

Conspiracy Theories In The Mainstream

Conspiracy theories are an almost ubiquitous feature of irrational political beliefs. (If you haven't been reading our **analysis** of conspiracy theories we urge you to do so now.) The degree of detachment from reality of some individuals and some entire cultures can be very scary. But what's even more scary is when such theories begin to seep into mainstream political thinking in our own culture. Some recent examples are:

- The theory that Princess Diana was murdered by the British Secret Service – **believed by 27% of British people**;
- The theory that Dr David Kelly was murdered – **taken shamefully seriously by the BBC** (see the last paragraph of that article);
- The “**It's all about oil**” explanation of the liberation of Iraq, including...
- “**the dumbest bit of oil-based conspiracy-theory yet**”: explaining the recent Mars policy announcement in terms of President Bush's being under the control of mineral-exploration companies (see also **this** follow-up); and...
- The **theory** (with heavy antisemitic overtones) of a conspiracy of “neocons” having “taken control” of the President: check out its various versions on Google if you have the stomach for it.

Are you afraid yet?

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Nothing new

This is nothing new in American culture. From the myriad JFK theories, to the FDR-Pearl Harbor stuff, to stories going back all the way to the Founding Fathers about their involvement in a secret world-dominating society of Freemasons, conspiracy theories are a part and parcel of American political culture. The real danger here is not the apparent sudden rise, but allowing ourselves to be so deluded as to think this is something new. Its obvious to me that these theories aren't accepted because they're so compelling, but because the mind of the American electorate is such fertile soil for these kinds of theories to grow. And **that** is the real problem.

-GJM

by a reader on Wed, 01/21/2004 - 18:39 | [reply](#)

neocons control bush

i blogged that one. [see here](#)

-- Elliot Temple
<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Wed, 01/21/2004 - 18:43 | [reply](#)

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Elliot Temple wrote

I blogged that one

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a reader@18:39 makes a very g...

a reader@18:39 makes a very good point about conspiracy theories not being new in our society. It's probably a little much to imply that they are uniquely or primarily the province of, or spring from the nature of, "American culture"/"American electorate". If you ask me, there are certain other cultures one could name which are more plagued by conspiracy theories, more by at least an order of magnitude. (For starters you might want to look at any society in which "the Protocols" are taken seriously by anything close to a majority....)

-Blix
blix.blogspot.com

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