On Some Social Aspects of Conspiracy Theories

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ABSTRACT: At the beginning of the third decade of the third millennium, conspiracy theories represent a phenomenon that gained considerable popularity among the public and began to permeate society considerably. More and more often, we encounter various conspiracy theories that respond to several socially significant events taking place around us, while coming up with an alternative explanation, especially for those events that concern a larger number of people. Today, due to the quick introduction of the Internet and rapid development in the field of information and communication technologies, systems and means, conspiracies penetrate very significantly into the field of mass media and especially into the field of new media. Today, social networks are the medium with the greatest spread of various conspiracy theories. The above is one of the primary reasons why conspiracy theories became the subject of our scientific interest and why, with the use of relevant methods of qualitative theoretical scientific research, we present in this article to readers from the professional and lay public our research findings and a view of some selected social aspects closely related with the issue of conspiracy theories.

KEYWORDS: conspiracy theories, society, media, people, events.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, we have increasingly come across various conspiracy theories that respond to several socially significant events taking place around us. Immediately after their media coverage, a whole series of significant and important events are the object of alternative explanations that challenge official positions or explanations. Conspiracy theories come up with an alternative explanation, especially for those events that involve a larger number of people. The belief that conspiracies are happening is based on human mistrust and doubt. Conspiracy theories also include a certain amount of mystery, which makes them even more attractive. Among several, let's mention, for example, the events of September 11, 2001, the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, the origin of the refugee crisis, the reasons for revealing the emissions scandal of the Volkswagen company, or the spread of the coronavirus around the world. These and other events very soon after their publication received "new explanations" that sought to reveal their "true meaning, origin or causes".

Conspiracy theories today represent a phenomenon that, especially since the terrorist attacks in the United States of America that happened on September 11, 2001, has gained considerable popularity, and has begun to permeate society. This situation has stimulated research into conspiracy theories as well as the emergence of publications that deal with the popularity of these theories and their impact on society. It is therefore a bit surprising that this topic, with exceptions, is absent from professional literature written in Slovak that would deal with this phenomenon. This absence was one of the inspirations why we chose this topic for our research. Even foreign publications and studies forgot about this topic for a long time. This situation really changed only in the 21st century. The reason may be the approach with which the field of conspiracy theories was received on professional, academic, and scientific grounds (Swami, 2012). The problem was mainly the fact that academics and researchers were afraid to professionally deal with conspiracy theories because they could subsequently be labelled as conspiracy theorists.

However, the need for research in this area is now indisputable. Conspiracy theories and the belief in these theories really represent a phenomenon that has a significant impact on contemporary society. In the United States of America, for example, during a public opinion poll, up to half of the respondents expressed their positive relationship or belief in a conspiracy theory (Sides, 2015). Conspiracies had and still have an influence on the content component of the production of

popular culture, they also significantly penetrate the field of mass media and especially the field of new media. Today, social networks are the medium with the greatest spread of various conspiracy theories. In the same way, society has an influence on how a given population approaches conspiracy thinking and how it positions itself to believe in these theories. The above-mentioned topics have become the subject of our interest, and therefore in this article, using relevant methods of qualitative theoretical scientific research, we bring to readers from the professional and lay public our findings and a view of some selected social aspects closely related to the issue of conspiracy theories.

II. THE SPREAD AND RISE IN POPULARITY OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

An important aspect of conspiracy thinking, and the theories based on it is the method of their dissemination, that is, the way in which their creators can spread their theory to the rest of the population. Although conspiracy theories have been around for a very long time, new media is an important factor in their spread and popularity. Over time, interest in conspiracy theories is also strengthened by the mass media - newspapers, television broadcasts and cinematography (Arnold, 2008). While for the 50s and 60s of the 20th century television broadcasting and the production of the film industry were an important factor in the spread of conspiracies, for the 21st century the Internet and its more massive expansion, as well as the mass active use of social networks, have a crucial influence. Thanks to them, supporters of conspiracy theories have gained a powerful tool to spread their theories and to band together (Byford, 2011).

A significant influence on the spread and rise in popularity of conspiracy theories was also had by significant events with a societal impact, which took place under circumstances that part of the population considered unclear and not very convincing, and which thus aroused interest in their alternative interpretation or explanation. It was, for example, the landing of Apollo on the moon, the murder of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, or the fatal car accident of Princess Diana. A national poll conducted by the New York Times in 1992 revealed that only 10% of the American population believed the official version that the assassination of Kennedy was the result of an independent individual action by Lee Hervey Oswald. While 77% of respondents were convinced that this act was the work of a larger number of persons, 12% percent of

respondents said they did not know or did not want to answer (Krauss, 1992).

Time also plays an important role in the spread of conspiracy theories and their rise in popularity in society. That is, the amount of time that has passed since the event that is the object of the conspiracy theory. As already mentioned, in 1992 only 10% of respondents believed in the official version of the assassination of the American president, while in 1966 (3 years after this event) 36% believed in the official version. During surveys carried out later, it was 11% of respondents in 1976 and 1983, and 13% during a survey in 1988. So, as is clear, the number of sceptics rejecting the official version increased noticeably 13 years after the assassination, and until the 1990s their number remained constant in similar numbers (Goertzel, 1994). This increase in belief in the conspiracy theory was noted despite the fact that in the years following the assassination, more and more evidence was collected in favour of the version that Oswald was behind the assassination alone.

Let's stay with the assassination of J. F. Kennedy. This act meant a big shift in the degree to which the American public perceived conspiracy theories. It was the catalyst that unleashed another flurry of conspiracy theories in American culture, primarily on television. Since then, the phenomenon of conspiracy theories has reached an iconic status, occupying people's minds with many other related thoughts and events. And so, at the beginning of the 21st century, conspiracy and related theories became a fixed part of the culture. This was also reflected in the content of films, television shows, books, and political debates.

Belief in conspiracies has also reached the highest levels of American politics. This is evidenced by the fact that their belief that the assassination of Kennedy was not the work of one person, but that it was a conspiracy, was publicly expressed, for example, by former US Secretary of State John Kerry (Parade, 2016), or former Pennsylvania state senator Richard Schweiker. Schweiker said that *"the investigative report of the Warren Commission was like a house of cards about to collapse"* (Olmsted, 2010, p. 168). He came to this opinion after becoming a member of the Committee for the Investigation of Political Assassinations in 1976. As part of this committee, Schweiker was present at the re-investigation of the circumstances surrounding the death of President Kennedy and the activist Martin Luther King (Simkin, 2014).

Participation in this committee left him with the impression that the investigators at the time

did not do a faultless job and that they ignored certain facts. For example, they left out the possibility that the assassination was not the work of a lone shooter but could be an act behind a larger number of people. Senator Richard Russell, who directly participated in the investigation of the Warren Commission as a member, had similar doubts. Although he signed the investigation's final report, his personal notes he wrote during the commission's investigation indicate that he had trouble accepting the lone gunman version of the

These ambiguities and doubts, which accompanied the investigation of this highly publicized case in the media, convinced many people that the officially presented reports were not entirely sufficient to explain the events surrounding the assassination. This situation then led to the emergence of a series of conspiracy theories that were supposed to clarify this act and bring a desirable explanation.

The process by which conspiracy theories moved from the fringes of interest to the centre of television attention was a gradual one. The permeation of American culture by conspiracies also had an impact on the politics of the time. During this time, several films and television productions appeared, which, whether based on historical facts or assumptions and fantasy, composed diverse themes that shaped the status of conspiracy theories even more strongly and sharply. The emergence of so many movies and TV shows with this basic theme could hardly have been a matter of coincidence (Arnold, 2008).

In the late 1990s, but especially in the early 2000s, it was not unusual to come across conspiracies as an explanation for a wide range of political events that might otherwise appear completely ordinary. For example, some considered the source of President Bill Clinton's problems at the time to be a great right-wing conspiracy. The liberal media were accused of conspiratorial intrigues, which were supposed to be behind the fact that the media image of global events does not match the conservative views of the population (Arnold, 2008).

Regardless of the personal preferences and opinions of individuals, these examples clearly show that conspiracy theories have penetrated from the periphery of interest to the mainstream of American culture and politics as a powerful source of contemporary experience, but one that can sometimes be confusing and ambiguous.

III. CONSPIRACY THEORIES IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW MEDIA

The Internet has significantly changed our perception and way of communication, as well as our access to information. Based on this, we can rightly assume that the Internet has also been a great asset to the field of conspiracy theories. The modern era, associated with the intermingling of cultures and the development of information and communication technologies, systems and means, enables a much more effective and widespread dissemination of information and communication between people. These are aspects that increase the influence of conspiracy theories on politics and society.

Willman characterized the rise of conspiracy theories as a possible response to the mysteriousness of a world where modern technology plays an increasingly important role (Willman, 2002). Steward described the architecture of web pages as a network connected by hyperlinks, as we can see in the structure of conspiracy theories (Stewart, 1999). With the declining influence of traditional gatekeepers of information such as book publishers or film producers, it is easier than ever to gain access to information that is considered unacceptable or even absurd by the mainstream.

As research shows, people who were previously afraid to express their opinion now can freely meet and communicate with like-minded individuals on various forums and blogs, where they create like-minded communities in a breadth and depth that we have never been able to see before (McKenna, Bargh, 1998). This phenomenon does not only bring positive aspects but can also provide certain threats and the risk of abuse. Therefore, in the next part, we will focus on the negatives that the Internet brings and new ways of spreading information that the Internet provides.

IV. THE THREAT OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW MEDIA

The Internet, various social networks and platforms offering the possibility of so-called microblogging, have changed the way in which it is possible to access information and how to further shape and spread the acquired knowledge. Especially nowadays very popular social networks, where the content is created by the users themselves, provide a new dimension for observing how their content leads the interest of the visitors of the given servers to specific patterns of how they create, receive, and spread new information (Garcia, 2012).

Despite the enthusiastic debate about how new technologies and media have sparked interest in public debate on political or social issues, the role of the technical system and its influence on public opinion is still unclear. Although social media users are becoming more wary of unverified information, false, fabricated, altered and alarmist news remains a ubiquitous part of the Internet. However, a large part of active users of social networks is still willing to believe them.

The World Economic Forum, in this regard, has called the spread of unofficial theories on the Internet one of the biggest threats the world will face in the coming years and can have serious real-world consequences (Howell, 2013). Industry officials and event risk experts said the spread of fake news on the Internet ranks alongside economic crises, environmental degradation, and the spread of disease belong among the biggest global threats today.

The current situation regarding the Internet and social networks and the spread of fake news and conspiracy theories is compared to that of 1938, when the massive spread of radio receivers led to the confusion and fear of thousands of Americans during the broadcast of Orson Wells' radio play The War of the Worlds. Today, radio broadcasts would probably not confuse anyone, but this role has now been taken over by the Internet and especially social networks.

The World Economic Forum sees the main threat in the fact that the Internet does not have any regulatory mechanism for the spread of false information. The viral spread of various conspiracy theories, disinformation and hoaxes on social networks can thus have a very negative impact on individuals and society. A possible solution to this problem can be seen in limiting Internet anonymity. However, attempts that should have led to this or a similar decision are regularly met with a great wave of resentment, both in the Slovak Republic and abroad (Wood, 2013). But how to deal with the situation if the originator of disinformation is an international organization or even a state? Social networks and their users and content creators will have to develop an ethos of self-responsibility and healthy scepticism towards the content presented on the Internet, just as happened with radio listeners (WEF, 2013).

Spreading conspiracy theories, disinformation, hoaxes, and alarmist messages of various kinds on the Internet, and above all on social networks, is currently a major problem. And that's because of the easy availability of this information, combined with the possibility that anyone who decides to publicly present their opinions or articles can do so at will with zero or only minimal control. This presents the possibility of how the subject of these messages can easily get their disinformation into wider awareness and harm someone through them. New media not only provide space for expression and association of people who share the same interest in conspiracies, but also the possibility of deliberately spreading deceptive, invented, altered or unverified news.

In this context, Solon (2014), as an illustrative example, points to an event when a message appeared on the Facebook social network during the Italian elections in 2013 that Italian senators voted for a law proposed by Senator Cerenga, the purpose of which would be to provide 134 billion euros to politicians whose party fails in the elections, to find a new job (Ascione, 2013). Despite the fact that the truth of this report could be questioned based on several facts, for example, there is no senator named Cerenga, the Italian senate did not discuss or approve such a law, or the number of senators who were supposed to vote for the adoption of this law was higher than the total number of senate members, this news spread quickly. It was shared by more than 350,000 users on Facebook in the first month after its publication, and it even ignited civil unrest in several Italian cities. These events only prove the influence that new media has on the spread and perception of conspiracy theories today, and that their users generally approach them with a very small degree of prudence.

The collective of authors tried to clarify the influence that new media can have on the spread and acceptance of conspiracy theories in the work *Collective attention in the age of (mis)information*. As part of this work, its authors conducted a study aimed at understanding the connection between political debate and information on the web. Part of the Facebook social network was analysed with the finding that this network represents a complex set of social interactions.

During the study, it was found that there is a debate based on news from different information sources (alternative or conventional) and that there is a strong interaction between political debate and information sources. Most of the activities on the mentioned social network contained the belief that the conventional media and their news are manipulated by other, superior entities, which makes the information provided by them unreliable and biased. Out of the total number of 1279 monitored users, 56% regularly followed alternative sources of information and were thus significantly

more exposed to unsubstantiated claims and fake news (Mocanu et al., 2014).

This study therefore shows that the greater is the amount of unconfirmed information in circulation on the Internet, the greater is the number of users who succumb to the distortion of this misinformation when choosing the content, they will watch.

V. THE IMPACT OF SECULARIZATION ON CONSPIRACY THINKING

Geertz defined religion as *"a system of symbols which establish strong, penetrating, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating concepts of a general order of being and endowing these concepts with such an air of reality that these moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."*(Geertz, 2000, p. 105)

According to Wilson, religion is the ideology of a traditional type of society. In this type of society, religion provided signs and symbols to individual and group identity and legitimized the way of life. The goals of human life were expressed in transcendent terms, that is, in terms moving beyond sensory experience, and every part of the life of traditional societies was permeated with religious symbolism. People used religion to gain strength and justification for their position, well-being or, on the contrary, poverty (Lužný, 1999).

Thus, religion established interactions in society, defined moral norms and provided explanations for various phenomena. But over time, with the progress of industrialization and the development of modern technologies, to a certain extent, society moved from a religious level to a rational one. Weber talks about the rationalization of society as a process that forms the basis of the development of capitalist societies (Weber, 1983). In modern society, religion is no longer the clear originator of the aforementioned functions, and a process of social secularization is taking place. Secularization is a process in which religious practices, consciousness and institutions lose their original social meaning (Lužný, 1999).

One of the possible reasons why contemporary society is so permeated with conspiratorial thinking can also be the fact that the Western world is going through a process of secularization, during which the position of religion is significantly weakened (Casanova, 2006). Halík disagrees with this and states that *"faith does not disappear, it only "moves" from public life and from external forms (especially institutional church-oriented forms) to the area of private life of individuals; religion does not disappear, but*

becomes less visible" (Halík, 2013, p. 1). This thesis is evidenced by the rise of modern religious movements within the New Age movement. Modern society no longer clings so much to classical forms of religion but looks for alternative ways through modern forms of religion and philosophical directions. Believing in conspiracy theories can be one of the possible alternatives.

Heil states that, for example, current belief in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories stems from the belief that the Jewish people are no longer under God's guidance, are uncontrollable, and that everything they do is for their own benefit, deliberately ignoring anyone who is not of the Jewish faith. This state is called the "desacralization process", which is more broadly the result of multifaceted social secularization. According to the author, the process of secularization changed the concept of anti-Semitic conspiracies and led to a complete reversal of their original arrangement (Heil, 2014).

Popper, on the other hand, presents the opinion that conspiracy theories are a typical result of the secularization of religious beliefs. While earlier traditional religions attributed wars to the intrigues of the gods, in current society conspiracy theories have replaced the gods with powerful individuals or organizations, sinister and influential groups whose sinfulness is responsible for all the evil that society suffers from (Dehaven-Smith, 2014). Supporters of conspiracies can thus find an explanation for the evil and suffering that occurs in society through conspiracy theory. But with the difference that the originator of individual events is no longer transcendental authorities and forces in the form of various deities or demons, but powerful figures from the field of politics or from an influential organization.

Conspiracy theories can thus provide an alternative way in contemporary society to interpret certain actions or events, just as these explanations were previously provided by traditional religion. Belief in conspiracies can thus represent a belief system that replaces traditional religious orientations and fulfils a deep-rooted desire for spirituality that has been transforming in recent decades. This also proves the opinion that religion and belief in it is not a matter of social evolution, but rather an *"anthropological constant"* (Halík, 2014, p. 1). This phenomenon can be traced to the rise of the already mentioned New Age movement, which points out that the departure from the classic directions of faith does not mean that contemporary society is not interested in faith, but that this interest is only moving in a different direction than the traditional

one - less towards community way and more to the individual. Conspiracy theories can thus in a certain way represent a contemporary secularized form of religion and can be considered a modern form of a traditional religious myth, which represents an analogy to religious belief (Bilewicz et al., 2015). In the sense that these theories present an explanation of events that are perceived as threatening.

VI. BELIEF IN CONSPIRACIES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN SOCIETY

A prominent element of belief in conspiracy theories is the relationship between authoritarianism and society, especially right-wing authoritarianism. Therefore, some authors tried to find a causal connection between the level of authoritarianism in society and the belief in conspiracies and conspiracy theories. Adorno drew attention to this phenomenon in his work, who outlined the relationship between authoritarianism and belief in conspiracy theories (Adorno, 2019). Right-wing authoritarianism is defined as a covariation of three attitude sets – authoritarian obedience, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism (Altemayer, 2019).

Authoritarian obedience expresses a general acceptance of the establishment and official authorities in the society where the individual lives, as well as a high degree of willingness to accept them. Authoritarian aggression is a state of hostility and general aggressiveness towards other members of society, for example towards members of minority groups or towards those whom the individual considers to be ideological enemies. It is possible to include racial, ethnic, or national minorities among them. According to Altemeyer, right-wing authoritarians are the group most subject to social prejudice. Authoritarian aggression is usually accompanied by feelings of conviction that this behaviour is approved by the authority in question, or that it is a way to keep the authority in place and thus maintain its status quo. Conventionalism expresses adherence to social conventions, which are perceived as punishment and support from both authority and society. This phenomenon is so closely related to belief that others should also have a positive attitude towards social norms and follow them. Altemeyer also points out the existence of a relationship between authoritarianism and religion, or that religious education can be the basis for an authoritarian personality type (Bilewicz et al., 2015).

For the first time, the thesis connecting authoritarianism and conspiracy theories, as already mentioned, was expressed by Adorno and a group of authors in the publication *The authoritarian personality* (Adorno, 2019). Specifically, that belief in conspiracies is characteristic of individuals with a high degree of authoritarianism. The first work that looked at the influence of personality differences on belief in conspiracy theories, including authoritarianism, was a study by Abalakina-Paap and her colleagues, in which they measured authoritarianism with a twelve-item scale derived from Altmeyer's Scale of Right-Wing Authoritarianism. Based on this measure, right-wing authoritarianism was found to be a good predictor of belief in a certain conspiracy theory. These included, for example, the theory that the banking system is controlled by a Jewish conspiracy, or that the government is deliberately covering up the landing of extra-terrestrial civilizations on Earth (Abalakina-Papp, 1999). However, the connection between authoritarianism and belief in the existence of conspiracies on a general scale was not confirmed in this study, only their connection with specific theories.

Bruder, in his study, using Funke's twelve-part scale, demonstrated that right-wing authoritarianism has a positive effect on both acceptance of conspiracy theories as a general phenomenon and belief in specific conspiracy theories. These specific cases of conspiracies in the study included the death of Princess Diana, the landing of extra-terrestrial civilizations, or business conspiracies pointing to the influence of organized crime on the operation of the Vatican Bank (Bruder, 2013). Grzesiak-Feldman, for example, addressed this topic in her work on the influence of authoritarianism on the spread of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in Poland. Her study pointed out that anti-Semitic conspiracy theories among the Polish population are also positively influenced by authoritarianism (Grzesiak-Feldman, 2009).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to mention works that reached different results. McHoskey, in his publication, concluded that the respondents he observed, who showed a greater degree of authoritarianism, were more open to arguments that supported the official, non-conspiracy explanation of the assassination of J.F. Kennedy (McHoskey, 1995). Interesting and unexpected results were achieved in Swami's research. He showed mixed results when he conducted two investigations as part of the study. The first pointed to a negative relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and general belief in

conspiracy theories, and the second pointed to the fact that there is not a very significant relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and belief in a Jewish conspiracy. At the same time, the first research investigation showed a relationship between right-wing authoritarianism and belief in a Jewish conspiracy, and the second investigation pointed to a positive correlation between right-wing authoritarianism and general belief in conspiracy theories (Swami, 2012). Imhoff with Bruder also got surprising results the following year when they used Funke's scale again during the next study, but with different results. They pointed out that the relationship between authoritarianism and conspiratorial thinking was statistically insignificant (Imhoff, Bruder, 2014).

Many contemporary conspiracy theories have a populist and anti-government focus. In these theories, authorities are blamed as the originators of evil in society - for example, that the American government is responsible for the attacks of September 11, or that the British secret service MI6 is responsible for the accident of Princess Diana. According to Wood, it can be deduced from this that supporters of authoritarianism are significantly less prone to believe that their authorities (the government) conspired against them and, conversely, that opponents of authoritarianism find this idea even more attractive (Wood, 2013).

Although most of the research that works with the link between authoritarianism and

VII.   CONCLUSION

Taking into account the fact that in the last few years, due to the enormous progress in the spread of the Internet and in the development of information and communication technologies, systems and tools, we increasingly encounter various theories that respond to several socially significant events taking place around us, the aim of this the work was, with the use of relevant methods of qualitative theoretical scientific research, to investigate one of the phenomena of the current modern information society – conspiracy theories. We found that they represent a phenomenon that can be looked at from different points of view, both in terms of their scope and the size of their sphere of influence, as well as based on their originators, causes, or what roles they have in society or what their motivations are. Although conspiracy theories and tendencies towards conspiracy theorizing have been inherent in humans throughout the long historical development of human society, they only entered the wider

conspiratorial thinking sounds positive in favour of their mutual correlation, some studies have come to the opposite results. An evident connection between authoritarianism, belief and the spread of conspiracy theories has not yet been clearly demonstrated, and it is therefore possible that this aspect is present only in some specific theories and cannot be considered as a general characteristic that could be applied to a wider spectrum of conspiracy theories. The different research results were probably caused by the different characteristics of the research sample of the respondents.

Swami attributes this phenomenon primarily to the different cultural context (Swami, 2012). While his study on the relationship between authoritarianism and conspiratorial thinking conducted among respondents in the Central European region showed a positive correlation, his second study, which investigated the same among a Malaysian sample of respondents, showed the opposite results. So, it is therefore obvious that it is necessary to consider the extent to which regional politics, the economic situation and the cultural climate affect a given society and how these factors influence conspiracy thinking and belief in conspiracy theories in general. It is also important to distinguish between belief in a specific conspiracy theory and belief in conspiracy theories as a general phenomenon that includes a subset of individual theories.

consciousness in the 21st century after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Based on the examination of certain selected social aspects related to the relationship between society and conspiracy theories, we can conclude that there is a connection between the increase in popularity of conspiracy thinking and socially significant events that took place under unclear circumstances, or whose official explanation was not sufficiently convincing for part of the population. This relationship is mutual and is mainly visible in how the popularity of conspiracy theories has affected, for example, television and film production. Other aspects that have a positive effect on this relationship include the degree of authoritarianism in a certain society and religious secularization. On the question of how the degree of authoritarianism affects the affinity for conspiratorial thinking, ambivalent results were obtained. It is not possible to simply generalize, but it is necessary to consider the specifics of societies, conditions, and cultures. As we indicated above, the development of the Internet and the massive

use of social networks played a significant role in this area, which raised conspiracy theorizing to a new higher level. While until then conspiracy theorists had very limited opportunities to spread their theories, with the massive development and availability of internet connection and the active use of various social networks, they have gained a powerful tool to associate and share their theories about supposed conspiracies.

Conspiracy theories represent a topic within which it is difficult or impossible to formulate clear conclusions and attitudes. Just as it is impossible to condemn every supporter of conspiracy theories as a paranoid suffering from cognitive distortion, it is also impossible to label every theorist as a truth-seeking and injustice-fighting individual. While some theories are so outlandish that it is obvious from the start that they are mere figments of a wild imagination, some theories not only have at least a partial basis but may prove to be partially or completely true over time. This situation further complicates the attitude towards the phenomenon of conspiracy theories. This points out that they cannot be seen as a general set to which all conspiracy theories belong but must be seen as separate and distinct entities in their own context. In an individual approach to this topic, it is therefore necessary to focus on specific aspects of individual theories with a critical distance and try to form an opinion on a specific conspiracy based on them. This way of thinking could lead to finding out whether a certain theory is at least partially relevant and whether it tries to point out a possible problem, the detection and subsequent solution of which would be useful and desirable for society, or whether it is just a purposeful accusation that aims harm the subject who is the target of the accusation.

In the very conclusion, we would like to express the assumption that the goals of our work have been achieved and the questions have been answered. During the research, other sub-questions naturally emerged that would deserve more detailed research. It is possible to include, for example, the relationship of trust and the political establishment or government, which are often the target of conspiracies. The aim of the research could be whether conspiracy theories cause distrust in the political establishment, or whether the already present distrust in the ruling political set is the reason for increased affinity to these conspiracy theories. We plan to address these topics in our further research.

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