

“WHAT’S THERE IN BELIEF TO CONSPIRACY THEORIES?” WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BRIAN L. KEELEY’S PAPER “OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES” (1999)

Abstract

The title of the study is “What’s there in belief to Conspiracy theories?” Based on the title’s concern, the study aims to examine Conspiracy Theories whether there is something in their theory that can make people believe in Conspiracy theories for a specific time or even forever.

This study especially references Brian L. Keeley’s work “Of Conspiracy Theories” (1999). Then the study examines Keeley’s views on warranted belief in Conspiracy theories for Conspiracy Theories’ explanations or arguments.

Some people claim Conspiracy Theories are irrational and do not have warranted beliefs. However, Conspiracy Theories argue that people actually believe their approaches, and they have their answer to why people should believe them or Conspiracy theories. They claim they can prove the existence of a conspiracy, the essential factor of Conspiracy Theories. So the prime task of the study is to find out how far they are capable of proving their statement.

Keywords: Conspiracy theories; conspiracy theorist; belief; credibility; warranted belief; existence; prove; essential factor.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Conspiracy theories are prevalent even in modern times. How come every bit of misinformation and information of past events take turn to conspiracy theory and will so repeatedly revolve? Some people are likely or more vulnerable to believe Conspiracy theories, and others do not. So, the study accounts, some people being vulnerable to Conspiracy theories have something to do with Conspiracy theories’ approaches. Immense efforts have been carried out to study conspiracy theories for decades by sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, and philosophers.

We may opine Conspiracy Theorists do their stuff like indicting Covid-19 as a bio-warfare mindlessly without considering ground reality. Nonetheless, Conspiracy Theorists have specific reasons for their stuff. If we dig into their theories, we would most likely find they do have an answer for their approaches. Based on scepticism, we could argue their theories as being irrational. If it is irrational, can Conspiracy theories resolve it to a rational approach?

On one hand, the term “Conspiracy” refers to a secret plan or plot by a group of people to attempt a harmful or unlawful action. It is considered as a secret unlawful plan of two or more people and not used to refer to an individual’s unlawful secret plan. For an unlawful secret plan by a group of people to be called a conspiracy it should be intentional and have an agreement among the individuals of the group. Here, the term agreement means the group of individuals who are of one mind, plotting for the same goal. Besides this, the individuals involved in the conspiracy are called conspirators.

On the other hand, the term “theory” derived from the Greek word “theoria.” Theoria means contemplation or speculation. When an individual or a group speculates their beliefs or ideas about something which may guide certain analysis may be called theory. But this speculation may not necessarily have evidence. For example: A car is an automobile. A driver of a car may have experience to drive it but might not have the experience of automobile’s theory. Theory may also be defined as a study or explanation of a specific context like automobile, electronics, etc. It includes thinking and perspective of specific individuals or a group of individuals.

Therefore, we could say that conspiracy theories are speculations or explanations of a harmful or unlawful secret plan by a group of people. Conspiracy theories explains the cause of harmful events. In many cases it contrasts the official theories or explanations. Official explanations might be from sources like government, business corporates and national news channels or newspapers. But with regard to the account of official source, the study does not present any conflict of interest. The believability of official source is a subject of debate along with the Conspiracy Theories’ believability.

Conspiracy Theorists are those who theorise certain beliefs or theories for the cause of an event. Mainly their theories includes the motive of debunking conspiracy that they believe to be the reason for a cause of an event. From one point of view, Conspiracy Theorists’ works can be seen as scrutiny of nefarious events. On the other hand, it might have bad agendas in claiming that a cause of an event contains a conspiracy.

Conspiracy Theorists are referred as the producers of the Conspiracy Theories. The opposing factor of conspiracy theory is official theory. However, there is no warranty in claiming the existence of an official theory. The question who is the producer of an official theory is an area of debate for academicians and researchers. Therefore, there is a chance that producer of an official theory might also be the producer of conspiracy theories which they may name it as an official theory.

Conspiracy Theories are often formed as a way for people to cope with sudden and un-sudden events. For example, plane crashes, terrorist attacks, mass shootings, the death of prominent and important individuals, and many. In the face of unexplained occurrences and confused hysteria, people look for psychological relief. They look for answers, for ways to process things and bring some order in the frightening and unforeseen events. There is a connection between conspiracy theorizing and nefarious activities. And many have rightly recognized this as a crisis. But the crisis of what?

A general answer is a crisis of literacy of truth. We are in a crisis of truth. We, as fundamentally rational beings, above all we do seek the truth. It is just that in this post-truth era, we have been left without the tools to verify our facts as we would like to. The idea then is that this has led us to live in the divided times that we live in, which can all be chalked up to some massive misunderstanding.

The study aims to enquire into the question “What’s there in belief to Conspiracy theories?” with special reference to Brian L. Keeley’s work “Of Conspiracy Theories” (1999).

With respect to the particular question cited above, I present a thesis based on Conspiracy Theories’ influence over people to believe them. Back to back, the study also presents how Conspiracy theories introduce their approaches and establish their account.

Concerning the particular issues cited above, it is necessary for the philosophers and scholars of other subjects to study a thesis based on Conspiracy Theories' influence on people to believe them. This research project will provide a systematic understanding of how Conspiracy theories introduce their approaches and establish their account. The study will also explain what scholars like Brian L. Keeley, Matthew Dentith, and Charles Pigden have to say to warranted belief in Conspiracy Theories. In contrast to these scholars' views, the research project aims to examine their views with its approaches. Then this research project will provide an overview of Conspiracy Theories' standpoint that what they hold to be convincing to make people believe in Conspiracy Theories, despite their explanations, is irrational to many. In addition, it will propose a philosophical framework for understanding and studying the concern "belief in Conspiracy Theories."

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are several research works on belief to conspiracy theories but in the philosophical approach, what I have found is that scholars debate much about the irrationality of conspiracy theories. They talk about why conspiracy theories are unwarranted, or they forward some views regarding strong points of Conspiracy theories. No doubt scholars like Charles Pigden and Matthew Dentith did a significant analysis on the defence of conspiracy theories or on why they are believable. But light has not been shed so much as to garner

attention from scholars and the field of literatures on this subject matter. There is a need to bring out some credible explanation on what philosophy has to say about why people do actually believe in conspiracy theories.

Conspiracy theories play a vital role in winning people's assent. They have their way of presenting their theories. There is a need to scrutinize what kind of approach or techniques the Conspiracy Theorists impose to make their theories more reliable.

People adopt hard-core conspiracy theories that are less substantiated with an extent of paranoia who believe that the government is out there to get them. Like the idea, the conspiracy theory that the medical industry has found the cure to cancer but keeps it hidden to profit from chemotherapy and other less effective, more expensive cancer treatments. It is sinister, it is sensational, but it is unlikely.

More reasonable Conspiracy Theories rely, as I mentioned, on a need for explanation or answers — for example, UFO sightings or extra-terrestrial encounters or strange lights in the sky. As humans, we are uncomfortable with admitting when we do not know something. So will it tribute to something otherworldly or something supernatural? But all conspiracy theories share a foundation, and this is what I want to focus on, because the thinking process that goes into constructing and believing these Conspiracy Theories is quite remarkable.

When someone starts to think like a Conspiracy Theorist, how does that process work? Well, to accept some of these ideas, one must detach oneself from the conventional way of thinking. So one might begin by viewing mainstream information with skepticism. It is to give up trust upon powerful organizations; ones that have more power than the general public. That decides what the public needs to know because of the hierarchy that comes along with any form of civilization. One might begin to think about the amount of power that certain phenomena have in our world, such as the role that materialism has on our society, money, objects and drugs, egos, and the way people think of themselves. All marketing is based on fear and compulsion to drive people to do things. Our urban lives are filled with billboards and advertisements that make us think we are occupied but only superficially. Our lives are so fast-paced and so punctuated with pop and celebrity culture, with social obligations with studies and work and assignments that we barely get to develop the scope to think of the bigger picture, the system that we are a part of.

More specifically, the following research questions needed to be addressed:

- Do Conspiracy theories contain some convincing explanation for conspiracy?
- What are the answers that conspiracy theories claim to have for belief in their approaches?
- Do conspiracy theories meet the mark of people's search for answers about all the sudden and un-sudden incidents?
- What do philosophers have to say in accordance with Conspiracy Theories' believability approach?

III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research aims to develop a systematized philosophical analysis concerning the belief in Conspiracy Theories.

The current study aims to provide a helping hand to the aspirants searching for specific work on the vital role of Conspiracy Theories to establish their believability. Primarily the study has the following aims and objectives:

1. To scrutinize Conspiracy Theories, whether there is something in their theory that makes people believe in Conspiracy theories for a specific time or even forever.
2. To especially examine views of scholars like Brian Keeley (1999) and Matthew Dentith’s (2012) on warranted or unwarranted belief in Conspiracy theories in contrast to Conspiracy theories' explanations to their believability.
3. To outline Conspiracy Theories' arguments for people's beliefs to their approaches.
4. To provide a comprehensive analysis of their answer to why people should believe them or Conspiracy theories.

This study will be beneficial to the aspirants of Philosophical perspectives as well as to the general audience. The study will be a helping tool further to guide the literature of Conspiracy Theories and the academicians.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

In terms of the believability of conspiracy theories, various approaches have been developed. For instance, Keeley, in his paper "Of Conspiracy Theories" (1999), did an epistemic analysis on Conspiracy Theories' believability. His interest is in what he calls "unwarranted conspiracy theories," which compete with the rival, non-conspiratorial explanations. For him, they are invariably nefarious in intent, and seek to tie together seemingly unrelated events (Keeley, 1999, p. 116-117). However, Keeley is worried about the credibility of conspiracy theories because we cannot easily distinguish between warranted and unwarranted examples (Keeley B. 2007).

Basham gives a developmental account of conspiracy theories in his paper, "Living with the Conspiracy" (2001). “Conspiracy theories, warranted or not, follow a two-step pattern: First, they undermine official accounts through striking incongruities. Next, they offer plausible but conspiratorial accounts that incorporate the incongruities into a framework where these then become wholly congruent” (Basham, 2001, p. 266).

Coady does not necessarily take it that Conspiracy Theories existing at odds with official theories make Conspiracy Theories epistemically suspicious because he does not take it that official theories are necessarily epistemically authoritative (Coady, 2006b, p. 117).

While Conspiracy Theory conflicts Conspiracy Theories with the official theory, where the official theory is the explanation offered by the (relevant) epistemic authorities, it is prima facie unwarranted (Levy, 2007, p. 182).

From another standpoint, Conspiracy Theories that aim to explain only limited historical phenomena are often warranted, i.e., they provide the (more or less) correct explanation of events (Raikka J., 2009, p.187).

Official explanations can be theories, and they can refer to conspiracies, but they cannot be Conspiracy Theories (unless they are official explanations of wrong authorities) (Raikka J., 2009, p.187).

The literature review shows that past studies are primarily focused on the believability of Conspiracy theories or whether conspiracy theories are believable or warranted to what extent. But, limited progress has been made on systematizing various concerns like the techniques that Conspiracy Theories or Conspiracy Theorists imply to make their theory more credible.

What is there in belief in conspiracy theories? Does conspiracy theory have some profound explanations to show the existence of conspiracy theories? Because if Conspiracy Theories succeed in proving that there really exists Conspiracy behind several incident, then maximum people, whether literate or illiterate, would believe their theories. Historically literate people accept that conspiracies have occurred and that some theories about conspiracies have turned out to be warranted (Pigden, 1995, p. 3). These are the concerns that are not much presented or structured in past studies.

Nonetheless, Brian Keeley (1999) and Dentith (2012) have presented specific analyses that can be cited in my study’s concerns. Still, there is a need to bring out a more structured work mainly to the cited concerns.

V. THE THESIS

Conspiracy Theories gives excellent credibility for explaining the conspiracy actions and the existence of a conspiracy. They have their answers to their approaches. They have their reasons why people should believe the existence of the conspiracy and mainly to Conspiracy Theories.

VI. IN SUPPORT OF THE THESIS

Given that Conspiracy Theories are essentially flawed, why do people happen to believe or fall in their jaws?

Keeley (1999) uses the abbreviation UCT (Unwarranted Conspiracy Theories) for Conspiracy Theories. Warranted and unwarranted aspect of conspiracy theory is a subject of discussion for both academicians and non-academicians. However, whether Conspiracy Theory is warranted or unwarranted, it always prevails in our society and life. It is connected to people’s life because number of discussion and accounts of good and bad events involve people’s life. Without people’s life it is very likely that conspiracy would not exist. The conspirators conspires against and for some people or people’s ideologies. Life of people and conspiracy is invariably related.

The task of explaining why people believe in Conspiracy Theories can be defined by introducing some techniques used by Conspiracy Theories or Conspiracy Theorists to establish their accounts.

- 1. Unified explanations:** “One of the central virtues of conspiracy theories is the virtue of unified explanations” (Keeley, B. L. 1999, p. 119). Well, the unified explanation for a conspiracy becomes more acceptable than trying to run over the other theory (official theory) of an incident. What Conspiracy Theorists do is that they lay open every explanation put forwarded on an official theory. They would thoroughly search for loopholes in the official theory or search for missing details, details having contradictions. Brian Keeley says Unwarranted Conspiracy Theories accounts to scour the errant data laid by the official theory, which fails to give a ready answer for the incident. To make it more straightforward, let us look at the incident of the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995. The Conspiracy Theory produced against the incident cited in the above line explains the conspiracy about how BATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms) and other conspirators had a clear-cut connection in bombing the Murrah building in Oklahoma City. Even if we scrutinize that incident thoroughly, we cannot easily say the claim made by Conspiracy theory is implausible. The reason is that conspiracy theory inquires why no BATF personnel was in the bombed building besides BATF having an office in the building. Conspiracy Theories also holds that BATF was forewarned (Keith’s observation on Official theory: news reports suggesting that the BATF had received prior warning of the bombing) (Keeley, B. L. 1999, p. 115). It is also accountable that BATF denies that they were forewarned, but they could not provide explanations to stand on their position of denial.
- 2. Posing question:** If someone claims that the Conspiracy Theories as unacceptable, well, in that case, a conspiracy theorist would very likely posit questions to the doubtful explanations of official theory. As so, Conspiracy Theorists or even general individuals could begin to criticise the official theory by throwing up questions to against the so-called official explanation of an event. If the official theory fails to give a ready answer to any accountable data, it poses a serious conflict in accepting the official theory.

With the account in hand as discussed above, the technique of throwing up questions to the doubtful explanation of official theory gives an acceptable stand to Conspiracy Theories. In other words, it means that large people out there would continue to believe the Conspiracy Theories explanations or will have a doubt like there may be something nefarious plan behind the scene before the incident happened.

- 3. Pushing critics to frustration:** It is the game of making the critics lose their endurance. It is evident that the host or supporter of the official theory will criticize the explanation and data of Conspiracy Theories. They would also examine the Conspiracy Theories with the official theory and try to reclaim their position (Keeley, B. L. 1999, pp. 116-117). Even if that be the case, the Conspiracy Theorist would not give away so easily. They could throw up more questions and data against the official theory. They have certain explanations by which they will make up more stuff just for the sake of lengthening their created data. And in that case, if the official theory fails to provide the source for their data, the Conspiracy Theorist could claim that the data of the official theory has been removed by conspirators from the internet or official record book or whatever that may be. A Conspiracy Theorist is capable of such a claim because it is more likely that the maximum official theory of an incident cannot give full details of the source for the data. Like in the Oklahoma City Bombing case, the official theory could not provide a source for data on how no BATF personnel was there in the bombed building.

So, by failing to answer the questions posed by Conspiracy Theorists, the host of official theories or critics will lose their endurance. If the critics try to ignore the questions of a Conspiracy Theorist; the Conspiracy Theorist could ask the critics why they ignore to explain the doubtful questions. It means, is it not the responsibility of the host of the official theory to provide answers to the questions. Regarding this point, Conspiracy Theorists could argue that there is something behind the picture put forwarded by official theory. So, if it is the case that official theory cannot provide the good ground for their explanation, people would for sure believe in Conspiracy Theory. The failure nature of the official theory makes individuals give more assent to Conspiracy Theories. Conspiracy Theory is not conspiracy theory for its believers, rather it is the explanations that they provide for the cause of the destructive event.

VII. ARE WE WARRANTED IN BELIEVING CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

There are some Conspiracy Theories that later turned out to be true – like the case of Watergate and the Iran-Contra affair. But, certain Conspiracy Theories fail to provide assent. As a result, there are distinguished explanations to debunk the Conspiracy Theories.

Firstly, errant data might be a hostage to Conspiracy Theories, but there is also another side that Conspiracy Theories often do not consider. Errant data means a data or information that does not make sense in accordance to the fact. It is a deviation from the actual course. Brian represents two classes of errant data. One is unaccounted-for data and the other is contradictory data. Brian says, “Unaccounted-for data do not contradict the received account, but are data that fall through the net of the received explanation. They are data that go unexplained by the received account. Whereas, Contradictory data are data that, if true, would contradict the received account” (Keeley, B. L. 1999, pp. 118). Hence, Conspiracy Theory examines the data provided by official theory. When the data provided by official theory contradicts with the event or left unexplained they could also be termed as an errant data.

Human understanding of the world, in general, is imperfect. As so sometimes the most compelling theory could also be debunked. The data that official theories or Conspiracy theories provide do not always meet the mark of truth. No data can be entirely accurate because the nature of world is beyond a finite being. On the contrary, science has a character to chase after errant data hoping that it might lead to specific beneficial outcomes.

Second, “Imagine if neutrinos were not simply hard to detect, but actively sought to avoid detection!” (Keeley, B. L. 1999, p. 120). This line points out how Conspiracy Theories try to escape from being debunked. They say there is someone out there who tries to destroy their investigation by revealing the conspiracy. They say, whereas, in science, the investigated nature of a thing has no character of bothering the investigators or scientists.

Depending on the above claims, Conspiracy Theories counters critics. If the critics cannot provide evidence for their explanation Conspiracy Theories are un-falsifiable. It means falsifiable explanations provided by critics becomes the ground for support to Conspiracy Theories. The basis for falsifiability can be considered in the field of natural science, but in the case of Conspiracy Theories, it is absurd.

We might regard Conspiracy Theories as un-falsifiable. But we cannot give a guarantee for its warranty like Keeley said, it is Unwarranted Conspiracy theory. We will discuss about the issue of conspiracy theory’s warranty or un-warranty in the upcoming sections.

Conspiracy Theories are un-falsifiable in a number of grounds. However, in the gradual process some Conspiracy Theory fail to provide reasonable evidence against the conspiracy. What they do is that they go on doubting every institution and individual. They urge for official theory with clear-cut data. Modern Science has its procedure to provide precise data through publication, peer review, professional reputation, university accreditation, etc. (Keeley, B. L. 1999, p. 122). Unlike Conspiracy Theories, Keeley says, claims of science have warranted belief. Conspiracy Theories have no such positive procedure that might validate their irrational claims. Even if there were one, it would turn out to debunk the errant data of Conspiracy Theories. Here, we find errant data can be examined in Conspiracy Theory also.

Third, the Conspiracy Theory becomes less believable as time passes. As we know, Conspiracy Theories goes on posing scepticism which calls into question to more and more people and institutions. This character of Conspiracy Theories gradually weakens the theory’s plausibility. For instance, the claim “Holocaust never occurred and is the fabrication of Jews and their sympathizers” (Keeley, B. L. 1999, p. 123). Now, this claim shows how far Conspiracy Theories can go. Every people know that Holocaust did take place and it is a fact recorded in history. There are several evidences every now and then. The implausibility of that kind of instance erodes the reality of Conspiracy Theories. Keeley states, “Some people just do things. They assassinate world leaders, act on poorly thought out ideologies, and leave clues at the scene of the crime. Too strong a belief in the rationality of people in general, or of the world, will lead us to seek purposive explanations where none exist”(Keeley, B. L. 1999, p. 126).

What Keeley says is a kind of acceptable in general. However, it does not meet up to the mark to take excuses from the existence of a conspiracy. No doubt, many Conspiracy Theories are irrational and can be debunked. But, some characters involved in Conspiracy Theories could make people fall into the wheel of belief in conspiracy theories. Social psychologist, Sander van der Linden, says “many people do not simply fall for falsehoods. But when misinformation offers simple, casual explanations for otherwise random events, it helps restore a sense of agency and control for many people” (Kramer, J. 2021). To make this point more clear, let us turn to the next section, which explains the existence of the conspiracy and how proof of the existence of a conspiracy can make people believe in Conspiracy Theories.

VIII. HOW TO PROVE THE EXISTENCE OF A CONSPIRACY?

To answer the question, “how to prove the existence of a conspiracy?” might answer why people believe in Conspiracy Theories at least for a specific time or forever as such. Dentith says, “A warranted claim of conspiracy will only be explanatory if we can show that the conspiratorial activity is the salient cause of the event. We need to do more than fall back upon some claim like ‘There was a conspiracy!’ to show that a conspiracy theory is a good explanation. For a conspiracy to be a salient cause of an event, we need to show that the

conspirators’ intended goal was causally responsible for the event we are trying to explain” (Dentith, M. 2012, p. 204).

“One reason for thinking that inferences to conspiracy theories might typically be inferences to any old explanation is that even if there is a warrant for some claim of conspiracy that does not mean it is part of the best explanation of some event. Having a warrant for a claim of conspiracy only means that the evidence shows a conspiracy existed” (Dentith, M. 2012, p. 204).

“Even if we can show that a conspiracy occurred, that does not mean that it can be used to explain the occurrence of some event; we need to show that there is a link between the conspiratorial activity and the event in question” (Dentith, M. 2012, pp. 204-205).

Dentith (2012) explains his statements with two examples and as such, which I also will do. In analyzing Dentith’s explanations, I follow some of his structures to keep the gist of his work (I hope the reader will excuse this part).

- 1. Example 1:** In December 2019, there was a cluster of pneumonia cases in the Wuhan city of China. Some early cases reported were from visiting or working in a seafood and live animal market in Wuhan. The investigation found that a newly discovered Corona virus caused the diseases. The disease was subsequently named Covid-19. Covid-19 spread within China and to the rest of the world. On 30th January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

In the account of the recent widespread of Covid-19 numerous Conspiracy Theories have been made up and made public through different media, websites and social media. The official report says the first detection of the Covid-19 case was found in the city of Wuhan in China. So China was most likely to face accountability for spreading the Covid-19 virus by their rival or another unidentified conspiracy theorist who is always hungry for making up some propaganda and throwing up questions out of their curiosity.

“Collective narcissism a psychological factor leading to belief in conspiracies, is what experts call collective narcissism, or a group's inflated belief in its significance. Marchlewska's research suggests that collective narcissists are apt to look for imaginary enemies and adopt conspiracy explanations that blame them” (Kramer, J. 2021).

Several Conspiracy Theories have been made public, but I am about to particularly examine the conspiracy theory “Corona Virus: A Bio-warfare” (Skopec R., 2020).

Conspiracy Theorists claim that the Corona virus was engineered by scientists in a high-level biological warfare laboratory. Conspiracy Theories claim that China wanted to spread the Covid-19 to the entire world, especially to the USA, the known rival of China. It is claimed that China wanted to design the cure for Covid-19 and beat America’s economic growth and also to be a superpower by defeating the USA through a bio-weapon. Whatever China was trying to gain, failed because they could not create the cure in time and distribute it worldwide. They could not meet their expectations, instead, they were caught in the blame game.

On the other hand, China was suspected because in history there are number of conflicts between China and America. Also, China has a history of many border conflicts with other countries, unlike America. There is also evidence of how they control media and various public agencies, unlike democratic countries. As a result, maximum people doubt China whether they really did not create the Covid-19.

On the contrary, China claims the USA is responsible for the virus outbreak. “Chinese respiratory specialist Zhong Nanshan stated at a 2020 February press conference that though the COVID-19 was first discovered in China, it does not mean that it originated from China, planting the seeds of doubt” (Yan, L. 2020). However, China claims, “the coronavirus was introduced to China when 300 US military members arrived in the Wuhan region for the ‘Military World Games’ in mid-October 2019 and infected the local population” (Winter, L., 2020). Researchers and scientists also say that Covid-19 was not engineered by scientists but was developed naturally through mutation. However, there is no such official theory that validates the researcher and scientist’s claims. So in this light, the Conspiracy Theories could gain attention towards their approach by explaining that some powerful people are involved in conspiratorial actions. Well, the Covid-19 Conspiracy theory might not be a reasonable theory. However, to hold an argument, we can consider it as having enough content to be regarded as having nefarious conspiracy in the given example – 1. By this, we can say that:

- There existed a group of conspirators, including members of scientists and the government of China.
- They intended to create a bio-warfare and later gain superpower by designing cure to Covid-19 and also to beat USA in economic growth.
- Various measures were carried out to hide the connection between the government’s inclusion and scientists. They also tried to divert the issue that Covid-19 was not originated from China.

The conspiracy theorist says the Covid-19 outbreak had something to do with Conspiracy; still, it might be intentional or unintentional. The bio-war of the Corona virus did not result in China’s favour. So to understand the Conspiracy of the Covid-19 outbreak, we have to explain how it went against their favour or expectations.

The Conspiracy Theory I have presented reveals the connection between conspirators and the results of their expectations from conspiratorial actions.

So far now, we know that there is also a story that Conspirator’s failure of their expectations have a connection to the incident that took place for the Conspiracy. I am speaking about the context of connection that gives Conspiracy Theorists reasonable grounds to explain that there exists a Conspiracy and to make people believe in their theory. And besides this explanation, the doubtful context of people against China plays a vital role in boosting the concept of connection I mentioned.

Next, I will turn to another example explaining how having some inference hypothesis merely cannot give reasonable grounds to believe in existence of a conspiracy and most certainly the Conspiracy Theories. And then will examine how example – 1

proves the existence of conspiracy and the existence of conspiracy as the ground for belief in Conspiracy Theories.

IX. MADE-UP CONSPIRACY THEORY

1. Example 2: For the sake of explanation, let us suppose that I have a belief in a conspiracy and that there are conspirators against my candidature for Assembly election 2022. I believe that there is a conspiracy carried out against me, and as well as I am in the belief of conspiracy because of the political party's denial to provide me a ticket to contest in the upcoming assembly election. The reasons could be

- Some executive members of the political party were involved in the conspiracy.
- To my knowledge, there is a person having influence over the party like me.
In the above-stated reasons why I am saying that there is a conspiracy is because –
- I can signify that there are conspirators, including the party's working president and other executive members, who often disagree with my approaches.
- The other man having influence has often been favoured over me.
- To overthrow me and retain their position and voice.
- Specific measures were carried out to hide the conspiracy by controlling the other.

The central point to my hypothesis is that there is a conspiracy in denial to provide a ticket to contest for the assembly election. The issues that I have put forward give me a pretty good affirmation to back up my claims that it satisfies the position of conspiratorial activity.

Now we know the conspiracy I mentioned is one side of my explanation of the matter that I was denied a ticket because some executive members of the party have their personal favour towards another person. Nonetheless, I should bring out the other challenges to present my hypothesis as a convincing explanation of what I have stated.

The case might be that I am not capable enough to face the competitor. Still, I hold the denial of a ticket to be a conspiracy because I am aware that the party member favours the other person. If there is a conspiracy here, to favour another person and on the other hand, if I am more capable than that another person, the conspirators would try to make such a clever move as to fortify that my candidature will be denied so the other person could be put up for the candidature. Even if I were more capable than the other person, I would be rejected, and the other person would be accepted, relying on specific adequate reasons.

The example that I have forwarded might not have a relation between my belief in some conspiratorial action and the incident that I am trying to spell out, unlike the previous example-1, where we could believe that there was some conspiratorial action to create the incident. There are no reasonable grounds for the connection between the conspiratorial action and the incident in example - 2. Even if I have a firm belief that there exists a conspiracy behind the scene, I am taking a hostage to an inference of some

other previous explanation for the sake of proving that conspiracy is the sole cause for denial of a ticket to contest in assembly election.

Note: To make the claim of a conspiracy validated or warranted, to explain it to be solely responsible for any incident, it is also essential to present that conspiratorial explanation is not merely a part of someone’s one-sided explanation. Rather, it should be a highly credible explanation.

In example 1, the outbreak of Covid-19 Conspiracy Theory, we find that China have control over the free media and public agents. We also find several doubtful contexts against China’s international affairs, and ultimately we have the ground to believe that there existed conspiratorial actions.

There is also a story that the conspirator’s failure of their expectations has a connection to the incident that took place for the Conspiracy. The entire story of Conspiracy Theory gives excellent credibility for explaining the conspiracy actions and the existence of a conspiracy. But, in the matter of example- 2, the explanation I provided for rejection of my candidature does not provide reasonable grounds to reveal conspiratorial actions even though I have knowledge that a conspiracy was being plotted against me. As a result, example - 2 does not explain that there is an existence of a conspiracy and for which it cannot make people believe in the Conspiracy Theory of denying a ticket for assembly election.

The world is filled with numerous conspiracies, but even if we try to correlate previous conspiracies to take them hostage, most probably, they might not give any reasonable grounds for explanation to present claims at hand for conspiracy.

It would not be correct to say that illustrations of past conspiratorial actions are ineffective. Rather, they could provide credible help to draw the hypothesis for the given instances at hand.

To convince people that there is a conspiracy out there is a kind of tough stuff but not that tough, though. If we could provide the reasonable grounds of inference to explain how conspiracy exists and if we could explain that it is not the only credibility of connection between the conspiracy and happenings of sinister incidents, but also that conspiratorial actions provide a profound ground for an explanation of conspiracy, then we could make people believe in Conspiracy Theories to a great extent.

X. MEASURES THAT FAIL TO DEBUNK CONSPIRACY THEORY

Pauly (2020) states belief and theories or conspiracy theories must have the aim to truth. In alternate, instrumentalists propose usefulness as the criteria to believe in belief and theories or conspiracy theories. In addition instrumentalists holds strict pragmatists views which says to regard consequences (for example: social and political consequences) as an essential criteria for claiming a belief or theory or conspiracy theory.

However, one needs to ponder the measures of debunking conspiracy theories before choosing to accept or discard the credibility of Conspiracy Theories. Pauly says philosophical

discussion mainly sheds light on the measures taken or to be taken by the government and politicians.

According to Sunstein and Vermeule (2009), including psychological and social mechanisms in respect to credibility of Conspiracy Theories the measures that needs to be taken by government is also important. Government’s policy and legal actions are important in debunking nefarious Conspiracy Theories. However, measures like banning conspiracy theories, imposing fine for spreading conspiracy theories, opposing arguments and cognitive infiltration of agents (groups of individuals) that spreads conspiracy theories might not always be good measures for discrediting conspiracy theories. The term cognitive infiltration is used by Sunstein and Vermeule. This term refers to changing the perspective or idea of producers of Conspiracy Theories.

Now let us analyse the applicability of government and politician’s measures:

1. Banning of Conspiracy theories: All in all why government’s measure or policy of banning conspiracy theories might not be plausible to discredit Conspiracy Theories is because banning Conspiracy Theories would only be applicable for non-democratic (For example, monarchical rule, dictatorial rule) nations and not for democratic nations. Banning Conspiracy Theories would be applicable in non-democratic nations for the following reasons:

- Non-democratic nations follows the rules laid down by a supreme leader or a monarch.
- In these type of nations it is uncomplicated to stop a group from producing Conspiracy Theories. The causalities are severe if a group tries to oppose the supreme leaders because in non-democratic nations general public have no power to participate in policy making. In other words the people of these nations have little to no right in expressing their views and freedom of speech.
- In contrast to non-democratic nations, banning of Conspiracy Theories in democratic nations is almost impossible. This is because various complications might arise on numerous levels as in democratic nations general public are entitled with right to speech and information. In addition, the general public has the right to participate in forming of the government body as well as the policies laid down by the government.

2. Imposing fine for spreading conspiracy theories: In a democratic nation, suppose a group is fined by the government for spreading a Conspiracy Theory. In this case if the so-called conspiracy theory turns out to be true later on then the trust over the government by the people will weaken and the people will start believing in the forthcoming Conspiracy Theories.

However, in a non-democratic nation if a group is fined by their government for spreading Conspiracy Theory, on a later date, even if the theory is proved to be true, the group or the general public cannot retaliate the government for their loss because the people do not have the freedom to voice down their opinion in a non-democratic nation

compared to a democratic nation. If found opposing, they may face severe punishments such as execution.

3. **Opposing arguments:** Even if a ruling government opposes a Conspiracy Theory based on an argument it does not prove the validity of that argument. It is because there is no specific grounds for the certainty to the reliability of government’s argument. If their argument is acceptable; on what criteria would that argument be accepted; will there be any specific criteria to validate their argument?

In some instances the people can differentiate the credibility of Conspiracy Theories; be it based on their intuition or the nature of the conspiracy theory. For example the Conspiracy Theory of “Lizard People” which is based on the idea that great personalities are lizards who can shape-shift and take upon human forms to dominate upon the humankind in all fields possible. Lizard people are also referred as cold-blooded reptilians.

If people were to take upon this example they can easily understand the implausibility of the concept of Conspiracy Theory of “Lizard People” based both on their intuition and the nature of the conspiracy theory.

4. **Cognitive infiltration of agents (groups of individuals) that produce conspiracy theories:** According to Sunstein and Vermeule, “the government may try to involve private parties to infiltrate online fora and discussion groups associated with conspiracy theories in order to introduce cognitive diversity, breaking up one-sided discussion and introducing non-conspiratorial views” (Pauly, M., 2020).

Coady (2018) vehemently opposes the idea laid down by Sunstein and Vermeule as it is not easy to suppose the government’s intention because it might have selfish agenda which might or might not be helpful for the general public. For instance, in a democratic nation we find that the government body is formed of different elected representatives belonging to numerous political parties. Hence, in the context of politics the reliability of government’s source or information might not always be how it seems. This is because, in politics there is present numerous political parties along with numerous opposition parties who have their own ideologies. The parties who form the government, most of the time work based on their ideologies and as a result this would be a one sided agenda. So, the government being one-sided cannot be a measure to debunk the conspiracy theory.

Now, from the above passages we find that the idea of cognitive infiltration performed by the government to bring about cognitive diversity by breaking up one-sided discussion as invalid because the ideas and arguments introduced by the government against conspiracy theory would also be one-sided for their ideas and arguments are based on their party’s agenda or ideologies.

In such a scenario the actions of both the government and politicians cannot be a good measure to debunk the credibility or believability of conspiracy theories.

XI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, what we find from the study is that Conspiracy Theories or Conspiracy Theorists might seem irrational; nonetheless, they have answers for their approaches. So, “What’s there in belief to Conspiracy Theories?” is a question to consider and inquire about. To a great extent, Conspiracy Theories can influence the people to believe that there is a conspiracy behind maximum incidents like the spread of Covid-19, 9/11 Attack, Love Jihad, and many.

The hypothesis and story of Conspiracy Theories give excellent credibility for explaining the conspiracy actions and the existence of a conspiracy. They often provide reasonable explanations that make people assent to Conspiracy Theories like in the case of Covid-19, they could draw numbers of connective hypotheses to prove how a conspiracy exists. Their backup is to counter the probable evidence that mainstream or official theory provides.

However, at some point, maximum Conspiracy Theories are debunked. As we know, Conspiracy Theories goes on posing scepticism which calls into question more and more people and institutions. Such character of Conspiracy Theories gradually weakens the theory’s plausibility.

The study of believability or credibility of Conspiracy Theory has a great significance. Especially in the field of Philosophy the study of Conspiracy Theory, or its context of believability is important in finding the aspects of its epistemic, ethics, social or political criteria. In the subjects of Psychology or Sociology its explication is important to study the human beings relation to it and its effects to human beings and a society as a whole. The context of Conspiracy Theory is an important philosophical study area that can be included in academic syllabus for higher education. In most of the universities and colleges we find the inclusion of different philosophical problems developed by different philosophers such as of ancient, medieval, modern, post modern and contemporary. However, in recent times the study of the problem of Conspiracy Theory and its advocates have become important to be included in philosophical discussions and researches. The academics could benefit from the discussion of the problem of Conspiracy Theory that is in and around our socio-political life. In adding to these, the study of its demerits and merits could add light in understanding its good and bad impacts in society and life.

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