

Voter fraud vs. QAnon: How conspiracy theories are shaping the election | Vox

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As the 2020 election enters its final phases, it feels like a lot could go wrong in the United States. Reports warn that hackers from Russia and China are targeting both parties, while the fringe conspiracy movement QAnon slips into the mainstream and possibly influences voters. And millions of people are talking about a different conspiracy theory, one that posits that the election has already been stolen.

Believers say this still-unfolding scandal goes all the way to the top. It gets weird, too. According to some, a sinister millionaire is ripping equipment out of post offices so they can't properly process mail-in ballots. Others say foreign governments are printing millions of fraudulent mail-in ballots and that "deep state" goons are raiding nursing homes to tamper with senior citizens' mail-in ballots. One way or another, President Trump is almost always supposedly involved in these plots — either orchestrating the conspiracy or fighting the America-hating intruders. And at the end of the day, this conspiracy theory boils down to one very bad but also mundane thing: voter fraud.

Let that sink in. The conspiracy theory that's catching on — the one to really worry about as the country gears up to elect its future leaders — is not QAnon, which claims that Satan-worshipping, liberal pedophiles are running the country. It's the one hiding in plain sight, the one that supporters of both parties are pushing, and the one that's at the center of the most dangerous misinformation campaigns.

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