PROBLEM STATEMENT

- CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE CORROSIVE TO DEMOCRACY
  - PARANOIA IS NO BASIS FOR A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

- THIS ‘PARANOID STYLE’ IS EFFECTIVE FOR GAINING POWER, BUT PRODUCES POOR POLICY DECISIONS
  - HOFSTADTER’S EVERGREEN DIAGNOSIS

- GOOD GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES REQUIRE GOOD INFORMATION COMING IN
  - ALTERNATIVE IS GIGO
GLOBAL CONSPIRANOIA

• 67% OF RUSSIANS BELIEVE A “ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT” IS IN CONTROL

• 67% OF EGYPTIANS BELIEVE THE U.S. CONTROLS ISIS TO TAKE OVER SYRIA

• 55% OF FRENCH BELIEVE VACCINE DANGERS ARE BEING HIDDEN BY THE GOVERNMENT

• 30% OF AMERICANS BELIEVE IN ‘CHEMTRAILS’; 4% IN LIZARD PEOPLE
HOW IT AFFECTS GOVERNANCE

- BELIEF IN ONE CONSPIRACY THEORY HIGHLY CORRELATED WITH BELIEF IN OTHERS
  - FEAR, LOATHING, DISEMPOWERMENT, ECONOMIC ANXIETY, SOCIAL ISOLATION – IN AN ENDLESS SPIRAL

- EROSION OF TRUST IN GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS AND NORMS
  - WEAKENING OF CONFIDENCE AND TRUST LEADING TO PERCEIVED/ACTUAL LOSS OF LEGITIMACY

- BLAME ASSIGNED TO SPECIFIC GROUPS
  - INCREASED HOSTILITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GOVERNMENT AND THE “OTHER”

- ELEVATION OF LEADERS PROMISING TO MAKE THINGS GREAT (AGAIN)
  - RESURGENCE OF ISOLATIONISM AND NATIONALISM, RISE OF CONSPIRACY-ADDLED POLITICS AND POLICIES
POLICY-SIDE IMPACTS

- **CLIMATE CHANGE**
  - “GLOBAL SOUTH-/SCIENTIST-/LIBERAL-/SOROS-/CHINESE-LED CONSPIRACY”
  - CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS AND DATA MEANS (WEATHER/CLIMATE)
  - MANIPULATION OF IGNORANCE – “DOUBT IS OUR PRODUCT”
  - READY-MADE ESCAPE FROM SCARY REALITIES
  - EQUALS LACK OF SERIOUS EFFORT ON POLICY FRONT, COSTS ARRAYED DISPROPORTIONALLY AGAINST ACTION
GOING FORWARD

- **How can we best resist conspiranoia?**
  - Those already lost have to find their own way back
    - Stop debating, stop legitimizing, avoid the CNN trap, stand your ground
  - Teach how knowledge is created and advanced
    - Discuss methods, peer review, process of research, difference between fact and opinion
  - Make our work accessible and transparent
    - Outreach, conversation, connect to non-academic audiences