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New World Order (conspiracy theory)



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This article is about the use of the term New World Order in conspiracy theory. For other uses, see [New World Order](#).

As a [conspiracy theory](#), the term **New World Order** or **NWO** refers to the emergence of a [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](#) 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](#). Significant occurrences in [politics](#) and [finance](#) are speculated to be orchestrated by an unduly influential [cabal](#) that operates through many [front organizations](#). Numerous historical and current events are seen as steps in an ongoing plot to achieve world domination through [secret political gatherings](#) and decision-making processes.^{[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 were actively preparing for [apocalyptic millenarian](#) scenarios.^{[4][6]} Those political scientists were concerned that [mass hysteria](#) could have what they judged to be devastating effects on American political life, ranging from widespread [political alienation](#) to escalating [lone-wolf terrorism](#).^{[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

During the 20th century, many [politicians](#), such as [Woodrow Wilson](#) and [Winston Churchill](#), used the term "new world order" to

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refer to a new period of history characterised by a dramatic change in world political thought and the [balance of power](#) after [World War I](#) and [World War II](#). They all saw the period as an opportunity to implement [idealistic](#) proposals for [global governance](#) in the sense of new collective efforts to address worldwide problems that go beyond the capacity of individual [nation-states](#) to solve, while always respecting the right of nations to [self-determination](#). These proposals led to the creation of international organizations (such as the [UN](#) and [NATO](#)), and international regimes (such as the [Bretton Woods system](#) and the [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade](#) (GATT)), which were calculated both to maintain a balance of power in favor of the United States and to regularize cooperation between nations, in order to achieve a [peaceful phase of capitalism](#). These creations in particular and [liberal internationalism](#) in general, however, were regularly criticized and opposed by American ultraconservative [business nationalists](#) from the 1930s on.^[10]

[Progressives](#) welcomed these new international organizations and regimes in the aftermath of the two World Wars, but argued that they suffered from a [democratic deficit](#) and were therefore inadequate not only to prevent another [global war](#) but to foster [global justice](#). The United Nations was designed in 1945 by US bankers and [State Department](#) planners, and was always intended to remain a free association of sovereign nation-states, not a transition to democratic world government. Thus, activists around the globe formed a [world federalist movement](#), hoping in vain to create a "real" new world order.^[11]

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 [planned economy](#).^[12] Despite the popularity of his ideas in some [state socialist](#) circles, Wells failed to exert a deeper and more lasting influence because he was unable to concentrate his energies on a direct appeal to the [intelligentsias](#) who would ultimately have to coordinate a Wellsian new world order.^[13]

During the [Red Scare of 1947–1957](#), agitators of the American secular and [Christian right](#), influenced by the work of Canadian conspiracy theorist [William Guy Carr](#), increasingly embraced and spread unfounded fears of [Freemasons](#), [Illuminati](#) and [Jews](#) being the driving force behind an "[international communist](#) conspiracy". The threat of "Godless communism", in the form of a [state atheistic](#) and [bureaucratic collectivist](#) world government, [demonized](#) as the "Red Menace", therefore 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 [collectivism](#) that will inevitably lead to nations being replaced with a [communist one-world government](#).^[14]

[Right-wing populist](#) advocacy groups with a [producerist](#) 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 [U.N.](#) as the vehicle to create a "One World Government". This right-wing [anti-globalist](#) conspiracism fuelled the Bircher campaign for [US 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 creation of the US [Federal Reserve](#) in 1913 by international bankers, who she claimed later formed the [Council on Foreign Relations](#) in 1921 as a [shadow government](#). At the time the booklet was published, "international bankers" would have been interpreted by many readers as a reference to a postulated "international Jewish banking conspiracy" masterminded by the [Rothschilds](#).^[14]

Claiming that the term "New World Order" is used by a secretive elite dedicated to the destruction of all national sovereignties, 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 much current right-wing populist conspiracism in the US. Thus, after the [fall of communism](#) in the early 1990s, the main demonized [scapegoat](#) of the American [far right](#) shifted seamlessly from [crypto-communists](#), who plotted on behalf of the Red Menace, to globalists, who plot on behalf of the New World Order. The relatively painless nature of the shift was due to growing right-wing populist [opposition to corporate internationalism](#), but also in part to the basic underlying apocalyptic millenarian paradigm, which fed the [Cold War](#) and the [witch-hunts](#) of the [McCarthy period](#).^[14]

In his speech, [Toward a New World Order](#), delivered on September 11, 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:
([NWO Speech](#) [↗](#))

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.

[The New York Times](#) observed that progressives were denouncing this new world order as a rationalization of [American imperial](#) ambitions in the [Middle East](#), while [conservatives](#) rejected any new security arrangements altogether and fulminated about any possibility of a UN revival.^[15] However, [Chip Berlet](#), an American investigative reporter, specializing in the study of [right-wing](#) movements in the US, writes:

When President Bush announced his new foreign policy would help build a New World Order, his phrasing surged through the Christian and secular hard right like an electric shock, since the phrase had been used to represent the dreaded collectivist One World Government for decades. Some Christians saw Bush as signaling the End Times betrayal by a world leader. Secular anticommunists saw a bold attempt to smash US sovereignty and impose a tyrannical collectivist system run by the United Nations.^[14]

American televangelist [Pat Robertson](#), with his 1991 best-selling book *The New World Order*, became the most prominent Christian popularizer 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, nudging people constantly and covertly in the direction of world government for the [Antichrist](#).^[6]

Observers note that the galvanizing of right-wing populist conspiracy theorists such as [Linda Thompson](#), [Mark Koernke](#) and Robert K. Spear into militancy led to the rise of the [militia movement](#), which spread its [anti-government](#) ideology through speeches at rallies and meetings, books and videotapes sold at [gun shows](#), shortwave and satellite radio, fax networks and computer bulletin boards.^[14] However, it is overnight AM radio shows and [viral propaganda](#) on the Internet that have most effectively contributed to their [extremist](#) political ideas about the New World Order finding their way into the previously apolitical literature of numerous [Kennedy assassinologists](#), [ufologists](#), [lost land theorists](#) and, most recently, [occultists](#). From the mid-1990s on, the worldwide appeal of those subcultures transmitted New World Order conspiracism like a "mind virus" to a large new audience of seekers of [stigmatized knowledge](#).^[6]

Hollywood [conspiracy-thriller](#) television shows and films also played a role in introducing a vast popular audience to various [fringe theories](#) related to New World Order conspiracism—[black helicopter](#), [FEMA "concentration camps"](#), etc.—which for decades were previously confined to [radical 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]

Following the start of the 21st century, and specifically during the [late-2000s financial crisis](#), many politicians and pundits, such as [Gordon Brown](#)^[16] and [Henry Kissinger](#),^[17] 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"](#) that takes into account [emerging markets](#) such as [China](#) and [India](#). These declarations had the unintended consequence of providing fresh fodder for New World Order conspiracism, which culminated in talk show host [Sean Hannity](#) stating on his [Fox News Channel](#) program *Hannity* that the "conspiracy theorists were right".^[18] Fox News in general, and its opinion show [Glenn Beck](#) in particular, has been repeatedly criticized by progressive [media watchdog](#) groups, for not only mainstreaming the New World Order conspiracy theories of the [radical right](#), but possibly agitating its [lone wolves](#) into action.^{[19][20]}

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 are committed to exposing and vigorously opposing what they perceive to be an emerging New World Order.^[21] The growing dissemination and popularity of conspiracy theories has also created an alliance between right-wing populist agitators, such as Alex Jones, and [hip hop music](#)'s left-wing populist rappers, such as [KRS-One](#), [Professor Griff](#) of [Public Enemy](#) and [Immortal Technique](#), thus illustrating how [anti-elitist](#) conspiracism can create unlikely political allies in efforts to oppose the political system.^[22]

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.^[23]

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 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](#) and the [Book of Revelation](#).^[24] 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 [Secretary-General of the United Nations](#), or even the [Caliph](#) of a [pan-Islamic](#) state.^{[6][24]}

Some of the most vocal critics of end-time conspiracy theories come from within Christianity.^[14] 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*.^[25] 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.^[24] [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,^{[26][27]} 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](#).^{[28][29]}

Freemasonry

Main article: [Masonic conspiracy theories](#)

[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 and/or governed only by Freemasons.^[14]

The [esoteric](#) nature of [Masonic symbolism](#) and [rites](#) led to Freemasons first being accused of secretly practising [Satanism](#) in the late 18th century.^[14] 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.^[14] 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.^[30]

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.^[31] Furthermore, there is no published information establishing the Masonic membership of the men responsible for the design of the Great Seal.^{[31][32]} 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,^[33] in fact, the all-seeing [Eye of Providence](#) and the unfinished pyramid were symbols used as much outside Masonic lodges as within them in the late 18th century, therefore the designers were drawing from common esoteric symbols.^[34] 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 and a few operate as active political lobbies for [secularist](#) causes, as exemplified by the [Grand Orient of France](#), Masonic researcher Trevor W. McKeown argues:

The accusation that Freemasonry has a hidden agenda to establish a Masonic government ignores several facts. While agreeing on certain Masonic Landmarks, the many independent and sovereign Grand Lodges act as such, and do not agree on many other points of belief and practice. Also, as can be seen from a [survey of famous Freemasons](#), individual Freemasons hold beliefs that span the spectrum of politics. The term "Masonic government" has no meaning since individual Freemasons hold many different opinions on what constitutes a good government.^[35]



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.^[36]

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](#).^[37]

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]

There is no evidence that the Bavarian Illuminati survived its suppression in 1785.^[37]

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](#).^[38] *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.^[14]

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](#).^[39]

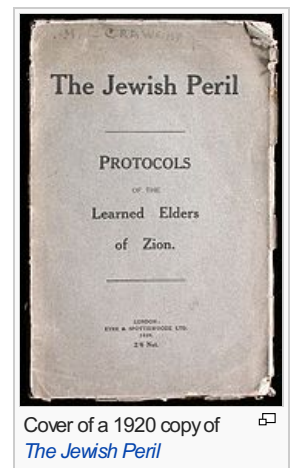
Responsible for feeding many [antisemitic](#) and [anti-Masonic](#) mass hysterias of the 20th century, *The Protocols* has been influential in the development of some conspiracy theories, including some New World Order theories, and appears repeatedly in certain contemporary conspiracy literature.^[6] 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.^[40] Although the Priory of Sion itself has been exhaustively [debunked](#) by journalists and scholars as a hoax,^[41] 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.^[42]

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



Cover of a 1920 copy of *The Jewish Peril*

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.^[43]

In 1902, "The New York Times noted that following his 1877 will, Rhodes in 1890 put forth the same ideas, and set forth the goal that his secret society should work towards "gradually absorbing the wealth of the world".^[44]

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](#).^[43]

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.^[45] 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.

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](#).^[46] 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 [producerist](#) worldview, such as members of the [John Birch Society](#), were the first to combine and spread an ultraconservative [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](#).^[47]

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](#) ([Cleon Skousen](#)) and [New Left](#) ([Carl Oglesby](#)) to substantiate this view, even though he 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.^[47]

Larry McDonald, the 2nd 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 stated:

The drive of the Rockefellers and their allies is to create a one-world government, combining super-capitalism and Communism under the same tent, all under their control ... Do I mean conspiracy? Yes I do. I am convinced there is such a plot, international in scope, generations old in planning, and incredibly evil in intent.^[48]

In his 2002 autobiography *Memoirs*, 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.^[49]

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:

I don't think that I really feel that we need a world government. We need governments of the world that work together and collaborate. But, I can't imagine that there would be any likelihood or even that it would be desirable to have a single government elected by the people of the world ... There have been people, ever since I've had any kind of position in the world, who have accused me of being ruler of the world. I have to say that I think for the large part, I would have to decide to describe them as crackpots. It makes no sense whatsoever, and isn't true, and won't be true, and to raise it as a serious issue seems to me to be irresponsible.^[50]

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;^[51] while others, such as [G. William Domhoff](#), argue that it is in fact a mere policy discussion forum,^[52] which provides the business [input to U.S. foreign policy planning](#).^[citation needed] The latter argue that it 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; and as far as being secretive, it issues annual reports and allows access to its historical archives. However, all these critics agree that historical studies of the council show that it has a very different role in the overall power structure than what is claimed by conspiracy theorists.^[52]

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](#).^[53] 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.^[12]

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.^[54]

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.^[55]

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.^[56] 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](#).^[57]

Paradoxically, since the 2000s (decade), 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](#). However, some conspiracy theorists use the research findings of American journalist [Edwin Black](#), author of the 2009 book *Nazi Nexus*, to claim that some American corporations and philanthropic foundations—whose complicity was pivotal to the Third Reich's war effort, [Nazi eugenics](#) and the [Holocaust](#)—are now conspiring to build a Fourth Reich^[dubious – discuss].

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.^[58]

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](#).^[59]

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.^[60]

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](#).^{[61][62]}

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.^[62] 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 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 are [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](#).^[63]

[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.^[64]

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.^[65]

Skeptics argue that the North American Union exists only as a proposal contained in one of a thousand academic and/or 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.^[65]

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.^{[66][67]}

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.^[68]

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.^[69]

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 [F.E.M.A.](#) will be used for the [internment](#) of suspected [subversives](#), making little effort to distinguish true threats to the New World Order from pacifist dissidents.^[20]

Before year 2000 some [survivalists](#) wrongly believed this process would be set in motion by the predicted [Y2K problem](#) causing [societal collapse](#).^[70] Since many left-wing and right-wing conspiracy theorists believe that the [September 11 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](#).^[71]

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.^[14]

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](#),^[72] 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.^[73] 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.^[74] It also inflamed conspiracy theorists,^[75] who misinterpret the "eye and pyramid" as the [Masonic](#) symbol of the [Illuminati](#),^{[32][76]} an 18th-century secret society they speculate continues to exist and is plotting on behalf of a New World Order.^{[36][37]}

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.^[77] Civil libertarians argue that the privatization of surveillance and the rise of the

Part of a series on

GLOBAL SURVEILLANCE



Disclosures

Origins · Pre-2013 · 2013–present · Reactions

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XKeyscore · PRISM · ECHELON · Carnivore · DISHIRE · STONEGHOST · Tempora · Frenchelon · Fairview · MYSTIC · Boundless Informant · BULLRUN · PINWALE · Stingray

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Places

The Doughnut · Fort Meade · Menwith Hill · Pine Gap · Southern Cross Cable · Utah Data Center · Bad Aibling Station · Dagger Complex

Laws

FISA amendments · UKUSA Agreement · Lustre · Data Retention Directive · Data Protection Directive · USA Freedom Act

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 Mass surveillance portal

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surveillance-industrial complex in the United States does raise legitimate concerns about the erosion of [privacy](#).^[78] 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](#) and/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](#)^[79]) and facilities ([Denver International Airport](#)) to advance their plot to rule the world.^[6]

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.^[80]

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.

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.^[81] 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.](#).^[82]

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.^[83] 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.^{[84][85]}

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 U.S.S.R.](#) 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.^[52]

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, they 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.^[86]

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.^[87] 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.^[87]

Criticisms

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](#), writes in a March 2005 essay entitled *There Are No Conspiracies*:

There are several problems with a conspiratorial view that don't fit with what we know about power structures. First, it assumes that a small handful of wealthy and highly educated people somehow develop an extreme psychological desire for power that leads them to do things that don't fit with the roles they seem to have. For example, that rich capitalists are no longer out to make a profit, but to create a one-world government. Or that elected officials are trying to get the constitution suspended so they can assume dictatorial powers. These kinds of claims go back many decades now, and it is always said that it is really going to happen this time, but it never does. Since these claims have proved wrong dozens of times by now, it makes more sense to assume that leaders act for their usual reasons, such as profit-seeking motives and institutionalized roles as elected officials. Of course they want to make as much money as they can, and be elected by huge margins every time, and that can lead them to do many unsavory things, but nothing in the ballpark of creating a one-world government or suspending the constitution.^[52]

Partridge, a contributing editor to the global affairs magazine *Diplomatic Courier*, writes in a December 2008 article entitled *One World Government: Conspiracy Theory or Inevitable Future?*:

I am skeptical that "global governance" could "come much sooner than that [200 years]," as [journalist Gideon Rachman] posits. For one thing, nationalism—the natural counterpoint to global government—is rising. Some leaders and peoples around the world have resented Washington's chiding and hubris over the past two decade of American unipolarity. Russia has been re-establishing itself as a "great power"; few could miss the national pride on display when China hosted the Beijing Olympics this summer; while Hugo Chavez and his ilk have stoked the national flames with their anti-American rhetoric. The departing of the Bush Administration could cause this nationalism to abate, but economic uncertainty usually has the opposite effect. [...] Another point is that attempts at global government and global agreements have been categorical failures. The WTO's Doha Round is dead in the water, Kyoto excluded many of the leading polluters and a conference to establish a deal was a failure, and there is a race to the bottom in terms of corporate taxes—rather than an existing global framework. And, where supranational governance structures exist, they are noted for their bureaucracy and inefficiency: The UN has been unable to stop an American-led invasion of Iraq, genocide in Darfur, the slow collapse of Zimbabwe, or Iran's continued uranium enrichment. That is not to belittle the structure, as I deem it essential, but the system's flaws are there for all to see.^[68]

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,^[88] 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.^[89]

The activities of conspiracy theorists (talk radio shows, books, websites, documentary videos, conferences, etc.) unwittingly draw enormous amounts of energy and effort away from serious criticism and activism directed to real and ongoing [crimes of state](#), and their institutional background. That is why conspiracy-focused movements ([JFK](#), [UFO](#), [9/11 Truth](#)) are treated far more tolerantly by centers of power than is the norm for serious critical and activist work of truly [left-wing progressives](#) who are marginalized from mainstream public discourse.^[14]

Alexander Zaitchik from the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) wrote a report titled "'Patriot' Paranoia: A Look at the Top Ten Conspiracy Theories" condemning such conspiracies are an effort of the radical right to undermine society.

Scholars continue to debate the psychological and sociological origins of conspiracy theories, but there is no arguing that these theories have seen a revival on the extreme right in recent years. Over the last two decades, a far-right conspiracy culture of self-proclaimed "Patriots" has emerged in which the United States government itself is viewed as a mortal threat to everything from constitutional democracy to the survival of the human race. This conspiracy revival — which has been accompanied by the explosive growth of Patriot groups over the last year and a half — kicked into overdrive with the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, who is seen by Patriots as a foreign-born Manchurian candidate sent by forces of the so-called "New World Order" to destroy American sovereignty and institute one-world socialist government.^[1] [↗](#)

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](#),^[90] Barkun writes:

The danger lies less in such beliefs themselves ... than in the behavior they might stimulate or justify. As long as the New World Order appeared to be almost but not quite a reality, devotees of conspiracy theories could be expected to confine their activities to propagandizing. On the other hand, should they believe that the prophesied evil day had in fact arrived, their behavior would become far more difficult to predict.^[6]

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:

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.^[14]

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*:

The crucial piece of this puzzle is the identity of the Antichrist, the tyrannical figure who both leads and inspires the new world order. [...] for many years, rapture theologians identified the Soviet Union as the Antichrist. But after Sept. 11, they became quite certain that the Antichrist was closely connected with the Arab world and the Muslim religion. This means, quite simply, that for rapture theologians, Islam stands at the heart of the tyrannical "new world order." Precisely here we discover why the idea of a "new world order" has such potential to move global politics in profoundly negative directions, for rapture theologians typically welcome war with the Islamic world. As Bill Moyers wrote of the rapture theologians, "A war with Islam in the Middle East is not something to be feared but welcomed—an essential conflagration on the road to redemption." Further, rapture theologians co-opt the United States as a tool in their cosmic vision—a tool God will use to smite the Antichrist and the enemies of righteousness. This is why Tim LaHaye, co-author of the best-selling series of end-times books, could lend such strong support to the American invasion and occupation of Iraq. By virtue of that war, LaHaye believed, Iraq would become "a focal point of end-times events." Even more disturbing is the fact that rapture theologians blissfully open the door to nuclear holocaust. Rapture theologians have always held that God will destroy his enemies at the end of time in the Great Battle of Armageddon. But since World War II, they have increasingly identified Armageddon with nuclear weaponry, thereby lending biblical inevitability to the prospects of nuclear annihilation. As one prophecy writer put it, "The holocaust of atomic war would fulfill the prophecies."^[24]

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](#).^{[14][91]} 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.^[6]

See also

- [Globalization](#)
- [Anti-globalization movement](#)
- [Criticisms of globalization](#)

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Further reading

The following is a list of non-self-published non-fiction books that discuss New World Order conspiracy theories.

- Carr, William Guy (1954). *Pawns in the Game*. Legion for the Survival of Freedom, an affiliate of the [Institute for Historical Review](#). ISBN 0-911038-29-9.
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-  Quotations related to **New World Order** at Wikiquote

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