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Maintaining Power Through Conspiracies: An Analysis of Conspiratorial Populist Rhetoric from American Politicians

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Universiteit
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Master Thesis Seminar

Global Public Goods and Commons

Thesis Proposal

Maintaining Power Through Conspiracies

An Analysis of Conspiratorial Populist Rhetoric from American Politicians

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Abstract

Populist leaders seem to rely on misinformation, fake news, and conspiracies to expand their power and keep their followers engaged and drown out condemnation from any opponents (Bergman, 2020; Tucker et al 2017). There has been an established relationship between populism and conspiracies, but the literature is still learning exactly in which ways conspiracy theories are used by populist (Taggart, 2018). This thesis conducts a discourse analysis of two controversial American politics to determine in which ways they use conspiracies. It shows populists will utilize conspiracies if they have a disparaging relationship with nonpartisan experts. Once they decide to use conspiracies, they are able to do so to explain why ‘the people’ are not a majority, yet their will should still be considered absolute. And lastly, they are able to limit the amount of information sources they advocate to their followers, potentially isolating voters from truth or criticism.

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Introduction

In August 2022, a Republican politician that had lost his primary in Missouri, Wesley Smith shared a meme of a man dressed as a Nazi SS Officer captioned with “IRS new uniforms coming soon” and “87,000 more soldiers to investigate and prosecute American citizens. All while raising taxes on those who make \$30,000 or more.” It was shared 600 times in one week. Five months later, it became the basis of the first piece of legislation the 118th United States House of Representatives would pass (USA Today 2022). Politicians had created a narrative of a hidden governmental effort to harass its own people. This started with a need to hire to all positions within the tax agency to provide better services. It was a small piece of a larger bill, meant to stabilize the economy during times of record setting inflation (Inflation Reduction Act, 2022).

That politicians lie or perform crises emphasizing government failure is not new information (Moffitt, 2015). What is puzzling about this event is that Republicans had to be aware there was little chance of passing their legislation to reverse the original bill. Politicians, seeking reelection, reproduced a viral story that the government they themselves are a part of could not be trusted, they alone could fix it, knowing it was unlikely they would unlikely be able to fix it. At first glance, it looks like they set themselves up to fail.

This may seem like a blunder, however, when considered through the lens of the rise in populism within the US, it might make more sense. Populism is a black and white view of politics involving a struggle of ‘the people’ against ‘the elite’ who seek to harm them (Mudde, 2004). This black and white view of power struggles, in which a small clandestine group is working to harm a larger, innocent group, has obvious parallels with populism (Moore, 2016; Guinjoan & Galais, 2023).

This leads to the research question: *In which ways do populist politicians utilize conspiracies?*

To answer this, a discourse analysis from two populist politicians has been completed. This project focuses on the US as a case study. It is true that America’s democracy is somewhat unique with the way that its checks and balances are set up. However, it is easy to make the

argument that paranoia and conspiracies are interwoven into American politics making it a typical case for research (Bergmann, 2020: 253).

Paranoia and conspiracies are not new in American politics; it is a troubling tool for a politician to use (Bergmann, 2020). By their nature, conspiracy theories are overly simplistic explanations of complex events in which the world is divided into a Manichean view of good versus evil that is inherently unfalsifiable (Pirro & Taggart, 2022). Seeking to understand how these fit into populist rhetoric is necessary as populism continues to rise (Zaslove et al, 2021). It is dangerous in a democracy to purposefully create conspiratorial distrust in elected government.

Literature Review

There has been an increased concern in the rise of populism particularly since Trump's presidential election victory in 2016 and the Brexit referendum of the same year (Zaslove et al, 2021). However, populism is not a recent phenomenon. For instance, the US saw a populist uprising of farmers in the late 1800s as they struggled to overcome the rising influence of railroad lobbyists (Taggart 2018: 84). Populism has been intertwined into South American politics for a decades and it has been on the rise in European politics for nearly the same amount of time (Mudde, 2004; Pirro & Taggart, 2022).

But what *is* populism? The most widely accepted definition comes from Cas Mudde (2004), who states there must firstly be a division between two homogeneous groups, the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite.' Secondly, there must be an antagonistic relationship between them. Lastly, "that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (p 543). The will and knowledge of the people is inherently good and is why their sovereignty should remain unchallenged (Kriesi, 2014; Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2018). The elite, however, are corrupted and seeking to overthrow the people as sovereign. This leads to a perception of politics as a Manichean, black and white, division between good and evil (Taggart, 2018: 80; Zaslove et al., 2021).

Given populism's emphasis on the people as sovereign (Canovan, 1999), there is a parallel between the ideals of democracy and populism. Canovan and others argued that populism has potential to restore people's faith in democracy and keep them engaged in their government (Canovan, 2002; Kriesi, 2014; Zaslove et al., 2021). Populism is meant to solve a representation crisis through collective action by offering a voice to an electorate that feels unheard (Kriesi, 2014; Oliver & Rahn, 2016). Some argue populism, or policies inspired by it, have the potential to save crumbling democracies by offering more avenues of direct government such as referendums, mini publics, or shifting rhetoric to emphasize a deliberative mass public (Chambers, 2009; Hix 2020; Zaslove et al, 2021).

Optimism regarding populism was not shared by all. Populism is the opposite of pluralism and thus undermines the stability of a diverse society. This is because the will of the people is absolute, even if they wish to undermine democratic institutions or harm minority rights. To the populist, this is justified because the goodness of the people is inherent (Mudde 2004). As populism continued to play out in Europe and the US, there was a troubling trend in a rise of illiberal values such as contempt for the rule of law or freedom of the press from

democratically elected officials and expressed in their policy platforms (Norloff, 2018). By exalting the reign of the people over constitutional law or minority rights, liberal values become threatened (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Pappas, 2019; Taggart, 2018).

Despite observable effects of populism, populist politicians and their policies goals were difficult to fully conceptualize (Aslanidis, 2015). This criticism lead to others arguing that it is better to think of populism as rhetoric. As rhetoric, it is easier to frame populism as a story of ‘the people’ caught up in a, often existential, struggle against a corrupt elite. This understanding treats populism as a tool politicians have at their disposal as opposed to an ideology. Seeing it as a rhetoric places discourse as an integral part of understanding populism (Aslanidis, 2015; Moffitt, 2015; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018).

To understand populism as a tool, it might help to think of it as described by Moffitt in 2016. In this analogy, populism is a performance in which a politician is the star, the people an audience, and crisis is the stage in which the performance takes place (Moffitt, 2016). The struggle between the people and the elite is thus framed by the populist politician. Crisis cannot be separated from populism, it is foundational. Without crisis there is no stage. The populist politician has no place to perform and the people have no way of seeing the performance (Moffitt 2015; Moffitt 2016).

Fortunately for the populist politician, crisis can be found, or even created, in many places. As a ‘sense of urgency’, crisis is not limited to some external event such as a natural disaster, but more often, some sort of failure on the part of the government (elite) that populist actors use to their advantage (Moffitt, 2015). While a crisis can be something more tangible and real such as a disaster (Hart, 2022), a populist politician can use economic anxieties or political polarization and work it into mainstream politics (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Within a democracy, the perceived crisis could lie within the view that liberal democracy is not putting enough emphasis on rule by the people (Canovan, 2002; Kriesi, 2014; Moffitt, 2016). It can come from contrasting interests in a pluralist society or a sense of loss of identity or feelings of insecurity (Pappas, 2019; Homolar & Scholz, 2019; Taggart, 2000).

Crisis is then performed in an environment where factchecking is not encouraged from the target audience. It is probably not surprising that one trope of populism is that conspiracy theories are able to wrap themselves easily within populist rhetoric (Taggart 2018). This natural overlap along with a shift in media consumption has allowed conspiracy theories to

flourish amongst populist actors (Bergmann, 2020). This might be because populist voters are more likely to believe politically charged conspiracies (Castanho Sila, et al, 2017).

Conspiracies are different from fake news and misinformation in that, unlike fake news and misinformation, conspiracies are not falsifiable. Fake news, misinformation, and conspiracies have varying degrees of proximity to the truth (Hopkin & Rosamond, 2018). Conspiracy theories seek to explain a phenomenon, whereas fake news and misinformation do not necessarily address complex real-world happenings (Bergmann, 2020; Guldemon et al., 2022; Pirro & Taggart, 2022).

In these complex narratives, there is usually a small, corrupt, and clandestine group seeking to victimize a larger group, similar to the antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite in populism. The potential overlap between populism and conspiracies is evident (Castanho Silva et al., 2017). This important overlap means there is something about conspiracy theories populists may be able to use to their advantage. To be clear, conspiracy theories do not always have to involve populism and populist narratives are not always conspiracies that should be treated as such, but as the use of populism persists so does the potential for populist actors to utilize conspiracy theories.

Theoretical Framework

Further research is needed on conspiracies in populism (Castanho Silva et al., 2017; Pirro & Taggart, 2022). Within populism, learned information from intellectuals is often rejected in favor of common wisdom and populists tend to feel compelled to spread their message (Taggart, 2018). Populism is, after all, an exercise in collective problem solving and the success of collective action is dependent greatly on information sharing (Ostrom, 1998). This information does not need to be truthful, it could be harmful, and can spread unchecked by reason in an evangelical group that has little interest in experts (Guldemon et al., 2022; Taggart, 2018). This has been even more evident with the rise of information sharing on social media as illiberal actors are able to spread content without the burden of gatekeepers or factcheckers (Tucker et al., 2017). There is reasonable concern conspiracies could more easily proliferate into mainstream acceptance.

Despite its potential for harm, conspiracy theories help actors to maintain their relationship with their followers by distancing themselves from establishment politics (Pirro & Taggart, 2022). The populist leader is able to explain that, despite their presence in leadership, there is still a crisis of failure to perform because some sort of powerful entity is operating behind the scenes to hinder their efforts to return power to the people (Moffitt, 2015; Pirro & Taggart, 2022). In addition to this, populist voters tend to be distrusting in politics and have higher beliefs in conspiracies. Conspiracies may politicians to motivate voters to vote and to vote in irrational ways (Taggart, 2018; Homolar & Scholtz, 2019).

Because populism can be difficult to conceptualize, this framework will draw upon both ideas of populism as an ideology and populism as rhetoric. Populism will be treated as a rhetoric style, a tool to be utilized, in which a politician performs crisis for an audience (Moffitt 2016). To help understand the performance, who the actor and audience is, and the crisis they perform, Mudde's (2004) definition in which two homogenous groups, 'the good people' and 'the corrupt elite' are locked in an antagonistic relationship with each other will be used. So the audience, 'the people' are considered inherently good. The crisis that is being performed will be treated as the basis of their clash with the elite, the corrupt villain of the performance.

Much like populism, conspiracies are difficult to conceptualize. Conspiracy theories are an attempt to explain complex, sometimes unrelated, social or political events in a simplified deterministic manner. Their narratives involve a small group with (near) infinite power that operates in varying degrees of secrecy to thwart the well-being of a victimized larger group.

Conspiracies are unfalsifiable (Castanho Silva et al., 2017). Unfalsifiable is an essential part of a conspiracy theory. This means they are self-insulated from evidence that may disprove them. For example, if one were to discover evidence that ‘the deep state’ does not exist, a believer would simply say that *is* proof of the deep state’s power as they most likely planted the evidence there to confuse people. (Bergmann, 2020; Napolitano, 2021; Guldmond et al., 2022; Pirro & Taggart, 2022)

There are a few things already known about the circumstances in which populists will use conspiracies. Taggart (2018) argues that conspiracies are a trope of populism, meaning there is an overlap between the two concepts but conspiracies may not appear in *every* instance of populism. It is also known that populists narratives will change depending on which side of the political spectrum a politician falls on (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). And lastly, conspiratorial talk changes depending on party affiliation, meaning the right wing will use conspiracies differently than the left wing, and conspiratorial talk will vary depending on party affiliation and who is in power (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013; Moore 2016: 18). But, what if no political party clearly holds power? The literature currently overlooks this. Conspiracy theories are seldom related to the truth and are inherently unfalsifiable, their use may have more to do with a politician’s relationship with experts than who is in power. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Whether a populist politician will use conspiracies will be determined by the role that epistemic communities play in their ingroup

Once a populist has opted to use a conspiracy theory, it is necessary to figure out in what way they use them. It stands to reason that any politician willing to utilize conspiracies will do so in order to reinforce, or further explain some aspect of their populist beliefs. They could use conspiracies to explain who is part of the ingroup and who is part of the outgroup. They could explain the crisis that is being performed, such as their own failure within government or various ways the elite are corrupt (Pirro & Taggart, 2022). The conspiracy theory offers a unique opportunity to explain their populist narrative in way that would be immune to scrutiny (Napolitano, 2021: 86-88). Populist narratives rely on a thin-centered ideology that offers a flimsy definition of an ingroup, a politician may need conspiracies to explain more details of their populist narrative and ‘thicken’ their ideology. (Mudde, 2004). This would be

especially useful for a populist politician if they needed to explain why ‘the people’ are not an obvious majority since their will can only be absolute if they are in face a majority. This leads to the second expectation:

H2: Populist politicians will use conspiracy theories to explain why their ingroup is a minority.

Lastly, other authors have shown that conspiracies have the ability to undermine trust in non-partisan authorities including experts (Moore 2016: 19). This is a troubling concept considering populism’s rejection of traditional knowledge and learning in lieu of folk wisdom (Canovan 1999, Taggart 2018: 83). As populist politicians have a captive audience that is disinclined to trust experts, conspiracies may allow them to deepen that distrust and formulate a narrative in which they are the only ones that can be trusted or the only ones aware of the truth. They could build an echo chamber where the truth will not be trusted and their audience will be even more isolated from reality. This would give the populist politician complete control of their narrative. Therefore, the last expectation is this:

H3: Populist politicians will use conspiracies to undermine outside experts and isolate their followers from any facts that do not support their narrative

Methodology

By their nature, conspiracies seek to offer a simple explanation for a complicated social phenomenon in which there is a perceived asymmetrical power balance between the colluders and the victims (Pirro & Taggart, 2022). Both linguistics and social context are important for fully understanding this rhetoric. Given the inherent power struggle conspiracies attempt to explain, critical discourse fits this research well (van Dijk, 1993). It offers a deeper understanding of the relationship between the politicians of interest, their supporters and “the establishment.” As this is an understudied area of populism, no coding index exist, thus inductive coding was utilized for analysis.

Data collection came from American politicians. Data will be collected from the lower chamber of the legislative branch, the House of Representatives, often simply referred to as ‘the House.’ Representatives work for a district determined by geography and the census. While politicians will align themselves with a party, they are meant to represent their entire district once in office, regardless of party affiliation and are up for election every two years.

Data collection will come from two national level politicians that have been associated with a populist movement from either side of the spectrum. On the right-wing, data has come from controversial Georgia House Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene who has a close association to former President Donald Trump. She has fallen under scrutiny multiple incendiary comments (Newsweek, 2022). She is a populist politician from the right-wing (Van Schenk, 2023).

On the left-wing, data came from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a controversial Representative for New York. She has received scrutiny for her anti-billionaire views, comparing migrant detention centers to the Holocaust, and is currently under an ethics investigation for her controversial Met Gala appearance (The Guardian, 2023). She has close political ties with leftist populist and former presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders and is an example of an American populist (Rasulo, 2020).

Both representatives have been chosen to create a most similar systems design. They are both influential member of the House of Representatives. They are controversial figures in American politics with ties to populist presidential candidates and have their own use of populist rhetoric. In 2022 they were both seeking reelection and won. Their speeches were collected from 1 February 2022 and 7 November 2022. This covers primary elections through election day.

Alexandria Ocasio Cortez		Marjorie Taylor Greene	
Date	Location/Event	Date	Location/Event
12 February 2022	Campaign Rally- Texas	3 March 2022	People’s Convey
15 February 2022	Town Hall	12 March 2022	Save America Rally- Georgia
24 March 2022	Town Hall	4 April 2022	Georgia Republican Assembly
20 April 2022	Town Hall	25 May 2022	Primary election victory speech
20 May 2022	Instagram Live Fundraiser	25 July 2022	Turning Point Student Action Committee
26 May 2022	Instagram Live Fundraiser	21 August 2022	Moment of Truth Summit
26 May 2022	Town Hall	3 September 2022	Save America Rally- Pennsylvania
25 June 2022	Abortion Rights Rally- NYC	16 September 2022	Texas Youth Summit
26 June 2022	Instagram Live Fundraiser	17 September 2022	Save America Rally- Ohio
29 June 2022	Town Hall	1 October 2022	Save America Rally- Michigan
16 August 2022	American Postal Workers Union Convention	9 October 2022	Save America Rally- Arizona
5 October 2022	Speech on Taxi Medallion Debt	3 November 2022	Save America Rally- Iowa
13 October 2022	Town Hall		
7 November 2022	Campaign Rally- Queens, NY		

Table 1- List of dates and events collected for data analysis

To determine which appearances were collected for analysis, their social media pages were searched for indications of public appearances they made during this timeframe. It stands to reason that most politicians would utilize social media to make the public aware of where they are going to be or to thank others for their support at an event. Consideration was primarily given to both Twitter and Instagram, as Taylor-Greene was banned from Twitter for

part of 2022. After compiling a list of their appearances, sources such as C-SPAN, YouTube, and Google were searched for complete, unedited videos of their appearances and speeches.

Only unedited speeches or appearances, where there is some type of face to face interaction between the politician and an audience such as constituents or supporters, were collected.

Live streaming events have been included because during this time frame as COVID restrictions were still in place and live streams allow for real time comments from viewers.

Material such as a commercials or social media posts like tweets have not been included in the data. Frequently these materials are handled by a third party such as an advertising company or a member of their staff and are not part of their live communications with their supporters or constituents. Furthermore, events that are moderated such as debates, podcasts, and interviews with the press have been omitted as they also take part of the control of the narrative away from the politician, are often controlled by a third party, and maybe edited or censored for the purposes of entertainment or broadcasting standards. This is to adhere to the idea of populism as a rhetoric tool that is performed by a politician on a stage, this means their performance in front of their audience is essential to understanding the rhetoric they use (Chambers, 2009; Moffitt 2016). Please refer to table 1 for a complete list of the collected data.

Concept	Theme	Examples of indicators
Conspiracies	If conspiracies are used...	Using known conspiracies such as QAnon, vaccines/autism, or explaining complex events like COVID-19 with ‘collusion’ in a way that cannot be disproven
Explain ingroup as minority	Why isn’t the ingroup an obvious majority?	Claims of voter oppression/suppression, or silencing free speech or otherwise altering results of elections or polls, altering census data or partisan gerrymandering
Undermine	Purposefully placing experts or epistemic communities in the outgroup	Mocking scientists/experts, emphasizing lack of impartiality, attacking the data, applauding common sense over science, claims of ‘fake news’

Table 2- Operationalization of concepts

During the analysis, a search was conducted for indications of populist conspiracies, focused on cohesive efforts, in varying degrees of secrecy, from a corrupt elite that would seek to overturn the will of the people or otherwise victimize them. Data was analyzed for evidence of conspiratorial rhetoric (Pirro & Taggart, 2022). This will be shown through references to things such as “deep state,” “collusion, or “agendas” that may show some cohesive effort, possibly in secret.

Data was also analyzed to determine in which ways populists use conspiracies. Focus was given to how a politician uses this to explain why their ingroup is not a clear majority or why their ingroup has not experienced a landslide electoral victory. This could be demonstrated through explaining how the ingroup is being thwarted at the polls or how the elite cheat in order to win an election. Lastly, analysis focused on how experts are undermined or discredited, purposefully cast to the outgroup. This could be shown in discrediting scientists, data, or news organizations. For more examples of indicators, please refer to Table 2.

Results

Conspiracies Versus Science

In regards to H1, respect for experts will determine if conspiracies are used, the collected data from Representatives Greene and Ocasio-Cortez was analyzed to gauge what type of crisis they performed and if conspiracy theories were involved. Both politicians focused on different crises. In the case of Representative Ocasio-Cortez, crisis was often performed in a populist manner, however, she did not utilize conspiracies within her rhetoric.

Ocasio-Cortez championed causes associated with ‘the common people,’ such as race and removing money from politics (Alexandria Ocasio Cortez(b), 2022: 17:00; RepAOC(g), 2022: 57:36). She intertwined identity politics into her populist narrative. An example comes from her Asotria rally, “And no, we’re not going to leave anyone behind. We’re not going to leave our trans brothers and sisters behind. We’re not going to leave our undocumented brothers and sisters behind. We’re not going to leave the poor behind because chopping everybody bit by bit is how we’ve gotten into this mess in the first place” (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez(f), 2022: 9:27). With her use of identity politics within her populist narrative, she campaigns using crises that concern different groups such as abortion access, gun violence, and environmental justice.

At her April 2022 Townhall, she spoke of environmental injustice as a problem for ‘us.’ “In terms of the Bronx, the Bronx has a profound climate justice and environmental injustice issue. And, that is really showing up in our lungs. It’s showing up in a lot of places, but in the Bronx environmental injustice and environmental racism is really showing up in our lungs” (RepAOC(c), 2022: 20:09). She uses environmental injustice to emphasize the corruption of the billionaire class. “We also do a lot of environmental justice work on the island, particularly around a lot of the federal and local tax evasion that’s going on on the island where you see a lot of these bitcoin and crypto billionaires that are attempting to displace native Puerto Ricans and violate local law” (RepAOC(e), 2022: 57:35).

Her crisis performance uses systemic issues, not just environmental. She connected the housing crisis and abortion rights by speaking of the housing crisis being a barrier to supporting people seeking abortion services when traveling from another state (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez(d), 2022: 9:47). She sees a connection between education access and racism, “It actually wasn’t until these systems started to become racially integrated that we started to see cost of tuition skyrocket as almost, I would argue, a secondary way to enforce class and

race discrimination by making higher education far more expensive. It's a way of keeping the people out that were originally kept out prior to integration of schools" (RepAOC(e), 2022: 48:46).

These crises may feel conspiratorial but they are not associated with any conspiracy theory. Issues like environmental injustice or systemic racism are supported by academics and journalists. The evidence for them is not self-isolated (Napolitano, 2021). In support of H1, she may not use conspiracies because she has an overall positive relationship with epistemic communities. Her rhetoric emphasizes a need for evidence and a respect for science. Please consider her townhall from May 2022, "We have to look at the data, and science isn't just for climate. All of our policy decisions and all of our policy making should be evidence based" (RepAOC(d), 2022: 15:33). Or in a rally, "People die when you don't invest in infrastructure and when you don't acknowledge the inevitable science about our planet" (KENS 5, 2022: 1:51:00).

On the contrary, Representative Greene frequently employed conspiracy theories in her rhetoric and they were a common way of performing crisis for her. She used conspiracies at every single analyzed event. At 75 percent those appearances, she emphasized the crisis of 'Stop the Steal,' a known conspiracy regarding the 2020 election (see appendix 1). During the first half of the 2022 campaign, she frequently relied on conspiracies related to COVID-19, referencing COVID at every appearance until related restrictions were mostly lifted. In its place in the second half of the campaign, she brought up conspiracies related to the Great Replacement theory at almost every appearance. For further details, please see appendix 2.

Greene has a notably different relationship with experts than Ocasio-Cortez. Throughout her speeches, science, scientists, and mainstream news outlets were either mocked or treated as an enemy. As an example, "Because they're the party of science [Democrats], supposedly. I mean, Dr. Fauci is like doctor Frankenstein. He creates viruses that kill people so they love science" (Right Side Broadcasting, 2022: 2:06:46). Here, she has accused a former Director of the National Institute of Health to Dr. Frankenstein, accusing him of creating a deadly virus and this being met with approval by the Democratic party.

She addresses science with sarcasm, preferring folk wisdom or common sense. "We don't have any common sense in the White House, ladies and gentlemen. As a matter of fact there's not any sense at all. We don't know what's happening up there ... I know all of you attend the climate Church of whatever, right? I'm sure you all are climate worshippers. Well, the folks

in Washington that are addicted to this disgusting science, because I mean clearly looking back on the Ice Age we know that people back then paid a lot of taxes to melt that ice, right? Clearly. Duh” (Georgia Republican Assembly 2022: 9.22).

Her disdain for epistemic communities does not end with science or academics. While not specifically a part of a conspiracy, she treats journalism, along with academics, as a hinderance to American democracy and prosperity. “In 2016, this nation came together to show the Hollywood elites and university professors and line news reporters that we hold the power of self-governance. We reminded them that they are not in charge. We are. We elected Donald J Trump and we will make an American revival possible” (Fox5 Atlanta, 2022: 14:36). Here, academics and journalists are not part of ‘we.’ She also paints the medical community as actively attempting to do harm. “If you hear that term gender affirming care, no no no no. These, this is like, this is like what you think about when you're a young child. You lay in bed, you think there's a monster under your bed or there's a monster in your closet. These doctors, nurses, psychologists those are, they are those kind of monsters. They are evil and it's so dangerous” (Right Side Broadcasting, 2022: 2:10:00).

The above evidence shows that there is a connection between a populist’s willingness to use conspiracies and their view of experts, thus H1 is accepted. If experts are part of ‘the elite,’ there is more room in their narrative for conspiracies. Both Representatives were willing to perform crises and use populist language. However, Ocasio-Cortez did not resort to conspiracies and Greene did. Moore (2016) indicates that conspiracy use shifts from either side of the political aisle depending on who is in power, meaning if the left wing is in power, conspiracies will come from the right wing. However, in the case of 2022, it is debatable who was in power. While Democrats had control of the executive branch, power was split in the legislative and the judicial branch was conservative, though not having any party affiliation. Despite power being split between the two parties, conspiracies were only utilized by one. In this case, their use of conspiracies was determined by the role epistemic communities play in their populist narrative. For Ocasio-Cortez, they were an ally that offered solutions and should inform policy. For Greene, they were either something to be mocked or a hinderance to self-governance that seeks to do harm. Taggart (2018) states that not all populists will use conspiracies, but does not offer much explanation for the conditions necessary for a populist politician to use them. This shows an important condition may be exclusion from ‘the people.’

'The People' as a Minority

As Ocasio-Cortez chose not to use conspiracies in her rhetoric, the rest of the theoretical expectations do not apply to her rhetoric. Greene, however, used them frequently and her rhetoric will be considered in relation to the other two expectations. In regards to H2: conspiracies can explain the ingroup is a minority, Representative Greene's use of conspiracies were analyzed to explain how her ingroup is a minority.

As a bit of background, Greene's supporters do currently find themselves as a minority within the US. Their policy platforms, such as banning abortion and refusing legal protections for transgender people, are not popular among Americans (Pew Research(a), 2022; Pew Research(b), 2022). Even young Republicans, those under 30, have rejected MAGA for more liberal policies such as reparations for those effected by slavery (Pew Research, 2020). MAGA supporters are not in a majority as shown by recent Vanderbilt polling (Hayes, 2023). A majority of Americans do not identify with or support the ultra-conservative policy platform of Representative Greene. It stands to reason that Greene would need to explain why her concept of 'the people' are not an obvious majority yet their will should still be considered absolute.

This explanation can be found in the conspiracy theories she chooses to employ. Her most commonly espoused conspiracy theory was that the 2020 election was fraudulent or stolen. As an example, at the Moment of Truth Rally, "I will tell you that I know for a fact, I know it in my heart that Georgia reelected President Trump in 2020, but that's not what the results said and that is where our fight began" (Marjorie Taylor Greene(b), 2022: 0:37). She pushed the narrative in more subtle ways, "...Ilhan Omar and Kamala Harris, our border czar and *supposedly* our Vice President, what did they do? They bailed 'em out of jail so they could go back and do it again..." (C-SPAN(a), 2022: 1:13:00). In this quiet jab at Vice President Harris, Greene meant to undermine her authority, suggest she is not supposed to be the Vice President, and tie the administration to communism. The conspiracy of a stolen election accomplishes a few things within the populist narrative. It offers an explanation for why a democratically elected government would be considered illegitimate, an important way of circumventing the apparent overlap between populism and democracy (Canovan 1999; Mudde 2004). It also explains why the preferred candidates of the ingroup are not winning elections, despite being the voice of 'the people'.

As part of the election fraud conspiracy, Greene mentioned they were being silenced when trying to demand accountability or rectification of the rigged election. “So how dare they tell you that you can't care about election integrity? How dare they tell you that you cannot have an audit? How dare they cancel you off of your social media account because you say that you want audits, you think the election was stolen, you say Trump won. How dare they do that? It is a good question” (Marjorie Taylor Greene(b), 2022: 2:25). Silencing free speech of the ingroup was a proposed indicator and here ‘the people’ are being silenced on social media. If this were true, their message would falsely seem fringe not because they are not a majority, but because ‘the elite’ are silencing them.

One other indicator that was not expected, but was discovered through analysis, was the idea that the majority is being replaced. Greene often pushed a narrative commonly associated with The Great Replacement Theory. This theory involves some sort of white genocide and has been associated with the far-right. Though infrequent during the first part of her campaign, some part of the Great Replacement narrative was an important talking point in all of her appearances in September and October 2022. To be clear, she does not use overtly racist language, however, she pushes narratives associated with the conspiracy theory. In her speeches she emphasizes an “invasion” on the Southern border, notably the border that connects the US to predominantly non-white countries. She does not hide that she is concerned about being ‘replaced,’

Since Biden has taken office, 5 million people, 5 million people have crossed our borders. There are only 25 states of America's 50 that have a population larger than 5 million. People, think about that. 5 million people from all over the world have crossed our borders. Joe Biden has brought in 5 million people with his failure to secure America's borders. Joe Biden's 5 million illegal aliens make up a state, the same as five Delawares, nearly five Montanas, and 10 Wyomings. And how does that compare to your state Arizona? Joe Biden's 5 million illegal aliens are on the verge of replacing you, replacing your jobs, and replacing your kids in school and coming from all over the world. They're also replacing your culture and that's not great for America. The United states southern border is the most dangerous in the entire world. Under the Biden regime human trafficking is no longer illegal it is encouraged and incentivized (C-SPAN(c), 2022: 24:26).

In the above quote, ‘you,’ her predominantly white supporters (Blum & Parker, 2021), are being replaced by ‘illegal aliens.’ She compares the numbers of incoming migrants to predominantly white states, several of which have been considered part of a white supremacist homeland (Medina, et al. 2018). At the end of the above quote, she makes it clear that Biden is purposefully incentivizing this replacement. It is possible Greene is not aware of the association this language has with the Great Replacement. She maybe simply parroting a popular Fox News host, Tucker Carlson, as he played a significant role in mainstreaming the ideas of this conspiracy and he is a popular figure amongst MAGA supporters (Anti-Defamation League, 2022). Regardless of this possibility, it is a conspiracy theory she utilizes, even if she is unaware that it is racist. Other talking points of hers also fit into this conspiracy theory. She uses conspiracies involving George Soros and the Great Replacement has antisemitic roots (Anti-Defamation League, 2022). She has also referred to abortion as genocide (Georgia Republican Assembly, 2022: 36:19).

Perhaps, the more difficult conspiracy to understand is that of children being brainwashed into becoming transgender. Her speeches are filled with buzzwords such as “woke” or “Disney” that might catch the attention of her base, but she paints a very clear picture of a conspiracy. Political and non-political actors are brainwashing children to push their ideology, sterilize them, and profit from this whole process (Marjorie Taylor Greene (c), 2022: 8:30). This conspiracy is more than transphobic pandering, it paints a very clear picture of an evil elite that will hurt the innocent for the purpose of profit and ideology. In Michigan, she places special emphasis on exactly how vulnerable these children are, “A high percentage of these confused kids are from foster care or have learning disabilities, mental health issues, and approximately one third of them have autism. Genital mutilation of these children is a new evil that we have never seen and should never, ever, exist and it's happening because the Democrats demand it.” (Marjorie Taylor Greene(d), 2022: 12:15) This allows her to place special emphasis on how evil the elite are and push a white supremacist conspiracy theory through concerns over children’s sterility, and thus falling birthrates, which has a clear connection to the Great Replacement as shown by interviews conducted by *Time* (Aguilera & Abrams, 2022).

Lastly, the insertion of a conspiracy to brainwash children led to another unexpected indicator in explaining why MAGA supporters find themselves in a minority. An important part of the narrative regarding trans children was that they are being brainwashed through many facets of society, from schools, Disney, and the ‘radical’ left (Georgia Republican Assembly, 2022:

34:07). It offers an explanation for why their policies are so unpopular with the youngest of Republicans and why their message has such difficulties resonating with the young in general (Pew Research 2020).

In summary, *this evidence allows H2 to be accepted, conspiracies can explain how 'the people' can be a minority*. With election rigging, being silenced in social media, their replacement, and their children being brainwashed against them, their appearance as a minority appears false. According to these narratives, they are winning elections when they are not rigged. Their voices would be louder in the mainstream if they were not being silenced. They would be the majority if the elite were not purposefully replacing them. Their children would be taking up the cause if they were not being brainwashed. In this view, they are rightfully the majority and it would be obvious if the system were not so rigged against them. This means they are still able to see themselves as inherently good and their will should still be absolute.

It has been shown that populists will use conspiracies to stay in power (Pirro & Taggart, 2022), but this research is limited to populist leaders who had either failed to get reelected or did not have reason to be concerned about elections. Here, Greene is still accountable to her supporters and is not able to influence the inner-workings of government. She is able to maintain her populist narrative, that her people are a rightful majority despite the opposite being true, and thus hold onto power.

Isolating Followers from Knowledge

In regards to the last expectation, H3: Populists politicians can use conspiracies to harm trust in experts, the data collected from Representative Greene was analyzed to determine how she uses conspiracies to limit the trust her voters have in epistemic communities. Isolation will be measured by how conspiracies are used to limit the amount of trusted experts or media outlets that are trustworthy and undermining will be measured through evidence of corruption, nonobjectivity, mocking, or other examples of casting experts in a negative light.

Greene did use conspiracies as an attempt to limit the trusted sources of information for her followers. One conspiracy she often mentioned involved Hunter Biden's laptop. For further explanation of this as a conspiracy, please see appendix 1. While her use of this particular conspiracy died off towards the end of the 2022, it was mentioned in 50 percent of her speeches between March and September 2022. This narrative provided her with a way to 'prove' the mainstream media and intelligence communities were corrupted or compromised.

“...Let's go a little further talking about Hunter Biden's laptop. Well you know there were 51 intelligence agency people, you know the “experts” that talk on television and tell you people what to think. Well, they denied the story so let me tell you about it. I got a friend over here, Congressman Matt Gaetz. He's right there, and my buddy Congressman Gaetz and I will be introducing a House resolution this week to strip their security clearance because you don't get to lie to the American people when the President's son committed crimes and we have proof of it on his laptop...”

(CSPAN(a), 2022: 1:13:30).

In this example, the intelligence community that examined the laptop for authenticity and evidence of wrongdoing have been accused of telling ‘you’ what to think and worthy of having their security clearance removed for it. It is also noteworthy that she frames herself and her political ally as the only ones that will be honest and work for ‘the people.’ At the Georgia Republican Assembly (2022: 19:13) she makes it clear that the New York Times and ‘intelligence professionals’ told “everyone on the news” false information regarding the laptop. With this conspiracy, she has been able to cast doubt on the trustworthiness of intelligence organizations and news outlets.

This distrust extends to the medical, academic, legal, and bureaucratic sectors. As previously discussed, she pushed that Dr. Fauci was directly involved in ‘creating’ COVID-19 (Right Side, 2022: 2:06:46). As part of the Great Replacement conspiracy, she cited that District Attorneys (DAs) were ‘funded by George Soros’ (Marjorie Taylor Greene(d), 2022: 4:03). This implication is that an important part of the justice system had been ‘bought’ by their political opponents. However, the conspiracy theory that children are being brainwashed into turning trans contained the most evidence of distrust of various epistemic communities. All within one narrative, followers are told doctors, the Department of Education, teachers, and universities are all trying to harm their children (Marjorie Taylor Greene(d), 2022: 17:01). Yet again, she reinforces that the elite are corrupt and these are structures that protect them and their power. They are not worthy of trust, only she and her political allies are. The pool where her followers can get nonpartisan information they trust shrinks with these narratives.

Given the care Greene goes through to talk about nonpartisan efforts within the narratives of these conspiracies, H3 is accepted. This is an aspect of conspiracies that was previously overlooked within the literature. It has been stated that populists will use conspiracies to maintain power or explain their failures within government or fuel cynicism towards a

government (Pirro & Taggart 2022; Moore, 2016). While these conspiracies probably help fuel cynicism, it overlooks an important totality of the situation. Conspiracies are self-insulated from scrutiny or otherwise unfalsifiable. For example, any evidence supporting gender affirming care for children would most likely come doctors or academics, but they are part of the plot to hurt these children and therefore cannot be trusted (Castanho Silva, Vegetti, Littvay, 2017; & Napolitano 2021). Populists live in a world with the assumption they are the majority, their will should be unchallenged, and they are inherently good (Mudde 2004). They are likely to reject information that is not folk wisdom, common sense, or generated by ‘the people’ (Taggart, 2018: 83). When conspiracy theories are thrown into a populist narrative, a politician is able to craft a crisis in which no one can be trusted. There is no other source of information the voter can turn to in good faith. Their echo-chamber informs the people as sovereign.

Why would a populist politician do this? Because of the nature of conspiracies, the politician is able to maintain complete control of their narrative with little meaningful scrutiny from supporters or critics. Narratives that are threatening to one’s idea of self or security can also make for potent calls to action and lead to irrational voting patterns (Homolar & Scholz, 2019). If they are able to make their followers believe their will is absolute and that there is no other reliable source of information, it becomes easier to make power grabs unquestioned.

Conclusion

Through the above analysis, the threat to democracy is laid out through the way populists can use conspiracy theories. The analysis was able to show several things about populist politicians relationship with conspiracies. This study showed a contemptuous relationship with nonpartisan experts is most likely necessary. Secondly, that conspiracies maybe necessary when ‘the people’ are not a real majority. And lastly, that conspiracies allow populist politicians to limit the amount of epistemic communities that ‘the people’ can trust.

The contrast between Representatives Ocasio-Cortez and Greene showed that researches should not overlook the relationship populists have with experts. Previous studies have shown that conspiracies help populists create space between themselves and the establishment, or maybe contingent on their parties relationship with power (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013; Moore 2016: 18). However, conspiracies are self-insulated from evidence that would disprove them. This does not lend itself well to science, or anyone that would place emphasis on an evidence based approach to policy. Ocasio-Cortez advocated evidence based decision making. Greene ridiculed and disparaged experts in her rhetoric and frequently employed conspiracies.

Secondly, analysis was able to show that Greene uses conspiracies to explain why her ingroup is not a majority. Previous research had shown that populists are able to use conspiracies once in office to maintain power by focusing on a common enemy of the people (Pirroh & Taggart, 2022). However, those politicians had much different circumstances in their elections. In the case of Greene, she used conspiracies to convince her followers they would be a majority if it were not for the interferences of the elite. She did this by using conspiracies to show that elections were rigged, their population was being replaced, and their children were being brainwashed against them.

Greene also used conspiracies to harm her followers views of experts that might be able to offer evidence contrary to the conspiracies she employed. Other research has shown that populists tend to believe in conspiracies, and there is an overlap between populist thought and conspiracy theories (Castanho Silva et al, 2017, Taggart 2018, Guinjoan & Galais, 2023). This research was missing what happens when conspiracies target epistemic communities. The populist is able to whittle away at the groups their followers can turn to, until only they are left. This allows for authoritarian and illiberal tendencies to flourish within a populist movement (Taggart, 2000; Mudde 2004).

This thesis has its limitations in several aspects. The selected politicians did not both utilize conspiracy theories and there is not enough information to determine if the left side of the political spectrum would have used conspiracies in the same way. Research was also limited to one country and societal views of authority may change how and if populists use conspiracies.

This leaves room for future research. Researchers should determine if these results hold up across both sides of the political spectrum. Future research should also consider how voters responded to these conspiracy theories, if it made any change in their voting behavior, engagement in politics, or their perception of the legitimacy of institutions. And lastly, there is room to determine how conspiracies effect the policy cycle. Politicians make campaign promises inspired by conspiracies that may turn into legislation. There are still many aspects of the political process populist conspiracies could effect.

While conspiracies may seem like a problem that only exist on the fringes of society, this research has shown that conspiracies have entered into mainstream politics in the US and unfortunately current events and literature has shown this is not a problem exclusive to America. While this research offers important insights into the use of conspiracies, more information is needed regarding how to combat them once they are disseminated by political leaders.

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Appendix 1- Conspiracies Explained

Covid as Conspiracy

This is probably the easiest conspiracy to understand throughout Greene's rhetoric. In short, COVID-19 was manmade and was funded by US tax dollars. While there is much debate around the origins of COVID-19, Greene takes it further than that. In her narrative, Democrats were involved in the process, celebrated the deaths of Americans, and used it as a political tool to either oppress the people through lockdowns or rig elections in their favor. Evidence for this narrative is in her speeches and is highlighted in Appendix 2.

Stop the Steal

This conspiracy is also rather straightforward. Through various means, the Democrats rigged, or 'stole' the 2020 Presidential election in favor of Biden. This effort took place in different forms and included media bias, faulty technology, various voting irregularities, and corruption at the state and federal levels (Salak, 2023). Greene and other Republican politicians used this conspiracy throughout 2022, however, Greene was able to add to it. Her eligibility to remain on the ballot in 2022 was brought into question because of her alleged involvement in the January 6th, 2021 insurrection. She was able to apply the conspiracy theory to her situation. She also applied it to other Democrats such as Governor Newsome of California. She falsely referred to him as being related to Nancy Pelosi in order to accuse the Democrats of nepotism and election rigging.

Hunter Biden's Laptop

Perhaps one of the most complicated to understand is the conspiracy around Hunter Biden, President Joe Biden's adult son. The conspiracy revolves around the idea that while President Biden was Vice President, he helped his son with business dealings in Ukraine and China. In Ukraine, the then Vice President allegedly demanded a prosecutor in Ukraine be fired because that prosecutor was investigated an energy company who had Hunter Biden on their board. Supposedly, in China, President Biden had given the Chinese government preferential treatment because of his son's business dealing there. The laptop in question is stated to contain proof of these allegations (Time, 2023).

The laptop is said to contain information proving the corruption of the Biden family. The laptop was abandoned at a repair shop in Delaware, where the shop owners decided to take a look at it after it been abandoned for quite some time. He was troubled by what he found and when the laptop was not picked up, he turned it over to the FBI. Once the FBI stopped updating him about the laptop, he reached out to the media. Supposedly incriminating emails were published by The New York Post, and social media outlets moved to block the article as it appeared to be false or misleading information. Intelligence officials released a statement stating the hard drive in question had indications of Russian tampering. Other media outlets were able to authenticate at least of some the content on the hard drive and multiple investigations have since followed. Ultimately, no evidence has been found that would incriminated President Biden or link him to his son's business dealings, however, some Republicans claim that this is because of interference from Biden's administration (Time, 2023). Please note, this is a summary. Hunter Biden's past is complicated and so is the matter regarding his laptop. The previously cited Time article has a very detailed explanation.

The Great Replacement

This conspiracy, rooted in white supremacy, simply states there is a covert operation to replace the white race through various means. This includes through sterilization, immigration, and other means. While once on the fringe of American society, it has gained national attention because of TV personalities such as Tucker Carlson and has been cited as the inspiration for multiple mass shootings in recent years (Anti-Defamation League, 2022; Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2022).

- **Immigration-** In the American incarnation of this conspiracy, immigration from the US southern border is a driving force behind the fear of replacement and is described as a purposeful effort from the government (SPLC, 2022).
- **George Soros-** The theory has antisemitic roots and often has veiled contempt for the Jewish community through how the media is seen or even George Soros' philanthropy (SPCL, 2022). In the case of Greene, she references Soros' donation to political action committees that helped fund local and state level elections in the US. This included DAs who she accused of purposefully letting dangerous criminals free in order to harm people.
- **Trans children-** Sterilization and homosexuality are also important components driving fears of white replacement (SPLC, 2022). In the version presented by Greene, many actors are collaborating to ensure children are unable to reproduce by 'turning' them trans and performing 'genital mutilation.'

Deep State- This refers to a complicated and clandestine network involving the federal government, financial and industrial leaders, lobbyists, and elected officials in either influence the inner workings of government or undermine the will of the people.

Governor kidnapping- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Michigan went into lockdown when the state's infection rates became some of the highest in the country. Governor Whitmer became the source of disdain and contempt that lead to a thwarted attempt to kidnap the Governor. Because the director of the FBI field office involved was transferred to working on the Capitol riot cases, there has been a conspiracy that the attempted kidnapping of the Governor was a practice run for January 6th, making both of them false flag operations (PolitiFact, 2021).

Watchman of the Wall*- This ended up being excluded from analysis as Greene did not provide enough information to figure out the context in which she meant it. The term can refer to an extremist anti-gay movement, however, the term originates from a bible passage (SPLC, 2007). In Greene's speeches, it is not discernable how she means the term. She describes herself as Christian and maybe familiar with the bible verse. She uses it when speaking of immigration, however, anti-trans rhetoric is also frequently employed. Given the lack of clarity, this was excluded from analysis.

Appendix 2

People’s Convey- 4 March 2022

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sVh_xw_oXQ

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
46.35	Well can I just let you know you're right because what we're voting on tomorrow is going to have approximately \$22.5 billion for future COVID that's how it's termed future COVID and to vaccinate the world so of course it's not going away because they're already asking for money that we're voting tomorrow in the 1.5 trillion dollar omnibus bill tomorrow 22.5 billion for future COVID so yeah well yeah they're wanting you to pay they're not they're asking us to say yes I promise you I'm voting no there will I will not be voting yes for that but no you're right it's not going away and it's it's a shame it's terrible what can we do we have to we have to be in the majority we have to be in the majority republicans have to be in the majority in order for our votes to overtake theirs and change this type of legislation	COVID/Future COVID- as a planned political tool hidden in omnibus bill
54:00	<p>Audience: Part of my question is that are they going to do away with the mail-in ballots?</p> <p>Thomas: that's the biggest place where I think they're subject to gaming the elections is in mail in ballots and what I'm concerned about is there's gonna be another variant that pops up in October midterm so that they</p> <p>Taylor-Greene: the midterm variant</p> <p>Thomas: so that they can motivate that they may try to find some excuse to go back to mail in ballots you got to resist it</p>	<p>Election fraud (via mail-in ballots)</p> <p>Made-up COVID variant to help in election fraud</p>

Save America Rally Commerce, GA- 12 March 2022

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?518958-101/president-trump-holds-rally-commerce-georgia-introductory-speakers&event=518958&playEvent>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
1:12:41	these are the people that spent decades investing their money in foreign countries with corrupt business dealings like Hunter Biden and the Biden crime family in Ukraine and China well we have his laptop now ladies and gentlemen now that's not all these are	Hunter Biden’s laptop

	<p>the same people that funded BLM on their fundraising platform act blue and funded riots and when they were arrested these criminal rioters for destroying American cities they locked them up but then Ilhan Omar and Kamala Harris our border czar and supposedly our vice president what did they do they bailed 'em out of jail so they could go back and do it again those are the people that need to be prosecuted but let's go a little further talking about Hunter Biden's laptop well you know there were 51 intelligence agency people you know the experts that talk on television and tell you people what to think well they denied the story so let me tell you about it I got a friend over here congressman Matt Gaetz he's right there and my buddy congressman Gaetz and I will be introducing a house resolution this week to strip their security clearance because you don't get to lie to the American people when the presidents son committed crimes and we have proof of it on his laptop and you don't get to find things like gain a function that creates nasty little man-made viruses like COVID-19 we're coming after Anthony fauci too that's right well you know there's someone else we need to go after his name is Joe Biden and on January 20th of 2021 I introduced articles of impeachment because he's compromised because of his son Hunter Biden and the crimes that they have committed and you want to know something that's why the leftist come after me because they saw it happen the minute I got to Washington</p>	<p>Election fraud</p> <p>Hunter Biden</p> <p>Hunter Biden</p> <p>COVID- Manmade</p> <p>Hunter Biden</p>
<p>1:15:34</p>	<p>they're trying to take away your right to vote in my district because now they're coming after me to remove my name off the ballot well let me inform them of something right now you're going to lose you're not going to take my name off the ballot because we will defeat you and then when I'm finished playing defense let me inform you of something else and a game there's another side it's called offense and I'm coming and you better bet you and all your nasty attorneys and George Soros funded groups</p>	<p>Election fraud/subversion</p> <p>George Soros funded lawyers</p>

Georgia Republican Assembly- 4 April 2022

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObM1n1_6alw

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
<p>4:35</p>	<p>he's putting every single one of us and our security at risk I want you to know that deadly fentanyl that's coming from China and being brought into the narco</p>	

	<p>too long and This is why this is so important for me to finish on this and This is why it's so important women and children are under attack in America today it's predatorial this week in DC there were five aborted babies five aborted babies handed over to authorities these I'm sorry these were third trimester babies oh and they were likely aborted through partial birth abortion you see abortion is the worst thing in our country it is genocide it is a real genocide so when I say children are under attack and they're predators it's true abortion is killing the innocent unborn and sometimes the born every single day in our country and now with the evil ideology of this gender nonsense of this sexual immorality and of president Joe Biden talking about trans visibility day this is this is gone on too far they want to replace women</p>	<p>Genocide (White Genocide/ Great Replacement) Great Replacement</p>
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Republican Primary Victory Speech – 25 May 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKeVVmdLUT4>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
2:25	I got to work and even before being sworn in by leading the congressional objection to Joe Biden's fraudulent electoral votes on the House floor	Election Fraud
5:44	our party will have the power to make those committees useful and hold Democrats and the deep state who have put our country through hell accountable	Deep state
16:55	with Republicans in power we will launch real investigations with teeth to hold accountable and to jail bad actors in the deep state who work every day to strip away your freedoms	Deep state

Turning Point Student Action Committee- 25 July 2022

<https://rumble.com/v1ddg3-marjorie-taylor-greene-delivers-remarks-at-turning-point-usas-student-actio.html>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
6:30	well what do you guys think about Hunter Biden I mean I'm not talking about the beautiful videos he makes yeah he's he's he's quite the uh Hollywood actors or something like that but yeah he should be locked up what do you guys think well maybe we'll see that happen I think we should	Hunter Biden

Mike Lindell’s Moment of Truth Summit- 21 August 2022

<https://rumble.com/v1gtxm1-mtg-delivers-remarks-on-election-integrity-at-the-moment-of-truth-summit-in.html>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
0:35	<p>I do want to tell you you see I was elected in 2020 in a great district northwest Georgia strong republican district but I will tell you that I know for a fact I know it in my heart that Georgia reelected president trump in 2020 but that's not what the results said and that is where our fight began it started back in November of 2020 now here's what I found interesting as I was preparing to go into Congress I worked with a few of my great republican colleagues people you know like Matt Gaetz Jim Jordan a lot of our strong fighters and we came together and said this is so wrong we've got to do something about it and so we organized meetings and we did a lot of planning we looked at any evidence that we could find and the most compelling thing to me that I saw over and over again were the thousands of affidavits that people had signed ordinary people I'm not talking about elected officials or anybody famous regular Americans signed their name on these affidavits risking perjury if they are caught lying in a court of law saying that they had witnessed election fraud that spoke to me because we had never seen that before in in history</p>	<p>Election fraud</p> <p>Election fraud</p>
2:25	<p>I proudly objected to Joe Biden’s fraudulent Electoral College votes on January 6th I would do it again today right now and I would do it again tomorrow and again and again because I know president trump won the election in 2020 now what are we are living in the most insane times we're living in a time where all of you and all of us are shamed for saying that the election was stolen or shamed saying that we don't believe the results or shamed saying that no we want an audit of the machines we want an audit of these elections show us the proof why is that something to be ashamed of seriously let's ask ourselves who pays for the elections yes you do with what your money right tax dollars that means you own the machines you own the ballots you pay the people that get paid to do to run the elections so how dare they tell you that you can't care about election integrity how dare they tell you that you cannot have an audit how dare they cancel you off of your social media account because you say that you want audits you think the election</p>	<p>Election fraud</p> <p>Election fraud</p> <p>Election fraud</p>

	stolen you say trump won how dare they do that it is a good question	
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Save America Rally Pennsylvania- 3 September 2022

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?522469-101/introductory-speakers-president-trumps-pennsylvania-rally>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
22:50	you want to know something else Pennsylvania president trump won the 2020 election that's right we know president trump won and you know what under trump the policies here in Pennsylvania and for our entire country they were amazing because he put tariffs on China that protected workers in Pennsylvania and the steel industry	Election fraud

Texas Youth Summit- 16 September 2022

<https://rumble.com/v1kelsv-replay-texas-youth-summit-with-speaker-marjorie-taylor-greene-91622.html>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
1:56:26	the left doesn't want to grow in population you want to know why they would they would really rather kill babies in the womb yeah they want to reduce the population of the planet	Great Replacement
2:01:23	he's seriously is allowing an illegal invasion and you all put up with it far more than I do in Georgia we just we just have some of them you're getting a full country every every country on the planet flowing in every single day so I introduced articles of impeachment on Joe Biden for that he should be impeached but that's not the only one I introduced articles of impeachment on Joe Biden also for another reason because he and his son Hunter Biden are so corrupt they use Joe Biden's position of power to do all kinds of business in countries like China and Ukraine where billions and billions and billions of your tax dollars are being sent to defend a border that is not our own by the way I voted no on every single one of those bills	Great Replacement Hunter Biden
2:06:46	Because they're the party of science supposedly I mean Dr. Fauci is like doctor Frankenstein he creates viruses that kill people so they love science	COVID manmade
2:08:25	there is a horrific thing happening it is medical experimentation and they're doing it on kids and they're doing it on children all over the country and the numbers are staggering they're telling kids that you can oh if you if you don't feel like you're a girl or	

	<p>feel like you're a boy as a matter of fact they're brainwashing them and it's happening by sick and disgusting evil perverted child abusing school teachers and they want you all to believe this it is a lie it is a foundational lie you can't change your gender and here's what they're doing to kids and this is awful to talk about they are performing mastectomies that is literally cutting off girls breasts when they're teenagers they are performing hysterectomies that is removing a girl a teenage girl or younger ability to have a baby totally takes away her uterus cannot have a baby they are castrating teenage boys I know that's hard to understand and her horrific ways and changing the way they're shaped down there it's genital mutilation and it leads to lifelong medical issues and I'll explain it like this this is really gross but these young boys that end up doing this surgery they end up having to wear adult diapers the rest of their life because it affects they leak urine OK this is a real thing no one will tell you this but I I will tell it to you this is what they're doing to kids and they call it gender affirming care if you hear that term gender affirming care no no no no these this is like this is like what you think about when you're a young child you lay in bed you think there's a monster under your bed or there's a monster in your closet these doctors nurses psychologists those are they are those kind of monsters they are evil and it's so dangerous right now the numbers are this high one in ten children think they are trans one in 10 that's 10 percent it's never like that just a few years ago this is a it is an ideology that is being pushed on kids</p>	<p>Brainwashing children</p> <p>They cannot have children (genocide)</p> <p>Ideology pushed on kids</p>
<p>2:13:19</p>	<p>country with wide open borders where anyone and everyone is coming in crime that's going out of control in cities like it never should a decline in our moral our fabric or the complete decay of our moral character and fabric moving towards things that are so evil where I just told you about what they're doing to kids and that's unthinkable unthinkable</p>	<p>Narrative of decline in culture and evil towards children (referencing 'genital mutilation') Great Replacement</p>

Save America Ohio Rally- 17 September 2022

<https://rumble.com/v1kku4b-congresswoman-mtg-delivers-remarks-at-president-trumps-save-america-rally-i.html>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
<p>2:25</p>	<p>under Democrats wide open borders allowing a daily invasion of illegal aliens coming from every distant corner of the world with deadly drugs like fentanyl</p>	<p>Foreigners are killing us (Great Replacement)</p>

	<p>from China is killing our loved ones Joe Biden and the Democrats are the best business partners the Mexican cartels have ever had boosting their billion dollar illegal drug industry and enabling the worst human trafficking market in history disgusting Joe Biden should take a lesson from his big donors in Martha's Vineyard and deport illegal aliens breaking into our land</p>	
<p>4:29</p>	<p>we will secure our border and stop the invasion under Democrats the future of America is complete lawlessness with defund the police and empower the social worker policies real smart right Soros backed DA's who don't prosecute crime only declare war on their political enemies and release criminals back on the streets they're creating record violence crime and murder in the communities they are elected to serve it's pathetic under Republicans we will provide a future of funding and supporting our great men and women in blue who stand as Watchmen on the wall protecting the communities they love Oh yeah we backed the blue back the blue always we will fire Soros backed DAs and hire DAs who will enforce the law put criminals behind bars and make every single community safe</p>	<p>Invasion from Southern border (Great Replacement) Soros backed DAs</p> <p>Watchmen on the wall*</p> <p>Soros backed DAs</p>
<p>8:25</p>	<p>Gavin Newsom thinks he's going to be running for president hang on hang on now the only thing Gavin has going for him is hair gel rigged California elections and his favorite aunt Nancy Pelosi isn't it weird how all these people are all related somehow under Democrats our children's education is controlled by government bureaucrats abusing taxpayer funded education ripping rights away from parents who are the taxpayers by the way over what curriculum content and social ideas are taught to your children Democrats want the government to be the overriding authority over children instead of loving moms and dads well let me tell you under Republicans we will give a parents Bill of Rights giving moms and dads full authority over their children's education ending teacher union control over schools defunding wokeness from all colleges and universities and we will incentivize greatness and restore elite levels of education to America's education system and for our children if the government wants to replace parents and brainwash our children well you know what we will just defund the Department of Education under Democrats the future is all female remember they used to tell us that their evil ideology of destroying two genders of male and female and sexualizing children so that they can</p>	<p>Election fraud</p> <p>Brainwashing children</p>

	<p>confuse the most innocent among us to believe that gender is changeable they are targeting our kids and creating a medical industry of genital mutilation that is leading to suicide and a lifetime of permanent health problems and dependency on big pharma who profit on it all they will criminalize parents who try to protect their kids while they call this sick child abuse gender affirming care Can you believe that under Republicans we must protect anyone under the age of 18 who is not old enough to vote get a tattoo buy tobacco or alcohol join the military or even get a driver's license we must protect kids from permanent bodily damage from the left's gender change industry we must stop the sexualization and promotion of genital mutilation of children listen just because doctor Richard Levine is suffering from gender dysphoria and changed his name to Rachel doesn't mean that 12 year old girls should get double mastectomies and hysterectomies or that boys should be chemically castrated</p>	<p>Children are dying</p> <p>Unable to have children</p>
<p>13:59</p>	<p>he's the only one that has stood between you and that deep state that's right the future under Democrats is America last it's filled with woke Marxism economic failure and never ending foreign wars where 99% of Americans pay for it all that's all of you but in the future you'll live in poverty while the security state is the controlling regime who only serves the interests of the elite one percent we're not going to have that I'll tell you why the future under Republicans as America first protects freedoms for all reigns in the federal government and loyally follows the one true leader of the Republican Party and you know who that is he's the one we elected in 2016 the one we reelected in 2020 who won the election by the way Oh yeah he won he did and the one we will make our next president of the United States of America that's Donald J Trump</p>	<p>Deep state</p> <p>Election fraud</p>

*Watchmen of the wall is a potential conspiracy and extremist movement, however, it also refers to a bible verse and I was unable to determine if Greene meant to associate this statement with the ideology of the extremist group

Save America Rally Michigan- 1 October 2022

<https://rumble.com/v1mddje-congresswoman-mtg-delivers-remarks-at-president-trumps-save-america-rally-i.html>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
<p>1:53</p>	<p>trump won in 2020 that's why Matt Gaetz and I led the effort to object from Michigan on January 6th I bet you didn't know that we know there was fraud there is no way that a man who ran a presidential</p>	<p>Election fraud</p> <p>Election fraud</p>

	<p>campaign from his basement can beat a man who month after month week after week day after day had such incredible support from Americans just like you now whether in a Trump rally or a famous Michigan Trump boat parade remember those yeah they're the best Joe Biden never had one boat parade did he no he only had a few people sitting in weird circles didn't he I don't even know what that was Donald Trump won in 2020 and we're getting ready to do it again now</p>	<p>Election fraud</p>
<p>4:03</p>	<p>under Democrats the future of America's complete lawlessness with defund the police and empower the social worker policies Soros backed DA's who don't prosecute crime only declare war on their political enemies and release criminals back on the streets they are creating record violence crime and murder in the communities that they are elected to serve you know this to be true because your governor oh you know her right that's right [lock her up] that's a clear message your governor has increased murder rates by 30% shame on her no wonder you feel that way under Republicans we will provide a future of funding and supporting our great men and women in blue who stand as Watchmen on the wall protecting the communities that they love that's right we will fire Soros backed DA's in higher DA who will enforce the law and put criminals behind bars and make every community safe</p>	<p>Soros back DAs</p> <p>Governor increased murder rates</p> <p>Watchman on the wall</p> <p>Soros backed DAs</p>
<p>10:35</p>	<p>Gavin Newsom thinks he's going to be running for president thought it was so funny oh I just have to laugh but the only thing Gavin has going for him is his hair gel yeah it's pretty it is pretty and the rigged California elections they rig them out there oh and don't forget about his favorite aunt Nancy Pelosi</p>	<p>Election fraud</p>
<p>12:12</p>	<p>the barbaric new medical industry is convincing children that if they take puberty blockers hormones get their breasts cut off at 15 years old add on a hysterectomy at 16 and castrate teenage boys that they will somehow feel better about themselves than be accepted a high percentage of these confused kids are from foster care or have learning disabilities mental health issues and approximately 1/3 of them have autism genital mutilation of these children is a new evil that we have never seen and should never ever exist and it's happening because the Democrats demand it and they protect it one out of 10 children now identify as transgender if Democrats are not stopped this percentage will only grow as Democrats are promoting it passing laws that will criminalize and take away parents rights to stop this genital</p>	<p>Children won't be able to have children</p> <p>Government wants to control your children</p>

	<p> mutilation and child abuse of their own children the government wants to control your kids and this is already the case in California Can you believe that under Republicans we must protect anyone under the age of 18 from permanent bodily damage from the left's gender change industry none of these kids can vote they can't buy tobacco they can't join the military they can't even get a tattoo and for many of them they have yet to even get their driver's license go to the prom or graduate high school and when they finally do turn 18 they barely enter adulthood missing body parts and are sterile we must stop the sexualization and dangerous promotion of genital mutilation of children and that's why I introduced my bill to protect children's innocence act which will make it a felony to perform genital mutilation surgeries on minors lock them up we all love children we do just because doctor Richard Levine is suffering from gender dysphoria and changed his name to Rachel doesn't mean that 12 year old girls should get double mastectomies and hysterectomies or that boys should be chemically castrated or taking puberty blockers </p>	<p>Genital mutilation of children</p> <p>Kids will not be able to have kids</p>
<p>17:01</p>	<p> that governor Whitmer she's a treat isn't she you're intentionally excluded you want to know why because they want to brainwash your kids into believing whatever insane social idea they have next and what can they think of next Democrats want the government to run your household not loving moms and dads but under Republicans we will establish a parents Bill of Rights giving mom and dad's full authority over their children's education that's right ending teacher union control over schools defunding wokeness from all colleges and universities and we will incentivize greatness and restore elite levels of education to America's education system and that's for our kids if the government wants to replace parents and brainwash our children then we will just defund the Department of Education </p>	<p>Brainwashing kids</p> <p>Brainwashing kids</p>
<p>19:27</p>	<p> the same corrupt Department of Justice that came after president trump and probably you next even set up a fake kidnapping plot of your governor Whitmer all to frame maga it was their trial run leading up to January 6th even the same FBI agent running the FBI FBI led Whitmer kidnapping scam was transferred to Washington DC only a few months before January 6 it's funny how the same people always show up but the real person that must be held accountable for January 6 is the speaker of the house Nancy Pelosi </p>	<p>Fake kidnapping plot</p>

	she refused president trump's request to protect the capital with the National Guard	
22:11	the future under Republicans as America first protects freedoms for all raised in the federal government and loyally follows the one true leader of the Republican Party the one we elected in 2016 the one we reelected in 2020 and the one we will make our next president of the United States of America Donald J Trump	Election fraud

Save America Rally Arizona- 9 October 2022

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?523358-101/introductory-speakers-president-trumps-rally-arizona-republicans>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
24:26	since Biden has taken office 5 million people 5 million people have crossed our borders there are only 25 states of America's 50 that have a population larger than 5 million people think about that 5 million people from all over the world have crossed our borders Joe Biden has brought in 5 million people with his failure to secure America's borders Joe Biden's 5,000,000 illegal aliens make up a state the same as five delawares nearly five montanas and 10 wyomings and how does that compare to your state Arizona Joe Biden's 5,000,000 illegal aliens are on the verge of replacing you replacing your jobs and replacing your kids in school and coming from all over the world they're also replacing your culture and that's not great for America The United states southern border is the most dangerous in the entire world under the Biden regime human trafficking is no longer illegal it is encouraged and incentivized	Great replacement/White Genocide
34:33	we reelected him in 2020 didn't we I don't care what they say you people pay for elections don't let them bully you they work for you and president trump will be our next president of the United States of America	Election fraud

Save America Rally Iowa- 3 November 2022

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?523893-101/introductory-speakers-trump-iowa-rally>

Timestamp	Quote	Theme
12:38	the only crime victim you hear about from Democrats in the media is Paul Pelosi Paul Pelosi was brutally attacked by a drugged out illegal alien that should have been deported	Initially thought this was a conspiracy; it's technically true but omits important info

16:33	we can defund all of the horrific policies that the Democrats have passed over the past two years we will defund the 87,000 IRS army we will defund the vaccine mandates and we will defund the political actors abusing their power in the Department of Justice and in the FBI	IRS agents
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