorted followers in a post on 8chan to take a "digital soldiers oath"; many did, using the Twitter hashtag #TakeTheOath.^[48] In July 2020, Twitter banned thousands of QAnon-affiliated accounts and changed its algorithms to reduce the conspiracy theory's spread.^[49] A Facebook internal analysis reported in August 2020 found millions of followers across thousands of groups and pages; Facebook acted later that month to remove and restrict QAnon activity,^{[50][51]} and in October it said it would ban the conspiracy theory from its platform altogether.^[52] Followers had also migrated to dedicated message boards including EndChan, where they organized to wage information warfare in an attempt to influence the 2020 United States presidential election.^[53]

After Trump lost the election to Joe Biden, updates from Q declined dramatically. QAnon beliefs became a part of attempts to overturn the election results, culminating in the storming of the United States Capitol, leading to a further crackdown on QAnon-related content on social media.^{[54][55][56][57]} On the day of Biden's inauguration, Ron Watkins, a former site administrator for 8chan and a *de facto* leader among QAnon adherents, suggested it was time to "go back to our lives as best we are able".^{[58][59]} Other QAnon adherents believed that Biden's inauguration was "part of the plan".^[59]

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Background

Pizzagate

David Goldberg
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Twitter

On October 30, 2016, a Twitter account posting antisemitic and white supremacist material^[61] which said it was run by a Jewish New York lawyer falsely claimed that the New York City Police Department (NYPD) had discovered a pedophilia ring linked to members of the Democratic Party while searching through Anthony Weiner's emails.^{[62][63]} Throughout October and November 2016, WikiLeaks had published John Podesta's emails. Proponents of the conspiracy theory read the emails and alleged they contained code words for pedophilia and human trafficking.^{[64][65]} Proponents also claimed that Comet Ping Pong, a pizzeria in Washington, D.C., was a meeting ground for Satanic ritual abuse.^[66]

Rumors stirring in the NYPD that Huma's emails point to a pedophilia ring and @HillaryClinton is at the center. #GoHillary #PodestaEmails23

October 30, 2016^[60]

The story was later posted on fake news websites, starting with Your News Wire, which cited a 4chan post from earlier that year. The Your News Wire article was subsequently spread by pro-Trump websites, including SubjectPolitics.com, which added the claim that the NYPD had raided Hillary Clinton's property.^[62] The Conservative Daily Post ran a headline claiming the Federal Bureau of Investigation had confirmed the conspiracy theory.^[67]

Anons

In its most basic sense, an "anon" is an anonymous or pseudonymous Internet poster.^[68] The concept of anons "doing research" and claiming to disclose otherwise classified information, while a key component of the QAnon conspiracy theory, is by no means exclusive to it. Before Q, a number of so-called anons also claimed to have special government access. On July 2, 2016, the anonymous poster "FBIAnon", a self-described "high-level analyst and strategist" who claimed to have "intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the Clinton case", began posting false information about the 2016 investigation into the Clinton Foundation and claimed that Hillary Clinton would be imprisoned if Trump became president. Around that time, "HLIAnon", standing for "High Level Insider Anon", hosted long question-and-answer sessions, dispensing various conspiracy theories, including that Princess Diana was murdered after trying to stop the September 11 attacks. Soon after the 2016 United States elections, two anonymous posters, "CIAAnon" and "CIAIntern", falsely claimed to be high-ranking Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officers, and in late August 2017, "WHInsiderAnon" offered a supposed preview that something that was "going to go down" regarding leaks that would affect the Democratic Party.^[31]

Influence of 4chan culture

/htg/ or "Human Trafficking General" threads on the /pol/ board of 4chan have been called "the missing link" between Pizzagate and QAnon. Instead of focusing on a limited supply of email material to comb through, the /htg/ culture allowed users to actively participate in the imagined storylines. A key /htg/ poster was Anonymous 5 (also known as "Frank"), who claimed to be a child prostitution investigator. But the lack of a coherent narrative was a constraint on the /htg/ trend, and it never achieved Pizzagate's popularity.^[69]

The main tenets of the QAnon ideology were already present at 4chan before Q's appearance, including claims that Hillary Clinton was directly involved in a pedophile ring, that Robert Mueller was secretly working with Trump, and that large-scale military tribunals were imminent. His posts specifically targeted individuals who were highly hated in the community beforehand, namely Clinton, Barack

Obama and George Soros. The idea of the "Storm", central to the QAnon canon, was claimed to have been copied from another poster named Victory of the Light, who predicted the "Event", in which mass, televised arrests of the "Cabal" were forthcoming.^[69]

Origin and spread

A user named "Q Clearance Patriot" first appeared on the /pol/ board of 4chan on October 28, 2017, posting in a thread titled "Calm Before the Storm",^[25] a reference to Trump's cryptic description of a gathering of United States military leaders he attended as "the calm before the storm".^{[25][70]} The "Storm" became QAnon parlance for an imminent event in which thousands of alleged suspects will be arrested, imprisoned, and executed for being child-eating pedophiles.^[9] The poster's username implied that they hold Q clearance,^{[71][72]} a United States Department of Energy security clearance required to access Top Secret information on nuclear weapons and materials.^[73] An Internet community soon developed around interpreting and analyzing posts attributed to Q, and among these conspiracy theorists, several individuals became minor celebrities within the community.^{[74][75]}



A common logo used by QAnon followers.

According to a Reuters report, Russian-backed Twitter accounts played a role in propagating QAnon claims as early as November 2017.^{[15][17]}

In November 2017, Paul Furber, Coleman Rogers, and Tracy Diaz, two 4chan moderators and a YouTuber respectively, worked together to propagate QAnon to a wider audience.^{[76][77]} Some QAnon followers have accused the trio of profiting off of the movement.^[31] The three then created a Reddit community that was influential in spreading the conspiracy theory until they were banned and the subreddit was closed in March 2018, which Reddit explained was due to incitement of violence and posting private information.^[31] QAnon spread to other social media, including Twitter and YouTube.^[74] Rogers and his wife, Christina Urso, launched Patriots' Soapbox, a YouTube livestream dedicated to QAnon, which they used to solicit donations. Its guests have included Congress member Lauren Boebert and a Trump campaign publicist.^[76] Posts by Q later moved to 8chan, with Q citing concerns that the 4chan board had been "infiltrated".^[31] 8chan was shut down in August 2019 after it was connected with the 2019 El Paso shooting and other violent incidents, leading adherents of QAnon to move to Endchan and later a revived 8chan, now known as 8kun.^{[43][53]}

QAnon first received attention from mainstream press in December 2017, and in the early months of 2018 the conspiracy theory received traction from the mainstream right. Television host Sean Hannity and entertainer Roseanne Barr spread news about QAnon to their social media followers. InfoWars host and far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones claimed to be in personal contact with Q. The presence *en masse* of QAnon adherents at a July 2018 Trump rally for the midterm elections in Tampa, Florida, marked the conspiracy theory's entry into the mainstream.^{[23][74]}

Sites dedicated to aggregating these Q posts, also called Qdrops, became essential for their dissemination and spread. QMap was the most popular and famous aggregator, run by a pseudonymous developer and overall key QAnon figure known as "QAPPANON".^{[78][79]} But QMap shut down shortly after a September 2020 report was published by the fact-checking website *Logically*, which theorized that QAPPANON was a New Jersey-based security analyst named Jason Gelinis.^{[79][80]}

Between March and June 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, QAnon activity nearly tripled on Facebook and nearly doubled on Instagram and Twitter.^[81] By that time, QAnon had spread to Europe, from the Netherlands to the Balkan Peninsula. It maintains an especially strong following in Germany. Far-right activists and influencers have created a German audience for QAnon on YouTube, Facebook, and Telegram estimated at 200,000. One German Reichsbürger group adopted QAnon to promote its belief that modern Germany is not a sovereign republic, but rather a corporation created by Allied nations after World War II, and expressed its hope that Trump would lead an army to restore the *Reich*.^[82] In Russia, a similar conspiracy theory, the "Union of Slavic Forces of Russia" or "Soviet Citizens"—which claims the Russian Federation is a Delaware-based LLC that occupies the legal territory of the Soviet Union—also became susceptible to QAnon beliefs.^[83] Many Canadians have also propagated QAnon,^{[84][85][86]} and one in four Britons are said to believe in QAnon-related theories, though only six percent support QAnon.^[87] Charlie Ward and Martin Geddes are listed by Hope not Hate as influential British promoters of QAnon, with Geddes "[running] one of the most popular QAnon Twitter accounts in the world".^[88]

The movement has also spread to Spain and Latin America,^[89] with countries like Costa Rica, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay and Brazil having an online presence.^[90] According to an investigation by Costa Rica's largest newspaper, *La Nación*, its Facebook page spreads misinformation and fake news, calls to depose President Carlos Alvarado and extols right-wing figures like far right presidential candidate Juan Diego Castro Fernández and controversial deputies Dragos Dolanescu Valenciano and Erick Rodríguez Steller.^[91] In Spain, the far-right Vox party was accused of endorsing anti-Biden conspiracy theories linked to QAnon in its Twitter account by claiming that Biden was the candidate "preferred by pedophiles".^[92] An RTVE news report found that most Spanish QAnon supporters identified Vox as their preferred political party.^[93]

University of Southern California professor and data scientist Emilio Ferrara found that about 25% of accounts that use QAnon hashtags and retweet *InfoWars* and One America News Network are bots.^[94]

In February 2021, a poll by the American Enterprise Institute found that 29% of Republicans believe the central claim of QAnon, that "Donald Trump has been secretly fighting a group of child sex traffickers that include prominent Democrats and Hollywood elites."^[95] A March 2021 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute and Interfaith Youth Core found similar results: Republicans (28%) were twice as likely as Democrats (14%) to agree that the "elites" would soon be swept from power by a coming "storm"; Republicans (23%) were three times as likely as Democrats (8%) to agree that "Satan-worshipping pedophiles" control the government and media; and Republicans (28%) were four times as likely as Democrats (7%) to agree that "true American patriots may have to resort to violence" to resolve the situation.^[96]

Pastel QAnon is a collection of techniques aimed predominantly at indoctrinating women into the conspiracy theory, mainly on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram and TikTok.^{[97][98]} It uses feminine-coded aesthetics (including a pastel color palette, from which it gets its name), language, activities and communities, and uses gateway messaging to frame the conspiracies as reasonable concerns.^{[99][97]} Concordia University, Canada, researcher Marc-André Argentino identified the trend.^[100]

Conspiracy claims

The conspiracy theory has been widely characterized as "baseless"^{[35][101]} and "evidence-free".^[102] Its proponents have been called "a deranged conspiracy cult"^[13] and "some of the Internet's most *outré* [unconventional] Trump fans".^[103] It is disseminated mainly by Trump supporters, who refer to **the**

Storm and the Great Awakening. QAnon's precepts and vocabulary are closely related to the religious concepts of millenarianism and apocalypticism,^[9] leading it to be sometimes construed as an emerging religious movement.^{[43][104][105]} QAnon's adherents, while seeing Trump as a flawed Christian, also view him as a messiah sent by God.^{[42][21][106]}

According to Travis View, a host of the QAnon Anonymous podcast who has studied the theory and written about it extensively for The Washington Post, the essence of the conspiracy theory is that:

... there is a worldwide cabal of Satan-worshiping pedophiles who rule the world, essentially, and they control everything. They control politicians, and they control the media. They control Hollywood, and they cover up their existence, essentially. And they would have continued ruling the world, were it not for the election of President Donald Trump. Now, Donald Trump in this conspiracy theory knows all about this evil cabal's wrongdoing. But one of the reasons that Donald Trump was elected was to put an end to them, basically. And now we would be ignorant of this behind-the-scenes battle of Donald Trump and the U.S. military – that everyone backs him and the evil cabal – were it not for "Q". And what "Q" is is basically a poster on 4chan, who later moved to 8chan, who reveals details about this secret behind-the-scenes battle, and also secrets about what the cabal is doing and also the mass sort of upcoming arrest events through these posts.^[9]

Followers of QAnon also believe that there is an imminent event known as the "Storm", when thousands of members of the cabal will be arrested and possibly sent to Guantanamo Bay prison or to face military tribunals, and the U.S. military will brutally take over the country.^[9] The result will be salvation and utopia on earth.^[107]

Failed predictions

QAnon's first prediction was that Hillary Clinton was about to be arrested and would attempt to flee the country. This prediction failed. Other failed predictions include:^[109]

1. The "Storm" would take place on November 3, 2017. There were no notable events in US politics on that day.
2. The "Storm" would take place on January 20, 2021, the day of Biden's inauguration. No coup took place and Biden was peacefully inaugurated.^[110]
3. A major event involving the Department of Defense would take place on February 1, 2018.
4. People targeted by the president would commit suicide *en masse* on February 10, 2018. No prominent people committed suicide that day.
5. There would be a car bombing in London around February 16, 2018. There was no bombing.
6. The Trump military parade would "never be forgotten". The parade was canceled.
7. The Five Eyes "won't be around much longer".
8. Something major would happen in Chongqing on April 10, 2018. Nothing notable happened in Chongqing that day.

HRC extradition already in motion effective yesterday with several countries in case of cross border run. Passport approved to be flagged effective 10/30 @ 12:01 am. Expect massive riots organized in defiance and others fleeing the US to occur. US M's will conduct the operation while NG activated. Proof check: Locate a NG member and ask if activated for duty 10/30 across most major cities.

—QAnon's first post on the /pol/ message board of 4chan, on October 28, 2017^[108]

9. There would be a "bombshell" revelation about North Korea in May 2018. There were no notable developments.
10. A "smoking gun" video of Hillary Clinton would emerge in March 2018. No video appeared.
11. Multiple failed predictions that John McCain would resign from the US Senate. McCain remained in the Senate until his death in August 2018.
12. Multiple failed predictions that Mark Zuckerberg would leave Facebook and flee the United States. Zuckerberg remains CEO of Facebook as of June 2021.
13. Multiple failed predictions that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey would be forced to resign. Dorsey remains CEO of Twitter as of June 2021.
14. Multiple failed predictions that Pope Francis would be arrested on felony charges.
15. Multiple failed predictions that "something big" would happen or the truth would emerge "next week".
16. Multiple failed predictions that Donald Trump would be re-inaugurated on January 20, 2021 despite losing the election. Joe Biden was inaugurated as planned on January 20.^[111]
17. Donald Trump would be inaugurated on March 4, 2021, as the 19th president. This claim stems from a conspiracy theory stating that the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1871 made the United States into a corporation (a theory developed by the sovereign citizen movement).^[112] Therefore, Trump would have been inaugurated as the 19th president (after Ulysses S. Grant) and the country would cease to be a corporation and once again become the country started by the Founding Fathers.^{[113][114]} March 4 is the inauguration date because the 20th Amendment changed the date to January 20, and no amendments to the U.S. Constitution since 1869 are recognized.^[115] Joe Biden remains the incumbent and 46th president of the United States.
18. Donald Trump would be inaugurated again on March 20, 2021. After the failed prediction that Trump would be inaugurated on March 4, 2021, QAnon "delayed" the inauguration date to March 20, 2021.^[116] Joe Biden remains the President of the United States.

False claims

As well as the failed predictions, Q has posted numerous false, baseless, and unsubstantiated claims, such as:

1. That the CIA installed North Korean leader Kim Jong-un as a puppet ruler.^[117]
2. A February 16, 2018, false claim that U.S. representative and former Democratic National Committee chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz hired Salvadoran gang MS-13 to murder DNC staffer Seth Rich.^{[70][118]}
3. A March 1, 2018, apparent suggestion that German chancellor Angela Merkel is Adolf Hitler's granddaughter.^[119]
4. A July 7, 2018, *Daily Beast* article noted that Q falsely claimed that "each mass shooting is a false-flag attack organized by the cabal."^[11]
5. That Obama, Hillary Clinton, George Soros, and others are planning a coup against Trump and are involved in an international child sex-trafficking ring.^{[120][121]}
6. That the Mueller investigation is actually a counter-coup led by Trump, who pretended to conspire with Russia in order to hire Mueller to secretly investigate the Democrats.^[13]
7. That the Rothschild family leads a satanic cult.^[12] Similar political allegations and rumors have circulated since the 1970s. Typically the allegations revolved around investigators using existing Satanic cults to lure and blackmail left-wing activists, or in the case of the Franklin child prostitution ring allegations, Satanic sexual abuse perpetrated by elite Republicans. A significant difference between the older narratives and the QAnon of today is that now elite Democrats are considered the villains instead of Republicans.^[122]

Evolution of Q's claims

Q's posts have become more cryptic and vague, allowing followers to map their own beliefs onto them.^[123] Some posts include strings of characters that are allegedly coded messages.

On multiple occasions, Q has dismissed their false claims and incorrect predictions as deliberate, claiming that "disinformation is necessary".^{[124][125][126]} This has led Australian psychologist Stephan Lewandowsky to emphasize the "self-sealing" quality of the conspiracy theory, highlighting its anonymous purveyor's use of plausible deniability and noting that evidence against it "can become evidence of [its] validity in the minds of believers".^[108] Author Walter Kirn has described Q as an innovator among conspiracy theorists by enthralling readers with "clues" rather than presenting claims directly: "The audience for internet narratives doesn't want to read, it wants to write. It doesn't want answers provided, it wants to search for them."^[127]

Link to Miracle Mineral Solution

QAnon theorists have touted drinking an industrial bleach (known as MMS, or Miracle Mineral Solution) as a "miracle cure" for COVID-19.^{[128][129][130]}

Usage of #SaveTheChildren and Freedom for the Children

As in Pizzagate, QAnon followers believe that children are being abducted in large numbers to supply a child trafficking ring. By 2020, some followers began using the Twitter hashtag **#SaveTheChildren** (#SaveOurChildren was also used),^[131] coopting a trademarked name for the child welfare organization Save the Children, leading to an August 7 statement by Save the Children on the unauthorized use of its name in campaigns.^[132] Data from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children indicates that the overwhelming majority of missing children are runaways; the second-largest cause is abduction by family members. Less than 1% are abductions by non-family members.^{[133][134]} In September, Facebook and Instagram tried to prevent **#SaveTheChildren** being associated with QAnon by redirecting users who searched for the hashtag towards the child welfare group;^[135] in October, Facebook announced that it would try to limit the hashtag's reach.^[136] In the same timeframe, QAnon followers also created a conspiracy theory claiming that furniture company Wayfair had secret arrangements to sell and ship victims of child trafficking.^{[137][138]}



"#SAVEOURCHILDREN" graffiti on a bridge in Lufkin, Texas

Similarly, "Freedom for the Children" groups both in the US and in the UK helped organize street protests that they say are raising awareness of child sexual abuse and human trafficking.^{[139][140]} These protests tend to attract a more diverse and younger crowd than typical QAnon groups, including many people who do not fully believe all aspects of the QAnon conspiracy theory,^[141] and have often been able to avoid social media restrictions.^[142]

Identity of Q

Some researchers believe the pseudonymous identity known as Q has been controlled by multiple people in cooperation.^[76] A stylometric analysis has suggested that two people likely wrote Q's posts during different periods.^{[28][29]}

By design, anonymous imageboards such as 4chan and 8chan obscure their posters' identities.^{[76][144]} Those who wish to prove a consistent identity between posts while remaining anonymous can use a tripcode, which associates a post with a unique digital signature for any poster who knows the password.^{[43][5]} There have been thousands of posts associated with a Q tripcode, known as "Q drops".^[43] The tripcode associated with Q has changed several times, creating uncertainty about the poster's continuous identity.^[43] Passwords on 8chan are also easy to crack, and the Q tripcode has been repeatedly compromised and used by people pretending to be Q.^[145] When 8chan returned as 8kun in November 2019 after several months of downtime, the Q posting on 8kun posted photos of a pen and notebook that had been pictured in earlier 8chan posts to show the continuation of the Q identity, and continued to use Q's 8chan tripcode.^[43]

There has been much speculation about Q's motives and identity. A range of theories, held by both QAnon believers and critics, credit Q's posts to sources including a military intelligence officer, a Trump administration insider, an alternate reality game created by the puzzle organization Cicada 3301, or Trump himself.^{[26][75]}

Since the Q tripcode was uniquely verified by 8chan's server and not reproducible on other imageboards, and Q did not have another means of communication, Q was not able to post when the website went down after the 2019 El Paso shooting.^[146] This apparent conflict of interest, combined with statements by 8chan's founder Fredrick Brennan, the use of a "Q" collar pin by 8chan owner Jim Watkins, and Watkins's financial interest in a QAnon super PAC that advertises on 8chan, have led numerous journalists and conspiracy theory researchers to believe that Watkins^[147] or his son, 8chan's former administrator Ron Watkins, work with Q, know Q's identity, or are Q.^{[43][47][80][148][149]} Both Watkinses deny knowing Q's identity.^{[43][150]} Documentary filmmaker Cullen Hoback spent three years with the Watkinses and Brennan, investigating the origins of QAnon and its connection to 8chan. In the last episode of *Q: Into the Storm*, the 2021 HBO docuseries he produced from this research, Hoback showed his final conversation with Ron Watkins, who stated on camera, "I've spent the past ... almost ten years, every day, doing this kind of research anonymously. Now I'm doing it publicly, that's the only difference. ... It was basically ... three years of intelligence training teaching normies how to do intelligence work. It was basically what I was doing anonymously before but never as Q". Watkins then corrected himself, saying, "Never as Q. I promise. Because I am not Q, and I never was."^{[151][152][153]} Hoback viewed this as an inadvertent admission from Watkins, and concluded from this interview and his other research that Ron Watkins is Q.^[153] Ron Watkins again denied being Q shortly before the series premiered.^[154]



A QAnon flag based on the flag of the United States.^[143]



Outside the US. Capitol during the January 6, 2021 riot, a Trump supporter carries a placard depicting Jesus in a MAGA hat with the QAnon hashtag "#WWG1WGA" visible in the lower right.

Analysis

QAnon may best be understood as an example of what historian Richard Hofstadter called "The Paranoid Style in American Politics", the title of his 1964 essay on religious millenarianism and apocalypticism.^[9] QAnon's vocabulary echoes Christian tropes, such as the "Storm" (the Genesis flood narrative or Judgement Day) and the "Great Awakening" (evoking the reputed historical religious Great Awakenings of the early 18th century to the late 20th century). According to one QAnon video, the battle between Trump and "the cabal" is of "biblical proportions", a "fight for earth, of good versus evil". Some QAnon supporters say the forthcoming reckoning will be a "reverse rapture": not only the end of the world as we know it, but a new beginning, with salvation and utopia on earth for the survivors.^[107]

Some Christian pastors have introduced their congregations to QAnon ideas, with at least one ministry combining QAnon and Christianity in its services.^[155]

In less than a year of existence, QAnon became significantly recognized by the general population. According to an August 2018 Qualtrics poll for *The Washington Post*, 58% of Floridians were familiar enough with QAnon to have an opinion about it. Of those who had an opinion, most were unfavorable. The average score on the feeling thermometer was just above 20, a very negative rating, and about half of what other political figures enjoy.^{[103][156]} Positive feelings toward QAnon were found to be strongly correlated with being susceptible to conspiracy thinking.^[156]

According to a March 2020 Pew survey, 76% of Americans said they had never heard of QAnon, 20% had heard "a little about it", and 3% said they had heard "a lot".^{[157][158]} A September 2020 Pew survey of the 47% of respondents who said they had heard of QAnon found that 41% of Republicans and those who lean Republican believed QAnon is good for the country, while 7% of Democrats and those who lean Democratic believed that.^[159]

An October 2020 Yahoo-YouGov poll found that even if they had not heard of QAnon, a majority of Republicans and Trump supporters believed top Democrats were engaged in sex-trafficking rings and more than half of Trump supporters believed he was working to dismantle the rings.^[160]

Role of antisemitism

The Washington Post and *The Forward* magazine have called QAnon's targeting of Jewish figures like George Soros and the Rothschilds "striking anti-Semitic elements" and "garden-variety nonsense with racist and anti-Semitic undertones".^{[13][161]} A Jewish Telegraphic Agency article in August 2018 asserted: "Some of QAnon's archetypical elements – including secret elites and kidnapped children, among others – are reflective of historical and ongoing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories."^[162]

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported that while "the vast majority of QAnon-inspired conspiracy theories have nothing to do with anti-Semitism", "an impressionistic review" of QAnon tweets about Israel, Jews, Zionists, the Rothschilds, and Soros "revealed some troubling examples" of antisemitism.^[163]

An antisemitic canard published in 1903 called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has intersected with QAnon conspiracy theories, with Republican QAnon fan Mary Ann Mendoza retweeting a Twitter thread about the Rothschild family, Satanic High Priestesses, and American presidents saying, "*The Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion* is not a fabrication. And, it certainly is not anti-Semitic to point out this fact."^{[164][165]} Mendoza sits on the advisory board of Women for Trump and was scheduled to speak at the 2020 Republican convention until news of her Twitter activity came out;^[166] she later denied

knowing the content of the thread, although anti-Semitic references appeared in the first few tweets.^[167] Similarly, Trump has denied knowledge of QAnon except that QAnon fans like him and "love our country".^[168]

By 2020, QAnon followers were advancing the notion that Hollywood elites were engaging in "adrenochrome harvesting", in which adrenalin is extracted from children's blood to produce the psychoactive drug adrenochrome. Adrenochrome harvesting is rooted in antisemitic myths of blood libel.^{[169][170][171]} QAnon believers have also promoted a centuries-old antisemitic trope about an international banking conspiracy orchestrated by the Rothschild family.^[172]

Genocide scholar Gregory Stanton described QAnon as a "Nazi group rebranded", and its theories as a rebranded version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.^{[8][173]}

Appeal

Experts have classified QAnon's appeal as comparable to those of religious cults. According to an expert in online conspiracy, Renee DiResta, QAnon's pattern of enticement is similar to that of cults in the pre-Internet era where, as the targeted person was led deeper and deeper into the group's secrets, they become increasingly isolated from friends and family outside the cult.^[174] Online support groups developed for those whose loved ones were drawn into QAnon, notably the subreddit r/QAnonCasualties, which grew from 3,500 participants in June 2020 to 28,000 by October.^[175] In the Internet age, QAnon virtual communities have little "real world" connection with each other, but online they can number in the tens of thousands.^[174] Rachel Bernstein, an expert on cults who specializes in recovery therapy, said, "What a movement such as QAnon has going for it, and why it will catch on like wildfire, is that it makes people feel connected to something important that other people don't yet know about. ... All cults will provide this feeling of being special." There is no self-correction process within the group, since the self-reinforcing true believers are immune to correction, fact-checking, or counter-speech, which is drowned out by the cult's groupthink.^[174] QAnon's cultish quality has led to its characterization as a possible emerging religious movement.^{[43][104][105]} Part of its appeal is its gamelike quality, in which followers attempt to solve riddles presented in Qdrops by connecting them to Trump speeches and tweets and other sources.^[31] Some followers use a "Q clock" consisting of a wheel of concentric dials to decode clues based on the timing of Qdrops and Trump's tweets.^[43]

Travis View, a researcher who studies QAnon, says that it is as addictive as a video game, and offers the "player" the appealing possibility of being involved in something of world-historical importance. According to View, "You can sit at your computer and search for information and then post about what you find, and Q basically promises that through this process, you are going to radically change the country, institute this incredible, almost bloodless revolution, and then be part of this historical movement that will be written about for generations." View compares this to mundane political involvement in which one's efforts might help to get a state legislator elected. QAnon, says View, competes not in the marketplace of ideas, but in the marketplace of realities.^[176]

Conspiracy theories have tended to make headway in times of societal uncertainty, and help people to feel more in control in the face of disturbing information.^[177] Survey data showed in late 2020 that a quarter of those who knew about QAnon think there's some truth to it.^[177] In a conspiracy theory environment, primary institutions of society that once served as trusted impartial authorities are easily rejected if they contradict the conspiracy's beliefs, making it very difficult to counter a believer's thinking.^[177]

Disillusionment

Some QAnon believers realize that they have been isolated from loved ones, and suffer loneliness. This leads some to abandon the beliefs, but for others reinforces the benefits of belonging to the cult. View says:

People in the QAnon community often talk about alienation from family and friends. ... Though they typically talk about how Q frayed their relationships on private Facebook groups. But they think these issues are temporary and primarily the fault of others. They often comfort themselves by imagining that there will be a moment of vindication sometime in the near future which will prove their beliefs right. They imagine that after this happens, not only will their relationships be restored, but people will turn to them as leaders who understand what's going on better than the rest of us.^[178]



Jake Angeli, a prominent proponent of QAnon, carrying a "Q Sent Me" placard

Some followers break away when they recognize the theories are inconsistent, or see that some elements are aimed at driving donations from sources such as evangelical or conservative Christians. Some watch Q-debunking videos; one former believer said that the videos "saved" her.^[178]

Disillusionment can also come from the failure of the theories' predictions. Q predicted Republican success in the 2018 US midterm elections and claimed that Attorney General Jeff Sessions was involved in secret work for Trump, with apparent tensions between them a cover. When Democrats made significant gains and Trump fired Sessions, there was disillusionment among many in the Q community.^{[179][180]} Further disillusionment came when a predicted December 5 mass arrest and imprisonment in Guantanamo Bay detention camp of Trump's enemies did not occur, nor did the dismissal of charges against Trump's former national security advisor Michael Flynn. For some, these failures began the process of separation from the QAnon cult, while others urged direct action in the form of an insurrection against the government. Such a response to a failed prophecy is not unusual: apocalyptic cults such as Heaven's Gate, the People's Temple, the Manson Family, and Aum Shinrikyo resorted to mass suicide or mass murder when their expectations for revelations or the fulfillment of their prophecies did not materialize. Psychologist Robert Lifton calls it "forcing the end". This phenomenon is being seen among some QAnon believers.^[178] View echoes the concern that disillusioned QAnon believers might take matters into their own hands^[107] as Pizzagate believer Edgar Maddison Welch did in 2016, Matthew Phillip Wright did at Hoover Dam in 2018, and Anthony Comello did in 2019, when he murdered Mafia boss Frank Cali, believing himself to be under Trump's protection.

QAnon follower Liz Crokin, who in 2018 asserted that John F. Kennedy Jr. faked his death and is now Q,^[181] said in February 2019 that she was losing patience in Trump to arrest the supposed members of the child sex ring, suggesting that the time was approaching for "vigilante justice".^[182] Other followers have adopted the Kennedy conspiracy theory, asserting that a Pittsburgh man named Vincent Fusca is Kennedy in disguise and would be Trump's 2020 running mate. Some attended 2019 Independence Day celebrations in Washington expecting Kennedy to appear.^{[183][184]}

The Sabmyk Network is a network of Telegram channels promoting QAnon that primarily targets QAnon believers who have been disillusioned by Q's predictions' failure to happen.^[185] Set up by controversial German artist Sebastian Bieniek, the network (described as a new religion or cult) shares mainline QAnon beliefs^[186] but also believes in an idiosyncratic mythology surrounding a leader-prophet, Sabmyk, who will lead humanity's "awakening".^[185] The network has tried to link Trump to Sabmyk.^[186]

Terrorism threat

FBI domestic terrorism assessment

A May 30, 2019, FBI "Intelligence Bulletin" memo from the Phoenix Field Office identified QAnon-driven extremists as a domestic terrorism threat. The document cited a number of arrests related to QAnon, some of which had not been publicized before.^[187] According to the memo, "This is the first FBI product examining the threat from conspiracy theory-driven domestic extremists and provides a baseline for future intelligence products. ... The FBI assesses these conspiracy theories very likely will emerge, spread, and evolve in the modern information marketplace, occasionally driving both groups and individual extremists to carry out criminal or violent acts."^{[187][188]}

According to FBI's counterterrorism director Michael G. McGarrity's testimony before Congress in May, the FBI divides domestic terrorism threats into four primary categories, "racially motivated violent extremism, anti-government/anti-authority extremism, animal rights/environmental extremism, and abortion extremism", which includes both pro-choice and anti-abortion extremists. The fringe conspiracy theory threat is closely related to the anti-government/anti-authority subject area.^{[187][188]}

An under-reported QAnon-related incident was mentioned in the memo: the December 19, 2018, arrest of a California man whose car contained bomb-making materials he intended to use to "blow up a satanic temple monument" in the Springfield, Illinois, Capitol rotunda to "make Americans aware of Pizzagate and the New World Order, who were dismantling society". According to the same source, the FBI said another factor driving the intensity of this threat is "the uncovering of real conspiracies or cover-ups involving illegal, harmful, or unconstitutional activities by government officials or leading political figures".^[187]

QAnon followers' reactions included the suggestion the memo was fake, calling for the firing of FBI director Christopher A. Wray for working against Trump, and the idea that the memo was actually a "wink-and-a-nod" way of attracting attention to QAnon and tricking the media into asking Trump about it.^[189] At a Trump reelection rally several hours after the memo's existence became known, WalkAway campaign founder Brandon Straka, a gay man who claims to have been a liberal Democrat but is now a Trump supporter, addressed the crowd using one of QAnon's primary rallying cries, "Where we go one, we go all." A videographer found numerous QAnon supporters in the crowd, identified by their QAnon shirts showing large "Q"'s or "WWG1WGA".^[39]

Role in U.S. elections and government

2019 congressional candidates

Two people who declared themselves as Republican congressional candidates in 2019 expressed interest in QAnon theories. Matthew Lusk, a Florida candidate, told *The Daily Beast* he was not a "brainwashed cult member", saying QAnon theories are a "legitimate something" and constitute a "very articulate

screening of past events, a very articulate screening of present conditions, and a somewhat prophetic divination of where the political and geopolitical ball will be bouncing next".^[190] Danielle Stella, running as a Republican to unseat Ilhan Omar in Minnesota, wore a "Q" necklace in a photo she tweeted^[191] and twice used the hashtag #WWG1WGA, a reference to the QAnon motto "where we go one, we go all". Her Twitter account "liked" responses from QAnon believers who acknowledged the necklace, and the account follows some prominent QAnon believers. A former campaign aide asserted that Stella was merely posing as a QAnon believer to attract voter support.^{[192][193]}

Incidents related to Trump's 2020 campaign

QAnon supporters claim that they were asked to cover up their "Q" identifiers and other QAnon-related symbols at a Trump campaign rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, on August 15, 2019. Although one person who was asked to turn his "Q" shirt inside out when he entered the rally identified the person who asked him to do so as a Secret Service agent, the agency denied this, saying in an email to *The Washington Post*, "The U.S. Secret Service did not request, or require, attendees to change their clothing at an event in New Hampshire." QAnon supporters also claim that their visibility at Trump rallies has been suppressed for months.^[194]



Man wearing "We Are Q" shirt at Trump rally in New Hampshire

In August 2019, a video posted online by "Women for Trump" late in July was reported to include "Q"s on two campaign signs. The first sign, which said "Make America Great Again", had a "Q" taped to it in the corner. The other side, "Women for Trump" had the "O"s in "Women" and "for" pasted over with "Q"s. The images which included the altered signs were clearly taken at a Trump campaign rally, which have increasingly attracted adherents of the QAnon conspiracy theory, so it is unknown if those particular signs were selected for inclusion deliberately or not.^[195] The video has since been taken down.^[196]

In July 2020, *Business Insider* reported that according to Media Matters for America, a left-leaning media monitoring group, Trump's reelection campaign relied on a network of QAnon-related accounts to spread disinformation and propaganda on social media, especially Twitter. An analysis of 380,000 tweets sent between early April and the end of May 2020, and another of the most popular words used by 1,000 accounts, showed that the QAnon network "is playing a key role in generating and spreading Trump's propaganda".^[197]

The Washington Post reported at the beginning of August 2020 that adverts for Trump's campaign had shown images of supporters with prominent QAnon merchandise. Thousands of comments on YouTube saw these details as signs of victory.^[106]

The New York Times wrote that QAnon adherents had been shaken by Trump's defeat in the 2020 presidential elections, following years of reassurance that Trump would win by a landslide. Some followers repeated baseless claims that there had been widespread voter fraud and that Trump had actually been reelected, while others began to accept Biden's victory.^[147] On the day of Biden's inauguration, participants on 8kun differed in their views on the future of their cause. Ron Watkins, a former 8kun administrator and major figure in spreading QAnon,^[198] suggested it was time to "go back to our lives as best we are able" and "as we enter into the next administration please remember all the friends and happy memories we made together over the past few years." A board moderator deleted the

Q message history and was threatened with death after the content was restored by others. Some suggested that Biden was "part of the plan".^[59] Many became disillusioned; the alt-right, white nationalists and neo-Nazis thereafter aimed to recruit such people.^{[110][199][200]}

In February 2021, Media Matters published analysis finding that QAnon adherents were praising the recent 2021 Myanmar coup d'état, in which the military overthrew the democratically elected government, and advocating a similar coup in the United States.^[201] In May 2021, Michael Flynn addressed a Dallas QAnon conference when an audience member said, "I want to know why what happened in Myanmar can't happen here." Flynn responded, "No reason. I mean, it should happen here. No reason. That's right." After his words were reported, Flynn asserted he had "not at any time called for any action of that sort" and accused the press of "boldface fabrication based on twisted reporting".^{[202][203]} He had suggested in December 2020 that Trump should suspend the Constitution, silence the press, and hold a new election under military authority.^[204]

Sidney Powell appeared at the same conference, falsely asserting that Trump "can simply be reinstated, that a new Inauguration Day is set", eliciting cheers from the crowd.^[205] Two days after Powell's remarks, Maggie Haberman of *The New York Times* tweeted that Trump "has been telling a number of people he's in contact with that he expects he will get reinstated by August."^{[206][207]}

Other 2020 electoral candidates and members of Congress

Marjorie Taylor Greene, a businesswoman, won an August 2020 runoff to become the GOP nominee in the heavily Republican 14th Congressional District in Georgia. Months into the Trump presidency, she had stated in a video: "There's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take this global cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles out, and I think we have the president to do it."^[208] She has made racist and antisemitic statements, which led Republican leaders such as Kevin McCarthy and Steve Scalise to condemn her remarks.^{[209][210]} Trump endorsed her candidacy the day after her nomination, characterizing her as a "future Republican Star" and "a real WINNER!"^{[211][212]}

After Greene won a primary runoff election in Georgia in August, Illinois Republican Representative Adam Kinzinger denounced QAnon, calling it a "fabrication".^[213] Trump campaign staffer Matt Volking responded aggressively to Kinzinger, saying, "he should condemn the Steele Dossier and conspiracy theories promoted by Democrats."^[214] Kinzinger went on to create a political action committee, "Country First," launched just weeks after the January 2021 storming of the Capitol, dedicated to fighting the influence of conspiracy theories within the GOP.^[215]

Jo Rae Perkins, the 2020 Republican Senate candidate in Oregon, tweeted a video on the night of her May primary victory showing her holding a WWG1WGA sticker and stating, "I stand with President Trump. I stand with Q and the team. Thank you Anons, and thank you patriots. And together, we can save our republic." She expressed regret at having later deleted the video on the advice of a political consultant.^{[216][217][218]} The next month she tweeted a video of her taking the "digital soldiers oath" that Q had requested followers to do three days earlier.^{[219][48]}

On June 30, 2020, incumbent Republican U.S. representative Scott Tipton lost a primary for Colorado's 3rd congressional district to Lauren Boebert in an upset. Boebert expressed tentative support for QAnon in an interview, but after winning the primary, attempted to distance herself from those statements, saying "I'm not a follower."^{[220][221]} In July 2020, *Business Insider* reported, "At least 10 GOP Congressional candidates have signaled their support for the QAnon movement."^[197] Boebert was elected to Congress the following November.^[222]

In September 2020, political newcomer Lauren Witzke defeated a party-endorsed candidate to become the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate in Delaware. Witzke has promoted QAnon on Twitter and been photographed wearing a Q t-shirt, although during the campaign she distanced herself from the movement. She has also called herself a "flat-earther" and in September called her Democratic opponent Chris Coons a "Christian-hating baby-killer", adding "I'm coming for your seat, Satanist."^{[223][224]} In the November general election, Coons defeated Witzke, 59–38%.^[225]

Angela Stanton-King, a Trump-backed candidate running for the Georgia House seat of the late congressman John Lewis, posted on Twitter that Black Lives Matter is "a major cover up for PEDOPHILIA and HUMAN TRAFFICKING" and "THE STORM IS HERE". Stanton-King told a reporter that her posts did not relate to QAnon, asserting, "It was raining that day." Weather records did not show precipitation in her area on the day of the post.^[226]

Texas Republican Party slogan

In August 2020, *The New York Times* suggested that the Texas Republican Party had chosen a new slogan taken directly from QAnon. Texas Republican Party officials denied this and claimed that the slogan ("We Are the Storm") was inspired by a biblical passage and has no connection to QAnon.^{[227][228]}

Congressional resolution

On August 25, 2020, two members of the U.S. House of Representatives, Democrat Tom Malinowski and Republican Denver Riggleman, introduced a bipartisan simple resolution (H. Res. 1154) condemning QAnon and rejecting its conspiracy theories.^{[229][230]} Malinowski said the resolution's aim was to formally repudiate "this dangerous, anti-Semitic, conspiracy-mongering cult that the FBI says is radicalizing Americans to violence".^[229] The resolution also urged the FBI and other law enforcement and homeland security agencies "to continue to strengthen their focus on preventing violence, threats, harassment, and other criminal activity by extremists motivated by fringe political conspiracy theories" and encouraged the U.S. Intelligence Community "to uncover any foreign support, assistance, or online amplification QAnon receives, as well as any QAnon affiliations, coordination, and contacts with foreign extremist organizations or groups espousing violence".^[230]

In September 2020, Malinowski received death threats from QAnon followers after he was falsely accused of wanting to protect sexual predators. The threats were prompted by a National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) campaign advertisement that falsely claimed that Malinowski worked against plans to increase registration for sex offenders in a 2006 crime bill while he was working as a lobbyist for Human Rights Watch.^{[231][232][233]}

The resolution passed on October 2, 2020, in a 371–18 vote.^{[230][231]} Seventeen Republicans (including Steve King, Paul A. Gosar, and Daniel Webster) and one independent (Justin Amash) voted no; Republican Andy Harris voted "present".^{[230][231][234]} The resolution does not have the force of law.^[234] Before the vote, Malinowski told *Slate* magazine, referencing the NRCC ad: "I don't want to see any Republicans voting against fire on the House floor this week and then continuing to play with fire next week by running these kinds of ads against Democratic candidates."^[235]

Comments by Trump and connected individuals

Donald Trump

According to analysis by Media Matters, as of August 20, 2020, Trump had amplified QAnon messaging at least 216 times by retweeting or mentioning 129 QAnon-affiliated Twitter accounts, sometimes multiple times a day.^{[41][42]} On November 26, 2017, Trump retweeted a post by Twitter account @MAGAPILL, a self-styled "official President Donald Trump accomplishment list" and major QAnon proponent, less than a month after QAnon first started posting.^[103] On September 9, 2019, Trump retweeted a video from the QAnon-promoting Twitter account "The Dirty Truth". The video featured future director of national intelligence John Ratcliffe criticizing former FBI director James Comey.^[236] On August 24, 2018, Trump hosted William "Lionel" Lebron, a leading QAnon promoter, in the Oval Office for a photo op.^{[237][238][239]} Shortly after Christmas 2019, Trump retweeted over a dozen QAnon followers.^[240]

On August 19, 2020, Trump was asked about QAnon during a press conference; he replied: "I don't know much about the movement, other than I understand they like me very much, which I appreciate. But I don't know much about the movement."^[241] An FBI Field Office in Phoenix has called QAnon a potential domestic terror threat, but Trump called QAnon adherents "people who love our country".^{[242][241]} When a reporter asked Trump if he could support a notion that suggests he "is secretly saving the world from this satanic cult of pedophiles and cannibals", he responded: "Well, I haven't heard that, but is that supposed to be a bad thing or a good thing?" Presidential candidate Joe Biden responded that Trump was aiming to "legitimize a conspiracy theory that the FBI has identified as a domestic terrorism threat".^{[243][2]}

On October 15, 2020, when given the opportunity to denounce QAnon at a "town hall"-style campaign event, Trump refused to do so and instead pointed out that QAnon opposes pedophilia.^[244] He said he knew nothing else about QAnon and told his questioner, Savannah Guthrie of NBC News, that no one can know whether the premise of QAnon's conspiracy theory is true. "They believe it is a satanic cult run by the deep state," Guthrie informed him. When Guthrie asserted that the conspiracy was not true, Trump responded, "No, I don't know that. And neither do you know that."^[245]

Mike Pence

On August 21, 2020, Vice President Mike Pence said that he "doesn't know anything about" QAnon except that it is a conspiracy theory that he dismisses "out of hand".^[247] When asked whether he would acknowledge the administration's role in "giving oxygen" to the belief, Pence shook his head and said, "Give me a break."^[247] In August 2020, Pence said that the problem with the press asking about QAnon and about anyone's apparent efforts to encourage it is that the press is asking the wrong questions ("chasing shiny objects").^[248]

Michael Flynn

In August 2019, a "Digital Soldiers Conference" was announced for the following month in Atlanta. The stated purpose was to prepare "patriotic social media warriors" for a coming "digital civil war". The announcement for the event prominently displayed a Q spelled in stars on the blue field of an American flag. Scheduled speakers for the event included former Trump aides Michael Flynn and George Papadopoulos, as well as Gina Loudon, a Trump friend and member of his campaign media advisory board, singer Joy Villa, and Bill Mitchell, a radio host and ardent Trump supporter.^{[143][249]} The host of the event, Rich Granville, is CEO of Yippy, Inc., a firm that markets the Yippy search engine, which it claims is free of censorship of conservative views, characterizing it as an "intelligence enterprise" with

high-level White House connections. He told a reporter, "you don't know who you're fucking with" and denied the Q flag was a reference to QAnon, though he had had numerous references to QAnon on his Twitter account.^[250]

On July 4, 2020, Michael Flynn (the former lieutenant general, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, and National Security Advisor to Trump) posted to his Twitter account a video of himself leading a small group in an oath with the QAnon motto, "Where we go one, we go all."^[251] Analysts say the oath is part of QAnon's attempt to organize "digital soldiers" for the political and social apocalypse they see coming. Flynn's apparent declaration of allegiance to QAnon makes him the most prominent former government official to endorse the conspiracy theory, although Trump has retweeted or mentioned at least 152 QAnon-affiliated Twitter accounts at least 265 times, according to analysis conducted by Media Matters.^{[252][41]}

Flynn's attorney Sidney Powell denied the oath related to QAnon, saying it was merely a statement engraved on a bell on John F. Kennedy's sailboat. But during preceding days numerous QAnon followers had taken the same so-called "digital soldier oath" on Twitter, using the same #TakeTheOath hashtag Flynn did.^{[253][254]}

In March 2021, Flynn's brother, retired Lieutenant General Jack Flynn, and his wife filed a \$75 million defamation suit against CNN, alleging the network had falsely accused them of being QAnon followers. They asserted that the video Flynn had posted in July 2020, and which CNN had broadcast, depicted their pledging an oath to the Constitution, rather than to QAnon. The suit claimed Flynn alone had recited the QAnon motto, "where we go one, we go all", though the video showed all the other participants had done so. The plaintiffs also said they "are not followers or supporters of any extremist or terrorist groups, including QAnon".^{[255][256][252]}

Other Trump associates

On three occasions during 2019 and 2020, Trump's deputy chief of staff and social media director Dan Scavino tweeted ticking-clock memes QAnon believers use to signify the countdown until the "Storm".^[227] Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, has also occasionally retweeted posts with the #QAnon hashtag and of the limited number of accounts he follows (224 as of October 2019) many are QAnon advocates.^{[42][257]} Eric Trump, in a summer 2020 tweet (later deleted), promoted his father's rally in Tulsa with an image of a large "Q" and the text "Where we go one, we go all."^[106]

Reactions



U.S. vice president Mike Pence with members of the SWAT team of Broward County, Florida, on November 30, 2018; the man on the left of the image is displaying a red and black "Q" patch used by believers of the QAnon conspiracy theory. The photo was tweeted, removed, and then replaced in Pence's feed.



Detail from the photo showing the QAnon patch. The black-and-white patch to the left has been reported to be that of the SWAT team. Regulations forbid wearing either patch, and the deputy was reprimanded and removed from the SWAT team as a result.^[246]

On December 28, 2017, the Russian television network RT aired a segment discussing "QAnon revelations", calling the anonymous poster a "secret intelligence operative inside the Trump administration known by QAnon".^[72] Although Russia was not involved in QAnon's origins, Russian-backed social media accounts propagated early QAnon claims as early as November or December 2017.^[17] Russian government-funded Russian state media such as RT and Sputnik have been amplifying the conspiracy theory since 2019, citing QAnon as evidence that the United States is riven by internal strife and division.^{[14][21]} In 2021, a report from the Soufan Center, a research group focused on national security, found that one-fifth of 166,820 QAnon posts in the US between January 2020 and February 2021 originated in foreign countries, primarily Russia and China.^{[258][259]}

On March 13, 2018, Cheryl Sullenger, the vice president of the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue, called QAnon a "small group of insiders close to President Donald J. Trump" and called their posts the "highest level of intelligence to ever be dropped publicly in our known history".^{[260][261]} On March 15, Kyiv-based *Rabochaya Gazeta*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Ukraine, published an article calling QAnon a "military intelligence group".^[262] On March 31, U.S. actress Roseanne Barr appeared to promote QAnon, which was subsequently covered by CNN, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*.^{[263][264][265][266]}

On June 28, 2018, a *Time* magazine article listed Q among the 25 Most Influential People on the Internet in 2018. Counting more than 130,000 related discussion videos on YouTube, *Time* cited the wide range of the conspiracy theory and its more prominent followers and news coverage.^[267] On July 4, the Hillsborough County Republican Party shared on its official Facebook and Twitter accounts a YouTube video on QAnon, calling them a "mysterious anonymous inside leaker of deep state activities and counter activities by President Trump". The posts were soon deleted.^{[103][268]}

On August 1, 2018, following the previous day's large presence of QAnon supporters at President Trump's Tampa, Florida rally for the mid-term elections,^{[13][269]} MSNBC news anchors Hallie Jackson, Brian Williams, and Chris Hayes dedicated a portion of their respective television programs to the conspiracy theory.^{[270][271][272]} *PBS NewsHour* also ran a segment on QAnon the next day.^[273] On August 2, *Washington Post* editorial writer Molly Roberts wrote, "'The storm' QAnon truthers predict will never strike because the conspiracy that obsesses them doesn't exist. But while they wait for it, they'll try to whip up the winds, and the rest of us will struggle to find shelter."^[274] On August 4, former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer was asked to comment on QAnon in his "ask me anything" session on the /r/The Donald subreddit. In response to the question "Is Q legit?" Spicer answered "No."^[275]

Reaction of online platforms

Publishing of personal information

On March 14, 2018, Reddit banned one of its communities discussing QAnon, /r/CBTS_Stream, for "encouraging or inciting violence and posting personal and confidential information".^[276] After that, some followers moved to Discord.^[277] Several other communities were formed for discussion of QAnon, leading to further bans on September 12, 2018, in response to these communities "inciting violence, harassment, and the dissemination of personal information", which led to thousands of adherents regrouping on Voat,^[278] a Switzerland-based Reddit clone that has been described as a hub for the alt-right.^{[279][280]}

QDrops app

QDrops, an app that promoted the conspiracy theory, was published on the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).^[281] It became the most popular paid app in Apple's online store's the "entertainment" section in April 2018, and the tenth-most popular paid app overall. It was published by Tiger Team Inc., a North Carolina couple, Richard and Adalita Brown.^{[282][283][284]} On July 15, 2018, Apple pulled the app after an inquiry from [NBC News](#).^[285]

In mid-May 2020, Google removed three other apps – QMAP, Q Alerts! and Q Alerts LITE – from the Android app store for violating terms.^{[286][287]}

Removal of related content

In early 2019, Twitter removed accounts suspected of being connected to the [Russian Internet Research Agency](#) that had disseminated a high volume of tweets related to #QAnon that also used the #WWG1WGA slogan.^{[14][16]}

On May 5, 2020, Facebook announced its removal of five pages, twenty accounts, and six groups linked to "individuals associated with the QAnon network" as part of an investigation into "suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior" ahead of the [2020 United States election](#).^{[288][289]} On August 19, Facebook expanded its Dangerous Individuals and Organizations policy to address "growing movements that, while not directly organizing violence, have celebrated violent acts, shown that they have weapons and suggest they will use them, or have individual followers with patterns of violent behavior". As a result of this increased vigilance, Facebook reported having already "removed over 790 groups, 100 Pages and 1,500 ads tied to QAnon from Facebook, blocked over 300 hashtags across Facebook and Instagram, and additionally imposed restrictions on over 1,950 Groups and 440 Pages on Facebook and over 10,000 accounts on Instagram".^{[14][290][291][292]} In the first month after its August announcement, Facebook said it deleted 1,500 QAnon groups; such groups by then had four million followers. On October 6, 2020, Facebook said it would immediately begin removing "any Facebook Pages, Groups and Instagram accounts representing QAnon, even if they contain no violent content". The company said it would immediately ban any group representing QAnon.^{[293][294][295]}

On July 21, 2020, Twitter announced it was banning more than seven thousand accounts in connection with QAnon for coordinated amplification of fake news and conspiracy theories. In a press release, Twitter said, "We've been clear that we will take strong enforcement action on behavior that has the potential to lead to offline harm. In line with this approach, this week we are taking further action on so-called 'QAnon' activity across the service." It also said that the actions may apply to over 150,000 accounts.^{[296][297]}

Facebook banned all QAnon groups and pages on October 6, 2020. That day, QAnon followers speculated that the action was part of a complex Trump administration strategy to begin arresting its enemies, or that Facebook was attempting to silence news of this occurring; neither is true. Some followers speculated that a Justice Department "national security" news conference scheduled for the next day would relate to charges against Democrats, including Hillary Clinton. The Justice Department actually announced the investigation and arrest of Islamic State members.^[298]

On October 7, 2020, it was announced that [Etsy](#) would remove all QAnon-related merchandise from its online marketplace.^[299]

In an October 12, 2020 interview with CNN, YouTube CEO [Susan Wojcicki](#) said much QAnon material was "borderline content" that did not explicitly break its rules, but that changes in the site's methodology for recommendations had reduced views of QAnon-related content by 80%.^[300] Three days later, YouTube announced that it had modified its hate and harassment policies to bar "content that targets an

individual or group with conspiracy theories that have been used to justify real-world violence", such as QAnon and Pizzagate.^{[301][302]} It would still allow content discussing QAnon if it did not target individuals.^[303]

The hashtags associated with QAnon have since been banned by numerous social networks including Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram.

Efforts to defuse QAnon

Suggestions for making progress responding to QAnon and reducing its impact on society have included actions for individuals on social media and the social media platform companies;^[304] some social media forums, such as the subreddits r/QAnonCasualties and r/ReQovery, aim to assist either former believers and supporters of QAnon conspiracies or those whose family members engaged in the conspiracy.^[177] An online game has been developed that helps players understand how misinformation spreads, in part due to research showing that people who understand those mechanisms are less likely to be hooked themselves, although *Go Viral!* was developed specifically for COVID-19 misinformation.^{[177][305]}

Accusations of being a psyop

In January 2021, after the storming of the Capitol, many prominent conservatives, such as Steve Bannon and Bill Still, began to denounce QAnon, accusing it of being a "psyop" created by U.S. Intelligence or the FBI.^{[306][307]}

Incidents

Tucson cement plant incident

In May 2018, Michael Lewis Arthur Meyer livestreamed a Facebook video from the site of a Tucson cement plant, asserting, "This is a child sex trafficking camp that no one wants to talk about, that no one wants to do nothing about." The video was viewed 650,000 times over the ensuing week. Tucson police inspected the plant without finding evidence of criminal activity. Meyer then occupied a tower on the property for nine days, until reaching agreement with police to leave. He later returned to the tower in July, whereupon he was arrested for trespassing. Meyer referenced QAnon and the #WWG1WGA hashtag on his Facebook page.^{[308][309][310]}

Hoover Dam incident

On June 15, 2018, Matthew Phillip Wright of Henderson, Nevada, was arrested on terrorism and other charges for driving an armored truck,^[311] containing an AR-15 and handgun, to the Hoover Dam and blocking traffic for 90 minutes.^[312] He said he was on a mission involving QAnon: to demand that the Justice Department "release the OIG report" on the conduct of FBI agents during the investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server.^{[27][35][313]} Since a copy of the Office of the Inspector General report had been released the day before, the man had been motivated by a Q "drop" which claimed the released version of the report had been heavily modified and that Trump possessed a more damning version but had declined to release it. In video recorded inside his armored truck, Wright expressed disappointment that Trump had not honored a "duty" to "lock certain people up", asking him to "uphold your oath".^{[35][314]}

Wright was found guilty and, on December 17, 2020, sentenced to seven years on a terrorism charge and nine months consecutively for unlawful flight.^[315]

Targeting of Michael Avenatti

On July 29, 2018, Q posted a link to Stormy Daniels's attorney Michael Avenatti's website and photos of his Newport Beach, California, office building, along with the message, "Buckle up!" The anonymous poster then shared the picture of a still unidentified man, appearing to be holding a cellphone in one hand and a long, thin object in the other, standing in the street near Avenatti's office, adding that a message "had been sent". This sparked an investigation by the Newport Beach Police Department. On July 30, Avenatti asked his Twitter followers to contact the Newport Beach Police Department if they "have any details or observed" the man in the picture.^{[316][317][318]}



Matthew Wright's armored vehicle used to block a bridge over the Hoover Dam on the Nevada-Arizona border

Harassment of Jim Acosta

At a Trump rally in Tampa, Florida, on July 31, 2018, Trump supporters exhibited hostile behavior toward CNN chief White House correspondent Jim Acosta. Exponents of QAnon-related theories were at the rally.^[319]

The next day, David Martosko of the *Daily Mail* asked White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders whether the White House encouraged the support of "QAnon fringe groups". Sanders denounced "any group that would incite violence against another individual", without specifically responding to the QAnon mention.^[320] Sanders added that Trump "certainly doesn't support groups that would support that type of behavior".^{[321][322]}

Grass Valley Charter School fundraiser

The Blue Marble Jubilee fundraising event at Grass Valley Charter School in Grass Valley, California scheduled for May 11, 2019, was canceled as a precaution after a tweet by former FBI head James Comey on April 27 using the hashtag #FiveJobsIveHad, in which the first letters of the jobs were GVCSF, was interpreted by QAnon followers as a veiled reference to the Grass Valley Charter School Foundation, suggesting that Comey planned to stage a "false flag" terror attack at the event; the hashtag was also interpreted by QAnon adherents as an anagram of "five jihads", and the time stamp on the post was related to the 9/11 attacks. The police and the FBI received warnings, in addition to the school, which decided not to take the risk of Internet vigilantes attending "to guard the place", as a police sergeant put it.^{[323][324]}

Murder of Frank Cali

Anthony Comello of Staten Island, New York, was charged with the March 2019 murder of Gambino crime family underboss Frank Cali. According to his defense attorney, Comello had become obsessed with QAnon theories, believing Cali was a member of a "deep state" and was convinced he "was enjoying the protection of President Trump himself" to place Cali under citizen's arrest. Confronting Cali outside his Staten Island home, Comello allegedly shot Cali ten times. At his first court appearance, Comello

displayed QAnon symbols and phrases and "MAGA forever" scrawled on his hand in pen.^{[325][326]} Comello had also posted material on Instagram praising Fox News personalities such as Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson and Jeanine Pirro.^[327]

Kidnapping incidents

In December 2019, Cynthia Abcug was arrested and charged in Colorado with conspiracy to commit second-degree kidnapping of one of her children who had been removed from her custody. Her other daughter reported to police that Abcug had been collaborating with an armed male who was "definitely part of this group QAnon", that her mother had gone to QAnon meetings and believed that the child had been taken by "evil Satan worshippers" and "pedophiles".^[328] Abcug pleaded not guilty to the charge in September 2020 and was tried in February 2021.^[329]

On March 20, 2020, Neely Blanchard was arrested and charged with kidnapping and custodial interference after taking her two daughters who had been in the sole legal custody of their grandmother. Blanchard had made multiple social media posts promoting QAnon including memes and pictures of her wearing QAnon shirts at Trump rallies. She also has taken actions connected with the sovereign citizen movement.^[330]

Tintagel flag

In January 2020, John Mappin (also affiliated with Turning Point UK) began to fly a Q flag at the Camelot Castle hotel near to Tintagel Castle in England.^[331] Advocacy group Hope not Hate said, "Mappin is an eccentric figure, considered outlandish even by his fringe rightwing peers. This childish ploy is a weak attempt at getting attention for himself and his marginal Turning Point UK organisation, and is better off being ignored."^[332]



QAnon flag flown at the Camelot Castle hotel near to Tintagel Castle

Jessica Prim arrest

In April 2020, Jessica Prim was arrested carrying several knives after live-streaming her attempt to "take out" presidential nominee Joe Biden. Prim was arrested in New York City on a pier where she appeared to have been trying to get to the U.S. Navy Hospital Ship Comfort. QAnon claimed the ship was used by a cabal of pedophiles. During her arrest, Prim was reportedly shown crying and asking police, "Have you guys heard about the kids?"^[333]

Before her arrest, Prim posted on Facebook that Hillary Clinton and Biden "need to be taken out" and that "Hillary Clinton and her assistant, Joe Biden and Tony Podesta need to be taken out in the name of Babylon! ... I can't be set free without them gone. Wake me up!!!!!"^[333]

Prim's Facebook page was filled with references to QAnon. She encouraged her Facebook followers to check out QAnon "clues". In a video posted just hours before her arrest, Prim ranted about a video that she believed depicted Hillary Clinton and an aide murdering a child.^{[333][334]}

Misinformation on the 2020 Western United States wildfire season

As wildfires spread across large parts of the Western U.S. in September 2020, false rumors spread on social media that antifa activists were setting fires and preparing to loot property that was being evacuated. Some residents refused to evacuate based on the rumors, choosing to defend their homes from the supposed invasion. Authorities pleaded with residents to ignore the false rumors.^[335] A firefighters' union in Washington state described Facebook as "an absolute cesspool of misinformation" on the topic. QAnon followers participated in the misinformation, with one false claim that six antifa activists had been arrested for setting fires amplified by Q specifically.^{[336][337]} Days earlier, Trump and Attorney General Bill Barr had amplified false social media rumors that planes and buses full of antifa activists were preparing to invade communities, allegedly funded by George Soros.^{[338][339][340][341][342][343]}

2020 presidential election

Near Philadelphia's Convention Center, where mail-in ballots were being counted, two men from Virginia were taken into custody based on a tip of a threat of an attack with AR-15s. Bumper stickers on their truck referenced QAnon.^{[344][345]}

As baseless allegations of voting fraud spread following Trump's defeat in the election, QAnon followers advanced a hoax that voting machines made by Dominion Voting Systems had deleted millions of Trump votes. The hoax was repeated on the far-right cable news outlet One America News Network, and Trump tweeted about it.^{[346][347]} The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency announced that the election was the most secure in American history, with "no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes or was in any way compromised".^[348]

Based on a false interpretation of the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1871, according to which it transformed the federal government into a corporation and rendered illegitimate every president elected thereafter, some QAnon adherents believed that the 18th president (Ulysses S. Grant, who was in office 1869–1877) was the last legitimate president. They believed that Trump would be sworn in as the 19th president on March 4, 2021, the original inauguration date until the Twentieth Amendment changed it to January 20 in 1933, and that he would restore the federal government.^[349] Based on intelligence that an identified but undisclosed militia group might attempt an attack on the Capitol on that date, the U.S. Capitol Police issued an alert on March 3. House leadership subsequently rescheduled a March 4 vote to the previous night to allow lawmakers to leave town.^[350] However, Newsweek reported a recent skepticism towards the March 4 idea developing among QAnon adherents, who rescheduled the purported date of Trump's re-inauguration to March 20, the 167th anniversary of the founding of the Republican Party.^[351]

Storming of the U.S. Capitol

Ashli Babbitt, a U.S. veteran who was shot by police while storming the United States Capitol building, was described as an adherent of QAnon and had retweeted conspiracy theory attorney L. Lin Wood in the final days of her life.^{[352][353]} Other QAnon-affiliated protesters either wore clothing with Q-related emblems or were identified as QAnon followers from video footage.^{[353][354]} Jake Angeli (QAnon Shaman), the man seen in photos wearing fur, is a QAnon supporter and was arrested on January 9, 2021.^[355] On January 12, Facebook and Twitter announced that they were removing "Stop the Steal" content and suspending 70,000 QAnon-focused accounts, respectively.^[356] On April 19, 2021, the Soufan Center reported that Russia and China had amplified and "weaponized" QAnon stories around the time of the storming of the Capitol "to sow societal discord and even compromise legitimate political processes."^{[357][358]}

Interruption of Ghislaine Maxwell court hearing

On January 19, 2021, a hearing on the unsealing of documents related to a settled Ghislaine Maxwell civil defamation suit with Virginia Roberts Giuffre was interrupted after it was discovered that someone present was unlawfully streaming the proceedings on YouTube. The unauthorized stream reached approximately 14,000 viewers, including a contingent of QAnon supporters, before it was shut off after the judge warned the room.^{[359][360][361]}



A QAnon emblem (*upper left*) is raised during the 2021 storming of the United States Capitol.

See also

- Apophenia – tendency to mistakenly perceive connections and meaning between unrelated things
- Cult of personality
- List of conspiracy theories
- Moral panic – feeling of fear spread among many people that some evil threatens the well-being of society
- Nostradamus – 16th-century French reputed seer who published cryptic poetic quatrains in *Les Prophéties*, allowing for subjective interpretations
- Ong's Hat – Internet conspiracy alternate reality game
- Operation Mockingbird – alleged CIA operation to manipulate the media which is occasionally referenced in the QAnon conspiracy theory
- QAnon Anonymous – anti-QAnon investigative podcast
- Satanic Panic – a moral panic in the United States involving allegations of a global Satanic cult that abused children
- Secret decoder ring – promotional items by radio and television programs that tap into a common fascination with secret codes
- John Titor – anonymous Internet personage active 2000–2001 who made several failed predictions
- Trumpism

Explanatory notes

- a. The term originally referred to the anonymous poster "Q", but some media outlets have started to use the compound "QAnon" as a collective term for either the conspiracy theory or the community driving and discussing it.

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Conspiracy theories in the Arab world

Conspiracy theories are a prevalent feature of Arab culture and politics. Prof. Matthew Gray writes they "are a common and popular phenomenon." "Conspiracism is an important phenomenon in understanding Arab Middle Eastern politics ..." ^[1] Variants include conspiracies involving colonialism, Zionism, superpowers, oil, and the war on terrorism, which may be referred to as a War against Islam. ^[1] Roger Cohen theorizes that the popularity of conspiracy theories in the Arab world is "the ultimate refuge of the powerless", ^[2] and Al-Mumin Said noted the danger of such theories in that they "keep us not only from the truth but also from confronting our faults and problems..." ^[3]

Gray points out that actual conspiracies such as the 1957 plot to seize control of the Suez Canal encourage speculation and creation of imagined conspiracies. ^[4] After the 1967 Six-Day War which resulted in a decisive Arab defeat, conspiracy theories started to gain traction in the Arab world. The war was perceived as a conspiracy by Israel and the United States—or its opposite: a Soviet plot to bring Egypt into the Soviet sphere of influence. ^[5] Thomas Friedman notes the numerous conspiracy theories concerning the Lebanese civil war. They "were usually the most implausible, wild-eyed conspiracy theories one could imagine ... Israelis, the Syrians, the Americans, the Soviets, or Henry Kissinger—anyone but the Lebanese—in the most elaborate plots to disrupt Lebanon's naturally tranquil state." ^[6]

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Jewish conspiracies

The Anti-Defamation League lists Zionist conspiracies including spreading poisons (Jan 1995, *Al-Ahram*), spreading AIDS (*Al-Shaab*), blood rituals (June 1995, *Al-Ahram*), leading an international conspiracy against Islam (March 1995, *Al-Ahram*), and creating the myth of the Holocaust (Dec 1995 – Feb 1996, *Egyptian Gazette*). ^[7]

Conspiracy theories holds the Jews responsible for killing American Presidents Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, and causing the French and Russian revolutions. ^[8] Zionists are seen as a threat to the world. ^[8] A widespread conspiracy theory after the September 11 attacks blamed Israel and Mossad for the attacks. ^{[9][10][11][12]}

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an infamous hoax document purporting to be a Jewish plan for world domination, is commonly read and promoted in the Muslim world.^{[13][14][15]}

Conspiracy theorists in the Arab world have claimed that ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was in fact an Israeli Mossad agent and actor called Simon Elliot. The rumors claim that NSA documents leaked by Edward Snowden reveal this connection. Snowden's lawyer has called the story "a hoax."^{[16][17][18]}

In early 2020, according to Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) reports, there have been numerous reports in the Arab press that accused the US and Israel of being behind the creation and spread of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic as part of an economic and psychological war against China. One report in the Saudi daily newspaper *Al-Watan* claimed that it was no coincidence that the coronavirus was absent from the US and Israel, despite the US having had at least 12 confirmed cases. The US and Israel have also been accused of creating and spreading other diseases, including Ebola, Zika, SARS, avian flu and swine flu, through anthrax and mad cow disease.^[19]

Animal-related conspiracy theories

Animal-related conspiracy theories involving Israel are prominent, alleging use of animals by Israel to attack civilians or to conduct espionage. These conspiracies are often reported as evidence of a Zionist or Israeli plot. Examples include the December 2010 shark attacks in Egypt and the 2011 capture in Saudi Arabia of a griffon vulture carrying an Israeli-labeled satellite tracking device.^{[20][21]}

Writing in *The Times*, James Hider linked the responses to the shark incident with those to the vulture incident and ascribed the reactions in Arab countries to "paranoia among Israel's enemies and its nominal friends", adding that "evidence of Mossad using animals is scant."^[22]

Gil Yaron wrote in *The Toronto Star* that "Many animals undoubtedly serve in Israel's army and security services: dogs sniff out bombs and alpaca help mountaineers carry their loads. [...] But tales about the use of sharks, birds, rodents or, as has also been claimed, insects in the service of the military are more the fruit of imagination than hard fact."^[23]

American conspiracies

Following Egypt's 2012 presidential election, an Egyptian television station^[24] stated that the United States government and Egypt's ruling military council had rigged the election in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi.^[25] The theory was seen as fueling a 15 July 2012 attack of tomatoes and shoes by Egyptian Copt protestors on the motorcade of the visiting US Secretary of State.^{[26][27]} The widespread view that America was conspiring to support Morsi prompted President Barack Obama to note that conspiracy theories abound both alleging US support for and against Morsi.^{[11][12][28][29]} The rise of the Islamic State gave rise to conspiracy theories that it had been created by the US, CIA, Mossad, or Hillary Clinton.^{[30][31]} The same happened after the rise of Boko Haram.^{[32][33]}

Conspiracy theorists in the Arab world have advanced rumors that the US is secretly behind the existence and emboldening of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, as part of an attempt to further destabilize the Middle East. After such rumors became widespread, the US embassy in Lebanon issued an official statement denying the allegations, calling them a complete fabrication.^[34]

The "War against Islam" conspiracy

"War against Islam", also called the "War on Islam" or "Attack on Islam", is a conspiracy theory narrative in Islamist discourse to describe an alleged conspiracy to harm, weaken or annihilate the societal system of Islam, using military, economic, social and cultural means. The perpetrators of the conspiracy are alleged to be non-Muslims, particularly the Western world and "false Muslims", allegedly in collusion with political actors in the Western world. While the contemporary conspiracy theory narrative of the "War against Islam" mostly covers general issues of societal transformations in modernization and secularization as well as general issues of international power politics among modern states, the Crusades are often narrated as its alleged starting point.



Different groups of Egyptians have accused the United States of supporting and opposing Mohamed Morsi.

Other conspiracies

After the fall of Morsi, xenophobic conspiracy theories have singled out Palestinians and Syrian refugees as part of a plot to bring the Muslim Brotherhood back to power. Pro-Morsi supporters single out Saudis and Emiratis as part of a counter conspiracy.^[11]

A common conspiracy theory is about soft drink brands Coca-Cola and Pepsi, that the drinks deliberately contain pork and alcohol and their names carry pro-Israel and anti-Islamic messages.^{[35][36][37]}

See also

- Conspiracy theories in Turkey

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Conspiracy theories in Turkey

Conspiracy theories are a prevalent feature of culture and politics in Turkey. Conspiracism is an important phenomenon in understanding Turkish politics.^[1] This is explained by a desire to "make up for our lost Ottoman grandeur",^[1] the humiliation of perceiving Turkey as part of "the malfunctioning half" of the world,^[2] and a low level of media literacy among the Turkish population.^[3]

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The prevalence of conspiracy theorizing in Turkey

Roots and causes

Prominent Turkish author and journalist Mustafa Akyol describes the reason for the prevalence of conspiracy theorizing in Turkey as "it makes us feel important. If the world is conspiring against us, we must be really special. It is, I believe, the way we Turks make up for our lost Ottoman grandeur."^[1] Turkish economist Selim Koru has pointed to the humiliation of perceiving Turkey as part of the "malfunctioning [half]" of the world.^[2]

Turkish consumers are the second-most media illiterate when compared to countries in Europe, leaving them especially vulnerable to fake news, a 2018 report released by the Open Society Institute said. A combination of low education levels, low reading scores, low media freedom and low societal trust went into making the score, which saw Turkey being placed above only North Macedonia.^[3] According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018, Turkey with some distance is the country with most made-up news reports in the world.^[4]

Distinct features

A distinct feature of conspiracy theorizing in Turkey is that at the alleged command and control end of an alleged conspiracy scheme there are usually narrated to be state governments; this is due to an extreme state-centric worldview taught in the Turkish education system.^[5]

Doğan Gürpınar; a scholar whose areas of study include nationalism, historiography, and ideologies in Turkey; argues that conspiracism's power to shape intellectual discourse and ideological standpoints as well as represent the state tradition is unique to Turkey.^[6]

Conspiracy theorizing since before the AKP era

Before the AKP era, conspiracy theorizing in Turkey was generally directed against "the West",^[1] but also focused on Armenian genocide denial.

Conspiracy theory that the Armenian genocide is invented

Turkish Armenian genocide denialists typically argue the academic consensus of it being a genocide as anti-Turkish propaganda or as a conspiracy spread by the Armenians, instead claiming that it either did not occur or that it was somehow justified at the time.^{[7][8]}

Death of Özal

Some people believe that Turgut Özal, 8th president of Turkey, was assassinated in 1993. He was a supporter of a Great Turkic Union, therefore he is poisoned after Turkic nations gained independence after dissolution of the Soviet Union. Main supporter of this theory is Özal's wife Semra Özal.^[9]

Conspiracy theorizing during the AKP era

Since the AKP came to power in 2002, conspiracy theories have gradually grown to dominate public discourse in Turkey.^[1] Mustafa Akyol summarizes the situation as follows: "Under Erdogan's leadership, Turkey began to rise as a global power after a century of frailty. Since this New Turkey represents global justice for all the downtrodden, all the dark masters of the world are now alarmed by its glorious march. That is why they are using all their pawns against Turkey to defame, weaken, or destabilize it."^[1]

The general "Mastermind" conspiracy theory narrative

In 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan coined the term "mastermind" (Turkish: *üst akıl*) to denote the alleged command and control institution, somewhat ambiguously placed with the government of the United States, in a comprehensive conspiracy to weaken or even dismember Turkey, by orchestrating every political actor and action perceived hostile by Turkey.^{[10][11][1]} Erdoğan as well as the *Daily Sabah* have often alleged that very different non-state actors — like the Salafi jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Islamist cult with political ambitions around Fethullah Gülen — were attacking Turkey at the same time in a well-coordinated campaign.^[5]

A notable instance of promoting the "Mastermind" conspiracy theory was in February 2017 then Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek claiming that an earthquake in Çanakkale had been artificially generated by foreign powers.^{[12][13]} Similar claims have been made before, such as that the earthquakes of İzmit and Van were "generated" by the USA through the HAARP.^{[14][15]} In another example in November 2017, the Islamist newspaper Yeni Akit claimed that the fashion trend of "ripped denim" jeans would in fact be a means of communication, via specific forms of rips and holes, between agents of foreign states and their collaborators in Turkey.^[16] Throughout 2017, the Turkish AKP government increasingly started to explicitly name the United States as the alleged "mastermind".^[5]

According to a poll from April 2018, 42 percent of Turks, and 59 percent of AKP voters, saw the decline in the lira as a plot by foreign powers.^[17] On 30 May, foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu claimed that the plunge of the lira would have been caused by an organized campaign masterminded abroad, adding that the conspiracy would include both "the interest rate lobby" and "some Muslim countries", which he however refused to name.^[18] In August 2018, Erdoğan started using the formula of "the world fighting an economic war against Turkey".^[19]

Journalist Ömer Turan asserted that Netflix Turkey's teaser trailer for Money Heist contained messages aiming to incite the "second wave" of the Gezi Park protests.^[20] Similar remarks were made by Melih Gökçek later on.^[21]

Conspiracy theories directed against Israel

In the course of the 2006 Crimean–Congo hemorrhagic fever outbreak in Turkey, Felicity Party member Abdullah Uzun claimed that the tick species that spread the disease was brought to Turkey by Israeli female tourists.^[22]

In May 2012, a dead European bee-eater with an Israeli leg-band, used by naturalists to track migratory birds, was found by villagers near the southeastern Turkish city of Gaziantep. The villagers worried that the bird may have carried a micro-chip from Israeli intelligence to spy on the area and alerted local officials. The head of the Agriculture and Livestock Provincial Directorate in Gaziantep, Akif Aslanpay, examined the corpse of the bee-eater and stated that he found that "the nose of the bird is very different and much lighter than others" and that it "can be used for audio and video," which, "in the case of Israel, they do."^[23] A counter-terrorism unit became involved before Turkey's agriculture ministry assured villagers that it is common to equip migratory birds with rings in order to track their movements. The BBC correspondent, Jonathan Head, ascribed the event to his view that "wildly implausible conspiracy theories take root easily in Turkey, with alleged Israeli plots among the most widely believed."^[24]

In 2013, a kestrel carrying an Israeli foot band was discovered by villagers in the Elazığ Province, Turkey. Initially, medical personnel at Firat University identified the bird as "Israeli Spy" in their registration documents. After thorough medical examinations, including X-ray scans, the bird was determined to be carrying no electronic equipment.^[25] No charges were filed and the kestrel was freed and allowed to continue its flight.^[26]

In 2018, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım called Israel's Eurovision victory an "imperialist plot devised to ensure that Jerusalem becomes the following year's host and to provoke interreligious conflict."^[27]

A frequent claim that sees the Coca-Cola Company as an Israeli company or a company that gives financial aid to Israel led to its products being boycotted by some.^{[28][29]}

The "War against Islam" conspiracy theory narrative

"War against Islam", also called the "War on Islam" or "Attack on Islam", is a conspiracy theory narrative in Islamism discourse to describe an alleged conspiracy to harm, weaken or annihilate the societal system of Islam, using military, economic, social and cultural means. The perpetrators of the conspiracy are alleged to be non-Muslims, particularly the Western world and "false Muslims", allegedly in collusion with political actors in the Western world. While the contemporary conspiracy theory narrative of the "War against Islam" mostly covers general issues of societal transformations in modernization and secularization as well as general issues of international power politics among modern states, the Crusades are often narrated as its alleged starting point. The English-language political neologism of "War on Islam" was coined in Islamist discourse in the 1990s and popularized as a conspiracy theory only after 2001.^[30]

The secret articles of the Treaty of Lausanne

It has been claimed in civil and formal circles that the Treaty of Lausanne will expire in 2023. According to the conspiracy theory, Turkey is forbidden to mine its natural resources (such as boron and petroleum) due to the "secret articles" of the treaty; therefore, Turkey will rapidly become a developed country by mining and exporting its resources once the treaty expires.^[31]

See also

- Conspiracy theory
- Conspiracy theories in the Arab world
- American political conspiracy theories
- List of conspiracy theories

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List of political conspiracies

This is a **list of political conspiracies**. In a political context, a conspiracy refers to a group of people united in the goal of damaging, usurping, or overthrowing an established political power. Typically, the final goal is to gain power through a revolutionary coup d'état or through assassination. A conspiracy can also be used for infiltration of the governing system.

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References

Further reading

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- 1971 BCE - Apophis Kush Alliance against Egypt as attested to in the second Kamose stele^[1]
- 63 BCE - First Catilinarian conspiracy and the Second Catilinarian conspiracy^[2]
- 44 BCE - Liberatores plot assassination of Julius Caesar to restore Roman Republic^[3]
- 65 CE - Pisonian conspiracy^[4]
- 1478 Pazzi conspiracy, a plot by Pope Sixtus IV and the Pazzi family to depose the House of Medici in the Republic of Florence^[5]
- 1506 - Conspiracy against the life of the brothers Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara and Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in the Duchy of Ferrara, coordinated by their half brother Giulio d'Este and full brother Ferrante d'Este^[6]
- 1569 - 1569 Plot against John III of Sweden.^[7]
- 1570 - Ridolfi plot against Elizabeth I of England^[8]
- 1574 - Mornay Plot against John III of Sweden.^[9]
- 1583 - Throckmorton Plot by English Catholics led by Sir Francis Throckmorton to coordinate an invasion of England led by Henry I, Duke of Guise, to murder Elizabeth, and replace her with her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots^[10]
- 1586 - Babington Plot, plot by Anthony Babington and John Ballard to assassinate Elizabeth and coordinate an invasion of England by King Philip II of Spain and the Holy League. Discovered by Sir Francis Walsingham and led to execution of Mary, Queen of Scots^{[11][12]}
- 1603 - Main Plot to remove James I of England and enthrone Arbella Stuart allegedly led by Henry Brooke, Lord Cobham, and sponsored by Spain.^[13]
- 1603 - Bye Plot, leads to the execution of Sir George Brooke^[14]
- 1605 - Gunpowder Plot to blow up the House of Lords by during the State Opening of Parliament as prelude to a popular revolt in the Midlands, during which James's nine-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, was to be installed as the Catholic head of state; foiled after a letter to William Parker, 4th Baron Monteagle, and the discovery and arrest of Guy Fawkes. Often called the Gunpowder Treason Plot; origin of Guy Fawkes Day^[15]

- 1718–1720 The Pontcallec conspiracy during the minority of Louis XV to overthrow the Regent Philippe II, Duke of Orléans in favour of Philip V of Spain
- 1749 - Conspiracy of the Slaves by Muslim slaves in Hospitaller-ruled Malta to kill Grand Master Manuel Pinto da Fonseca and take over the island with the help of the Barbary states.^[16]
- 1756 - Coup of 1756 was an attempted coup d'état planned by Queen Louisa Ulrika of Sweden to abolish the rule of the Riksdag of the Estates and reinstate absolute monarchy in Sweden.^[17]
- 1788 - Anjala conspiracy^[18]
- 1789 - 1789 Conspiracy (Sweden) against Gustav III of Sweden.^[19]
- 1793 - Armfelt Conspiracy against Charles XIII of Sweden.^[20]
- 1832 - Georgian plot, assassination of the Russian imperial administration and restoration of the Georgian monarchy^[21]
- 1865 - Abraham Lincoln assassination plot, to include assassination of cabinet members.^[22] It had originated as a plot by Confederate sympathizers to kidnap Lincoln and force the Union to negotiate for either a release of prisoners of war or an end to the American Civil War.^[23]
- 1898 - The Dreyfus Affair, a coordinated attempt to falsely accuse Alfred Dreyfus of treason^[24]
- 1914 - The Black Hand helps Young Bosnia assassinate Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne in Austria-Hungary, thus launching the July Crisis that ended with World War I.^[25]
- 1924 - The Zinoviev letter, published in the *Daily Mail* in London before the 1924 general election, is a forgery that impacted the vote. It was signed with the name of Grigory Zinoviev, a politician in the Soviet Union and the leader of the Communist International, and called on violent action by the Communist Party of Great Britain. It was devised by anti-Communist White Russian émigrés in Paris and the Labour Party blamed it for its defeat.^[26]
- 1938 - Presumed Hitler Youth Conspiracy, NKVD case in Moscow involving some 70 arrests and 40 executions of teenagers and adults, later found to be baseless^[27]
- 1939 - Operation Himmler and its Gleiwitz incident - false-flag attacks, including on a radio station in Gleiwitz, by Nazi Germany and SS officers disguised as Polish Armed Forces personnel as a pretext for the invasion of Poland
- 1939 - Shelling of Mainila - false-flag artillery attack by the Red Army to provide the Soviet Union with a pretext for the Winter War against Finland.
- 1943 - Operation Spark, an attempt on the life of Adolf Hitler.^[28]
- 1944 - July 20 Plot - attempt to assassinate Hitler with suitcase bomb at a conference at the Wolf's Lair in Rastenburg, East Prussia, and then use Operation Valkyrie to grab power^{[29][30]}
- 1945 - The Soviet Union's infiltration of the Manhattan Project through atomic spies such as George Koval and Klaus Fuchs. Soviet intelligence was eventually confirmed by a declassified U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report and the Venona project, and assisted the Soviet atomic bomb project.^{[31][32]}
- 1951 - Rawalpindi conspiracy - failed coup against Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan.^[33]
- 1953 - Iranian coup d'état - The Imperial Iranian Armed Forces restores the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and overthrows Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh with the aid of CIA and MI6.^[34]
- 1954 - Lavon affair Operation Susannah, "False Flag" terrorism by Mossad^[35]
- 1957 - Audin affair - Murder of mathematician Maurice Audin who died under torture by the French state in 1957
- 1972 - Watergate scandal - The burglary of the Democratic National Committee offices at the Watergate complex by CREEP and subsequent cover-up scandals that forced President Richard Nixon to resign in 1974.^[36]

- 1984 - Brighton hotel bombing - attempted assassination of Margaret Thatcher and her cabinet by the Provisional IRA at the Grand Hotel in Brighton, resulted in the death of Deputy Chief Whip Anthony Berry.^[37]
- 1984 - Rajneeshee bioterror attack^[38]
- 1987 - Iran-Contra Affair - sale of arms to Iran to fund the Contras in Nicaragua by Reagan Administration officials to circumvent the Boland Amendment^{[39][40]}
- 1990 - Nayirah testimony, a false testimony to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus organized by public relations firm Hill & Knowlton for the Kuwaiti government
- 2001 - September 11 attacks - Attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and a planned fourth target in Washington D.C. using hijacked airplanes by al-Qaeda.^[41]
- 2003 - Plame affair - publication of Valerie Plame's employment as a covert CIA officer by Robert Novak, who learned it from Richard Armitage, after her husband Joseph C. Wilson published a *New York Times* op-ed expressing doubt that Saddam Hussein purchased uranium from Niger. Lead to conviction of Scooter Libby for obstruction of justice and perjury.
- 2015 - November 2015 Paris attacks - attacks on targets in Paris, including an Eagles of Death Metal concert at the Bataclan theatre and the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, conducted by coordinated teams of Islamic terrorists affiliated with ISIS.^[42]

See also

- List of conspiracy theories
- Conspiracy theory
- Seditious conspiracy

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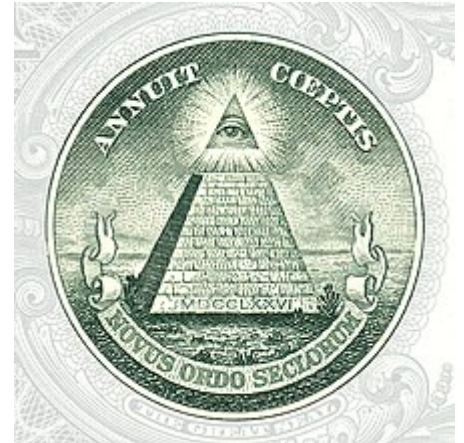
Conspiracy theory

A **conspiracy theory** is an explanation for an event or situation that invokes a conspiracy by sinister and powerful groups, often political in motivation,^{[2][3]} when other explanations are more probable.^{[4][5]} The term has a negative connotation, implying that the appeal to a conspiracy is based on prejudice or insufficient evidence.^[6] A conspiracy theory is not simply about a conspiracy; instead, it refers to a hypothesized conspiracy with specific characteristics, such as an opposition to the mainstream consensus among those people (such as scientists or historians) who are qualified to evaluate its accuracy.^{[7][8]}

Conspiracy theories resist falsification and are reinforced by circular reasoning: both evidence against the conspiracy and an absence of evidence for it are re-interpreted as evidence of its truth,^{[6][9]} whereby the conspiracy becomes a matter of faith rather than something that can be proven or disproven.^{[10][11]} Research suggests that **conspiracist ideation**—belief in conspiracy theories—may be psychologically harmful or pathological^{[12][13]} and that it is correlated with psychological projection, paranoia and Machiavellianism.^[14] Psychologists attribute finding a conspiracy where there is none to a mental phenomenon called *illusory pattern perception*.^{[15][16]}

Historically, conspiracy theories have been closely linked to prejudice, witch hunts, wars, and genocides.^{[17][18][19]} They are often strongly believed by the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, and were used as justification by Timothy McVeigh and Anders Breivik, as well as by governments such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union,^[17] and Turkey.^[20] AIDS denialism by the government of South Africa, motivated by conspiracy theories, caused an estimated 330,000 deaths from AIDS,^{[21][22][23]} QAnon and denialism about the 2020 United States Presidential Election results led to the 2021 storming of the United States Capitol,^[24] while belief in conspiracy theories about genetically modified foods led the government of Zambia to reject food aid during a famine,^[18] at a time when 3 million people in the country were suffering from hunger.^[25] Conspiracy theories are a significant obstacle to improvements in public health,^{[18][26]} encouraging opposition to vaccination and water fluoridation among others, and have been linked to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.^{[18][21][26][27]} Other effects of conspiracy theories include reduced trust in scientific evidence,^{[18][28]} radicalization and ideological reinforcement of extremist groups,^{[17][29]} and negative consequences for the economy.^[17]

Conspiracy theories once limited to fringe audiences have become commonplace in mass media, emerging as a cultural phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.^{[30][31][32][33]} They are widespread around the world and are often commonly believed, some even being held by the majority of the population.^{[34][35][36]} Interventions to reduce the occurrence of conspiracy beliefs include maintaining an open society and improving the analytical thinking skills of the general public.^{[34][35]}



The Eye of Providence, or the all-seeing eye of God, seen here on the US\$1 bill, has been taken by some to be evidence of a conspiracy involving the founders of the United States and the Illuminati.^[1]

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Etymology and usage

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *conspiracy theory* as "the theory that an event or phenomenon occurs as a result of a conspiracy between interested parties; *spec.* a belief that some covert but influential agency (typically political in motivation and oppressive in intent) is responsible for an unexplained event". It cites a 1909 article in *The American Historical Review* as the earliest usage example,^{[37][38]} although it also appeared in print as early as April 1870.^[39] The word "conspiracy" derives from the Latin *con-* ("with, together") and *spirare* ("to breathe").

Robert Blaskiewicz comments that examples of the term were used as early as the nineteenth century and states that its usage has always been derogatory.^[40] According to a study by Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, in contrast, in the nineteenth century the term *conspiracy theory* simply "suggests a plausible postulate of a conspiracy" and "did not, at this stage, carry any connotations, either negative or positive", though sometimes a postulate so-labeled was criticized.^[41] The term "conspiracy theory" is itself the

subject of a conspiracy theory, which claims the term was popularized by the CIA in order to discredit conspiratorial believers, particularly critics of the Warren Commission, by making them a target of ridicule.^[42] In his 2013 book *Conspiracy Theory in America*, political scientist Lance deHaven-Smith suggested that the term entered everyday language in the United States after 1964, the year in which the Warren Commission published its findings on the Kennedy assassination, with *The New York Times* running five stories that year using the term.^[43] However, deHaven-Smith's suggestion has been criticized by Michael Butter, a Professor of American Literary and Cultural History at the University of Tübingen, on the grounds that a CIA document which deHaven-Smith referenced, *Concerning Criticism of the Warren Report* – which was publicly released in 1976 after a Freedom of Information Act request – does not contain the phrase "conspiracy theory" in the singular, and only mentions "conspiracy theories" once, in the sentence "Conspiracy theories have frequently thrown suspicion on our organisation [sic], for example, by falsely alleging that Lee Harvey Oswald worked for us."^[44]

Difference from conspiracy

A conspiracy theory is not simply about a conspiracy, which refers to any covert plan involving two or more people.^[7] In contrast, the term "conspiracy theory" refers to *hypothesized* conspiracies that have specific characteristics. For example, conspiracist beliefs invariably oppose the mainstream consensus among those people who are qualified to evaluate their accuracy, such as scientists or historians.^[8] Conspiracy theorists see themselves as having privileged access to socially persecuted knowledge or a stigmatized mode of thought that separates them from the masses who believe the official account.^[7] Michael Barkun describes a conspiracy theory as a "template imposed upon the world to give the appearance of order to events".^[7]

Real conspiracies, even very simple ones, are difficult to conceal and routinely experience unexpected problems.^[45] In contrast, conspiracy theories suggest that conspiracies are unrealistically successful and that groups of conspirators, such as bureaucracies, can act with near-perfect competence and secrecy. The causes of events or situations are simplified to exclude complex or interacting factors, as well as the role of chance and unintended consequences. Nearly all observations are explained as having been deliberately planned by the alleged conspirators.^[45]

In conspiracy theories, the conspirators are usually claimed to be acting with extreme malice.^[45] As described by Robert Brotherton:

The malevolent intent assumed by most conspiracy theories goes far beyond everyday plots borne out of self-interest, corruption, cruelty, and criminality. The postulated conspirators are not merely people with selfish agendas or differing values. Rather, conspiracy theories postulate a black-and-white world in which good is struggling against evil. The general public is cast as the victim of organised persecution, and the motives of the alleged conspirators often verge on pure maniacal evil. At the very least, the conspirators are said to have an almost inhuman disregard for the basic liberty and well-being of the general population. More grandiose conspiracy theories portray the conspirators as being Evil Incarnate: of having caused all the ills from which we suffer, committing abominable acts of unthinkable cruelty on a routine basis, and striving ultimately to subvert or destroy everything we hold dear.^[45]

Examples

A conspiracy theory may take any matter as its subject, but certain subjects attract greater interest than others. Favored subjects include famous deaths and assassinations, morally dubious government activities, suppressed technologies, and "false flag" terrorism. Among the longest-standing and most widely recognized conspiracy theories are notions concerning the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the 1969 Apollo moon landings, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as well as numerous theories pertaining to alleged plots for world domination by various groups both real and imaginary.^[46]

Popularity

Conspiracy beliefs are widespread around the world.^[34] In rural Africa, common targets of conspiracy theorizing include societal elites, enemy tribes, and the Western world, with conspirators often alleged to enact their plans via sorcery or witchcraft; one common belief identifies modern technology as itself being a form of sorcery, created with the goal of harming or controlling the people.^[34] In China, one widely published conspiracy theory claims that a number of events including the rise of Hitler, the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and climate change were planned by the Rothschild family, which may have led to effects on discussions about China's currency policy.^{[35][47]}

Conspiracy theories once limited to fringe audiences have become commonplace in mass media, contributing to conspiracism emerging as a cultural phenomenon in the United States of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.^{[30][31][32][33]} The general predisposition to believe conspiracy theories cuts across partisan and ideological lines. Conspiratorial thinking is correlated with antigovernmental orientations and a low sense of political efficacy, with conspiracy believers perceiving a governmental threat to individual rights and displaying a deep skepticism that who one votes for really matters.^[48]

Conspiracy theories are often commonly believed, some even being held by the majority of the population.^{[34][35][36]} A broad cross-section of Americans today gives credence to at least some conspiracy theories.^[49] For instance, a study conducted in 2016 found that 10% of Americans think the chemtrail conspiracy theory is "completely true" and 20-30% think it is "somewhat true".^[50] This puts "the equivalent of 120 million Americans in the 'chemtrails are real' camp."^[50] Belief in conspiracy theories has therefore become a topic of interest for sociologists, psychologists and experts in folklore.

Conspiracy theories are widely present on the Web in the form of blogs and YouTube videos, as well as on social media. Whether the Web has increased the prevalence of conspiracy theories or not is an open research question.^[51] The presence and representation of conspiracy theories in search engine results has been monitored and studied, showing significant variation across different topics, and a general absence of reputable, high-quality links in the results.^[52]

One conspiracy theory that propagated through former US President Barack Obama's time in office^[53] claimed that he was born in Kenya instead of Hawaii^[54]- where he was born. Former governor of Arkansas and political opponent of Obama, Mike Huckabee made headlines in 2011^[55] when he, among other members of Republican leadership, continued to question Obama's citizenship status.

Types

A conspiracy theory can be local or international, focused on single events or covering multiple incidents and entire countries, regions and periods of history.^[7] According to Ruseell Muirhead and Nancy Rosenblum, historically, traditional conspiracism has entailed a "theory", but over time, "conspiracy" and "theory" have become decoupled, as modern conspiracism is often without any kind of theory behind it.^{[56][57]}

Walker's five kinds

Jesse Walker (2013) has identified five kinds of conspiracy theories:

- The "Enemy Outside" refers to theories based on figures alleged to be scheming against a community from without.
- The "Enemy Within" finds the conspirators lurking inside the nation, indistinguishable from ordinary citizens.
- The "Enemy Above" involves powerful people manipulating events for their own gain.
- The "Enemy Below" features the lower classes working to overturn the social order.
- The "Benevolent Conspiracies" are angelic forces that work behind the scenes to improve the world and help people.^[58]

Barkun's three types

Michael Barkun has identified three classifications of conspiracy theory:

- *Event conspiracy theories*. This refers to limited and well-defined events. Examples may include such conspiracies theories as those concerning the Kennedy assassination, 9/11, and the spread of AIDS.^[59]
- *Systemic conspiracy theories*. The conspiracy is believed to have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control of a country, a region, or even the entire world. The goals are sweeping, whilst the conspiratorial machinery is generally simple: a single, evil organization implements a plan to infiltrate and subvert existing institutions. This is a common scenario in conspiracy theories that focus on the alleged machinations of Jews, Freemasons, Communism, or the Catholic Church.^[59]
- *Superconspiracy theories*. For Barkun, such theories link multiple alleged conspiracies together hierarchically. At the summit is a distant but all-powerful evil force. His cited examples are the ideas of David Icke and Milton William Cooper.^[59]

Rothbard: shallow vs. deep

Murray Rothbard argues in favor of a model that contrasts "deep" conspiracy theories to "shallow" ones. According to Rothbard, a "shallow" theorist observes an event and asks *Cui bono?* ("Who benefits?"), jumping to the conclusion that a posited beneficiary is responsible for covertly influencing events. On the other hand, the "deep" conspiracy theorist begins with a hunch and then seeks out evidence. Rothbard describes this latter activity as a matter of confirming with certain facts one's initial paranoia.^[60]

Relationship with evidence

Belief in conspiracy theories is generally based not on evidence, but in the faith of the believer.^[61] Noam Chomsky contrasts conspiracy theory to institutional analysis which focuses mostly on the public, long-term behavior of publicly known institutions, as recorded in, for example, scholarly documents or mainstream media reports.^[62] Conspiracy theory conversely posits the existence of secretive coalitions of individuals and speculates on their alleged activities.^{[63][64]} Belief in conspiracy theories is associated with biases in reasoning, such as the conjunction fallacy.^[65]

Clare Birchall at King's College London describes conspiracy theory as a "form of popular knowledge or interpretation".^[a] The use of the word 'knowledge' here suggests ways in which conspiracy theory may be considered in relation to legitimate modes of knowing.^[b] The relationship between legitimate and illegitimate knowledge, Birchall claims, is closer than common dismissals of conspiracy theory contend.^[67]

Theories involving multiple conspirators that are proven to be correct, such as the Watergate scandal, are usually referred to as "investigative journalism" or "historical analysis" rather than conspiracy theory.^[68] By contrast, the term "Watergate conspiracy theory" is used to refer to a variety of hypotheses in which those convicted in the conspiracy were in fact the victims of a deeper conspiracy.^[69] There are also attempts to analyze the theory of conspiracy theories (conspiracy theory theory) to ensure that the term "conspiracy theory" is used to refer to narratives that have been debunked by experts, rather than as a generalized dismissal.^[70]

Rhetoric

Conspiracy theory rhetoric exploits several important cognitive biases, including proportionality bias, attribution bias, and confirmation bias.^[21] Conspiracy theories are most successful when proponents can gather followers from the general public, such as in politics, religion and journalism. These proponents may not necessarily believe the conspiracy theory, instead using it in an attempt to gain public approval. Conspiratorial claims can act as a successful rhetorical strategy to convince a portion of the public via appeal to emotion.^[18]

Conspiracy theories typically justify themselves by focusing on gaps or ambiguities in knowledge, and then arguing that the true explanation for this must be a conspiracy.^[45] In contrast, any evidence that directly supports their claims is generally of low quality. For example, conspiracy theories are often dependent on eyewitness testimony, despite its unreliability, while disregarding objective analyses of the evidence.^[45]

Conspiracy theories resist falsification and are reinforced by circular reasoning: both evidence against the conspiracy and an absence of evidence for it are re-interpreted as evidence of its truth,^{[6][9]} whereby the conspiracy becomes a matter of faith rather than something that can be proved or disproved.^{[10][11]} The epistemic strategy of conspiracy theories has been called "cascade logic": each time new evidence becomes available, a conspiracy theory is able to dismiss it by claiming that even more people must be part of the cover-up.^{[18][45]} Any information that contradicts the conspiracy theory is suggested to be disinformation by the alleged conspiracy.^[28] Similarly, the continued lack of evidence directly supporting conspiracist claims is portrayed as confirming the existence of a conspiracy of silence; the fact that other people have not found or exposed any conspiracy is taken as evidence that those people are part of the plot, rather than considering that it may be because no conspiracy exists.^{[21][45]} This strategy lets conspiracy theories insulate themselves from neutral analyses of the evidence, and makes them resistant to questioning or correction, which is called "epistemic self-insulation".^{[21][45]}

Conspiracy theorists often take advantage of false balance in the media. They may claim to be presenting a legitimate alternative viewpoint that deserves equal time to argue its case; for example, this strategy has been used by the Teach the Controversy campaign to promote intelligent design, which often claims that there is a conspiracy of scientists suppressing their views. If they successfully find a platform to present their views in a debate format, they focus on using rhetorical ad hominems and attacking perceived flaws in the mainstream account, while avoiding any discussion of the shortcomings in their own position.^[18]

The typical approach of conspiracy theories is to challenge any action or statement from authorities, using even the most tenuous justifications. Responses are then assessed using a double standard, where failing to provide an immediate response to the satisfaction of the conspiracy theorist will be claimed to prove a conspiracy. Any minor errors in the response are heavily emphasized, while deficiencies in the arguments of other proponents are generally excused.^[18]

In science, conspiracists may suggest that a scientific theory can be disproven by a single perceived deficiency, even though such events are extremely rare. In addition, both disregarding the claims and attempting to address them will be interpreted as proof of a conspiracy.^[18] Other conspiracist arguments may not be scientific; for example, in response to the IPCC Second Assessment Report in 1996, much of the opposition centered on promoting a procedural objection to the report's creation. Specifically, it was claimed that part of the procedure reflected a conspiracy to silence dissenters, which served as motivation for opponents of the report and successfully redirected a significant amount of the public discussion away from the science.^[18]

Conspiracism as a world view

The historian Richard Hofstadter addressed the role of paranoia and conspiracism throughout U.S. history in his 1964 essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics". Bernard Bailyn's classic *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967) notes that a similar phenomenon could be found in North America during the time preceding the American Revolution. Conspiracism labels people's attitudes as well as the type of conspiracy theories that are more global and historical in proportion.^[71]

One of the most widely confirmed facts about conspiracy theories is that belief in a single conspiracy theory tends to promote belief in other unrelated conspiracy theories as well.^{[21][72]} This even applies when the conspiracy theories directly contradict each other, e.g. believing that Osama bin Laden was already dead before his compound in Pakistan was attacked makes the same person more likely to believe that he is still alive. One conclusion from this finding is that the content of a conspiracist belief is less important than the idea of a coverup by the authorities.^{[21][73][74]}

The term "conspiracism" was further popularized by academic Frank P. Mintz in the 1980s. According to Mintz, conspiracism denotes "belief in the primacy of conspiracies in the unfolding of history":^{[75]:4}

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.^{[75]:199}

Justin Fox of *Time* magazine argues that Wall Street traders are among the most conspiracy-minded group of people, and ascribes this to the reality of some financial market conspiracies, and to the ability of conspiracy theories to provide necessary orientation in the market's day-to-day movements.^[76]

Middle East

Conspiracy theories are a prevalent feature of Arab culture and politics.^[77] Variants include conspiracies involving colonialism, Zionism, superpowers, oil, and the war on terrorism, which may be referred to as a war against Islam.^[77] For example, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an infamous hoax document purporting to be a Jewish plan for world domination, is commonly read and promoted in the Muslim

world.^{[78][79][80]} Roger Cohen has suggested that the popularity of conspiracy theories in the Arab world is "the ultimate refuge of the powerless".^[81] Al-Mumin Said has noted the danger of such theories, for they "keep us not only from the truth but also from confronting our faults and problems".^[82]

Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have used conspiracy theories about the United States to gain support for al-Qaeda in the Arab world, and as rhetoric to distinguish themselves from similar groups, although they may not have believed the conspiratorial claims themselves.^[83]

United States

Harry G. West and others have noted that while conspiracy theorists may often be dismissed as a fringe minority, certain evidence suggests that a wide range of the U.S. maintains a belief in conspiracy theories. West also compares those theories to hypernationalism and religious fundamentalism.^{[84][85]}

Theologian Robert Jewett and philosopher John Shelton Lawrence attribute the enduring popularity of conspiracy theories in the U.S. to the Cold War, McCarthyism, and counterculture rejection of authority. They state that among both the left-wing and right-wing, there remains a willingness to use real events, such as Soviet plots, inconsistencies in the Warren Report, and the 9/11 attacks, to support the existence of unverified and ongoing large-scale conspiracies.^[86]

The Watergate scandal has also been used to bestow legitimacy to other conspiracy theories, with Richard Nixon himself commenting that it served as a "Rorschach ink blot" which invited others to fill in the underlying pattern.^[68]

Historian Kathryn S. Olmsted cites three reasons why Americans are prone to believing in government conspiracies theories:

1. Genuine government overreach and secrecy during the Cold War, such as Watergate, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, Project MKUltra, and the CIA's collaboration with mobsters in attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro.
2. Precedent set by official government-sanctioned conspiracy theories for propaganda, such as claims of German infiltration of the U.S. during World War II or the debunked claim that Saddam Hussein played a role in the 9/11 attacks.
3. Distrust fostered by the government's spying on and harassment of dissenters, such as the Sedition Act of 1918, COINTELPRO, and as part of various Red Scares.^[87]

Consequences

Historically, conspiracy theories have been closely linked to prejudice, witch hunts, wars, and genocides.^{[17][18]} They are often strongly believed by the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, and were used as justification by Timothy McVeigh, Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant, as well as by governments such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.^[17] AIDS denialism by the government of South Africa, motivated by conspiracy theories, caused an estimated 330,000 deaths from AIDS,^{[21][22][23]} while belief in conspiracy theories about genetically modified foods led the government of Zambia to reject food aid during a famine,^[18] at a time when 3 million people in the country were suffering from hunger.^[25]

Conspiracy theories are a significant obstacle to improvements in public health.^{[18][26]} People who believe in health-related conspiracy theories are less likely to follow medical advice, and more likely to use alternative medicine instead.^[17] Conspiratorial anti-vaccination beliefs, such as conspiracy theories

about pharmaceutical companies, can result in reduced vaccination rates and have been linked to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.^{[21][18][27][26]} Health-related conspiracy theories often inspire resistance to water fluoridation, and contributed to the impact of the Lancet MMR autism fraud.^{[18][26]}

Conspiracy theories are a fundamental component of a wide range of radicalized and extremist groups, where they may play an important role in reinforcing the ideology and psychology of their members as well as further radicalizing their beliefs.^{[17][29]} These conspiracy theories often share common themes, even among groups that would otherwise be fundamentally opposed, such as the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories found among political extremists on both the far right and far left.^[17] More generally, belief in conspiracy theories is associated with holding extreme and uncompromising viewpoints, and may help people in maintaining those viewpoints.^[28] While conspiracy theories are not always present in extremist groups, and do not always lead to violence when they are, they can make the group more extreme, provide an enemy to direct hatred towards, and isolate members from the rest of society. Conspiracy theories are most likely to inspire violence when they call for urgent action, appeal to prejudices, or demonize and scapegoat enemies.^[29]

Conspiracy theorizing in the workplace can also have economic consequences. For example, it leads to lower job satisfaction and lower commitment, resulting in workers being more likely to leave their jobs.^[17] Comparisons have also been made with the effects of workplace rumors, which share some characteristics with conspiracy theories and result in both decreased productivity and increased stress. Subsequent effects on managers include reduced profits, reduced trust from employees, and damage to the company's image.^{[17][88]}

Conspiracy theories can divert attention from important social, political, and scientific issues.^{[89][73]} In addition, they have been used to discredit scientific evidence to the general public or in a legal context. Conspiratorial strategies also share characteristics with those used by lawyers who are attempting to discredit expert testimony, such as claiming that the experts have ulterior motives in testifying, or attempting to find someone who will provide statements to imply that expert opinion is more divided than it actually is.^[18]

It is possible that conspiracy theories may also produce some compensatory benefits to society in certain situations. For example, they may help people identify governmental deceptions, particularly in repressive societies, and encourage government transparency.^{[35][89]} However, real conspiracies are normally revealed by people working within the system, such as whistleblowers and journalists, and most of the effort spent by conspiracy theorists is inherently misdirected.^[29] The most dangerous conspiracy theories are likely to be those that incite violence, scapegoat disadvantaged groups, or spread misinformation about important societal issues.^[90]

Interventions

The primary defense against conspiracy theories is to maintain an open society, in which many sources of reliable information are available, and government sources are known to be credible rather than propaganda. Additionally, independent nongovernmental organizations are able to correct misinformation without requiring people to trust the government.^[35] Other approaches to reduce the appeal of conspiracy theories in general among the public may be based in the emotional and social nature of conspiratorial beliefs. For example, interventions that promote analytical thinking in the general public are likely to be effective. Another approach is to intervene in ways that decrease negative emotions, and specifically to improve feelings of personal hope and empowerment.^[34]

Joseph Pierre has also noted that mistrust in authoritative institutions is the core component underlying many conspiracy theories and that this mistrust creates an epistemic vacuum and makes individuals searching for answers vulnerable to misinformation. Therefore, one possible solution is offering consumers a seat at the table to mend their mistrust in institutions.^[91] Regarding the challenges of this approach, Dr. Pierre has said, "The challenge with acknowledging areas of uncertainty within a public sphere is that doing so can be weaponized to reinforce a post-truth view of the world in which everything is debatable, and any counter-position is just as valid. Although I like to think of myself as a middle of the road kind of individual, it is important to keep in mind that the truth does not always lie in the middle of a debate, whether we are talking about climate change, vaccines, or antipsychotic medications."^[92]

It has been suggested that directly countering misinformation can be counterproductive. For example, since conspiracy theories can reinterpret disconfirming information as part of their narrative, refuting a claim can result in accidentally reinforcing it.^{[45][93]} In addition, publishing criticism of conspiracy theories can result in legitimizing them.^[89] In this context, possible interventions include carefully selecting which conspiracy theories to refute, requesting additional analyses from independent observers, and introducing cognitive diversity into conspiratorial communities by undermining their poor epistemology.^[89] Any legitimization effect might also be reduced by responding to more conspiracy theories rather than fewer.^[35]

However, presenting people with factual corrections, or highlighting the logical contradictions in conspiracy theories, has been demonstrated to have a positive effect in many circumstances.^{[34][93]} For example, this has been studied in the case of informing believers in 9/11 conspiracy theories about statements by actual experts and witnesses.^[34] One possibility is that criticism is most likely to backfire if it challenges someone's worldview or identity. This suggests that an effective approach may be to provide criticism while avoiding such challenges.^[93]

Psychology

The widespread belief in conspiracy theories has become a topic of interest for sociologists, psychologists, and experts in folklore since at least the 1960s, when a number of conspiracy theories arose regarding the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Sociologist Türkay Salim Nefes underlines the political nature of conspiracy theories. He suggests that one of the most important characteristics of these accounts is their attempt to unveil the "real but hidden" power relations in social groups.^{[94][95]}

Research suggests, on a psychological level, **conspiracist ideation**—belief in conspiracy theories—can be harmful or pathological,^{[12][13]} and is highly correlated with psychological projection, as well as with paranoia, which is predicted by the degree of a person's Machiavellianism.^[96] The propensity to believe in conspiracy theories is strongly associated with the mental health disorder of schizotypy.^{[97][98][99][100][101]} Conspiracy theories once limited to fringe audiences have become commonplace in mass media, emerging as a cultural phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.^{[30][31][32][33]} Exposure to conspiracy theories in news media and popular entertainment increases receptiveness to conspiratorial ideas, and has also increased the social acceptability of fringe beliefs.^{[17][102]}

Conspiracy theories often make use of complicated and detailed arguments, including ones which appear to be analytical or scientific. However, belief in conspiracy theories is primarily driven by emotion.^[34] Analytical thinking aids in reducing belief in conspiracy theories, in part because it emphasizes rational and critical cognition.^[28] Some psychological scientists assert that explanations related to conspiracy

theories can be, and often are "internally consistent" with strong beliefs that had previously been held prior to the event that sparked the conspiracy.^[28] People who believe in conspiracy theories tend to believe in other unsubstantiated claims – including pseudoscience and paranormal phenomena.^[103]

Attractions

Psychological motives for believing in conspiracy theories can be categorized as epistemic, existential, or social. These motives are particularly acute in vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. However, it does not appear that the beliefs help to address these motives; in fact, they may be self-defeating, acting to make the situation worse instead.^{[28][93]} For example, while conspiratorial beliefs can result from a perceived sense of powerlessness, exposure to conspiracy theories immediately suppresses personal feelings of autonomy and control. Furthermore, they also make people less likely to take actions that could improve their circumstances.^{[28][93]}

This is additionally supported by the fact that conspiracy theories have a number of disadvantageous attributes.^[28] For example, they promote a negative and distrustful view of other people and groups, who are allegedly acting based on antisocial and cynical motivations. This is expected to lead to increased alienation and anomie, and reduced social capital. Similarly, they depict the public as ignorant and powerless against the alleged conspirators, with important aspects of society determined by malevolent forces, a viewpoint which is likely to be disempowering.^[28]

Each person may endorse conspiracy theories for one of many different reasons.^[104] The most consistently demonstrated characteristics of people who find conspiracy theories appealing are a feeling of alienation, unhappiness or dissatisfaction with their situation, an unconventional worldview, and a feeling of disempowerment.^[104] While various aspects of personality affect susceptibility to conspiracy theories, none of the Big Five personality traits are associated with conspiracy beliefs.^[104]

The political scientist Michael Barkun, discussing the usage of "conspiracy theory" in contemporary American culture, holds that this term is used for a belief that explains an event as the result of a secret plot by exceptionally powerful and cunning conspirators to achieve a malevolent end.^{[105][106]} According to Barkun, the appeal of conspiracism is threefold:

- "First, conspiracy theories claim to explain what institutional analysis cannot. They appear to make sense out of a world that is otherwise confusing.
- Second, they do so in an appealingly simple way, by dividing the world sharply between the forces of light, and the forces of darkness. They trace all evil back to a single source, the conspirators and their agents.
- Third, conspiracy theories are often presented as special, secret knowledge unknown or unappreciated by others. For conspiracy theorists, the masses are a brainwashed herd, while the conspiracy theorists in the know can congratulate themselves on penetrating the plotters' deceptions."^[106]

This third point is supported by research of Roland Imhoff, professor in Social Psychology at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. The research suggests that the smaller the minority believing in a specific theory, the more attractive it is to conspiracy theorists.^[107]

Humanistic psychologists argue that even if a posited cabal behind an alleged conspiracy is almost always perceived as hostile, there often remains an element of reassurance for theorists. This is because it is a consolation to imagine that difficulties in human affairs are created by humans, and remain within

human control. If a cabal can be implicated, there may be a hope of breaking its power or of joining it. Belief in the power of a cabal is an implicit assertion of human dignity—an unconscious affirmation that man is responsible for his own destiny.^[108]

People formulate conspiracy theories to explain, for example, power relations in social groups and the perceived existence of evil forces.^{[c][106][94][95]} Proposed psychological origins of conspiracy theorising include projection; the personal need to explain "a significant event [with] a significant cause;" and the product of various kinds and stages of thought disorder, such as paranoid disposition, ranging in severity to diagnosable mental illnesses. Some people prefer socio-political explanations over the insecurity of encountering random, unpredictable, or otherwise inexplicable events.^{[76][109][110][111][112][81]}

According to Berlet and Lyons, "Conspiracism is a particular narrative form of 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".^[113]

Origins

Some psychologists believe that a search for meaning is common in conspiracism. Once cognized, confirmation bias and avoidance of cognitive dissonance may reinforce the belief. In a context where a conspiracy theory has become embedded within a social group, communal reinforcement may also play a part.^[114]

Inquiry into possible motives behind the accepting of irrational conspiracy theories has linked^[115] these beliefs to distress resulting from an event that occurred, such as the events of 9/11. Additionally, research^[116] done by Manchester Metropolitan University suggests that "delusional ideation" is the most likely condition that would indicate an elevated belief in conspiracy theories. Studies^[65] also show that an increased attachment to these irrational beliefs lead to a decrease in desire for civic engagement. Belief in conspiracy theories is correlated with anxiety disorders, paranoia, and authoritarian beliefs.^[117]

Professor Quassim Cassam argues that conspiracy theorists hold their beliefs due to flaws in their thinking and more precisely, their intellectual character. He cites philosopher Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski and her book *Virtues of the Mind* in outlining intellectual virtues (such as humility, caution and carefulness) and intellectual vices (such as gullibility, carelessness and closed-mindedness). Whereas intellectual virtues help in reaching sound examination, intellectual vices "impede effective and responsible inquiry", meaning that those who are prone to believing in conspiracy theories possess certain vices while lacking necessary virtues.^[118]

Some researchers have suggested that conspiracy theories could be partially caused by psychological mechanisms the human brain possesses for detecting dangerous coalitions. Such a mechanism could have been useful in the small-scale environment humanity evolved in but are mismatched in a modern, complex society and thus "misfire", perceiving conspiracies where none exist.^[119]

Projection

Some historians have argued that there is an element of psychological projection in conspiracism. This projection, according to the argument, is manifested in the form of attribution of undesirable characteristics of the self to the conspirators. Historian Richard Hofstadter stated that:

This enemy seems on many counts a projection of the self; both the ideal and the unacceptable aspects of the self are attributed to him. A fundamental paradox of the paranoid style is the imitation of the enemy. The enemy, for example, may be the cosmopolitan intellectual, but the paranoid will outdo him in the apparatus of scholarship, even of pedantry. ... The Ku Klux Klan imitated Catholicism to the point of donning priestly vestments, developing an elaborate ritual and an equally elaborate hierarchy. The John Birch Society emulates Communist cells and quasi-secret operation through "front" groups, and preaches a ruthless prosecution of the ideological war along lines very similar to those it finds in the Communist enemy. Spokesmen of the various fundamentalist anti-Communist "crusades" openly express their admiration for the dedication, discipline, and strategic ingenuity the Communist cause calls forth.^[111]

Hofstadter also noted that "sexual freedom" is a vice frequently attributed to the conspiracist's target group, noting that "very often the fantasies of true believers reveal strong sadomasochistic outlets, vividly expressed, for example, in the delight of anti-Masons with the cruelty of Masonic punishments."^[111]

Sociology

In addition to psychological factors such as conspiracist ideation, sociological factors also help account for who believes in which conspiracy theories. Such theories tend to get more traction among election losers in society, for example, and the emphasis of conspiracy theories by elites and leaders tends to increase belief among followers who have higher levels of conspiracy thinking.^[120]

Christopher Hitchens described conspiracy theories as the "exhaust fumes of democracy":^[112] the unavoidable result of a large amount of information circulating among a large number of people.

Conspiracy theories may be emotionally satisfying, by assigning blame to a group to which the theorist does not belong and so absolving the theorist of moral or political responsibility in society.^[121] Likewise, Roger Cohen writing for *The New York Times* has said that, "captive minds; ... resort to conspiracy theory because it is the ultimate refuge of the powerless. If you cannot change your own life, it must be that some greater force controls the world."^[81]

Sociological historian Holger Herwig found in studying German explanations for the origins of World War I, "Those events that are most important are hardest to understand because they attract the greatest attention from myth makers and charlatans."^[122]

Influence of critical theory

French sociologist Bruno Latour suggests that the widespread popularity of conspiracy theories in mass culture may be due, in part, to the pervasive presence of Marxist-inspired critical theory and similar ideas in academia since the 1970s.^[123]

Latour notes that about 90% of contemporary social criticism in academia displays one of two approaches, which he terms "the *fact position* and the *fairy position*".^{[123]:237}

- The "fairy position" is anti-fetishist, arguing that "objects of belief" (e.g., religion, arts) are merely concepts onto which power is projected; Latour contends that those who use this approach show biases towards confirming their own dogmatic suspicions as most "scientifically supported". While the complete facts of the situation and correct methodology are ostensibly important to them, Latour

proposes that the scientific process is instead laid on as a patina to one's pet theories to lend a sort of reputation high ground.

- The "fact position" argues that external forces (e.g., economics, gender) dominate individuals, often covertly and without their awareness.^[123]

Latour concludes that each of these two approaches in academia has led to a polarized, inefficient atmosphere highlighted (in both approaches) by its causticness. "Do you see now why it feels so good to be a critical mind?" asks Latour: no matter which position you take, "You're always right!"^[123]

Latour notes that such social criticism has been appropriated by those he describes as conspiracy theorists, including climate-change denialists and the 9/11 Truth movement: "Maybe I am taking conspiracy theories too seriously, but I am worried to detect, in those mad mixtures of knee-jerk disbelief, punctilious demands for proofs, and free use of powerful explanation from the social neverland, many of the weapons of social critique."^[123]

Fusion paranoia

Michael Kelly, a *The Washington Post* journalist and critic of anti-war movements on both the left and right, coined the term "fusion paranoia" to refer to a political convergence of left-wing and right-wing activists around anti-war issues and civil liberties, which he said were motivated by a shared belief in conspiracism or shared anti-government views.^[124]

Barkun has adopted this term to refer to how the synthesis of paranoid conspiracy theories, which were once limited to American fringe audiences, has given them mass appeal and enabled them to become commonplace in mass media,^[125] thereby inaugurating an unrivaled period of people actively preparing for apocalyptic or millenarian scenarios in the United States of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.^[126] Barkun notes the occurrence of lone-wolf conflicts with law enforcement acting as proxy for threatening the established political powers.^[127]

Viability

The physicist David Robert Grimes estimated the time it would take for a conspiracy to be exposed based on the number of people involved.^{[128][129]} His calculations used data from the PRISM surveillance program, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, and the FBI forensic scandal. Grimes estimated that:

- A Moon landing hoax would require the involvement of 411,000 people and would be exposed within 3.68 years;
- Climate-change fraud would require a minimum of 29,083 people (published climate scientists only) and would be exposed within 26.77 years, or up to 405,000 people, in which case it would be exposed within 3.70 years;
- A vaccination conspiracy would require a minimum of 22,000 people (without drug companies) and would be exposed within at least 3.15 years and at most 34.78 years depending on the number involved;
- A conspiracy to suppress a cure for cancer would require 714,000 people and would be exposed within 3.17 years.

Politics

The philosopher [Karl Popper](#) described the central problem of conspiracy theories as a form of [fundamental attribution error](#), where every event is generally perceived as being intentional and planned, greatly underestimating the effects of randomness and unintended consequences.^[73] In his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, he used the term "the conspiracy theory of society" to denote the idea that social phenomena such as "war, unemployment, poverty, shortages ... [are] the result of direct design by some powerful individuals and groups."^[130] Popper argued that [totalitarianism](#) was founded on conspiracy theories which drew on imaginary plots which were driven by paranoid scenarios predicated on [tribalism](#), [chauvinism](#), or [racism](#). He also noted that conspirators very rarely achieved their goal.^[131]

Historically, when real conspiracies have occurred they have usually had little effect on history and have had unforeseen consequences for the conspirators. As described by [Bruce Cumings](#), history is instead "moved by the broad forces and large structures of human collectivities".^[132]

[Alex Jones](#) referenced numerous conspiracy theories for convincing his supporters to endorse [Ron Paul](#) over [Mitt Romney](#) in the [2012 Republican Party presidential primaries](#) and [Donald Trump](#) over [Hillary Clinton](#) in the [2016 United States presidential election](#).^[133] More recently, the [QAnon conspiracy theory](#) (which originated in the U.S.) alleges that Trump is fighting against a [cabal](#) of child sex-abusing and Satan-worshipping [Democrats](#).^[134]

See also

- [Big lie](#) – Gross distortion of the truth
- [Cherry picking](#) – Fallacy of pointing to individual cases that seem to confirm a position while ignoring related cases that may contradict the position
- [Conspiracy fiction](#) – Subgenre of thriller fiction
- [Fake news](#) – False or misleading information presented as news
- [Fringe theory](#) – idea or viewpoint which differs from the accepted scholarship in its field
- [Furtive fallacy](#) – Informal fallacy of emphasis in which outcomes are asserted to have been caused by the hidden misconduct or wrongdoing by decision makers
- [Hanlon's razor](#) – Philosophical heuristic to never attribute to malice what is explained by stupidity
- [List of fallacies](#) – Types of reasoning that are logically incorrect
- [List of topics characterized as pseudoscience](#) – Wikipedia list article
- [Occam's razor](#) – Philosophical principle of selecting the solution with the fewest assumptions
- [Influencing machine](#)
- [Philosophy of conspiracy theories](#) – Branch of philosophy on the nature of conspiracy theories
- [Propaganda](#) – Form of communication intended to sway the audience through presenting only one side of the argument
- [Pseudohistory](#) – Pseudoscholarship that attempts to distort or misrepresent the historical record
- [Pseudoscience](#) – Unscientific claims that are wrongly presented as scientific
- [Superstition](#) – Belief or behavior that is considered irrational or supernatural

References

Informational notes

- a. Birchall 2006: "[W]e can appreciate conspiracy theory as a unique form of popular knowledge or interpretation, *and* address what this might mean for any knowledge we produce about it or how we interpret it."^{[66]:66}

- b. Birchall 2006: "What we quickly discover ... is that it becomes impossible to map conspiracy theory and academic discourse onto a clear illegitimate/legitimate divide."^[66]:72
- c. **Barkun** 2003: "The essence of conspiracy beliefs lies in attempts to delineate and explain evil. At their broadest, conspiracy theories 'view history as controlled by massive, demonic forces.' ... For our purposes, a *conspiracy belief* is the belief that an organization made up of individuals or groups was or is acting covertly to achieve a malevolent end."^[105]

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