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The importance of conspiracy theory in extremist ideology and propaganda

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Propositions relating to the dissertation “The Importance of Conspiracy Theory in Extremist Ideology and Propaganda” by Andrew Fink.

1. There is an identifiable tradition of conspiracy theorizing that posits the existence of a powerful network that has either secretly taken over the world or is about to do so, often under the guise of the trappings of liberal modernity (enlightenment values, republican government, freedom of the press, capitalism, etc.). This thesis calls this idea the Grand Conspiracy Theory (GCT).
2. Various societies and religions have been named as the servants or the leaders of the supposed grand conspiracy: from Freemasons to bankers, from Bahá'í to Jews. Older sectarian conspiracy theories were woven into the fabric of the GCT when traditions that attacked these groups were “appropriated.”
3. An examination of the history and key texts of the GCT reveals that propaganda campaigns have played an crucial role in shaping and spreading this tradition.
4. The emphasis on deception in the GCT makes it easily adapted to suit the needs of diverse and sometimes diametrically opposed political groups.
5. On several occasions the GCT has inspired or been incorporated into the ideology of groups of violent extremists who form counter-conspiracies to strike out against what they believe is a powerful enemy with superpowers of deception.
6. While it was originally used to attack innovative, revolutionary regimes, the GCT's emphasis on deception has caused a few of its believers to turn against the most reactionary, establishment regimes as secretly under the control of the grand conspiracy.
7. Versions of the GCT were prominent in the core ideologies of both of the great “totalitarian” states of the 20th century – Nazism and Soviet Communism. Both have an ultimate enemy defined by variants of the GCT.
8. The belief in a massive Jewish/imperialist conspiracy against Islam, a version of the GCT, is an essential element of Sayyed Qutb's idea of modern *jahiliyyah* and also Khomeini's idea of the Governance of the Jurist.
9. Conspiracy theories, especially the tradition of the GCT, are important ideas for the study of political theory and have had a decisive effect on Western and Middle Eastern politics during last two centuries.