Conspiracy Theory

A false interpretation of a matter that explains its subject as the result of a conspiratorial undertaking. For example, a conspiracy theorist might claim that a nation is secretly under the control of some sort of cabal rather than by its actual government. Conspiracy theories often emerge from a desire to seek larger, more complex answers to incidents that are actually relatively straightforward in nature. They can also be created by people seeking to delegitimize unwelcome events. For example, anti-government extremists, unwilling to accept that some of their own committed the Oklahoma City bombing, constructed a conspiracy theory that the federal government had deliberately bombed its own federal building. Finally, some conspiracy theories can be used to demonize groups of people, as anti-Semitic conspiracy theories do.