

The next chapter, “Drones and International Law,” argues that the use of armed drones contravenes international law, particularly territorial sovereignty and the laws of armed conflict. However precise and discriminating the technology is, targeting decisions must always be based on fallible human judgments. The international community must create new legal frameworks for the use of drones so as to bring practice in line with prevailing international norms.

Chapter 5, “The Ethics of Drone Warfare,” explains exactly how the use of remote technology erodes the moral connection between a populace and wars fought in its name. Here the argument overreaches in suggesting that U.S. drone culture and Nazi Germany “share a common attitude toward military mechanization” (p. 119)—even more so in drawing parallels with the German public’s gradual habituation to the Holocaust. “Such deference on matters of national security describes the general ethos surrounding U.S. drone strikes quite nicely” (p. 123). This is unfair. As their footnotes attest, the authors are aware of prominent attacks on drone policy in the U.S. press, by various think tanks, and by numerous individuals in the United States and elsewhere. The Obama administration has been forced to respond publicly to this pressure—including in the president’s May 2013 speech—and the number of drone attacks has decreased. The authors may consider the response inadequate (as other critics do), but drawing parallels to the Nazis goes too far and is unnecessary hyperbole in an otherwise balanced treatment. The key point of the chapter—that long-standing ethical frameworks are failing to keep pace with emerging new technologies—is spot-on and stands on its own.

The conclusion reprises key arguments and offers sensible policy recommendations including increased congressional oversight, better export controls, more U.S. transparency, new laws, and new institutions. The book is an excellent resource for the general reader and will be valuable for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on ethics, strategy, and international security.

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American Conspiracy Theories by Joseph E. Uscinski and Joseph M. Parent. New York, Oxford University Press, 2014. 240 pp. Cloth, \$99.00; paper, \$29.95.

Conspiracy theories have found true believers at all times in all parts of the world, but the United States in particular has a long history of persistent rumors and full-fledged conspiracy theories spanning from colonial times to the early twenty-first century. Some scholars have suggested that the ethnic,

racial, and religious mix of immigrants stirs anxieties of subversion by alien plotters teaming up with homegrown conspirators, such as Masons, Catholics, Mormons, Jews, Communists, and, most recently, Muslims, who are, according to the birther conspirators, in cahoots with President Barack Obama, allegedly a foreign-born Muslim. Wars, major man-made disasters such as the September 11 attacks or the recent Ebola epidemic tend to result in new conspiracy theories.

Scholars from a variety of fields, such as history, political science, psychology, and sociology, have contributed to our knowledge about the history of conspiracy theories, the economic and political conditions that breed these beliefs, and the peculiarities of wide-ranging conspiracy beliefs. Although scholars as well as the news media reveal a great deal about particular conspiracy theories, we know far less about long-term frequency trends and even less about the traits that make conspiracy theorists. In a welcome effort to address that knowledge gap, the authors of *American Conspiracy Theories* utilize three data sets to quantify their analyses and generalize their findings: first, a commissioned survey of 2012 tailored to measure the predisposition of individuals to buy into conspiracy theories; second, letters to the editor referring to conspiracy theories published in the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* spanning 121 years from 1890 to 2010; and third, about 3,000 relevant Internet items posted from July 2012 to July 2013.

The in-depth analysis of poll data in Chapter 4 produces particularly interesting results. After categorizing respondents based on their answers to specially designed questions as ranking high, medium, or low on the conspiracy predisposition scale, the authors first examine the highly susceptible segment according to gender, race, age, education, ideology, and party identification. The data reveal differences of varying degrees concerning age, education, and race but none with respect to gender. The most noteworthy finding is that “conspiratorial predispositions appear nearly flat across political ideology and partisanship” (p. 89). In the authors’ words, “there is not much evidence that either side is significantly more prone to conspiracy theorizing” (p. 93). Although it is perfectly plausible that those identified as susceptible may or may not become conspiracy theorists, the authors criticize contemporary social science research for being preoccupied with conspiratorial beliefs of the political right.

The same chapter contains other thought-provoking results, among them those concerning attitudes toward political violence in the various susceptibility groups. For example, 20 percent of the top 50 respondents in the high category agreed that “violence is sometimes an acceptable way to express disagreement with the government,” whereas less than 8 percent in the low category thought so (p. 98). This seems to confirm anecdotal evidence that

conspiracy theorists are well represented among violent extremists on both the left and the right.

Assuming that letters to the editor reflect the issues of the times they are published in, the researchers identified those referring to conspiracy beliefs and established a revealing time series of conspiracy letters. While it is hardly surprising that conspiracy theories were most prevalent during the 1890s, at the height of antibusiness and antitrust sentiments, and even more so in the 1950s, at the height of Red Scare hysteria, the data contradict the conventional wisdom that conspiracy theories are more numerous in recent times than ever before.

Categorizing Internet items pinpointed by Google Alerts as containing the search word “conspiracy theory,” the authors found that nearly two-thirds discussed conspiracy theories negatively, merely 19 percent positively. This does not prove that information provided on the Internet is heavily tilted against conspiracy theories; rather, because most proponents of such theories do not perceive and refer to their beliefs as conspiracy theories, their online posts and discussions are not detected by using “conspiracy theory” as a search term.

Altogether, though, this is an innovative book that illuminates our understanding of American conspiracy theories based on empirical evidence. I recommend the book for both undergraduate and graduate courses and will use it in a seminar on social and popular movements and conspiracy theories.

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Buying the Vote: A History of Campaign Finance Reform by Robert E. Mutch. New York, Oxford University Press, 2014. 380 pp. \$34.95.

No one would deny that our nation’s campaign finance laws are intimately connected to deliberations on larger matters of public policy. Few writers have done as much to explore the history of this relationship as Robert E. Mutch. Mutch’s outstanding and important new book *Buying the Vote* succeeds on two levels. First, it is a comprehensive history of American campaign finance law, with a focus on the early twentieth century. Mutch painstakingly assembles estimates of the true costs of elections in 1904, 1908, and other years that have rarely received scrutiny. He demonstrates that these elections were every bit as expensive as modern elections and that wealthy donors of the time were, if anything, more restrained than today’s top donors. Mutch also corrects the conventional wisdom about heroes and villains in American politics of the era;