

# **CONSPIRANOIA AND GOVERNANCE**

**DR. TIM WEDIG, LAS GLOBAL STUDIES**



# 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**