Conspiracy as Governance

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> *Conspiracy, Conspire*: make secret plans jointly to commit a harmful act; working together to bring about a particular result, typically to someone's detriment. ORIGIN late Middle English : from Old French *conspirer*, from Latin *conspirare* agree, plot, from *con-* together with *spirare* breathe. (OED)
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> *The best party is but a kind of conspiracy against the rest of the nation.* (Lord Halifax)
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> *Security gives way to conspiracy.*
> (*Julius Caesar*, act 2, sc. 3. The soothsayer's message, but Caesar is too busy to look at it)

Introduction

To radically shift regime behavior we must think clearly and boldly for if we have learned anything, it is that regimes do not want to be changed. We must think beyond those who have gone before us and discover technological changes that embolden us with ways to act in which our forebears could not.

We must understand the key generative structure of bad governance[1]

We must develop a way of thinking about this structure that is strong enough to carry us through the mire of competing political moralities and into a position of clarity.

Most importantly, we must use these insights to inspire within us and others a course of ennobling and effective action to replace the structures that lead to bad governance with something better.

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[1] Everytime we witness an act that we *feel* to be unjust and *do not act* we become a party to injustice. Those who are repeatedly passive in the face of injustice soon find their character corroded into servility. Most witnessed acts of injustice are associated with bad governance, since when governance is good, unanswered injustice is rare. By the progressive diminution of a people's character, the impact of reported, but unanswered injustice is far greater than it may initially seem. Modern communications states through their scale, homogeneity and excesses provide their populace with an unprecidented deluge of witnessed, but seemingly unanswerable injustices.

Conspiracy as governance in authoritarian regimes

Where details are known as to the inner workings of authoritarian regimes, we see conspiratorial interactions among the political elite, not merely for preferment or favor within the regime, but as the primary planning methodology behind maintaining or strengthening authoritarian power.

Authoritarian regimes create forces which oppose them by pushing against a people's will to truth, love and self-realization. Plans which assist authoritarian rule, once discovered, induce further resistance. Hence such schemes are concealed by successful authoritarian powers until resistance is futile or outweighed by the efficiencies of naked power. This collaborative secrecy, working to the detriment of a population, is enough to define their behavior as conspiratorial.

> *Thus it happens in matters of state; for knowing afar off (which it is only given a prudent man to do) the evils that are brewing, they are easily cured. But when, for want of such knowledge, they are allowed to grow until everyone can recognize them, there is no longer any remedy to be found.*
> (*The Prince*, Niccolo Machiavelli [1469-1527])

Terrorist conspiracies as *connected graphs*

Pre and post 9/11 the Maryland Procurement Office[2] and others have funded mathematicians to look at terrorist conspiracies as *connected graphs* (no mathematical background is needed to follow this article).

We extend this understanding of terrorist organizations and turn it on the likes of its paymasters; transforming it into a knife to dissect the conspiracies used to maintain authoritarian power structures.

We will use *connected graphs* as a way to apply our spatial reasoning abilities to political relationships. These graphs are very easy to visualize. First take some nails ("conspirators") and hammer them into a board at random. Then take twine ("communication") and loop it from nail to nail without breaking. Call the twine connecting two nails a *link*. Unbroken twine means it is possible to travel from any nail to any other nail via twine and intermediary nails. Mathematicians say that this type of graph is *connected*.

Information flows from conspirator to conspirator. Not every conspirator trusts or knows every other conspirator even though all are connected. Some are on the fringe of the conspiracy, others are central and communicate with many conspirators and others still may know only two conspirators but be a bridge between important sections or groupings of the conspiracy.

Separating a conspiracy

If all conspirators are assassinated or all the links between them are destroyed, then a conspiracy no longer exists. This is usually requires more resources than

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[2]National Security Agency light cover for academic funding, google for grant code "MDA904"

we can deploy, so we ask our first question: What is the minimum number of links that must be cut to separate the conspiracy into two groups of equal number? (divide and conquer). The answer depends on the structure of the conspiracy. Sometimes there are no alternative paths for conspiratorial information to flow between conspirators, othertimes there are many. This is a useful and interesting characteristic of a conspiracy. For instance, by assassinating one "bridge" conspirator, it may be possible to split a conspiracy. But we want to say something about all conspiracies.

Some conspirators dance closer than others

Conspirators are often discerning, for some trust and depend each other, while others say little. Important information flows frequently through some links, trivial information through others. So we expand our simple connected graph model to include not only links, but their "importance".

Return to our board-and-nails analogy. Imagine a thick heavy cord between some nails and fine light thread between others. Call the importance, thickness or heaviness of a link its *weight*. Between conspirators that never communicate the weight is zero. The "importance" of communication passing through a link is difficult to evaluate apriori, since its true value depends on the outcome of the conspiracy. We simply say that the "importance" of communication contributes to the weight of a link in the most obvious way; the weight of a link is proportional to the amount of important communication flowing across it. Questions about conspiracies in general won't require us to know the weight of any link, since that changes from conspiracy to conspiracy.

Conspiracies are cognitive devices. They are able to out-think the same group of individuals acting alone

Conspiracies take information about the world in which they operate (the conspiratorial environment), pass through the conspirators and then act on the result. We can see conspiracies as a type of device that has inputs (information about the environment), a computational network (the conspirators and their links to each other) and outputs (actions intending to change or maintain the environment).

Deceiving conspiracies

Since a conspiracy is a type of cognitive device that acts on information acquired from its environment, distorting or restricting these inputs means acts based on them are likely to be misplaced. Programmers call this effect *garbage in, garbage out*.

Usually the effect runs the other way; it is conspiracy that is the agent of deception and information restriction. In the US, the programmer's aphorism is sometimes called "the Fox News effect".

What does a conspiracy compute? It computes the next action of the conspiracy

Now we ask the question: how effective is this device? Can we compare it to itself at different times? Is the conspiracy growing stronger or is it weakening? This question asks us to compare two values over time.

Can we find a value that describes the power of a conspiracy?

We could count the number of conspirators, but that would not capture the key difference between a conspiracy and the individuals which comprise it. How do they differ? In a conspiracy, individuals conspire, while when isolated they do not. We can show most of this difference by adding up all the important communication (weights) between all the conspirators. Call this *total conspiratorial power.*

Total conspiratorial power

This number is an abstraction. The pattern of connections in a conspiracy is usually unique. But by looking at a value that is independent of the arrangement of connections between conspirators we can say something about conspiracies in general.

If total conspiratorial power is zero, there is no conspiracy

If *total conspiratorial power* is zero, then clearly there is no information flow between the conspirators and hence no conspiracy.

A substantial increase or decrease in *total conspiratorial power* almost always means what we expect it to mean; an increase or decrease in the ability of the conspiracy to think, act and adapt.

Separating weighted conspiracies

We now return to our earlier idea about cleaving a conspiracy into halves. Then we looked at dividing a conspiracy into two groups of equal numbers by cutting the links between conspirators. Now we see that a more interesting idea is to split the *total conspiratorial power* in half. Since any isolated half can be viewed as a conspiracy in its own right we can continue separating indefinitely.

Throttling weighted conspiracies

Instead of cutting links between conspirators so as to separate a weighted conspiracy we can achieve a similar effect by *throttling* the conspiracy — constricting (reducing the weight of) those high weight links which bridge regions of equal total conspiratorial power.

Attacks on conspiratorial cognitive ability

A man in chains knows he should have acted sooner for his ability to influence the actions of the state is near its end. To deal with powerful conspiratorial actions we must think ahead and attack the process that leads to them since the actions themselves can not be dealt with.

We can *deceive* or *blind* a conspiracy by distorting or restricting the information available to it.

We can reduce *total conspiratorial power* via unstructured attacks on links or through *throttling* and *separating*.

A conspiracy sufficiently engaged in this manner is no longer able to comprehend its environment and plan robust action.

Traditional vs. modern conspiracies

Traditional attacks on conspiratorial power groupings, such as assassination, cut many high weight links. The act of assassination — the targeting of visible individuals, is the result of mental inclinations honed for the pre-literate societies in which our species evolved.

Literacy and the communications revolution have empowered conspirators with new means to conspire, increasing the speed of accuracy of the their interactions and thereby the maximum size a conspiracy may achieve before it breaks down.

Conspirators who have this technology are able to out conspire conspirators without it. For the same costs they are able to achieve a higher *total conspiratorial power.* That is why they adopt it.

For example, remembering Lord Halifax's words, let us consider two closely balanced and broadly conspiratorial power groupings, the US Democratic and Republican parties.

Consider what would happen if one of these parties gave up their mobile phones, fax and email correspondence — let alone the computer systems which manage their subscribes, donors, budgets, polling, call centres and direct mail campaigns?

They would immediately fall into an organizational stupor and lose to the other.

An authoritarian conspiracy that cannot think is powerless to preserve itself against the opponents it induces

When we look at an authoritarian conspiracy as a whole, we see a system of interacting organs, a beast with arteries and veins whose blood may be thickened and slowed until it falls, stupefied; unable to sufficiently comprehend and control the forces in its environment.

Later we will see how new technology and insights into the psychological motivations of conspirators can give us practical methods for preventing or reducing important communication between authoritarian conspirators, foment

strong resistance to authoritarian planning and create powerful incentives for more humane forms of governance.