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# Trends. The Timelessness of Conspiracy Theories: Comments of the Malaysian Prime Minister

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Allegations of conspiracy can be discovered and identified throughout history. And unlike bombs employed against adversaries, conspiracy allegations rarely don't go off. Instead there are usual and unusual suspects, expected and unexpected supporters whom will be witting and unwitting accomplices in ensuring and furthering the intended damage.

In the case of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, he has made public allegations that the recent weakening of currencies of a number of South East Asian countries was the design of George Soros, a United States (US) citizen, philanthropist, and financier. The purpose of Mr. Soros was allegedly to punish the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) for admitting Burma as a member--perhaps also for not taking the US line on Cambodia and other Asian countries.

The beauty of employing this conspiracy story is manifold. (1) Choosing the US as the ultimate malefactor is consonant with Mahathir's public statements through the years. And the US Government (USG) has authorized and acquiesced to some acts which charitably may be considered not in the best interests of indigenous populations throughout various countries in Asia. (2) As a viable tool of foreign policy, many countries including the US attempt to affect political, cultural, military, social, and economic aspects of other countries--including comparative values of currencies. (3) There certainly are case histories of countries, nations, government representatives, and criminal organizations attempting to subvert currencies of other countries. (4) Mr. Soros as a financier is publicly known for making profits and taking losses based on predictions about the values of various foreign currencies. (5) Mr. Soros already is hugely unpopular with various international leaders who resent his attempts to foster a particular brand of democracy and free market thinking and who term his efforts as needless interference in their sovereign affairs. (6) The choice of convenient, credible, and external sources for an internal problem is a time-honored tradition for ensuring the peoples' attention is not directed towards those leaders who have the relevant portfolios. (7) And, of course, some conspiracy theories speak the truth. The allegations are fact.

Unfortunately, the USG response has been disingenuous, implying that (1) investors merely react to market fluctuations and don't attempt to influence them and that (2) undercutting economies of Asia is in no one's interest when actually undercutting any economy can be quite profitable, especially in the short term. If anything, these sorts of response might induce wondering in even more sophisticated observers about the credibility of the conspiracy allegation.

The psychology of conspiracy theory induces a tar-baby phenomenon. Whether allegations are ignored, ridiculed, or attacked, they often stick. (See The psychology of conspiracy. (November 1, 1996.) International Bulletin of Political Psychology, 1(1), 4-7, (<http://www.pr.erau.edu/~security>); Erlanger, S. (July 29, 1997.) Albright assails Malaysia's currency conspiracy theory. The New York Times. (<http://www.nytimes.com>)