

# Deepfakes Case

## Affirmative and Negative (On-Case) Packet

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**Credit:** Adapted from files published by the [Washington Urban Debate League](#)

# Background

(Do not read this in round- this is meant to help you better understand the case)

In recent years, artificial intelligence has made huge leaps in what it is able to do. Now, AI platforms can manipulate audio and video in a way that is so seamless, it can make it seem like something was said or something happened that actually never occurred at all. This is a “deepfake,” an audio-visual creation of an event that didn’t happen.

In a world dominated by social media, you often cannot trust your own eyes and ears anymore. It makes it much harder for people to determine what is real and what is fake. It allows people to claim things that are untrue, but it also allows people to say that something that is real was “deepfaked” to try to make it go away. Right now, people often don’t have the skills to figure out the truth until the damage has already been done.

Deepfakes are a huge, real time threat to most things you can imagine, and this case is designed to allow you to explore their impacts on different elements of society based on your interests. The common things that unite them -- being able to separate fact from fiction is very important. If we don’t take action, this might soon become impossible.

This case proposes amending Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Written before the internet looked anything like it’s current form, this law says that companies that host content from 3rd party actors (like people who post articles to blogs, comment on threads / posts, or upload videos to Youtube) aren’t responsible for what that content is. The law has allowed the digital economy to thrive, but it has also allowed a lot of misinformation, harmful content, and increasingly, deepfakes to spread. The law was recently changed to make providers responsible for sex trafficking and child pornography, so the plan suggests even further to make platforms liable for deepfakes shared via their tools. It would force platforms increase their content moderation to prevent these, likely at great cost. It isn’t the only solution to combating deepfakes, but is among the most popularly discussed.

# Strategy Page

Deepfakes are a very large problem, and that problem affects a wide range of different areas of life. This is a large core file that you can modify to your own preferences.

This aff has six different advantage areas -- **the affirmative team should choose 2 or 3 Advantages to focus on (or switch them out to give your opponent a new look), do NOT try to read all six at the same time.**

- Democracy -- Deepfakes are a deep threat to democracy- it can make candidates look like they did things they didn't do, it can spread misinformation, and it can discourage people from voting. Democracy is essential to peace and global freedoms.
- Populism-- Deepfakes are spreading misinformation and driving voters towards "populist" leaders who are not good for democracy.
- Foreign Interference -- Other countries like China and Russia are using deepfakes to spread misinformation, influence our elections, and convince people around the world of things that are not true and bad for human rights.
- Racism -- Deepfakes are disproportionately used to target minorities, and they can spread racist misinformation.
  - The data on deepfakes says that the most common use of them right now (98%) is for pornographic material, often intentionally used to blackmail or attack women and children. We didn't write this version of the aff for the core files, but, if handled sensitively, it could be a strong arguments on the topic that could be introduced once we allow for open evidence.
- Economy -- Deepfakes can throw off our stockmarket and cause economic collapses.
- Domestic Extremeism -- Because companies are not held liable for information posted on their platforms, a lot of extremism is happening online and pushing misinformation to voters. This can lead to dangerous extremism or terrorism.

This AFF uses Section 230 reform as a mechanism that makes it pretty topical under this resolution, though it could be vulnerable to Topicality arguments about the term "its" -- the government has to do the protection themselves, instead of getting companies to do it for them. This isn't the only way to do the plan, so there could be counterplans that attempt to solve the problem through a different method.

**Make sure you take the time to read through the packet and highlight down the cards you want to use!**

# **The Affirmative** **Case**

# 1AC- Sample

## Inherency:

**Deepfakes are coming for our democracy now**

**Devine et al, CNN Reporters, 2024**

Curt, Donie O'Sullivan, and Sean Lyngaas, Feb 1st, CNN Reporters, A fake recording of a candidate saying he'd rigged the election went viral. Experts say it's only the beginning <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/01/politics/election-deepfake-threats-invs/index.html>

**Days before a pivotal election in Slovakia** to determine who would lead the country, **a damning audio recording spread online in which one of the top candidates seemingly boasted about how he'd rigged the election.** And if that wasn't bad enough, his voice could be heard on another recording talking about raising the cost of beer. **The recordings immediately went viral on social media, and the candidate, who is pro-NATO** and aligned with Western interests, **was defeated in September by an opponent who supported closer ties to Moscow** and Russian President Vladimir Putin. While the number of votes swayed by the leaked audio remains uncertain, two things are now abundantly clear: **The recordings were fake, created using artificial intelligence; and US officials see the episode in Europe as a frightening harbinger of the sort of interference the United States will likely experience**

during the 2024 presidential election. **"As a nation, we are woefully underprepared,"** said V.S. Subrahmanian, a Northwestern University professor who focuses on the intersection of AI and security. Senior national security officials in the US have been gearing up **for "deepfakes" to inject confusion among voters** in a way not previously seen, a senior US official familiar with the issue told CNN. That preparation has involved contingency planning for a foreign government potentially using AI to interfere in the election. State and federal authorities are also grappling with increased urgency to pass legislation and train election workers to respond to deepfakes, but limited resources within elections offices and inconsistent policies have led some experts to argue that the US is not equipped for the magnitude of the challenge, a CNN review found. Already, the US has seen AI-generated disinformation in action. **In New Hampshire, a fake version of President Joe Biden's voice was featured in robocalls that sought to discourage Democrats from participating in the primary.** AI images that falsely depicted former President Donald Trump sitting with teenage girls on Jeffrey Epstein's plane circulated on social media last month. A deepfake posted on Twitter last February portrayed a leading Democratic candidate for mayor of Chicago as indifferent toward police shootings. **Various forms of disinformation can shape public opinion, as evidenced by the widely held false belief that Trump won the 2020 election. But generative AI amplifies that threat by enabling anyone to cheaply create realistic-looking content that can rapidly spread online.** Political operatives and pranksters can pull off attacks just as easily as Russia, China or other nation state actors. Researchers in Slovakia have speculated that the vote-rigging deepfake their country faced was the work of the Russian government. "I can imagine scenarios where nation state adversaries record deepfake audios that are disseminated using both social media as well as messaging services to drum up support for candidates they like and spread malicious rumors about candidates they don't like," said Subrahmanian, the Northwestern professor. The FBI or Department of Homeland Security can move more swiftly to speak out publicly against a threat if they know that a foreign actor is behind a deepfake, said a senior US official familiar with the issue. But if an American citizen could be behind a deepfake, US national security officials would be more reluctant to counter it publicly out of fear of giving the impression that they are influencing the election or restricting speech, the official said. And **once a deepfake appears on social media, it can be nearly impossible to stop its spread.** "The concern is that there's going to be a deepfake of a secretary of state who says something about the results, who says something about the polling, and you can't tell the difference," said the official, who was not authorized to speak to the press. States try to prepare efforts to regulate deepfakes and guard against their effects vary greatly among US states. **Some states including California, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas and Washington have passed laws that regulate deepfakes in elections.** Minnesota's law, for example, makes it a crime for someone to knowingly disseminate a deepfake intended to harm a candidate within 90 days of an election. Michigan's laws require campaigns to disclose AI-manipulated media, among other mandates.

**But modern internet regulations (Section 230 of the Communication Decency Act) were passed in 1996, long before the rise of Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook. The internet is completely different, we need to update our laws to reflect that**

**Donegan, Manage Engine, 2024**

John April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, ManageEngine. “It’s time to reform Section 230” Kales ★

[https://insights.manageengine.com/digital-transformation/its-time-to-reform-section-230/#Section\\_230\\_is\\_a\\_non-partisan\\_issue\\_garnering\\_the\\_ire\\_of\\_folks\\_on\\_both\\_sides\\_of\\_the\\_aisle](https://insights.manageengine.com/digital-transformation/its-time-to-reform-section-230/#Section_230_is_a_non-partisan_issue_garnering_the_ire_of_folks_on_both_sides_of_the_aisle)

When **Hillary Clinton and Clarence Thomas are in agreement**, you know something is amiss. Albeit for different reasons, **they’d each like to see adjustments to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996. This law is antiquated.** Twenty-eight years ago, the Internet was in its infancy; 1996 was the heyday of AOL, Blockbuster Video, and dial-up modems. To put things in perspective, Section 230 became law three years before Napster, eight years before Facebook, and decades before social media companies began using sophisticated algorithms to curate content for their users. In short, **the Internet was an entirely different entity in 1996.** Nevertheless, due to the broad case law interpretation over the years, **Section 230 effectively provides social media and search companies with de facto, absolute liability immunity over all third-party content on their platforms.** Essentially, Section 230 provides publishers with “safe harbor” provisions against liability for any content users post on their platforms. The relevant provision, Section 230(c)(1), which is comprised of 26 words, helped create the Internet as we know it today: “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.” This provision is no longer adequate. At a recent House Committee on Energy and Commerce hearing, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (D – Menlo Park, CA) acknowledges they didn’t have a crystal ball back in 1996. Eshoo says, “We didn’t anticipate the harms to children. **We didn’t anticipate how it would be exploited to spread misinformation and disinformation; interfere with our elections, and threaten the foundations of our democracy and society.** And we didn’t anticipate online platforms designing their products to algorithmically amplify content despite its threats to the American people. All of **this necessitates Congress to update the law.**” Many conservatives, including Clarence Thomas, take umbrage with 230(c)(2), claiming it facilitates censorship and silences conservative voices. Aside from Thomas, who has been clamoring for 230 to be modified since at least October 2020, all the other Supreme Court justices have been reluctant to touch it. In May 2023, the court looked at two important cases: Twitter v. Taamneh and Gonzalez v. Google. In Twitter v. Taamneh, the court assessed whether Twitter was liable for “aiding and abetting” ISIS terrorists. Plaintiffs argued that Twitter facilitated communication between terrorists in the lead up to a 2017 attack in Istanbul. In a majority opinion, the court said Twitter didn’t knowingly provide the terrorists with assistance; thus, the ruling upheld Section 230 and declared Twitter not liable. Gonzalez v. Google dealt with a 2015 ISIS terrorist attack in Paris. In this case, the plaintiffs argued that Google was not merely a service provider, but also a “content creator” because Google’s algorithm directed specific content to specific users. Reluctant to rule on Section 230, the court remanded the case back to the 9th Circuit. Although many legal pundits argue that Section 230(c)(1) and Section 230(c)(2) are consistent and compatible, I don’t see it that way. Section 230(c)(1) gives platforms legal liability from content posted by third parties. And Section 230(c)(2)—the protection for “Good Samaritan” blocking and screening of offensive material—allows platforms to monitor their websites for harmful content without being held liable for these monitoring efforts. I understand that these two provisions are supposed to work in tandem. Yet, I’d argue that **the existence of (c)(1)—the liability protection—disincentivizes platforms from engaging in (c)(2)—moderating content. Why would platforms like Meta, X, Google, TikTok, and Snapchat bother spending money, time, and resources policing harmful content on their platforms if they’re not going to be held liable? They wouldn’t. And they don’t.** In fact, as long as the proliferation of harmful (often illegal) content doesn’t create a PR backlash, Big Tech companies will continue to allow this content to flourish. After all, **these are ad-driven businesses that make money when there is engagement.** Unfortunately, market forces encourage predominately negative content on many of these platforms. In the House Committee on Energy and Commerce hearing, Middlebury College professor Allison Stanger identifies the main problems as being: “The immunity from liability...and also the ad-driven business model, which means that the algorithms are optimized for engagement... **human beings are most engaged when they’re outraged.**” **Also, traditional media outlets are dying. More people than ever are getting their information from these platforms,** and as Stanger points out, “Section 230 currently covers recommender algorithms, content moderation, and search. They’re all immune. And that’s a very sweeping mandate.”

## **The Plan:**

Thus the plan: The United States Federal Government should significantly increase intellectual property protections by amending Section 230 (e)(2) of the Communications Decency Act to hold online platforms liable for deepfaked content.

## **Solvency:**

Deepfakes are spreading rapidly via social media platforms now -- amending Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to put liability on these platforms is necessary to prevent the spread of misinformation.

**Nagumotu, University of New Hampshire Law, 2022**

Kavyasri, JD Candidate, University of New Hampshire School of Law, Deepfakes are taking over social media: Can The Law Keep Up?

[https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu\\_pp113-157.pdf](https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu_pp113-157.pdf)

Public figures are being subject to deepfakes portraying artificially created circumstances that never actually occurred. **Digital impersonation is becoming increasingly realistic and convincing. Online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are fueling the rapid and widespread diffusion of user-created deepfakes. Intellectual property doctrines**

**and recent “fake news” rules are unable to handle published deepfakes. The current Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act completely shields online platforms from the liability of publishing users’ deepfakes. The online platforms, controlled by a few private companies, are essentially governing the large parts of the digital world, leading to a crisis of legitimacy. Technological and legal solutions are necessary to deter deepfakes that are primarily used to spread misinformation.**

As of now, the only possible ramification for public figures is to use property or tort law to claim civil liability against the individual deepfake creators. However, **civil liability cannot ameliorate the harms because plaintiffs are not always able to identify the deepfake creator, and the creators can be located beyond the effective reach of the U.S. legal process. Since online platforms play a key role in enabling the distribution of deepfakes, a more effective approach would be to shift the focus and impose liability on the platforms.** A discussion of First Amendment rights will remain in the background for these claims, and the courts must decide how to balance free speech rights with the societal harm that deepfakes cause. While we wait for legal mechanisms to potentially fall into place, **the technology of deepfakes is only going to improve, causing chaos. We need to** discuss the harms of deepfakes and possible solutions to **prevent the spread of misinformation now**

**Amending the intellectual property exemption in Section 230 (e)(2) allows copyright lawsuits, which would incentivize platforms to expand content screening/ oversight. Nagumotu, University of New Hampshire Law, 2022**

Kavyasri, JD Candidate, University of New Hampshire School of Law, Deepfakes are taking over social media: Can The Law Keep Up?

[https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu\\_pp113-157.pdf](https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu_pp113-157.pdf)

Content platforms play a key role in enabling the distribution of deepfakes. Given that **it may be difficult to find and deter creators of deepfakes, the most efficient and effective way to mitigate harm may be to impose liability on platforms.**<sup>146</sup> **“Online platforms already have an incentive to screen content,” posted because of “moral suasion, market dynamics, and political**

**pressures.”**<sup>147</sup> The online platforms hosting the user-generated deepfakes currently do not face any liability.<sup>148</sup> The websites are shielded by the Communications Decency Act, which immunizes websites from being responsible for user-generated content.<sup>149</sup> Using classic tort claims, like defamation, the individual could sue the online platforms if they are the publisher.<sup>150</sup> However, Section 230(c)(1) of the Communications Decency Act provides broad immunization for online platforms.<sup>151</sup> The relevant portion drafted by Congress states: “[n]o provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.”<sup>152</sup> Therefore, the poster on the website, and not Twitter or Facebook, “will be treated as the publisher who is liable for the tort.”<sup>153</sup> Distributor liability is very limited. Distributors, including online platforms, bookstores, and newsstands are not held liable for the content of the material that they distribute.<sup>154</sup> The historical reason behind the limitation was that it would be impossible for distributors to read every publication and would possibly result in excessive self-censorship. <sup>155</sup> These “online platforms [currently] enjoy immunity ... for user-generated content even if they deliberately encouraged the posting of that content.”<sup>156</sup> Courts have applied Section 230 broadly to include speech-based torts, invasion of privacy, misappropriation, and fraud.<sup>157</sup> A key exception to broad immunity is the preservation of “liability for a violation of any ‘Federal criminal statute.’”<sup>158</sup> “The law provide[s] . . . immunity . . . for hosting harmful content [with the exceptions] for content that violates federal criminal law, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, and intellectual property law.”<sup>159</sup>

**Specifically, Section 230(e)(2) notes that “[n]othing in this section shall be construed to limit or expand any law pertaining to intellectual property.”**<sup>160</sup> **The intellectual property exception may be the opening necessary to hold “online platforms liable for . . .**

**egregious deepfakes posted by third parties onto their [web]sites.”**<sup>161</sup> In crafting Section 230, Congress provided a safe harbor for online platforms by “forbid[ding] civil suits against platforms based on the good-faith act of filtering to screen out offensive content [including] obscenity, harassment, violence, or otherwise.”<sup>162</sup> However, the deepfakes with misinformation are not accounted for under the offensive content screening. Courts have consistently held that decisions made by online platforms to publish, remove, or edit user-submitted content is immunized under Section 230.<sup>163</sup> The online platforms, under Section 230, are not being held accountable for the amplification of deepfakes. **The only way to find them liable would be using the intellectual property exception of Section 230. Intellectual property encompasses copyright and rights of publicity which would fall under the exception when applied to online platforms.**

## Advantage One: Democracy

**Uniqueness and Link- Deepfakes are an existential threat to democracy -- it can destroy a candidate's credibility and fundraising and undermine trust in elections and institutions more broadly.**

**Ray, New South Wales Law Journal, 2021**

Andrew, Visiting Fellow, Australian National University College of Law, Disinformation, Deepfakes, and Democracy, University of New South Wales Law Journal,

[https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Issue-443\\_final\\_Ray.pdf](https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Issue-443_final_Ray.pdf)

The use of **AI technologies represents a significant and growing threat to electoral security.**

In particular, **deepfake technology** when deployed by experts **can create videos of politicians so realistic they cannot be distinguished from a real video** by humans or computers designed to detect them.<sup>10</sup> Deepfakes are created using 'neural networks that analyze large sets of data ... to learn to mimic a person's facial expressions, mannerisms, voice, and inflections'.<sup>11</sup> By way of a popular example, similar technology was used to create scenes in which the late Carrie Fisher appeared in the recent Star Wars film: Rogue One. Historically, individuals wishing to make a useful (or, perhaps more accurately described, undetectable) deepfake, required hundreds of images of their 'subject' to train an MLA.<sup>13</sup> However, recent advances in technology have meant that only a small number of images are required to generate realistic videos of the subject.<sup>14</sup> This, combined with the fact that videos shot front-on in consistent light are the easiest to replicate,<sup>15</sup> makes political figures a ripe target for deepfakes. This is due to the wide availability of footage of political figures in which they are positioned forward-facing, under similar lighting conditions.<sup>16</sup> This ease of creation is demonstrated by the fact that deepfakes can now be created on a smartphone, using only a few images of the intended subject.<sup>17</sup> **The targeting of politicians with**

**deepfake technology is more than an academic hypothesis.** Indeed, deepfakes have been made featuring Donald Trump,<sup>18</sup> Barack Obama,<sup>19</sup> Manoj Tiwari,<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Putin<sup>21</sup> and Sophie Wilmès.<sup>22</sup> These examples, while well-known, are not exhaustive. The targeting of then Belgian Prime Minister Sophie Wilmès by Extinction Rebellion<sup>23</sup> in mid-2020 is of particular concern as it appears to be the first adverse targeting of a politician: previous examples of political deepfakes were generally educational, comedic or satirical.<sup>24</sup> The video in question, which showed Wilmès giving a fictitious speech about the link between COVID-19 and climate change, was widely shared on social media. Critically, at least some users were tricked into believing the video was real.<sup>25</sup> Regardless of whether you agree with the motivation behind the video, the use of deepfake technology to falsely attribute a speech to an elected Prime Minister is of grave concern. This article will focus on two primary threats posed to elections by deepfakes: the use of deepfakes to alter voter preferences, and the impact of deepfakes on trust generally in elections and democratic institutions.<sup>26</sup> First, **through their potential impact on voter preferences, deepfakes may be used to** obfuscate or **undermine a politician's** (or political party's) **stance on a given issue, or to target their credibility.** Given the shift to longer periods of pre-polling in

Australia (and other democracies),<sup>27</sup> **the release of a deepfake within this period or just before election day will make it extremely challenging for politicians to respond** before any votes are cast. For example, a deepfake of a politician with a strong anti-drug platform consuming an illicit drug could be both impactful, and difficult to disprove.<sup>28</sup> A deepfake could be made as part of a candidate's official campaign, by an overseas actor attempting to sway an election, or even by an individual disconnected from the political process. While there is no evidence that deepfakes have impacted an Australian election to date, compromising (albeit true) video footage has previously led to federal candidates dropping out of an electoral race.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, doctored footage has been used in the United States ('US') by the Republican Party to attack House Speaker Nancy Pelosi by slowing down real video clips of her speeches to slur her words and make her appear drunk.<sup>30</sup> Similar videos were also used to target President Joe Biden in the 2020 Presidential election, with experts warning prior to the election that the worst was yet to come as 'cutting-edge methods such as deepfakes are best suited to ... predictable moment[s] of public uncertainty'.<sup>31</sup> Such a moment, they posited, would occur following the election, with Trump hinting that he would not accept electoral defeat.<sup>32</sup> That set of circumstances unfolded partly as predicted with Trump declaring the election results 'fake news' and his supporters storming the Capitol in circumstances condemned as terrorism by US security agencies.<sup>33</sup> There was however no detectable use of deepfake videos, with the potential for a faked video of then President-elect Biden accepting 'defeat' remaining only a possibility. It is noteworthy that despite public institutions, inquiries and courts all labelling the fraud claims false, Trump and the Republican Party more broadly continue to push the electoral fraud claims publicly. Exactly how many voters could be misled by a deepfake remains unclear. However, if marginal seats were targeted during an election, even swaying as few as 100 voters could be impactful.<sup>34</sup> In this context, **a 2020 study found that approximately 15% of viewers in a**

**controlled trial believed a deepfake of Obama was real.**<sup>35</sup> While it is unlikely that everyone who believes a deepfake will alter their vote because of it (in part due to the strength of party allegiance),<sup>36</sup> the possibility should not be discounted. Indeed, it may not be necessary for voters to alter their vote for a deepfake video to impact an election. For example, **deepfake videos could force candidates to withdraw or impact a candidate's** or party's

**fundraising ability** – these results themselves having an indirect effect on electoral outcomes. Further, while some authors have found that disinformation generally has little direct impact on elections,<sup>37</sup> disinformation has been shown to have (at least some) impact in Australian elections. For example, the Australian Labor Party acknowledged the impact of the (false) 'death tax' ads on its 2019 campaign, although they accepted that this alone did not decide the election.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, while disinformation (and specifically, in the context of this article, the use of deepfakes) may not alter which party secures a majority of seats, it may play a larger role in deciding individual electoral contests. This is especially the case with deepfakes, where, as discussed above, it is

possible for actors to target individual politicians by, for example, creating a deepfake of them engaging in illegal conduct. In this context, critically, at a federal level Australia remains vulnerable to targeted attacks: 36 lower house seats are currently held by a margin of less than 5%, 84 by less than 10% and 129 by less than 15%.<sup>39</sup> It is however the secondary threat that is likely of greater concern. In addition to the percentage who believed the deepfake was real, the 2020 study found that only 50.8% of the participants were not deceived by the video.<sup>40</sup> The remainder were unable to determine if the video was real or fake. It is this segment of individuals that highlights **the second threat posed by deepfakes** to elections: **a reduction in trust** in video footage and news **impacting our perception of democracy more broadly**.<sup>2</sup> Decreasing Trust in Democracy and Democratic Institutions Increasingly, Australians are turning to digital platforms such as Facebook to access news content.<sup>41</sup> This mirrors a global trend towards accessible and shareable content,<sup>42</sup> which is making it easier for fake news to be distributed widely. The shift to digital content has coincided with decreasing trust in politicians and politics in general.<sup>43</sup> Political deepfakes will further erode trust by allowing candidates to deride real footage as fake news, feeding into increasing claims by politicians that they have been set up.<sup>44</sup> It is this threat that most alarms political scientists as, after all, threats to a single election are of themselves a threat to democracy.<sup>45</sup> However, the rise of disinformation more broadly has the capacity to fundamentally undermine 'truth' in elections with disastrous consequences. For example, in the US, disproven rumours of electoral fraud are supporting a wave of electoral reforms that will make it harder to vote to 'safeguard' future elections.<sup>46</sup> These laws have been held constitutional by the US Supreme Court,<sup>47</sup> and may, along with gerrymandering, decide the outcome of future elections alone notwithstanding for whom people vote on voting day. **Deepfakes** may exacerbate these underlying issues and **cause distrust amongst voters themselves who may not know whom or what they can actually trust**, allowing lawmakers to pass anti-democratic laws to 'safeguard' elections.

## **Link- And Deepfakes risk Voter Suppression, not just misinformation and confusion Panditharatne, Brennan Center for Justice 2024**

Mekela, Counsel, Brennan Center's Election and Government Program, 4/16, Preparing to fight AI Backed Voter Suppression,  
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/preparing-fight-ai-backed-voter-suppression>

**On the eve of the 2024 New Hampshire primary, robocalls impersonating President Joe Biden counseled voters against** partaking in a write-in campaign **supporting Biden**, urging them to "save your vote" for the general election. It was the first known instance of the deployment of voice-cloning artificial intelligence at significant scale to try to deter voters from participating in an American election. A political operative later admitted to commissioning the scheme; creating the fake audio reportedly cost just **\$1 and took less than 20 minutes**. **Similar attempts are almost certain to plague future elections as the rapid uptake and development of generative AI tools continue apace**. This phenomenon is not entirely new — **vote suppression through disinformation has a long provenance in the United States**. Since Black Americans and other Americans of color gained the formal right to vote, malefactors committed acts of terror to intimidate voters and pressed for restrictive election laws that created unjustifiable barriers to voting. These suppression efforts have taken the form of **deceptions** to prevent minority citizens from voting for at least **25 years**. Similarly, antagonists of American democracy have removed eligible voters from registration lists, specifically **targeting minority voters**. **From the Reconstruction era to the digital age, these strategies have persisted and evolved**, retaining core elements even as new technologies and platforms have allowed for more precise and rapid targeting of voters. **AI has the capacity to supercharge these risks**, breathing new life into dated chicanery and **adding more burdens to the right to vote**. Generative **AI introduces the possibility of more sophisticated methods of deception, capable of being deployed more cheaply and swiftly on a wider scale. AI's persuasive potential may increase over time as current technological limitations are quickly surpassed** and different forms of AI are coalesced in new ways. Some kinds of AI systems will allow election deniers and other discontents to submit mass private challenges to voters' registration statuses more expediently — possibly with even less transparency and with a novel patina of faux legitimacy. While it remains unclear how much AI will change the face of vote suppression in the 2024 general election, new developments in AI use and capabilities lend fresh urgency to long-standing efforts to abate attempts to subvert elections. **Those developments necessitate strong new policy interventions to minimize the dangers on democracy's horizon**.

**Internal Link- Distrust causes people to stop participating in democracy. When they do, policies will ignore them even more, causing suffering -- the pandemic proves**

**Stier and Freedman, Politico, 2022**

Max, Co, Partnership for Public Service, and Tom, President, Freedman Consulting and former Clinton Adviser, Politico, 3/1, Why Democracy's in such trouble: A Crisis in Public Trust of Government, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/03/01/democracy-public-crisis-trust-government-faith-00012565>

**When people don't trust their government, they are more likely to opt out of voting and other types of civic participation. With less engagement, the public feels less empowered to influence government — and, in turn, government “hears” their needs and preferences less. This creates a mistrust loop: Diminished trust in government leads to a disengaged public, resulting in inefficient, unresponsive or unaccountable institutions, and that leads to further deterioration of trust and national progress. This dynamic can have life and death consequences.** Almost half (46 percent) of the people in our poll who said they were vaccinated for the Covid-19 virus trusted the government compared with 29 percent of those who had not been vaccinated. **A recent study published in the journal [The Lancet](#) found that countries with higher levels of government trust had lower infection and fatality rates during the pandemic.**

**Impact- Democracy is comparatively the best form of government -- it preserves rights and prevents wars**

**Mork, Carnegie Council, 2019**

Alexandra, winner of Carnegie Council's international student essay contest, Managing editor for the Brown Political Review.3/12, Why Democracy is the Best We've Got, Carnegie Council for Ethics In International Affairs,

<https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/media/article/why-democracy-is-the-best-weve-got>

First and foremost, **democracies are a crucial step in achieving equality for oppressed groups by giving people who would otherwise be excluded from politics the ability to vote** for the policies and people that they believe in. When given the right to vote, marginalized groups are naturally more likely to support politicians who will work to end the oppressive policies that are prevalent throughout the world. Some argue that democracy alone is insufficient in the pursuit of equality because the majority faction will still overpower minority factions. While this may be true, **the importance of democracy should be viewed through a lens of the possible alternatives: other systems of government**, such as autocracies, theocracies and monarchies **are comparatively worse for achieving equality** because they exclusively allow one person or group of people to make decisions for an entire population. **Only democracy allows all groups, regardless of race, gender identity, class or sexual orientation, to participate in politics.** Not only does democracy allow all people to have an equal voice, but it is also inherently an extremely flexible system, which allows for the government to adapt according to changing ideologies. Because elected representatives have an incentive to maintain their positions of power, they appeal to public opinion to remain popular. Although many people critique democratic politicians for their inauthenticity, politicians mirroring the beliefs of the people is actually positive because it ensures that the majority of citizens' beliefs are reflected in national policies. Furthermore, it functions as a crucial check on people in positions of power because if they act in an unpopular or unethical way, they will likely be voted out of office. Finally, living in a democracy is important because **democracies are the most statistically significant factor in reducing inter and intra state conflict.** Director of Policy Studies at the Kroc Institute David Cortright and his colleagues conducted a [study](#) to determine the validity of democratic peace theory and examine how regime type relates to violence. They concluded that **democracies are much less likely to both engage in war with other states and to participate in civil wars.** This is likely because war, in any form, is politically unpopular as it costs human lives, which thus incentivizes democracies to avoid it at all costs. Civil wars in particular are unlikely in democracies because democratic governments function as a safety valve for discontent; while disaffected civilians living in democracies can express their grievances in the form of free speech or exercising their right to vote, citizens living in autocracies have no choice other than violence if they hope for governmental change because they lack political power. Cortright also cites Rudolph Rummel's book *Death By Government*, in which Rummel finds that **autocratic regimes are three and a half times more likely to commit genocide than democratic regimes.** Cortright suggests this is a result of the prevalence of exclusionary ideology that is reinforced by authoritarian regimes in comparison with democratic ones.

## Advantage Two: Populism

**Uniqueness and Link- Deepfakes are destroying confidence in media and political institutions, driving populism**

**Henry, Catalyst, 2021**

Joanne, President of PR For Good, Catalyst, 4/13, Disinformation and Deepfakes fuel growing mistrust, <https://catalyst.iabc.com/Articles/disinformation-and-deepfakes-fuel-growing-mistrust>

**The growing mistrust in agreed-upon facts and a global decline in trust of all forms of media accelerated** in 2020. In the most recent [Edelman Trust Barometer](#) of 33,000 participants worldwide, **the threat**

**and negative result of disinformation campaigns was a key takeaway.** (For additional analysis and talking points, see the Catalyst article from Mike Klein, IABC task force member, "[Talking about Trust: IABC Insights From the Edelman Trust Barometer.](#)") Heightened polarization in many regions of the world and the rise of tribalism contribute to a

narrowcasting of news that reaches only those who already share a point of view. **On social media forums in particular, there appears to be both a free-for-all** in terms of sources purporting to be experts, combined with a censorship of content and sources inconsistently applied by standards that seem to shift in response to crowd thinking. The declining credibility of the media is tied to polarized viewpoints (i.e. "my station is the only one that does not spread lies") but that does not explain everything that makes us skeptical about content on all media formats, including social media. **The trends to**

**understand that may well be deepening polarization is the rapidly increasing technical**

**capabilities for news and information manipulation,** along with the continued power, growth and consolidation of giant news platforms. This includes cable, network and publishing conglomerates, and platforms like Google, Facebook, Snapchat and others. Potential Impact and Scope Since 2017 when initial fake videos came to the internet as pornography, **huge leaps in sophistication of technology and video production have made the**

**capability attractive** to good actors and bad actors alike. The now accessible (inexpensive) technology makes it incredibly easy to manipulate content and facts for entertainment, marketing and information, as well as sinister purposes. Deepfakes are among the communication tools that pose a significant risk to trust in communications. The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) "deep meaning" and "fakes," or deepfakes, use facial recognition and audio technology to produce AI-synthetic media. [According to Sentinel](#), a global organization founded by ex-NATO cybersecurity experts to detect them primarily for government clients, **the number of deepfakes online has grown 900% in the last year, amassing close to 6 billion views. The impact of deepfakes on credibility cannot be understated in a world where a false image can be shared millions of times in a few seconds.** Videos of politicians and business

leaders appearing to say words they never used have hit country leaders like Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, the president of Gabon, a UK major financial institution, Jeff Bezos and [Tesla's Elon Musk](#).

In the country of Gabon, a suspected deepfake video of the country's president (who had been in ill health) [sparked an unsuccessful coup](#). In the United States, a deepfake video of Pelosi added stuttering that made her appear drunk. It was widely circulated by her opposition. Disinformation and the Conditions That Enable It In the U.S., in January 2021, Edelman published its latest survey, which was completed by 33,000 people in 28 countries, indicates a growing "epidemic of misinformation," according to Edelman CEO Richard Edelman, as reported in a [CBS News commentary](#). **"We have an infodemic,** and in short, we don't trust the

sources of information, meaning we don't trust the media, it's seen as politicized, biased, and we don't trust the people who are speaking," Edelman said to CBSN. Advances in AI also allow "black box" algorithms to automate the control of precise distribution by media publishers and online platforms. Use of these algorithms can control what news, which version, frequency, and where and how content is displayed. For marketers, micro-personalization of content is a dream come true. For media companies, and those who rely on the media as a viable third-party source of accurate information, it is both boon and threat. For the public and for governments, the jury is still out. While AI image/text monitoring allows platforms to remove violent images or incitement to violence (think Christchurch massacre images pulled country by country on Facebook), it also enables content suppression, a "cancel culture." **Growing populist fury at real or imagined suppression of information fuels mistrust**

**and potentially makes it almost impossible for organizations to get out facts for**

**unpopular positions.** In late 2020, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube joined in a fight to remove conspiracy theories and any disinformation about new COVID-19 vaccines. The problem is that while many still get through by eliminating code words, other organizations trying to reach their employers and community members have experienced their channels temporarily blocked without warning.

## **Impact- And populism destroys military deterrence, and risking nuclear accidents and miscalculation**

**Hymans, USC 2021**

Jacques E. C. Associate Prof. of International Relations @ USC. "Responses to Meier and Vieluf" The Nonproliferation Review, Vol 28, Issue 1-3, 2021. Published online 9/20/22.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2022.2093512>

Meier and Vieluf's article does not do enough with its basic definition of nationalist populism as a black-white oppositional stance toward internal as well as external enemies. If we take that definition seriously, it becomes apparent that the biggest problem stemming from the rise of populists is not that they might ignore the advice of traditional nuclear and defense establishments and behave carelessly toward foreign powers. **The biggest problem is that populism is a gateway drug to internal political violence, revolution, and civil war.** And, perhaps needless to say, **serious domestic upheaval in a nuclear power also**

**increases the likelihood of a nuclear incident** of some kind. Perhaps the first-ever populist government in history was led by the Jacobin faction that drove the French Revolution forward from 1792 to 1794.<sup>13</sup> The Jacobins expressed a radical populist faith in the power of "redemptive violence" by "the people." <sup>14</sup> They made war both inside and outside France. To quote historian Brian Singer, the Jacobins' violence was directed neither "at a well-defined enemy" nor "at some limited, short-term end, but to the creation of a new regime, a new humanity." <sup>15</sup> In short, they wanted to raze the old world to the ground—or die trying. The Jacobins' favorite metaphor for their violence was lightning, which materializes from out of nowhere to simultaneously destroy and enlighten the dark world it strikes. Their interest in lightning was not only metaphorical; Jacobin ideologues such as Jean-Paul Marat were serious students of the new science of electricity.<sup>16</sup> France and the world are lucky that nuclear physics was not very far advanced in the Jacobins' day. None of the contemporary nuclear-armed populist leaders listed by Meier and Vieluf is a modern-day Jacobin. Most populists are merely unprincipled con artists who prey on atomized and insecure sections of the public, manipulating them to gain personal wealth and power. Even so, the language of populism is the language of revolution and civil war, and pretend revolutionaries can easily be carried along by the tide of social resentments that they have irresponsibly stirred up. Take, for instance, Trump and his followers' dismal trajectory to January 6, 2021. We need to consider worst-case scenarios. Trump did not actually want a civil war in the United States, but his rhetoric emboldened the not-so-small number of Americans who do. A rigorous time-series analysis found that **Trump's presidential run in 2016**

**was associated with an abrupt, statistically significant, and durable increase in violent attacks by domestic far-right extremists.**<sup>17</sup> For instance, the leading ideologist of the neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division, James Mason, wrote in July 2017, "I am not ashamed to say that I shed a tear of joy at [Trump's] win." <sup>18</sup> Far from standing back and standing by, Mason preached direct action to "accelerate" the onset of a society-purifying race war that he believed would push the Trump administration into embracing full-blown fascism. In May 2017, an Atomwaffen member, National Guard veteran, and onetime physics major named Brandon Russell was arrested for plotting to attack the Turkey Point nuclear power plant, among other targets. Police later also found traces of thorium and americium in

Russell's bedroom.<sup>19</sup> The domestic divisions fomented by **populists do not have to arrive at their logical end point of revolution and civil war to increase deterrence instability and the chances of a nuclear incident.** Below I elaborate three more specific hypotheses on the deterrence consequences of internally divisive populist governments. The hypotheses are speculative, but they logically follow from the definition of populism and should therefore serve as useful points for further discussion of Meier and Vieluf's core idea. Hypothesis 1. Populists are likely to be insensitive to nuclear threats to the political strongholds of

their domestic opponents. Meier and Vieluf observe that **the credibility of US extended-deterrence promises to**

**America's allies suffered massively under the Trump administration.** That is certainly true, but the question of whether the United States would be willing to trade "Pittsburgh for Paris" (p. 19) has been around for decades. The new problem that populism creates is that even homeland deterrence starts to suffer from the same credibility dilemmas as extended deterrence. In addition to the "Pittsburgh for Paris" question, we now also have to ask whether a populist administration in Washington would be willing to trade Pittsburgh for

Portland. In a country where **populist leaders revel in dividing society** against itself, deterrence theory's standard assumption that a nuclear threat to any part of the homeland will be treated as a threat to the whole homeland can no longer be taken for granted.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the president's true intentions, **foreign powers could potentially calculate that they will not be punished for striking at certain targets within the country's borders.**<sup>21</sup> For instance, the longest-range

North Korean missile that is currently operational, the Hwasong-14, has enough range for a nuclear attack against Seattle but not Mar-a-Lago. <sup>22</sup> Would the same president who formally designated Seattle as an "anarchist jurisdiction" in an attempt to starve it of federal dollars be greatly concerned by a credible threat of a North Korean strike against it? <sup>23</sup> Probably—but is "probably" a good enough answer for homeland deterrence credibility? Another dimension of this same hypothesis has to do with the precise locations where populists choose to install military installations that are likely to become nuclear targets. During the Nixon administration, the objections of congressional Democrats to the planned construction of Sentinel anti-ballistic-missile facilities near their political strongholds such as Boston and Seattle led Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to move the projects to less populated areas.<sup>24</sup> President Nixon believed that he needed to work constructively with the Democrats on core national security issues. By contrast, a populist president would love to see his political opponents sweating the targets he put on their backs.<sup>25</sup> Populists in power may even be slow to help their political opponents' regions recover from an actual nuclear attack. There is a lesson for nuclear analysts in the Trump administration's intentional slow-walking of congressionally mandated emergency aid to the US territory of Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017, one of the deadliest natural disasters in US history.<sup>26</sup> Having long held a low opinion of Puerto Ricans, Trump reportedly told his chief of staff and budget director that he "did not want a single dollar going to Puerto Rico." <sup>27</sup> Would Trump have been any more helpful if the island had been hit by a man-made bomb instead of a natural one? Maybe if Puerto Rico could do something for him in return, which leads to the second hypothesis: Hypothesis 2. Populists are likely to exploit their control over homeland deterrence to demand political concessions from their domestic political opponents. At the heart of populism is a disrespect for the principle of equal application of the laws. Instead, governance becomes a pure power game, and populist rulers notably exploit crises as opportunities to bring domestic political opponents to their knees. There is every reason to assume that a populist in full command of the nuclear and defense establishment would similarly take advantage of a nuclear crisis to conduct such a shakedown. In other words, populists in power will charge a high price for adequately responding to nuclear threats against their domestic opponents' political strongholds. Let us continue with the example of the Trump administration. The mass-destructive COVID-19 pandemic offers a highly relevant analogy for thinking about the internal political dynamics of a potential nuclear crisis under populist rule. Public-administration scholars have labeled Trump's governing approach as "chaotic transactional federalism," a cynical power system that "removes any vestige of certainty as decisions are shaped based on a desire to reward or punish other political actors, or left to subnational actors entirely. Expertise matters very little in these political, partisan

transactions.” 28 In line with this, Trump responded to the COVID-19 crisis by pitting the 50 states against each other in bidding wars for vital medical supplies and for his political favor.<sup>29</sup> The president publicly criticized Vice President Mike Pence for reaching out to all the state governors in his role as the coordinator of the national pandemic response, telling the press that he wanted Pence to deal only with those governors who were sufficiently “appreciative.” 30 Trump administration officials were even blunter in private. Trump’s son-in-law and closest adviser Jared Kushner reportedly said that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo “didn’t pound the phones hard enough to get PPE [personal protective equipment] for his state . . . . His people are going to suffer and that’s their problem.” 31 Trump’s response to the Democratic governors’ pleas for PPE to defend against the virus was essentially the same as his response to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s pleas for weapons to defend against Russia: “I would like you to do us a favor though.” 32 The hypothesis that populists will demand concessions from their domestic political opponents in exchange for issuing nuclear-deterrent threats on their behalf may at first glance appear to be only a matter of internal politics, but the distractions caused by internal political wrangling could greatly affect the denouement of a time-sensitive nuclear crisis. Foreign powers could also be tempted to initiate a nuclear crisis precisely in order to intensify their adversary’s domestic divisions. In addition, when facing the double burden of a nuclear threat and simultaneous shakedown by the president, politicians from disfavored regions would likely appeal to friendly elements of the military for assistance. That possibility tees up the third hypothesis: Hypothesis 3. **The establishment’s reaction to populism is likely to increase deterrence instability at least as much as the actions of the populists themselves.** Meier and Vieluf’s article implies that the fate of the world hangs on the establishment’s ability to keep populist fingers off the nuclear button. But the establishment’s effort to fend off the populists could itself dramatically increase deterrence instability, for instance **by sowing confusion about the chain of command.** This hypothesis is not mere speculation. Reacting to widespread fears that Trump might be tempted to launch a nuclear attack against China or another country after his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden, in January 2021, General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, quietly worked the phone lines to reassure key people at home and abroad that he personally would not allow the president to do anything of the sort. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs is legally outside the chain of command for the execution of the president’s military strategy. Indeed, neither he nor anyone else has the legal authority to prevent a determined president from launching a nuclear strike.<sup>33</sup> Yet Milley told Pelosi, “The president alone can order the use of nuclear weapons. But he doesn’t make the decision alone. One person can order it, several people have to launch it.” 34 Essentially, Milley was saying that if push came to shove, the military would mutiny. Meier and Vieluf seem to think that Milley did the right thing (pp. 15–16). Maybe so, but he also set an ominous precedent. As I mentioned at the outset, these comments are simply intended to spark further discussion about the important issues raised by Meier and Vieluf’s stimulating article. I would be relieved to discover that I am being overly pessimistic **about humanity’s chances of survival** with either the establishments or the populists in charge of nuclear arsenals. But **the more I study the issue, the more pessimistic I become.**

## Advantage Three: Foreign Interference

**Uniqueness and Link- Foreign interference in US elections are up -- Russia, China, Iran, and other adversaries are using Deepfakes to spread misinformation**

**Panditharatne Brennan Center for Justice, 2024**

Mekela, Counsel, Brennan Center's Election and Government Program, 4/16, Preparing to fight AI Backed Voter Suppression,

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/preparing-fight-ai-backed-voter-suppression>

**In the 2024 election and beyond, foreign influence campaigns that engage in vote-suppression activities stand out as major potential beneficiaries of generative AI advancements. Several U.S. adversaries have been known to interfere in American elections, sometimes by seeking to depress turnout and deter certain groups from casting ballots.** For example, analyses by the [Senate Intelligence Committee](#) and Oxford's [Computational Propaganda Research Project](#) found that **Russia attempted to suppress Black voter turnout during the 2016 election by exploiting social media platforms, producing content designed to fuel racial tensions, urging Black voters to follow fake voting procedures, and recommending that Black voters boycott the election.** Such campaigns are not limited to Russia: **information operations that target American voters have also been deployed by China, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and other global powers.** Although evidence is limited that foreign influence operations successfully altered American election outcomes in the recent past, **new generative AI tools could make future disinformation campaigns more widespread and more effective.** Generative AI might augment foreign influence campaigns in several ways. Such **tools lower the cost of mass digital deception, which in turn could increase the scale of such efforts. Content might become more sophisticated and harder to detect as well.** Earlier operations backed by Russia and other influence outfits often relied on mass duplicates and produced content marred by mistranslations, grammatical mistakes, and misused idioms. Sophisticated generative AI tools would likely help [blunt those flaws](#), rendering the products churned out by disinformation mills less dissonant and more varied — and thus less detectable and potentially more persuasive. As described above, interactive disinformation techniques propelled by generative AI may also worsen matters. Influence campaigns have used early iterations of generative AI technology for several years, synthesizing profile pictures of nonexistent people to prop up bot accounts. But in early 2023, Chinese state media feted its debut of [virtual news anchors](#) created by video-generation AI, and China-aligned bot accounts [shared videos](#) of AI-generated TV hosts for a fake news outfit spouting propaganda. **Microsoft announced in September 2023 that it had detected suspected** foreign influence operations using AI-generated images, and earlier this month it [found](#) that **Chinese state-affiliated actors are now spreading AI-generated content designed to sow domestic division in the United States** and other nations. In other words, **the use of more sophisticated generative AI tools by states and state-aligned groups to shape the political information environment is not only imminent — it is already occurring.**

## **Link- Specifically, Russia is using deepfakes on Tik Tok to undermine US support for Ukraine**

### **Wirtschafter Brookings Institution, 2024**

Valerie, Fellow, Foreign Policy, Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technology, Brookings Institution, May 2nd, Tracing the rise of Russian state media on Tik Tok,

[https://www.brookings.edu/articles/tracing-the-rise-of-russian-state-media-on-tiktok/?utm\\_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=305449115&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/tracing-the-rise-of-russian-state-media-on-tiktok/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_medium=email&utm_content=305449115&utm_source=hs_email)

**Russia's experimentation with TikTok is particularly timely. Amid contested elections in the United States and elsewhere, the results could dramatically reshape support for Ukraine and NATO. Against this backdrop, Russia's malign influence operations are likely to continue.**

according to a recent [report](#) by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Based on an analysis of TikTok posts from the first three months of 2024, I find that: Posts pertaining to U.S. politics make up a small percentage of overall content shared by Russian state-affiliated accounts, but they represent a slightly higher percentage of total posts on TikTok than on X or Telegram: Across all platforms, content tied to U.S. politics makes up around 3% of all content shared by these accounts. However, on TikTok, 5% of all posts in 2024 cover U.S. political topics, as compared to 4% on X and 1% on Telegram.<sup>3</sup> Spanish-language posts focused on U.S. politics are among the most popular on TikTok: 22 of the top 30 most engaged with TikTok posts tied to U.S. politics are in Spanish. The success of Spanish-language content across TikTok mirrors similar successes across other platforms, including X and Facebook, where Russian accounts like RT en Español and Sputnik Mundo regularly draw large audiences and high engagement. Among posts about U.S. politics on TikTok from Russian state-affiliated accounts, wedge issues feature prominently: Thus far, messaging about U.S. politics has focused on questions about President Joe Biden's age, protests over Biden's Israel policies, and political commentator Tucker Carlson's reflections on Russia and U.S. policy toward Russia, among other topics. Some of these [themes](#) are clear wedge issues that shape political debates and are likely to resonate with young audiences, who make up the majority of TikTok's U.S. user base. In tandem with [shifts](#) in covert influence operations, Russia's overt messaging has begun to adapt to an evolving information ecosystem made up of many more platforms with distinct identities. The use of TikTok highlights a growing, but still not fully realized, avenue for Russia's state-backed information apparatus to reach new, young audiences. Additional research to better understand the trajectory of Russia's engagement moving forward and how these narratives spread across TikTok will be valuable. Despite ongoing questions about the future of TikTok's ownership, it remains critical to not wholly ignore or disengage from the platform entirely. Much like on other social media websites, Russian state-affiliated accounts are finding a receptive audience. As a result, transparent and proactive pushback against Kremlin narratives is vital to countering their spread ahead of the 2024 elections and beyond. Russia's growing reach on TikTok As the social media landscape continues to evolve, Russian state-backed accounts have broadened their online strategies to incorporate more regular content creation on TikTok. Drawing on data from 70 different state-affiliated accounts, I find that the use of TikTok has grown rapidly over the past year.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, 57 accounts posted at least once, with only two posting 500 or more times total, and one account ([sputnik.kg](#)) posting on average twice per day. Ruptly, a Russian-backed website featuring video content targeted to [younger, left-leaning](#) voters, was the among most active during this early period. By 2023, fewer accounts (48) posted at least once, but six shared over 1,000 posts that year, or around three per day. RT en Español, one of Russia's most [effective](#) state-back media endeavors overall and a popular outlet for Russian narratives to reach Spanish-speaking audiences in Latin America, the United States, and Spain, posted nearly 3,000 times in that year, or over seven posts per day. In 2024 so far, 46 accounts have posted, with three averaging more than 10 posts a day. Due to the sampling process, many of these accounts are now labeled by TikTok as "state-controlled media," which up until recently had [not always been the case](#). Figure 1 plots the growth in total TikTok posts and posts per account since January 1, 2022. As new accounts have come online, unsurprisingly, the total number of posts has steadily climbed. However, since the start of 2024, Russian state-backed accounts have also begun to post more frequently on TikTok. Throughout 2023, these accounts posted between two and three times a day. Since the start of 2024, that number has doubled to around four or five posts per day, highlighting a growing attention to the platform. In tandem with an increase in posts, engagement with state-affiliated accounts has grown. As Figure 2 highlights, engagement, which includes likes, views, shares, and comments, has steadily climbed over time. In 2022, the posts of Russia's state-affiliated accounts garnered three million engagements per day, anchored by 14 massive days of engagement around the invasion of Ukraine. In 2023, that number doubled to around six million per day. And in 2024, engagement has more than doubled again, to 13 million per day. However, Figure 2 also highlights that this engagement has not yet corresponded with an overall increase in engagements per post. Additionally, in terms of raw engagement numbers, it also has yet to match the massive spike in engagement registered right after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when a handful of posts generated nearly a million engagements each. While X and Facebook received significant [scrutiny](#) for amplifying Russian state-based content around the invasion, TikTok content did not face nearly as much criticism, despite this clear surge. This is likely due in part to the fact that the number of posts from affiliated accounts on TikTok was so much smaller when compared to Facebook or X. Although Russian state-backed accounts have begun to post more on TikTok in 2024, they still largely emphasize other platforms to spread Kremlin messaging about current events, including Telegram and X.<sup>5</sup> Figure 3 plots the average number of posts per day by active account across the three platforms. Not only do Telegram and X have far more state-backed accounts posting on any given day, but they also post three to four times more frequently. Despite this imbalance, Figure 4 shows that engagement with posts on TikTok is far higher than engagement with posts on Telegram or X, although there are some accounts on Telegram that block all types of engagements except views. Of the top 50 most popular posts in 2024 thus far, accounts on TikTok shared 44 of these posts, while accounts on X posted the remaining six. These top posts averaged 3.5 million total engagements. Beyond the most popular posts, average engagement per post is also far higher on TikTok than on X or Telegram. On average, TikTok posts draw approximately 100,000 total engagements per post, or 3.5 times the rate of a Telegram message and 20 times the rate of an X post. Across all three sites, views are by far the primary driver of engagement, but views are also measured differently by platform. If we exclude views and focus on likes, shares, and comments exclusively, engagement per post is still 13 times higher on TikTok than on X. The increased presence of Russian state-backed accounts on TikTok coincides with the start of the 2024 U.S. presidential election cycle. As such, **TikTok's appeal to young voters in the United States offers an optimal avenue to spread Russian messaging about the U.S. political climate to a critical voting bloc** whose [turnout](#) has the potential to decide the election. What is the scope and substance of Russia's overt messaging about U.S. politics on TikTok thus far? And is it designed to appeal to this younger demographic? To answer these questions, I developed a dictionary of key terms tied to U.S. politics and searched posts since the start of 2024 for references to these terms. I find that posts pertaining to U.S. politics comprise only a small portion of content shared by Russian state-backed accounts across Telegram, TikTok, and X thus far, although that could change as the electoral contest becomes more acute. Terms tied to U.S. politics are referenced in just 3% of all posts—or around 9,000

times in over 300,000 posts. Yet I find clear variation across platforms as well. Given X's historically [elite](#) appeal with journalists, politicians, and other public figures and regular coverage of political topics through an algorithmically curated news feed, one might expect X's content to skew more political. By contrast, given Telegram's limited popularity in the United States and opt-in nature, which requires users who already agree with or endorse the content to explicitly sign up to receive it via a messaging app, the content could in theory be less political. TikTok, given its relative novelty, young audience, and algorithmically curated video-based feed, may trend more toward content that is less politicized and more entertaining. Despite these expectations, among accounts tracked in this analysis, I find that TikTok content has so far been the most focused on U.S. political topics, with 5% of all posts referencing political terms. X is also more political than the aggregate average, with 4% of all posts referencing the same dictionary. Telegram, as expected, is the least focused on U.S. politics—with just 1% of all posts referencing political terms. As Figure 5 highlights, engagement with politically charged posts also varies by platform. While political content on X garners nearly double the engagement as non-political content on average, on Telegram political content gets only 3% of the average engagement of a post that does not reference U.S. politics. This suggests that the followers of Russian state-affiliated accounts on the encrypted messaging app, which [surged](#) in popularity in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine, have little interest in U.S. political content and are instead focused on other types of content, such as [coverage](#) of breaking news around the war. On TikTok, however, average engagement with content focused on U.S. politics and average engagement with other content is about equal. Regardless, this engagement on TikTok is still on average 10 times higher than engagement with U.S. political content on X. Among the 30 most popular posts focused on U.S. politics, 20 were shared on TikTok and 10 were shared on X. Among the 30 most popular TikTok posts focused on U.S. politics, 22 come from Russia's Spanish-language accounts, which have the benefit of reaching not only audiences in Latin America and Europe but also Spanish speakers in the United States—another critical voting bloc in the upcoming U.S. elections. These findings mirror results from my prior coauthored research, which identified the similar [success](#) of Spanish-language content in the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine across other platforms, including Facebook and X. In an analysis of approximately 600 TikTok posts from 2024 that were flagged by the dictionary of key terms, I found several prominent themes. Unsurprisingly, [Ukraine](#) and [NATO](#), as well as the prospects of a [broader](#) conflict with Russia, featured prominently in posts. TikTok accounts also regularly referenced Tucker Carlson's [interview](#) with Russian President Vladimir Putin, conducted in late February 2024. The references highlight Carlson's remarks about [misperceptions](#) of Russia's intentions and his appreciation for the [beauty](#) of Moscow, among other [praise](#). Segments also [emphasized](#) the criticism he faced for wanting to interview Putin and [claimed](#) that Carlson would be detained if he was too nice in his questioning of Putin. Beyond issues of immediate concern to Russia, wedge issues driving voter preferences—like [immigration](#), the war in [Gaza](#), and Biden's [age](#)—also regularly surface in state-affiliated TikTok content. Despite efforts to highlight that Putin would actually [prefer](#) Biden to win the presidency in 2024, one of the most prominent themes in TikTok posts focused on Biden's purported age and fitness for office. These posts frequently highlighted [verbal](#) gaffes and questioned who was really [running](#) Biden's foreign policy. A few posts also [focused](#) on Biden's handling of classified documents. Where Donald Trump was featured in Russian state-backed TikTok content, posts have focused on his [humor](#), [stance on NATO](#), and limited-edition [shoe line](#). When posts mentioned Trump's legal issues, they [highlighted](#) the former president's own statements about the “weaponization of the [Department of Justice].” A few posts also [criticized](#) the security of U.S. elections in comparison to Russia's and [speculated](#) that the 2020 election was rigged. Countering Russia's growing focus on TikTok Russia's increased presence on TikTok does not necessarily mean that this content will impact voter preferences in any meaningful way. In fact, recent [research](#) has found that exposure to Russian narratives on Twitter in 2016 was highly concentrated, received relatively small engagement, and, at least in isolation, did not meaningfully alter voters' beliefs. However, the trends presented above highlight a clear shift in Russia's overt strategy for disseminating its preferred messaging abroad around topics of domestic importance to platforms beyond X. **This shift also complements ongoing adaptations in more covert information operations, which—with the ubiquity of generative AI outputs—may lead to the creation of higher volumes of more credible or persuasive content.** Furthermore, while exposure may not change beliefs, it may impact voters' willingness to mobilize or take actions that benefit the target of false or hyperpartisan content, a question I explore in [ongoing](#) coauthored research. **Unlike previous efforts, these narratives are also finding far wider audiences on TikTok** than on other platforms, as demonstrated by the high engagement rates with each post.<sup>6</sup> This likely means that **Russian state-backed accounts will continue to shift more resources and bandwidth toward reaching audiences on the platform,** which remains one of the [fastest](#) growing in the United States, with particularly high usage among younger audiences.

**Impact- The Russia-Ukraine war will determine whether norms against territorial conquest remain in place. Russian victory results in dozens of other conflicts worldwide. Fazal, University of Minnesota, 2022**

Tanisha, University of Minnesota, 4/6, Foreign Affairs, The Return of Conquest?[https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/ukraine-russia-war-return-conquest?utm\\_medium=newsletters&utm\\_source=fabackstory&utm\\_content=20220417&utm\\_campaign=FA%20Backstory\\_041722\\_The%20Backstory:%20Have%20Wars%20of%20Aggression%20Returned?&utm\\_term=fa-backstory-2019](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-04-06/ukraine-russia-war-return-conquest?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=fabackstory&utm_content=20220417&utm_campaign=FA%20Backstory_041722_The%20Backstory:%20Have%20Wars%20of%20Aggression%20Returned?&utm_term=fa-backstory-2019)

**If the prohibition against territorial conquest ends up in the graveyard of norms, then history will turn backward, and the world will revisit the brutal era of violent state death. This is not to say that the norm ushered in world peace. There have been plenty of wars since 1945. But a certain kind of war—wars between states over unresolved territorial claims—did decline.** Should that style of conflict return, civilians around the world will bear the consequences. **Consider the dozens of ongoing territorial disputes today. Armenia and Azerbaijan** are engaged in a frozen conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. **Sudan** has challenged its border with **Ethiopia** in the southeast and South Sudan in the south. In **the East China and South China Seas**, China and its neighbors, including Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, disagree over the sovereignty of a series of islands. **Taiwan's** fate is of particular concern. Putin's arguments about the legitimacy of Ukraine's statehood echo China's claim that Taiwan and China are already one country. **If it suddenly seems acceptable to take territory by force, leaders of states with long-unresolved territorial claims could attempt to subsume sovereign nations. Existing norms and legal structures have helped stop recent territorial conflicts from escalating,** offering nonviolent paths to their management and resolution. The International Court of Justice resolved a case between El Salvador and Honduras in 1986, for example. The United Nations and the Organization of American States resolved a brief conflict between Ecuador and Peru in 1998. Several years later, the ICJ resolved a long-standing militarized territorial dispute between Bahrain and Qatar; subsequently, the two states invested in what will be the world's longest bridge. This mediation allowed states to settle their differences without significant bloodshed. **Russia's war in Ukraine is about much more than Russia and Ukraine. Allowing the norm against territorial conquest to wither away would mean taking the lid off territorial disputes around the globe and making millions** of civilians **more vulnerable** to indiscriminate targeting. Right now, the immediate effects of the war are largely contained to Ukraine, Russia, and the countries taking in Ukrainian refugees. But further down the road, if the norm against territorial conquest ends up as another casualty of this war, states would be wise to carefully tend to their borders.

## Advantage Four: Racism

**Deepfakes will be used to spread hate and discrimination against otherized groups.**  
**Habgood-Coote, University of Leeds 2023**

Joshua, Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Science, University of Leeds, Former Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, University of Bristol, Epistemology Specialist, March 9th, Deepfakes and the epistemic apocalypse, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11229-023-04097-3>

It is worth stressing that **the most serious harms** of deepfake videos **are likely to be consequences of established ignorance-producing social practices affecting minority and marginalised groups**. If we think about pornography as a kind of propaganda which upholds and maintains a misogynistic social order, we can see the threat of pornographic deepfakes (Cole, [2018](#)) is not that they persuade anyone that they are a genuine depiction of the target woman—the current level of technology is far from being up to this task, and we can use background knowledge to infer that famous actors have not starred in pornographic films (see Harris, [2021](#): 13,386)—but is rather their ability to effectively spread sexist propaganda. Deepfake pornography presupposes that women are fungible subjects, whose faces and bodies can be swapped around like a children's toy (see Nussbaum, [1995](#)). We might worry that the political threat of deepfakes is not that people are persuaded that politicians have said that things that they have not—politicians can always present counter-evidence—but that **deepfakes will become an effective tool for white supremacist propaganda** (Mills, [2007](#)). Virtual influencers like @shudu.gram and @koffi.gram and image generation systems have already demonstrated that software for producing realistic images and videos has considerable potential for commodifying and dehumanising racialised minorities (Jackson, [2018](#), Sobande, [2021](#), Heikkilä, [2022](#)). **It does not take much imagination to see how deepfake technology might be used to spread controlling images of racialised minorities** (Hill Collins, [2002](#)). **The post-truth narrative encourages us to focus on the epistemic problems of mainstream political discourse. By shaking free of it, we can recognise that the most serious harms of epistemic dysfunction often effect minority and marginalised groups.**

## Advantage Five: Economy

**Uniqueness and Link- Deepfakes will cause chaos in the stock market and will destroy modern investments**

**Henry, Catalyst, 2021**

Joanne, President of PR For Good, Catalyst, 4/13, Disinformation and Deepfakes fuel growing mistrust, <https://catalyst.iabc.com/Articles/disinformation-and-deepfakes-fuel-growing-mistrust>

Communicators for governments and government agencies already face critical challenges related to **disinformation and the impact of mistrust** in leaders and in institutions. This threat **could easily migrate to business**

**leaders;** wherever they may stand on political issues, they are an “authority” institution that, by its leaders’ actions or inaction, could be a target. Organizations that are now in the public eye, or may be in the future, and those who need to reach constituents through the media will be most impacted by these issues. External communications and public affairs will be increasingly challenged, as traditional approaches will be inadequate if they don’t address new and constantly changing technology and political realities. **Corporate and investor relations professions for publicly traded companies rely on timely, accurate third-party information about their stocks and the company, including media reports. If even an unchecked rumor can send a stock plunging or skyrocketing, calculated disinformation using deepfake technology could be too difficult to detect until much damage had been accomplished.** Public affairs and communications professionals who operate in a climate of division on public/private issues will be affected, as opposition have new tools that are not as easy to monitor, and require fast responses.

**Internal Link- Stocks key to Economic Growth**

**Chikwira and Mohammed, University of Johannesburg, 2023**

Collin, School of Public Management, and Jahed Iqbal, College of Business and Economics, MPDI, The Impact of the Stock Market on Liquidity and Economic Growth Evidence of Volatile Market, <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7099/11/6/155>

**Stock markets serve as a conduit for money and liquidity, which are necessary for economic growth and stability.** This study aimed to determine whether **stock market impacts are communicated in an economically unstable environment, characterised by volatility, high inflation rates, and political instability.** The research used a time series Vector Autoregressive model (VAR) with quarterly data from between 2013 and 2022. **The study revealed that there is a positive statistically significant association between the stock market and economic growth** at the 10% level. On the other hand, the stock market liquidity has no major influence on Zimbabwe’s economic development. As a result, the study advises policymakers to evaluate the rules regulating the stock market carefully and to relax some of the requirements for firms to be listed on the stock exchange. The stock market will become more liquid as a result of this because it will draw more internal and external businesses to being listed. The ZSE should also develop a framework for the gradual implementation of the commodity derivatives exchange as Zimbabwe’s substantial mineral reserves and robust agriculture may bring significant income to the country’s economy.

## **Impact- Slowing growth cause conflict -- risk is high due to protectionist policies by struggling democracies**

**Jung, Myongji University, 2022**

Sung Chul Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Myongji University, 11/7/2022,

“Economic slowdowns and international conflict,” Peace Research Institute Oslo,

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221116656>

**Slow growth rates contribute positively to conflict initiation,** especially when an autocracy suffering from a slowing economy targets a democracy whose economy is dependent on the autocracy. Whereas economic interdependence has been regarded by many liberal scholars as a reason for international cooperation, this study shows why and how asymmetric interdependence contributes to interstate conflict by articulating its interaction with an economic slowdown in a dyadic relationship.

Both political unrest and **economic problems have destabilizing effects on international politics,** but their effects differ when economically dependent democracies are the target. Future research should compare different types of domestic unrest and their effects on international relations with sophisticated logic and strong evidence. This analysis shows that economic growth has two distinct effects. **Slower growth makes one state weaker than others and its**

**leaders more vulnerable to domestic challenges. A state's economic slowdown** not only causes a change in the balance of economic power so as to favor its competitor but also **increases the troubled**

**state's foreign aggression,** which can harm its adversary. Therefore, it is uncertain whether one state's economic slowdown benefits its rival's security. An autocracy's slowing economy can be a warning, rather than good news, to its democratic opponents if the latter maintain economic relationships with the former. In this regard, economic sanctions may provoke the target leader's diversionary tactic of blaming its poor economy on the sanctioner. We can see this pattern in Tokyo's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor at a time of US sanctions against Japan, which had continued since the late 1930s. The current global economic outlook is uncertain in the wake of COVID-19. Although we do not yet know the pandemic's long-term economic consequences, all states will likely struggle with slower growth and **the erosion of democracy and will engage in more**

**protectionist policies to reboot their economies and save major industries. In this context, we should be especially concerned about the risk that troubled economies pose to international security. As this study's findings suggest, slower growth causes domestic problems, which often lead to the diversionary use of force against foreign**

**states.** If we cannot prevent struggling leaders from using diversionary tactics, worsening economies in authoritarian states will likely drive such states into a more confrontational or aggressive stance toward their economic partners, if not toward political and ideological partners. We can all hope world leaders will realize that this is a time to beat a global pandemic and an economic recession, not to beat up on a foreign state.

## Advantage Six: Domestic Extremism

**Uniqueness and Link- Companies key to keep Extremism in check, but they choose not to under Section 230. Section 230 allows companies to avoid liability while they profit from Extremist posts due to their algorithm.**

**Grelich, Et Al, The Counterterrorism Group, 2021**

Keanna Grelich, Counterintelligence and Cyber (CICYBER) Team; Indirah Canzater, Tiffany Dove, Dyuti Pandya, NORTHCOM Team, Clea Guastavino, Cassandra Townsend, Senior Editors. Published on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by The Counterterrorism Group. "FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISTS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO COMMUNICATE AND SPREAD RADICALIZED BELIEFS"

<https://www.counterterrorismgroup.com/post/far-right-extremist-use-of-social-media-platforms-to-communicate-and-spread-radicalized-beliefs> Kales ★

**Social media's hold on society is undeniable.** In 2022, Facebook had approximately 300 million new photos posted daily; Twitter had 6,000 new Tweets every second; popular YouTube channels had 14 billion views on a weekly basis; and the messaging app Telegram had over 500 million users. **Simultaneously, the United States confronted unprecedented waves of political violence, ranging from the Jan. 6 insurrection to racist mass shootings in grocery stores. There is a sound relationship between the two: social media companies exploit users' confirmation biases by providing information that agrees with their beliefs, regardless of the validity, thereby nurturing polarization, eroding civil trust, and driving individuals to commit violent crimes. Yet, platforms like Facebook and Twitter involved in the process of instigating extremism evade legal responsibility by relying on Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act,** which states that social media companies are not liable for the content of their users' posts. Policymakers on both sides of the aisle advocate for reform but have repeatedly failed to reach a consensus. The question remains: how can Congress meaningfully regulate social media companies in order to lessen the adverse effects on the U.S.'s political environment and overall well-being? While there is no silver bullet to address the issue, **the country cannot afford to stand idle. Implementing pieces of current proposals—whether amending Section 230 to include regulations for sponsored speech or giving more power to the courts to specifically outline when social media platforms have immunity—would be a strong start.** A Rise in Political Violence **Domestic terrorism is a growing threat to the U.S.** From 2014 to 2021, America has witnessed a sharp increase in domestic terrorist attacks and fatalities, with a strong correlation to political demonstrations. Subtle increases in domestic terrorist incidents tied to protests began in 2011, but the major spike occurred in 2020, when 47 percent of all terrorist attacks involved political demonstrations. This marked a 45 percent increase from the previous year, leading to an evident correlation between an increase in domestic terrorist attacks and political ideologies. **Nowadays, political violence, whether related to conspiracy theories or law enforcement, is ubiquitous and seemingly normal** in the news. Last year, there were over 9,000 recorded threats against members of Congress and their families, nearly a tenfold increase from 2016. Most notably in late 2022, an intruder broke in and attacked Paul Pelosi, Speaker Pelosi's husband, in what the San Francisco DA described as "politically motivated." More broadly speaking, the percentage of domestic terrorist attacks tied to demonstrations increased again in 2021 to 53 percent. For example, on Feb. 19, 2022, Benjamin Smith opened fire on a police protest in Normandale Park in Portland, Oregon, after becoming enraged at the Black Lives Matter movement, COVID-19 restrictions, and an uncontrollable homeless problem. Smith killed one woman and hospitalized four others with gunshot wounds. Similarly, on May 14, 2022, Peyton Gendron opened fire on a grocery store in Buffalo, New York and sent three people to the hospital and killed ten others. After an investigation, authorities found the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, which alleges that white people are intentionally being replaced and has increased in popularity on mainstream platforms such as Fox News, was the underlying motivator. As 11 of the 13 people shot were Black residents of the area, the Department of Justice (DOJ) identified the attack as a hate crime and racially motivated violent extremism. The Global Terrorism Database found a new pattern related to these two examples: individuals, as opposed to organized and hierarchical terrorist groups, perpetrate the majority of violent incidents. Connection to Social Media **The rise in**

**individual actions speaks to a new danger the country faces: the rapid spread of violent ideologies on the Internet via social media platforms. In 2016, sites like Instagram and Facebook played key roles in radicalizing and mobilizing about 90 percent of lone terrorist actors.** This marked a 40 percent increase from the prior decade, which saw social media involved in about 50 percent of attacks. **Users can spread conspiracy theories, militia tactics, and white supremacist ideas on YouTube channels, blogs, Facebook pages, and more. Minimal regulation from governing bodies and social media companies, alongside over 302 million social media users in the U.S. as of 2023, enables the spread of extremist ideologies, creating a new reality where millions of Americans can undertake, support, or excuse political violence.**

However, propagating violent ideas does not end with the rapid spread of information. Rather, **algorithms from corporations like Facebook and Twitter manipulate users' confirmation bias—the tendency to favor information that either confirms or strengthens one's beliefs**—in order to maintain the highest number of users and drive profits in the process. Because the public valuation of tech companies is proportional to their number of users, they will often do whatever they can to optimize participation. Consequently, in the absence of reliable fact-checking and corporations regulating content, users become susceptible to unintentionally spreading false misinformation or deliberately spreading inaccurate information with the intent to deceive via disinformation. Malicious content creators can spread their ideologies by exploiting both the rapid spread of misinformation on social media platforms and companies' incentive to keep users engaged with content that reinforces and polarizes their beliefs. Disinformation can rapidly move through platforms and reach tens of thousands of users, but only a few narratives need to take hold to erode trust in facts and evidentiary standards. Social media companies' algorithms will then take over for the content creators and spread the stories that gained the most traction regardless of the truth in order to keep users engaged. Specifically, uncertain political outcomes, like elections, that depend on public support are uniquely susceptible to both misinformation and disinformation because actors rely on disinformation campaigns in order to discredit the opposition and secure backing for their side. Often, parties involved will organize sustained, coordinated, and sophisticated efforts to manipulate public sentiment and views beyond sporadic misinformation posts. The most infamous example of this in the U.S. was the lead-up to and aftermath of the 2020 Presidential elections. Even before the election, in late Sept. 2020, a disinformation story about mail-in ballots framed a photo of empty envelopes from the 2018 election as evidence of voter fraud. Within a single day, more than 25,000 Twitter users shared the false ballot-dumping story, including Donald Trump Jr. with over 5.7 million followers. This story strengthened the case for denying the election, and culminated in the Jan. 6 insurrection. By echoing information disorder, social media is a driving force of political polarization and pushes individuals to violent extremes.

**Misinformation campaigns weaken overall societal cohesion and separate individuals into increasingly isolated political and social communities, with few opportunities to encounter counter-narratives or other sources of information. Specifically, disinformation campaigns can target group leaders with smear campaigns or false accusations regarding corruption in order to threaten their credibility. Platforms then allow this dehumanizing and polarizing discourse to become widespread; this dialogue normalizes the perception of political opponents as untrustworthy sources of information who are threats to opposing ideologies.** Continued exposure to this type of rhetoric creates a marginalized mindset that isolates users from those they disagree with. Further reinforcing this, disinformation can build a collective identity around false perceptions of persecution, centering fear and grievances at the core of identity. Organizers may also present one's group as the authentic defenders of important values, causing an individual to feel as if they're engaged in a righteous struggle with potentially devastating consequences. As a result, there is minimal space for compromise with the opposition, and social media pushes its users to ideological extremes. Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act: Social Media Companies Evading the Blame Social media's involvement in the rise of political violence and misinformation begs the question of why neither Congress nor any other regulatory body has held these corporations accountable. In short, the answer lies in 26 words of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which aimed to allow the Internet to develop free of government intervention. Section 230 of the Act gives companies the ability to regulate content on their websites as they see fit and stipulates that they cannot be held responsible for the content of their users' posts. Social media companies like Facebook fine-tune their own algorithms that rank, recommend, and remove unwanted posts with minimal regulation, keeping their users entertained for a longer period of time and optimizing revenue in the process. The placement of profit above societal well-being was evident prior to the 2020 elections when Mark Zuckerberg agreed to adjust Facebook's algorithm to limit the spread of fake news. However, by the end of November, the number of users declined, and the company reverted back to its prior algorithm. After the political environment in the capitol was in disarray around 2020, even if Congress or the DOJ wished to charge social media companies, they could not under existing law. Methods for Reform Now, politicians on both the left and right argue for revising or repealing Section 230. Congressman Christopher Cox

(R-CA), who co-authored the Section in 1996, recently urged for amendments because “the original purpose of this law was to help clean up the Internet, not to facilitate people doing bad things.” Similarly, before the 2020 election, President Biden declared that it needed to be “revoked, immediately.” **Despite the shared desire for change, finding meaningful**

**regulation that will actually curb the rise in disinformation and violence remains a strenuous task with no clear solution.** Organic vs. Sponsored Speech One solution that avoids conflict with the First Amendment’s protection of freedom of speech is separate liability protections for organic and sponsored speech. Corporations would not be responsible for the information users post independently, but the law would hold platforms accountable for the content they promote via paid advertisements. In 2018, MIT researchers found that on Facebook, a new advertising system that monitors accuracy reduced false information by 75 percent. While this decrease may appear to resolve the issue, the study noted that there was still an immense amount of inaccurate content circulating on the platform, signifying that regulating sponsored speech is not sufficient on its own. Despite the effort in 2018, the number of comments and shares from false content providers still tripled between the third quarter of 2016 and the third quarter of 2020. Moreover, the majority of social media platforms already rely on algorithms to curate user experiences and generate content; as part of regulating promoted disinformation, **legislators could remove Section 230 immunity in cases where a company’s algorithm spreads disinformation and violence. The government would be able to prosecute companies with automated systems tied to acts of terrorism, extremism, and civil rights threats.**

**Impact- Political Extremism leads to Civil War. January 6<sup>th</sup> was the first but more events will come to follow if plan isn’t passed**

**Ottesen, Washington Post, 2022**

KK, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, ” ‘They are preparing for war’: An expert on civil wars discusses where political extremists are taking this country”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2022/03/08/they-are-preparing-war-an-expert-civil-wars-discusses-where-political-extremists-are-taking-this-country/> Kales ★

**Having studied civil wars all over the world, and the conditions that give rise to them, you argue in your book, somewhat chillingly, that the United States is coming dangerously close to those conditions. Can you explain that? So we actually know a lot about civil wars** — how they start, how long they last, why they’re so hard to resolve, how you end them. And we know a lot because since 1946, there have been over 200 major armed conflicts. And for the last 30 years, **people have been collecting a lot of data,**

**analyzing the data, looking at patterns.** I’ve been one of those people. We went from thinking, even as late as the 1980s, that every one of these was unique. And the way people studied it is they would be a Somalia expert, a Yugoslavia expert, a Tajikistan expert. And everybody thought their case was unique and that you could draw no parallels. Then methods and computers got better, and people like me came and could collect data and analyze it. And what we saw is that there are lots of patterns at the macro level. In 1994, the U.S. government put together this Political Instability Task Force. They were interested in trying to predict what countries around the world were going to become unstable, potentially fall apart, experience political violence and civil war.

Was that out of the State Department? That was done through the CIA. And the task force was a mix of academics, experts on conflict, and data analysts. And basically what they wanted was: In all of your research, tell us what you think seems to be important. What should we be considering when we’re thinking about the lead-up to civil wars? Originally the model included over 30 different factors, like poverty, income inequality, how diverse religiously or ethnically a country was. But only **two factors came out**

**again and again as highly predictive.** And it wasn’t what people were expecting, even on the task force. We were surprised. The first was this variable called anocracy. There’s this nonprofit based in Virginia called the Center for Systemic Peace. And every year it measures all sorts of things related to the quality of the governments around the world. How autocratic or how democratic a country is. And it has this scale that goes from negative 10 to positive 10. Negative 10 is the most authoritarian, so think about North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain. Positive 10 are the most democratic. This, of course, is where you want to be. This would be Denmark, Switzerland, Canada. The U.S. was a positive 10 for many, many years. It’s no longer a positive 10. And then it has this middle zone between positive 5 and negative 5, which was you had features of both. If you’re a positive 5, you have more democratic features, but definitely have a few authoritarian elements. And, of course, if you’re negative 5, you have more authoritarian features and a few democratic elements. The U.S. was briefly downgraded to a 5 and is now an 8. And what scholars found was that this anocracy variable was really predictive of a risk for civil war. That **full democracies almost never**

**have civil wars. Full autocracies rarely have civil wars. All of the instability and violence is happening in this middle zone. And there's all sorts of theories why this middle zone is unstable, but one of the big ones is that these governments tend to be weaker.** They're transitioning to either actually becoming more democratic, and so some of the authoritarian features are loosening up. The military is giving up control. And so it's easier to organize a challenge. Or, these are democracies that are backsliding, and there's a sense that these governments are not that legitimate, people are unhappy with these governments. There's infighting. There's jockeying for power. And so they're weak in their own ways. Anyway, that turned out to be highly predictive. And then **the second factor was whether populations in these partial democracies began to organize politically, not around ideology** — so, not based on whether you're a communist or not a communist, or you're a liberal or a conservative — **but where the parties themselves were based almost exclusively around identity: ethnic, religious or racial identity. The quintessential example of this is what happened in the former Yugoslavia.** So for you, personally, what was the moment the ideas began to connect, and you thought: Wait a minute, I see these patterns in my country right now? My dad is from Germany. He was born in 1932 and lived through the war there, and he emigrated here in 1958. He had been a Republican his whole life, you know; we had the Reagan calendar in the kitchen every year. And starting in early 2016, I would go home to visit, and my dad — he doesn't agitate easily, but he was so agitated. All he wanted to do was talk about Trump and what he was seeing happening. He was really nervous. It was almost visceral — like, he was reliving the past. Every time I'd go home, he was just, like, "Please tell me Trump's not going to win." And I would tell him, "Dad, Trump is not going to win." And he's just, like, "I don't believe you; I saw this once before. And I'm seeing it again, and the Republicans, they're just falling in lockstep behind him." He was so nervous. I remember saying: "Dad, what's really different about America today from Germany in the 1930s is that our democracy is really strong. Our institutions are strong. So, even if you had a Trump come into power, the institutions would hold strong." Of course, then Trump won. We would have these conversations where my dad would draw all these parallels. The brownshirts and the attacks on the media and the attacks on education and on books. And he's just, like, I'm seeing it. I'm seeing it all again here. And that's really what shook me out of my complacency, that here was this man who is very well educated and astute, and he was shaking with fear. And I was like, Am I being naive to think that we're different? That's when I started to **follow the data.** And then, **watching what happened to the Republican Party really was the bigger surprise — that, wow, they're doubling down on this almost white supremacist strategy.** That's a losing strategy in a democracy. So why would they do that? Okay, it's worked for them since the '60s and '70s, but you can't turn back demographics. And then I was like, Oh my gosh. The only way this is a winning strategy is if you begin to weaken the institutions; this is the pattern we see in other countries. And, as an American citizen I'm like, These two factors are emerging here, and people don't know. So I gave a talk at UCSD about this — and it was a complete bomb. Not only did it fall flat, but people were hostile. You know, How dare you say this? This is not going to happen. This is fearmongering. I remember leaving just really despondent, thinking: Wow, I was so naive to think that, if it's true, and if it's based on hard evidence, people will be receptive to it. You know, how do you get the message across if people don't want to hear it? If they're not ready for it. I didn't do a great job framing it initially, that when people think about civil war, they think about the first civil war. And in their mind, that's what a second one would look like. And, of course, that's not the case at all. So part of it was just helping people conceptualize what a 21st-century civil war against a really powerful government might look like. **After January 6th of last year,** people were asking me, "Aren't you horrified?" "Isn't this terrible?" "What do you think?" And, first of all, **I wasn't surprised,** right? **People who study this, we've been seeing these groups have been around now for over 10 years.** They've been growing. I know that they're training. They've been in the shadows, but we know about them. I wasn't surprised. The biggest emotion was just relief, actually. It was just, Oh my gosh, this is a gift. Because it's bringing it out into the public eye in the most obvious way. And the result has to be that we can't deny or ignore that we have a problem. Because it's right there before us. And what has been surprising, actually, is how hard the Republican Party has worked to continue to deny it and to create this smokescreen — and in many respects, how effective that's been, at least among their supporters. Wow: Even the most public act of insurrection, probably a treasonous act that 10, 20 years ago would have just cut to the heart of every American, there are still real attempts to deny it. But it was a gift because it brought this cancer that those of us who have been studying it, have been watching it growing, it brought it out into the open. Does it make you at all nervous when you think about the percentage of people who were at, say, January 6th who have some military or law enforcement connection? Yes. **The CIA also has a manual on insurgency.** You can Google it and find it online. Most of it is not redacted. And it's absolutely fascinating to read. It's not a big manual. And it was written, I'm sure, to help the U.S. government identify very, very early stages of insurgency. So if something's happening in the Philippines, or something's happening in Indonesia. You know, what are signs that we should be looking out for? And **the manual talks about three stages. And the first stage is pre-insurgency. And that's when you start to have groups beginning to mobilize around a particular grievance.** And it's oftentimes just a handful of individuals who are just deeply unhappy about something. And they begin to articulate those grievances. And they begin to try to grow their

membership. **The second stage is called the incipient conflict stage. And that's when these groups begin to build a military arm.** Usually a militia. And they'd start to obtain weapons, and they'd start to get training. And they'll start to recruit from the ex-military or military and from law enforcement. Or they'll actually — if there's a volunteer army, they'll have members of theirs join the military in order to get not just the training, but also to gather intelligence. And, again, when the CIA put together this manual, it's about what they have observed in their experience in the field in other countries. And as you're reading this, it's just shocking the parallels. And the second stage, you start to have a few isolated attacks. And in the manual, it says, really the danger in this stage is that governments and citizens aren't aware that this is happening. And so when an attack occurs, it's usually just dismissed as an isolated incident, and people are not connecting the dots yet. And because they're not connecting the dots, the movement is allowed to grow until you have open insurgency, when you start to have a series of consistent attacks, and it becomes impossible to ignore. And so, again, this is part of the process you see across the board, where the organizers of insurgencies understand that they need to gain experienced soldiers relatively quickly. And one way to do that is to recruit. Here in the United States, because we had a series of long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and Syria, and now that we've withdrawn from them, we've had more than 20 years of returning soldiers with experience. And so this creates a ready-made subset of the population that you can recruit from. What do you say to people who charge that this is all overblown, that civil war could never happen here in the United States — or that you're being inflammatory and making things worse by putting corrosive ideas out there? Oh, there's so many things to say. One thing is that groups — we'll call them violence entrepreneurs, the violent extremists who want to tear everything down and want to institute their own radical vision of society — they benefit from the element of surprise, right? They want people to be confused when violence starts happening. They want people to not understand what's going on, to think that nobody's in charge. Because then they can send their goons into the streets and convince people that they're the ones in charge. Which is why when I would talk to people who lived through the start of the violence in Sarajevo or Baghdad or Kyiv, they all say that they were surprised. And they were surprised in part because they didn't know what the warning signs were. But also because people had a vested interest in distracting them or denying it so that when an attack happened, or when you had paramilitary troops sleeping in the hills outside of Sarajevo, they would make up stories. You know, "We're just doing training missions." Or "We're just here to protect you. There's nothing going on here. Don't worry about this." I wish it were the case that by not talking about it we could prevent anything from happening. But the reality is, if we don't talk about it, [violent extremists] are going to continue to organize, and they're going to continue to train. There are definitely lots of groups on the far right who want war. They are preparing for war. And not talking about it does not make us safer. **What we're heading toward is an insurgency, which is a form of a civil war.** That is the 21st-century version of a civil war, especially in countries with powerful governments and powerful militaries, which is what the United States is. And it makes sense. An insurgency tends to be much more decentralized, often fought by multiple groups. Sometimes they're actually competing with each other. Sometimes they coordinate their behavior. They use unconventional tactics. They target infrastructure. They target civilians. They use domestic terror and guerrilla warfare. Hit-and-run raids and bombs. We've already seen this in other countries with powerful militaries, right? **The IRA took on the British government. Hamas has taken on the Israeli government. These are two of the most powerful militaries in the world. And they fought for decades.** And in the case of Hamas I think we could see a third intifada. And they pursue a similar strategy. Here it's called leaderless resistance. And that method of how to defeat a powerful government like the United States is outlined in what people are calling the bible of the far right: "The Turner Diaries," which is this fictitious account of a civil war against the U.S. government. It lays out how you do this. And one of the things it says is, Do not engage the U.S. military. You know, avoid it at all costs. Go directly to targets around the country that are difficult to defend and disperse yourselves so it's hard for the government to identify you and infiltrate you and eliminate you entirely. So, like with the [Charles Dickens's] ghost of Christmas future, are these the things that will be or just that may be? I can't say when it's going to happen. I think it's really important for people to understand that countries that have these two factors, who get put on this watch list, have a little bit less than a 4 percent annual risk of civil war. That seems really small, but it's not. It means that, **every year that those two factors continue, the risk increases. The analogy is smoking. If I started smoking today, my risk of dying of lung cancer or some smoking-related disease is very small. If I continue to smoke for the next 10, 20, 30, 40 years, my risk eventually of dying of something related to smoking is going to be very high if I don't change my behavior.** And so I think that's one of the actually optimistic things: We know the warning signs. And we know that if we strengthen our democracy, and if the Republican Party decides it's no longer going to be an ethnic faction that's trying to exclude everybody else, then our risk of civil war will disappear. We know that. And we have time to do it. But you have to know those warning signs in order to feel an impetus to change them.

## Framing:

**It's try or die for the aff -- we're on the brink of an Infocalypse that has the potential to completely destroy human agency and the world as we know it.**

**Warzel, BuzzFeed News 2018**

Charlie, BuzzFeed News, 2/11, Believable: The Terrifying Future of Fake News,

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/charliwarzel/the-terrifying-future-of-fake-news>

In mid-2016, [Aviv Ovadya](#) realized there was something fundamentally wrong with the internet — so wrong that he abandoned his work and sounded an alarm. A few weeks before the 2016 election, he presented his concerns to technologists in San Francisco's Bay Area and **warned of an impending crisis of misinformation** in a presentation he titled "Infocalypse." The web and **the information ecosystem that had developed around it was wildly unhealthy**, Ovadya argued. **The incentives that governed its biggest platforms were calibrated to reward information that was often misleading and polarizing**, or both. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Google prioritized clicks, shares, ads, and money over quality of information, and Ovadya couldn't shake the feeling that **it was all building toward something bad — a kind of critical threshold of addictive and toxic misinformation**. The presentation was largely ignored by employees from the Big Tech platforms — including a few from Facebook who would later go on to drive the company's NewsFeed integrity effort. "At the time, it felt like we were in a car careening out of control and it wasn't just that everyone was saying, 'we'll be fine' — it's that they didn't even see the car," he said. Ovadya saw early what many — including lawmakers, journalists, and Big Tech CEOs — wouldn't grasp until months later: Our platformed and algorithmically optimized world is vulnerable — to propaganda, to misinformation, to dark targeted advertising from foreign governments — so much so that it threatens to undermine a cornerstone of human discourse: the credibility of fact. But it's what he sees coming next that will really scare the shit out of you. "Alarmism can be good — you should be alarmist about this stuff," Ovadya said one January afternoon before calmly outlining a deeply unsettling projection about the next two decades of fake news, artificial intelligence-assisted misinformation campaigns, and propaganda. "We are so screwed it's beyond what most of us can imagine," he said. "We were utterly screwed a year and a half ago and we're even more screwed now. And depending how far you look into the future it just gets worse." **That future**, according to Ovadya, **will arrive with a slew of slick, easy-to-use**, and eventually seamless **technological tools for manipulating perception and falsifying reality**, for which terms have already been coined — "reality apathy," "automated laser phishing," and "human puppets." Which is why [Ovadya, an MIT grad with engineering stints at tech companies like Quora](#), dropped everything in early 2016 to try to prevent what he saw as a Big Tech-enabled information crisis. "One day something just clicked," he said of his awakening. It became clear to him that, if somebody were to exploit our attention economy and use the platforms that undergird it to distort the truth, there were no real checks and balances to stop it. "I realized if these systems were going to go out of control, there'd be nothing to reign them in and it was going to get bad, and quick," he said. "We were utterly screwed a year and a half ago and we're even more screwed now" Today Ovadya and a cohort of loosely affiliated researchers and academics are anxiously looking ahead — toward a future that is alarmingly dystopian. They're running war game-style disaster scenarios based on technologies that have begun to pop up and the outcomes are typically disheartening. [For Ovadya — now the chief technologist for the University of Michigan's Center for Social Media Responsibility and a Knight News innovation fellow at the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia](#) — the shock and ongoing anxiety over Russian Facebook ads and Twitter bots pales in comparison to the greater threat: Technologies that can be used to enhance and distort what is real are evolving faster than our ability to understand and control or mitigate it. **The stakes are high** and the possible consequences more disastrous than foreign meddling in an election — an undermining or **upending of core civilizational institutions, an "infocalypse."** And Ovadya says that this one is just as plausible as the last one — and worse. Worse because of our ever-expanding computational prowess; worse because of ongoing advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning that can blur the lines between fact and fiction; worse because those things could usher in a future where, as Ovadya observes, anyone could make it "appear as if anything has happened, regardless of whether or not it did." "What happens when anyone can make it appear as if anything has happened, regardless of whether or not it did?" And much in the way that foreign-sponsored, targeted misinformation campaigns didn't feel like a plausible near-term threat until we realized that it was already happening, Ovadya cautions that fast-developing tools powered by artificial intelligence, machine learning, and augmented reality tech could be hijacked and used by bad actors to imitate humans and wage an information war. And we're closer than one might think to a potential "Infocalypse." Already available tools for audio and video manipulation have begun to look like a potential fake news Manhattan Project. In the murky corners of the internet, people have begun using machine learning algorithms and open-source software to easily [create pornographic videos that realistically superimpose the faces of celebrities](#) — or anyone for that matter — on the adult actors' bodies. At institutions like Stanford, technologists have built programs that that [combine and mix recorded video footage](#) with real-time face tracking to manipulate video. Similarly, at the University of Washington computer scientists successfully built a program capable of [turning audio clips into a realistic, lip-synced video](#) of the person speaking those words." As proof of concept, both the teams manipulated broadcast video to make world leaders appear to say things they never actually said. As these tools become democratized and widespread, Ovadya notes that the worst case scenarios could be extremely destabilizing. There's "diplomacy manipulation," in which a malicious actor uses advanced technology to "create the belief that an event has occurred" to influence geopolitics. Imagine, for example, a machine-learning algorithm (which analyzes gobs of data in order to teach itself to perform a particular function) fed on hundreds of hours of footage of [Donald Trump](#) or North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, which could then spit out a near-perfect — and virtually impossible to distinguish from reality — audio or video clip of the leader declaring nuclear or biological war. "It doesn't have to be perfect — just good enough to make the enemy think something happened that it provokes a knee-jerk and reckless response of retaliation." "It doesn't have to be perfect — just good enough" Another scenario, which Ovadya dubs "polity simulation," is a

dystopian combination of political botnets and astroturfing, where political movements are manipulated by fake grassroots campaigns. In Ovadya's envisioning, increasingly believable AI-powered bots will be able to effectively compete with real humans for legislator and regulator attention because it will be too difficult to tell the difference. Building upon previous iterations, where public discourse is manipulated, it may soon be possible to directly jam congressional switchboards with heartfelt, believable algorithmically-generated pleas. Similarly, Senators' inboxes could be flooded with messages from constituents that were cobbled together by machine-learning programs working off stitched-together content culled from text, audio, and social media profiles. Then there's automated laser phishing, a tactic Ovadya notes security researchers are already whispering about. Essentially, it's using AI to scan things, like our social media presences, and craft false but believable messages from people we know. The game changer, according to Ovadya, is that something like laser phishing would allow bad actors to target anyone and to create a believable imitation of them using publicly available data. "Previously one would have needed to have a human to mimic a voice or come up with an authentic fake conversation — in this version you could just press a button using open source software," Ovadya said. "That's where it becomes novel — when anyone can do it because it's trivial. Then it's a whole different ball game." Imagine, he suggests, phishing messages that aren't just a confusing link you might click, but a personalized message with context. "Not just an email, but an email from a friend that you've been anxiously waiting for for a while," he said. "And because it would be so easy to create things that are fake you'd become overwhelmed. If every bit of spam you receive looked identical to emails from real people you knew, each one with its own motivation trying to convince you of something, you'd just end up saying, 'okay, I'm going to ignore my inbox.'" **That can lead to something Ovadya calls "reality apathy": Beset by a torrent of constant misinformation, people simply start to give up.** Ovadya is quick to remind us that this is common in areas where information is poor and thus assumed to be incorrect. The big difference, Ovadya notes, is the adoption of apathy to a developed society like ours. The outcome, he fears, is not good. "People stop paying attention to news and that fundamental level of informedness required for functional democracy becomes unstable." Ovadya (and other researchers) see laser phishing as an inevitability. "It's a threat for sure, but even worse — I don't think there's a solution right now," he said. "There's internet scale infrastructure stuff that needs to be built to stop this if it starts." Beyond all this, **there are other long-range nightmare scenarios** that Ovadya describes as "far-fetched," but they're not so far-fetched that he's willing to rule them out. And they are frightening. **"Human puppets,"** for example — **a black market** version of a social media marketplace with people instead of bots. "It's essentially a mature future cross border market **for manipulatable humans.**" he said.

## 2AC Evidence Extensions

### Inherency Extensions:

**Deepfakes are inevitable, their capabilities are improving and are accessible to all**  
**Jackson, Cyber Magazine, 2023**

Amber, Cyber Magazine, 10/12, The Rising Tide of Deepfakes as AI Growth cause concern,  
<https://cybermagazine.com/technology-and-ai/the-rising-tide-of-deepfakes-as-ai-growth-cause-concern>

**Deepfakes are inevitably becoming more advanced, which is making it harder to spot and stop those that are used with bad intentions.** As [access to synthetic media technology increases](#), **deepfakes can be used to damage reputations, fabricate evidence and undermine trust.** With deepfake technology increasingly being used for mal-intent, businesses would do well to ensure that their workforce is fully trained and aware of the risks associated with AI-generated content. Deepfakes continue to wreak havoc **Now nearly anyone can employ easy-to-use, readily available AI software to make content doing and saying things they never actually did** - thereby making it easier for bad actors to [defraud the public](#), along with other such crimes. The danger with deepfakes is in not being able to recognise what is real versus what is AI. As former Chief Information Security Officer at [SailPoint](#), [Heather Gantt-Evans](#), [explains to our sister publication Technology Magazine](#).

**Current corporate action is not enough**

**Panditharatne, Time Magazine, 2024**

Mekela, Time Magazine, 4/10, Counsel in the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law <https://time.com/6965299/risks-ai-elections/>

In Munich, **companies** including OpenAI, Apple, Meta, Microsoft, TikTok, Google, X, and others **announced a compact to undertake measures to protect elections** as America and other countries go to the polls in 2024. The companies [pledged to](#) help audiences track the origin of AI-generated and authentic content, to try to detect deceptive AI media in elections, and to deploy “reasonable precautions” to curb risks from AI-fueled election trickery. **While not unwelcome, the success of the compact will depend on how its commitments are executed. They were couched in slippery language—“proportionate responses,” “where appropriate and technically feasible,” “attempting to,” and so on—that give latitude to companies to do very little if they so choose.** While some are taking further steps, of course, **the urgency of the situation demands stronger and more universal action.**

## **The federal government hasn't done enough to combat Deepfakes now Edelman NBC, 2023**

Adam, Reporter, 12/16, States are lagging in tackling political deepfakes, leaving potential threats unchecked heading into 2024,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/artificial-intelligence-deepfakes-2024-election-states-rcna129525>

### **When it comes to policies tackling the challenges artificial intelligence and deepfakes** pose

in political campaigns, **lawmakers in most states are still staring at a blank screen.** Just three states enacted laws related to those rapidly growing policy areas in 2023 — even as the size, scale and potential threats that AI and deepfakes can pose came into clearer view throughout the year. And with just weeks before the [2024 election year](#) formally kicks off, proponents of regulating those spaces are warning that states must try to do more: not just because the federal government hasn't taken action, but because different approaches in different state capitals could provide a strong sense of what works — and what doesn't. "It's certainly the case that the states unquestionably need to do more," said Daniel Weiner, who as director of the elections and government program at the nonpartisan Brennan Center is closely following the issue. "I don't think we can afford to wait." The reasons states have been slow to tackle the issue are myriad, Weiner [and other experts have explained](#): Potential regulations would need to be reconciled with First Amendment rights and survive legal challenges. Generative AI and deepfake technology are growing and changing quickly and exponentially. Many state lawmakers don't yet know how to respond to these issues because they don't sufficiently understand them. And, crucially, any enforcement mechanisms would depend on a broad raft of parties, including giant social media companies. Still, Weiner and others warned, states need to start navigating these challenges now. "The really corrosive possibilities [from deepfakes] have fully burst into consciousness in the last year to two years," Weiner said. "But there are effective policy solutions on the table, so I think folks should roll up their sleeves and get to work." Deepfakes are videos that use artificial intelligence to create believable but false depictions of real people. They [have become significantly more common online in](#) recent months — an increase that has prompted some experts to warn that the 2024 race could be the first "[deepfake election](#)" because voters could see political disinformation videos online and not be able to determine what's real and what's not. In 2023, only Minnesota, Michigan and Washington enacted laws attempting to tackle the issue, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, which has tracked bills related to the subject. All passed with bipartisan support. Another seven states introduced bills designed to tackle the issue, but those proposals stalled or failed. Dual state-level approaches All of the bills fall into two categories — disclosure requirements and bans — and could possibly be models for future legislation in other states. A [Washington state law enacted in May](#) requires a disclosure be put on "synthetic" media that is being used to influence an election. The law defines "synthetic" as any image, audio or video "of an individual's appearance, speech, or conduct that has been intentionally manipulated with the use of generative adversarial network techniques or other digital technology in a manner to create a realistic but false image, audio, or video." Minnesota lawmakers [in August enacted](#) a law that bans the publication of "deepfake media to influence an election" in the 90-day window prior to an election in the state. A person can be charged under that law if they "know or reasonably should know that the item being disseminated is a deepfake"; if the media is shared "without the consent of the depicted individual"; and is "made with the intent to injure a candidate or influence the result of an election." The law defines the crime as a misdemeanor, with most offenses punishable by up to 90 days in jail or fines of up to \$1,000. A [Michigan law enacted last month](#) employs both a ban and a disclosure requirement. It prohibits the "distribution of materially deceptive media" 90 days prior to an election. That ban, however, will not be enforced if the material includes a disclosure stating that the media has been "manipulated." Manipulation is outlined in different ways, depending on whether the ad is an image, video, audio or text. Under the Michigan law, enforcement of the ban is also contingent on the person responsible knowing that the media "falsely represents" the persons depicted in it, and that that person "intends the distribution to harm the reputation or electoral prospects of a candidate in an election." The law defines a first violation as a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days in prison or a fine of up to \$500. Prior to 2023, California, Texas and Wisconsin were the only other states that had enacted legislation designed to tackle AI in elections. Many social media and tech giants have also taken steps in recent months. In November, Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, and Microsoft [said they would begin requiring](#) political ads on their social media platforms to [disclose](#) if they were made with the help of AI. Google made a similar announcement in September. Lack of federal action Experts said that state action will be particularly important in upcoming legislative sessions given that **the federal government hasn't addressed the issue. Proposals** in the U.S. [Senate](#) and House [aiming to regulate the use of AI deepfakes in political campaigns haven't moved forward](#). While **the Federal Election Commission announced an effort in August to take steps to regulate** deepfakes in campaign ads, the agency **hasn't announced much progress on the initiative.**

## Solvency Extensions:

Different circuit courts have offered different opinions -- a legislative remedy is key to make sure everyone follows the same rules, and it incentivizes companies to use the best tech to fight deepfakes.

**Nagumotu University of New Hampshire Law, 2022**

Kavyasri, JD Candidate, University of New Hampshire School of Law, Deepfakes are taking over social media: Can The Law Keep Up?

[https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu\\_pp113-157.pdf](https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu_pp113-157.pdf)

Platforms should be encouraged to be transparent about their policies and be held accountable for their speech decisions. **The most effective way to remedy the split between the Ninth, First and Third Circuits is to have the legislature clarify the language of Section 230(e)(2) by including an express statutory definition of intellectual property. By listing the right of publicity among the different types of intellectual property protected under Section 230(e)(2), courts will be bound by the strict literal interpretation of the statute, resulting in the uniform application of the law** across the circuit courts. A proposed change to the Section 230 immunity would include **placing the burden on the online entity to demonstrate that it has taken reasonable steps to ensure that its platform is not being used for fueling deepfakes.** 238 The online platforms will not be declared to be the publisher of the user-generated deepfakes they host but will be held liable for not taking effective steps to stop the spread of the misinformation propagated in the deepfake. **With an amendment to Section 230(e)(2) expressly listing the right of publicity as a protected intellectual property claim, exempt from Section 230 immunity, public figures and celebrities will have a legitimate cause of action against the online platform if their image is used to perpetuate misinformation.** Similar defenses used with rights of publicity can be used by online platforms such as fair use and parody. There is no denying that it is hard to predict how rigidly the online platforms would apply their screening, it would therefore be up to the courts to shape the law. Online platforms would still be able to let users freely post their content and only be responsible for determining what deepfakes are. The determination solely hinges on online platforms determining whether the content is technologically genuine or falsified, not whether the actual claims made in the deepfakes are true or considered misinformation. In 2021, Facebook underwent a “rebrand” by changing its name to Meta, aimed at branching out, but has not yet put out any responses on misinformation projects.<sup>239</sup> It is not yet clear what Mark Zuckerberg’s “metaverse” will actually consist of, but it does have adequate backing to invest in projects to accurately detect misinformation. There are obvious technological obstacles that would have to be developed for the online platforms to flag fakes efficiently. 240 Any proposed changes that rely on a factbased inquiry raise the question of the metes and bounds of reasonableness.<sup>241</sup> The inquiry should be like the Section 230(c)(2) good faith act filtering determination for offensive content. The online platforms would use good faith effort by using reasonable standards of either digital forensic tools to spot the fakes or rely on a system of digital signatures. 242 Assuming that the online platforms have the technological capability to distinguish between genuine and fake videos, **failing to remove the fakes within a reasonable time would rise to the level where the public figure can seek judicial judgment.**<sup>243</sup> **The law should compel online platforms to use technology to the best of their ability as effective authentication technology develops.**<sup>244</sup>

**Focusing on Social Media is the best way to solve  
Nagumotu, University of New Hampshire Law, 2022**

Kavyasri, JD Candidate, University of New Hampshire School of Law, Deepfakes are taking over social media: Can The Law Keep Up?

[https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu\\_pp113-157.pdf](https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu_pp113-157.pdf)

**There is a lack of infrastructure to limit the spread of misinformation among social media startups. The amplifying power of social media causes misinformation to circulate far and wide. Too many people rely on what they assume others have reliably determined and then pass the information along. Especially when a topic is interesting and presents novel information, it grabs the attention of people and lets them disregard its authenticity. This means that the current environment of social media platforms allows for deepfakes to mature and proliferate.**

**We have the technology to identify deepfakes -- the barrier is making sure everyone uses it.**

**Newton, Platformer, 2024**

Casey, May 7th, Inside Open AI's new plan for fighting deepfakes,

<https://www.platformer.news/open-ai-deepfakes-election-c2pa/?ref=platformer-newsletter>

**OpenAI has a few different ideas** on the subject. In addition to the C2PA, on Tuesday **it also released a deepfake detector to a small group of researchers for testing. The tool can identify 98.8**

**percent of images** made with DALL-E 3, the company said, but performs worse on images generated by rivals like

Midjourney. **In time, though, the company hopes it will serve as a check on media uploaded without content credentials — although they're not sharing it with platforms like**

**Facebook or Instagram just yet.** "We think it's important to build our understanding of the tool much more before it's let loose in the wild," Sandhini Agarwal, who leads trustworthy AI efforts at the company, told me. Among other things, OpenAI is still working to understand how the classifier responds to different sets of images. For example, there are concerns that images from non-Western countries, which may be underrepresented in the tool's underlying data set, might be falsely identified as fakes.

OpenAI is also exploring ways to add inaudible digital watermarks to AI-generated audio that would be difficult to remove.

"Fingerprinting," which allows companies to compare media found in the wild to an internal database of media known to be generated by their own tools, offers another possible path forward. In the meantime, OpenAI and Microsoft said Tuesday that they would [set aside \\$2 million](#) for a digital literacy program designed to help educate people about AI-generated media. "As we've been on a sort of listening tour to understand what the biggest concerns are leading up to elections in various countries, we've heard that there just aren't high levels of AI literacy," said Becky Waite, who leads OpenAI's election preparedness efforts. "There's a real concern about people's ability to distinguish what they're seeing online. So we're excited about this as an area of investment." No one I spoke with seemed certain that these approaches could collectively prevent [the infocalypse](#). There are still technical

breakthroughs to be achieved in order to create metadata that cannot be removed, for example. And it will take time for voters' digital literacy to catch up to the state of the art. (Particularly since all these high-tech credentials remain mostly invisible to the average user.)

**At the same time, you can begin to understand how platforms will soon use**

**technology to build trust in what people are seeing in their feeds. A combination of metadata, watermarks, fingerprinting and deepfake detection should go a long way in**

**determining the provenance of much of the content on social networks. That could be particularly true if platforms adopt policies that encourage people to share media that**

**comes with those credentials.** What would those policies look like? One possibility is that platforms could create a

system for digital content that resembles passport control. Just as most people are not allowed to cross borders without passports,

someday **social networks could choose not to display posts that arrive without credentials.**

**Or, more likely, they could restrict this type of content's reach: showing it to an account's followers, for example, but making it ineligible for promotion in ranked feeds.**

"There are tricky trade-offs to be made here," said David Robinson, who leads OpenAI's policy planning team. "I'm sure different platforms will make different choices." We're already seeing hints of this: in March, [YouTube added a way for creators to label their own videos as AI-generated](#); Meta followed suit with [a similar approach last month](#). For now, platforms aren't penalizing users for uploading AI-generated content, which is fine: most of it is relatively benign. As more pernicious forms of AI content begin to materialize on platforms, though, they may begin to consider more restrictive approaches. **"It's not just a technical problem,"** Agarwal told me. "I think that's the crux of why it's so complex. Because it's not just about having the technical tools. It's about having resilience across the stack. We're one actor, but there are many others. **This is a collective action problem."**

## Democracy Extension:

**Link: Deepfakes can hide crimes and discourage marginalized populations from participating in civic life**

**Llorente, Council on Foreign Relations, 2023**

Raquel Vazquez, Dec. 18th, Council on Foreign Relations, To Protect Democracy in the Deepfake Era, We Need to Bring in the Voices of Those Defending it at the Frontlines, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/protect-democracy-deepfake-era-we-need-bring-voices-those-defending-it-frontlines>

Generative AI introduces a daunting new reality: **inconvenient truths can be denied as deepfaked**, or at least facilitate claims of plausible deniability to evade accountability. The burden of proof, or perhaps more accurately, **the “burden of truth” has shifted onto those circulating authentic content and holding the powerful to account**. This is not just a crisis of identifying what is fake. **It is also a crisis of protecting what is true**. When anything and everything can be dismissed as AI-generated or manipulated, how do we elevate the real stories of those defending our democracy at the frontlines? But AI’s impact doesn’t stop at new challenges; **it exacerbates old inequalities. Those who are already marginalized and disenfranchised—due to their gender, ethnicity, race or belonging to a particular group—face amplified risks. AI is like a magnifying glass for exclusion, and its harms are cumulative**. AI deepens existing vulnerabilities, bringing a serious threat to principles of inclusivity and fairness that lie at the heart of democratic values. Similarly, sexual **deepfakes can have an additional chilling effect, discouraging women, LGBTQ+ people and individuals from minoritized communities to participate in public life**, thus eroding the diversity and representativeness that are essential for a healthy democracy. Lastly, much as with social media, where we failed to incorporate the voices of the global majority, we have borrowed previous mistakes. **The shortcomings in moderating content, combating misinformation, and protecting user privacy have had profound implications on democracy and social discourse**. Similarly, in the context of AI, **we are yet to see meaningful policies and regulation** that not only consult globally those that are being impacted by AI but, more importantly, center the solutions that affected communities beyond the United States and Europe prioritize.

**Link: Deepfakes can mimic public input on public policy proposals, making government more unresponsive**

**Weiner et al. Brennan Center for Justice 2023**

Daniel, Mekela Panditharatne, and Douglas Kriner, Nov. 3rd, Brennan Center for Justice, Artificial Intelligence, Participatory Democracy and Responsive Government, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/artificial-intelligence-participatory-democracy-and-responsive-government>

The FCC episode exemplifies how antagonists can use AI tools to undermine authentic public input on government decision-making. **New developments in generative AI enable vastly more sophisticated mass deception efforts that effectively mimic individuals’ feedback on public policy**, begetting the danger that officials will be duped or diverted by hard-to-detect AI-generated content. Using generative AI, **fraudsters can produce mountains of seemingly genuine policy submissions from fake stakeholders to manipulate perceptions of public sentiment**. If maliciously deployed at sufficient scale, **such efforts can erode government’s ability to be responsive to the American people — and ultimately undermine the people’s trust in government**. Public officials who administer elections, meanwhile, face acute risks that bad faith actors will exploit AI tools to amplify baseless concerns about the election process,

distract from voter needs ahead of (or on) Election Day, or drown offices in bot-delivered document requests that are difficult to identify as AI-generated.

**Impact: Democracies provide better human rights and more freedoms to their citizens  
Lynn-Jones, Harvard University, 1998**

Sean, Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Why the United States Should Spread Democracy,

<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/why-united-states-should-spread-democracy>

The first way in which the spread of **democracy enhances the lives of those who live in democracies is by promoting individual liberty, including freedom of expression**, freedom of conscience, and freedom to own private property.<sup>22</sup> Respect for the liberty of individuals is an inherent feature of democratic politics. As Samuel Huntington has written, liberty is "the peculiar virtue of democracy."<sup>23</sup> A democratic political process based on electoral competition depends on freedom of expression of political views and freedom to make electoral choices. Moreover, **governments that are accountable to the public are less likely to deprive their citizens of human rights**. The global spread of democracy is likely to bring greater individual liberty to more and more people. Even imperfect and illiberal democracies tend to offer more liberty than autocracies, and liberal democracies are very likely to promote liberty. Freedom House's 1997 survey of "Freedom in the World" found that 79 out of 118 democracies could be classified as "free" and 39 were "partly free" and, of those, 29 qualified as "high partly free." In contrast, only 20 of the world's 73 nondemocracies were "partly free" and 53 were "not free."<sup>24</sup> The case for the maximum possible amount of individual freedom can be made on the basis of utilitarian calculations or in terms of natural rights. The utilitarian case for increasing the amount of individual liberty rests on the belief that **increased liberty will enable more people to realize their full human potential, which will benefit not only themselves but all of humankind**. This view holds that **greater liberty will allow the human spirit to flourish, thereby unleashing greater intellectual, artistic, and productive energies that will ultimately benefit all of humankind**. The rights-based case for liberty, on the other hand, does not focus on the consequences of increased liberty, but instead argues that **all men and women, by virtue of their common humanity, have a right to freedom**. This argument is most memorably expressed in the American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness ..."

**Impact: It is not just about us. Democracy Failure is a trend that can impact the whole world.**

**Maza Vov Media, 2017**

Carlos, Vox, June 22nd, 2017, "The Decline of American Democracy won't be televised"  
<https://www.vox.com/videos/2017/6/22/15855498/decline-democracy-wont-be-televised-trump-comey>

**We imagine democratic failure as being some spectacular, singular event** — a violent military coup or the declaration of martial law. **But in a country like the United States, democratic failure is likely to look a lot less interesting**. That's because over the past few decades, **countries that have drifted away from democracy have typically done so through a process called "democratic backsliding"** — the slow erosion of a country's democratic institutions by its elected leaders. Populist leaders in countries like Turkey and Venezuela have used their power to make gradual, often legal

changes to undermine restraints on their authority rather than pursuing a dramatic power grab. When political scientists warn that Donald Trump poses a threat to American democracy, they're usually referring to [backsliding](#). **Trump shows a deep distrust of America's democratic institutions** — he criticizes sitting judges, questions the legitimacy of an election he won, and punishes news outlets he believes cover him too harshly. That kind of behavior poses a real challenge for journalists. Modern news media is designed to bombard viewers with breaking news and discrete pieces of information that briefly capture audiences' attention. But **democratic backsliding** doesn't work that way — it **happens slowly, through a series of steps that seem legal and benign in a vacuum but end up doing tremendous damage in the aggregate.**

## Populism Extension:

### **Uniqueness: Populism is at the brink -- distrust is key Collinson, CNN 2022**

Stephen, Reporter, 4/12, Trump Style populism rises in Europe and the US as Putin assaults world order,  
<https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/12/politics/rise-of-extremism-us-and-europe/index.html>

### **A fresh tide of extreme populism – feeding on economic strain, hostility to immigrants and cultural warfare – is challenging key democracies** from the inside [at the same time Russia escalates](#)

the most brutal assault on [the liberal Western order in decades](#). In France, [the United States](#), Hungary and elsewhere, **the center seems to be dropping out of politics as moderates lose ground to radicals** on the right and the left, **amid widespread public discontent after a two-year pandemic** that saw governments significantly curtail individual freedoms. Only 17 months ago, a US campaign won by a veteran establishment politician – President Joe Biden – who had campaigned as a moderate against a wannabe authoritarian – Donald Trump – appeared to herald the end of the road for the former commander in chief's populist crusade. Yet Republicans, still in thrall to Trump – many of whom have signed on to his corrosive lies about election fraud to win the favor of his supporters – appear on course to capture the House, and perhaps the Senate, in midterm elections in the fall. They are capitalizing on deep frustrations around the country over rising prices and high gasoline costs that Biden has been unable to stem. Many are also staking out fiery messages on racial, gender and LGBTQ issues and immigration, implying that traditional American culture is at risk of being destroyed. That theme dominated the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson. In France, President Emmanuel Macron – the epitome of technocratic elitism – now faces a tough two-week fight to beat back the momentum of the anti-immigrant, anti-Islam and pro-Putin far-right candidate [Marine Le Pen](#). The pro-Trump wing of European politics racked up one victory that would have pleased Russian President Vladimir Putin after [Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban](#) – a scourge of press freedom, EU leaders and democratic values – kept his job in a landslide election win earlier this month. Orban, a favorite of the “Make America Great Again” movement and conservative TV pundits, profited from his own gerrymandering of electoral districts and friendly propagandists in the press to defy predictions that his appeal was fading. Trump's continued hold on Republican politics, Orban's victory and Macron's tight reelection race underscore how **the established structures of democracy in Western nations remain vulnerable** – not just from hostile outside forces like Putin's election meddling but also **from a perception that**

**traditional politicians are unable to solve people's problems.** A rush to the political extremes The worst predictions of Macron's performance in the first round of the election didn't materialize as he won by about 5 percentage points. But his lackluster campaign gave Le Pen an opening to brand the President, who has always struggled to show he understands voters' economic difficulties, as indifferent to high inflation and energy prices. As he trained his sights on the second round of his election race, Macron styled himself as a bulwark against populism and extremism inside France and abroad. “I want France to be part of a strong EU, continuing to create alliances with the great democracies of the world to protect ourselves,” the French President said after the first-round result. “I do not want a France that leaves the EU and only has international populists and xenophobes as allies. That is not us.” After the effective disappearance of the center-right opposition in French politics, around 50% of the vote went to radical parties of the right and left. In some ways, this parallels the eclipse of moderate Republicans in Washington by Trump's authoritarian America First-ism. In the US, Biden won in 2020 by courting the moderate suburbs, but progressives succeeded in tugging his presidency to the left once he was in office in a way that may have alienated more centrist voters. Le Pen has worked to paper over her past support for Putin and her vows to pull France out of the European Union. But if she were to pull off a surprise victory, the anti-Putin coalition in Europe would come under severe strain, and the Russian leader would have a fresh opportunity to carve new divides among the allies. Macron has been especially prominent in the Ukraine crisis, keeping open lines of communication with the Kremlin but also emerging as Biden's most important ally in Europe. “Putin's invasion of Ukraine strengthened the West as never before since the Cold War. The world is now divided between those countries that defend the rule of law and democracy and those that fight to end them,” said Nicholas Dungan, an Atlantic Council senior fellow who teaches at Sciences Po, a prestigious French research university. Still, Macron's first-round victory and newly energized rhetoric offered the prospect that he could be a dam against extremism, at least in France. “Today we have some minor relief that we will be able to count on French leadership in the future,” Dungan said after Sunday's results in an election that had been watched with some anxiety among Biden administration officials. Still, no one who worries about the threat that extremism poses to democracy – a core theme of Biden's presidency – is taking a second-round Macron victory for granted. **“The far right has never been so close to winning.”** said defeated French Republican candidate Valerie Pécresse. **In 2016, the populist revolt that saw Britain vote to leave the European Union was a canary-in-the-coal-mine moment**

that foreshadowed Trump's outsider crusade that crushed Democrat Hillary Clinton's White House hopes. Six years later, there appear to be ill omens for Democrats across the English Channel. Le Pen was able to energize her campaign, holding multiple rallies in rural areas, by highlighting the punishing toll of inflation that pushed up the cost of living and was exacerbated by the economic impact of the war in Ukraine. Biden, who repeatedly told Americans that inflation was a “transitory” issue coming out of the pandemic, has tried hard to show the country he understands its effects. But he could pay a heavy price in November's midterms if already disgruntled voters are still furious about their grocery bills. Power based on big lies Trump, Le Pen and Orban don't come anywhere near the depravity and violence of Putin, who is perpetrating atrocities in Ukraine on a scale not seen since at least the Bosnian war and probably since World War II. But the tactics of many of the anti-establishment politicians stem from a similar well of political toxicity. They rely on whipping up anger over economic conditions into resentment of foreigners, Muslims and outsiders, including other minority communities. Some concentrate on eroding the reputation of democratic systems and a free press to build power. **Anything that increases the cynicism of the electorate about its rulers and the system that keeps them in place creates a new pool of anger that can be exploited.**

**Link: The plan can reduce populism by re-establishing trust in institutions, and preventing false alternative viewpoints from being discovered by users**

**Eike et al, University of Oslo, 2022**

Elisabeth,Finanstilsynet, Hans-Jorg Trenz, Scuola Normale Superiore and Asimina Michailidou, ARENA, University of Oslo, Oslo,Palgrave Studies in European Political Sociology, Chapter -- Journalism, truth and the restoration of trust in democracy, Tracing the EU Fake News Strategy, 11/11, p 53-75, [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-13694-8\\_4](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-13694-8_4)

**The rise of populism, illiberalism and political extremism undermine the authority of the intermediaries of truth and encourage their adherents to search for their own facts** against established media and journalism. **They, thus, build up their support base of seemingly self-empowered digital media users.** In turn, **policies that aim to stamp out misinformation, or algorithms that aim to detect ‘fake news’ online, equally build on the dichotomy between biased and pure truth,** and the promise to come up with a clear-cut response. This disregards the old insight of public sphere theory that **news making and decisions about the authority of information have always been political acts to the extent that journalism and news media prioritise some stories over others,** that they also prioritise according to news organisation agendas and the personal biases of the journalist. As such, journalists are not closer to truth, but rather more faithful to the procedures that allow to establish information value and truth in a way that is consensual to a majority.

**Impact: Populists are spreading racism, nationalism, and islamophobia**

**Roth, Human Rights Watch, No Date**

Kenneth, Executive Director, The Dangerous Rise of Populism,

[https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/populism\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/populism_0.pdf)

**Human rights exist to protect people from government abuse** and neglect. Rights limit what a state can do and impose obligations for how a state must act. Yet today **a new generation of populists is turning this protection on its head.** Claiming to speak for “the people,” they treat rights as an impediment to their conception of the majority will, a needless obstacle to defending the nation from perceived threats and evils. Instead of accepting rights as protecting everyone, they privilege the declared interests of the majority, encouraging people to adopt the dangerous belief that they will never themselves need to assert rights against an overreaching government claiming to act in their name. The appeal of the populists has grown with mounting public discontent over the status quo. In the West, many people feel left behind by technological change, the global economy, and growing inequality. Horrific incidents of terrorism generate apprehension and fear. Some are uneasy with societies that have become more ethnically, religiously and racially diverse. There is an increasing sense that governments and the elite ignore public concerns. **In this cauldron of discontent, certain politicians are flourishing** and even gaining power **by portraying rights as protecting only the terrorist suspect or the asylum seeker at the expense of the safety, economic welfare, and cultural preferences of the presumed majority. They scapegoat refugees, immigrant communities, and minorities. Truth is a frequent casualty. Nativism, xenophobia, racism, and Islamophobia are on the rise.**

**Impact: Populism seeks to dehumanize and control women**  
**Mostov, New York University, 2021**

Julie, *Frontiers of Sociology*, 1/11, Populism is always gendered and dangerous, *Sec. Gender, Sex, and Sexualities*, Vol. 5, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2020.625385/full>

Populist leaders who stoke the enthusiasm of the crowd rely on an identification of sameness among its members and incite suspicion of those who might question the message, who might not be properly loyal or who might be susceptible to the “contamination” of others. Even if the energy is focused on tearing down the establishment and weeding out corruption or systems of exploitation, **the distinctive nature of reliance on “us” v. “them” always carries the seeds of a kind of exclusive belonging and the perilous path of proscribed gendered roles. The reproduction of the “us” is too crucial to leave unregulated,** and gendered bodies are too vulnerable to

violation and occupation to go without vigilance, that is, without surveillance and demographic policing. **Proper gender**

**roles are essential to the nationalist narratives of populist imaginaries,** fueled by resentment at the demeaning roles left to beleaguered members of the “should-be dominant nation” by condescending elites or corrupt politicians. These gendered roles are often noted in feminist critiques of right-wing nationalism, but the relationship between gender and populism is understudied in the increasingly pervasive literature on populism ([Abi-Hassan, 2017](#)). In some cases, theorists question the specifically gendered nature of populism (as opposed to particular instantiations of it). Others, while recognizing the hypermasculinity of populist leaders and their rhetoric, qualify this by noting the currently increasing number of women engaged in or among the leadership of populist parties ([Farris, 2017](#); [Kantola and Lombardo, 2019](#)). In this short piece, my major focus is not to address the wide-ranging literature on populism, nor to explore the absence of gender from important discussions of populism, but to make the argument that **populism is always gendered and dangerous to women and**

**democracy.** While contested in terms of right and left associations and historical relations to fascism or democracy, theorists generally associate populism with the energized “ordinary” people who have been ignored and demeaned by an elitist few who have gained control of society in their own interests (often by bringing in or racial, religious, or ethnic others/minorities) at the cost of the people and, even, the Nation. The “authentic” people rally under a charismatic leader who claims to be in a unique position to define and defend the interests of the people and to recover the values which support the people’s prominence in the nation and restore the Nation to its glorious past ([Cohen, 2019](#); [Urbinati, 2019](#)). Anti-immigration policies and religious or ethnic bigotry, thus, often play important roles in the rhetoric of populists, together with an imaginary of violation, occupation, and displacement by the dangerous, criminalized, and devious others threatening the “assumed” majority, its rule and social, economic, and political standing ([Beltrán, 2020](#)). I do not associate these characteristics of populism with popular leaders, such as Bernie Sanders, who energize voters around critiques of inequality and social injustice, as well as notions of solidarity and recognition of difference. It is when popular movements eschew these principles and embrace exclusionary practices that they edge toward populism and its dangers. Populisms thrive on the devotion to sameness in the protection of “us” against the dangerous others and those “elites” who are ready to sacrifice us for them. This may speak to unemployed workers against immigrants; women fearful of losing privileged protections; members of ethnonational, racial or religious groups who are pitted against one another for the minimal benefits of inclusion; privileged communities afraid of the “lawlessness” of those demanding their basic rights; and members of self-proclaimed religious majorities threatened by those who believe differently. Populism and nationalism are tightly linked and, while appearing benign in some cases, always are eventually dangerous for gender differences, for women, and democracy<sup>1</sup>. **The desire to naturalize national boundaries and ethnic/racial differences makes recourse to gendered roles in the reproduction of the nation particularly effective** ([Stevens, 1999](#); [Mostov, 2008](#)).

**As women have a special duty to reproduce the nation and ward off the threat of demographic tragedy, control of women's sexuality is tightly linked to control of national space and the transgressing of symbolic and physical borders.** Women’s role in reproducing the nation and upholding its values makes them also the object of suspicion and surveillance: “our” women can be seduced by the dangerous male other or refuse their proper roles by failing to reproduce or doing so willingly with the other; the “other’s” women threaten the demographic balance by increasing their own numbers. This narrative may be obscured in populist party appeals to women’s equality in the workplace or at the ballot box, even in party politics, but the demographic threat of diminishing racial or ethnic group numbers and standing sneaks its way back in more or less vocal ways into populist policies. **Gendered bodies become the object of control, from direct attacks on abortion rights, to racialized reproductive incentives and patriarchal narratives that stigmatize the other's gendered practices, to family separations and decisions around deserving asylum seekers.**

## Foreign Interference Extension:

**Uniqueness: Foreign interference in US democracy via deepfakes is happening now due to geopolitical conflicts**

**Norden et al, Brennan Center for Justice, 2024**

Lawrence, Senior Director, Mekela Panditharatne, Counsel, Democracy Program, both at Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, and David Harris, UC Berkley and advisor to Brennan Center, Just Security, 2/16, Multiple threats converge to heighten risks to this year's US Elections,

<https://www.justsecurity.org/92348/multiple-threats-converge-to-heighten-disinformation-risks-to-this-years-us-elections/>

Meanwhile, **the threat of foreign influence campaigns has only grown since the 2020 election. With the continuation of Russia's war on Ukraine, growing tensions in the Middle East amid the war between Israel and Hamas, and increased friction between the United States and China, foreign powers have considerable interests in the outcome of the 2024 election.** [The Department of Homeland Security](#), [the National Intelligence Council](#), and [major tech companies](#) have warned **since 2022 that Russia, Iran, and China are all likely to launch interference efforts in 2024, with Russia as the "most committed and capable threat" to American elections,** according to Microsoft. **These campaigns have already begun.** In November, Meta found that thousands of Facebook accounts based in China were [impersonating Americans](#) and posting about polarizing political topics. Meta's most recent [adversarial threat report](#) noted that the company had already identified and removed multiple foreign networks of fake accounts originating in China and Russia, and highlighted that similar networks pose an ongoing threat to the information environment.

**Impact: Failure of the US to effectively defend its allies causes global instability, nuclear annihilation, and xenophobia---draws the US back into conflicts.**

**Wright, Brookings Institution, 2020**

Thomas, Director of the Center on the United States and Europe and a Senior Fellow in the Project on International Order and Strategy at the Brookings Institution, doctorate from Georgetown University, a Master of Philosophy from Cambridge University, and a bachelor's and master's from University College Dublin, "The Folly of Retrenchment," Foreign Affairs, 02-10-2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2020-02-10/folly-retrenchment>

This is a false promise, for a number of reasons. First, **retrenchment would worsen regional security competition in Europe and Asia.** The realists recognize that the U.S. military presence in Europe and Asia does dampen security competition, but they claim that it does so at too high a price—and one that, at any rate, should be paid by U.S. allies in the regions themselves. Although **pulling back would invite regional security competition,** realist retrenchers admit, the United States could be safer in a more dangerous world because regional rivals would check one another.

This is a perilous gambit, however, because **regional conflicts often end up implicating U.S. interests. They might thus end up drawing the United States back in after it has left—resulting in a much more dangerous venture than heading off the conflict in the first place by staying.**

Realist retrenchment reveals a hubris that the United States can control consequences and prevent crises from erupting into war. The progressives' view of regional security is similarly flawed. These retrenchers reject the idea that regional security competition will intensify if the United States leaves. In fact, they argue, U.S. alliances often promote competition, as in the Middle East, where U.S. support for Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates has emboldened those countries in their cold war with Iran. But this logic does not apply to Europe or Asia, where U.S. allies have behaved responsibly. A U.S. pullback from those places is more likely to embolden the regional powers. Since 2008, Russia has invaded two of its neighbors that are not members of NATO, and if the Baltic states were no longer protected by a U.S. security guarantee, it is conceivable that Russia would test the boundaries with gray-zone warfare. In East Asia, a U.S. withdrawal would force Japan to increase its defense capabilities and change its constitution to enable it to compete with China on its own, straining relations with South Korea. The second problem with retrenchment involves nuclear proliferation. If the United States pulled out of NATO or ended its alliance with Japan, as many realist advocates of retrenchment recommend, some of its allies, no longer protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, would be tempted to acquire nuclear weapons of their own. Unlike the progressives for retrenchment, the realists are comfortable with that result, since they see deterrence as a stabilizing force. Most Americans are not so sanguine, and rightly so. **There are good reasons to**

**worry about nuclear proliferation: nuclear materials could end up in the hands of terrorists, states with less experience might be more prone to nuclear accidents, and nuclear powers in close proximity have shorter response times and thus conflicts among them have a greater chance of spiraling into escalation.** Third, **retrenchment would heighten nationalism and xenophobia.** In Europe, **a U.S. withdrawal would send the message that every country must fend for itself.** It would therefore empower the far-right groups already making this claim—such as the Alternative for Germany, the League in Italy, and the National Front in France—while undermining the centrist democratic leaders there who told their populations that they could rely on the United States and NATO. As a result, Washington would lose leverage over the domestic politics of individual allies, particularly younger and more fragile democracies such as Poland. And since these nationalist populist groups are almost always protectionist, retrenchment would damage U.S. economic interests, as well. Even more alarming, many of the right-wing nationalists that retrenchment would empower have called for greater accommodation of China and Russia.

## Racism Extension:

### **Deepfakes could be used to fake bodycam footage and let abusive officers off the hook Pfefferkorn, Stanford University 2021**

Riana, Research Scholar, Stanford Internet Observatory, April 21st, Brookings Institution, The threat posed by deepfakes to marginalized communities,

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-threat-posed-by-deepfakes-to-marginalized-communities/>

**When we're faced with a video recording of an event—such as an incident of police brutality—we can generally trust that the event happened as shown in the video. But that may soon change,** thanks to the advent of so-called “deepfake” videos that use machine learning technology to show a real

person [saying and doing things](#) they haven't. **This technology poses a particular threat to marginalized**

**communities. If deepfakes cause society to move away from the current “seeing is believing” paradigm for video footage, that shift may negatively impact individuals**

**whose stories society is already less likely to believe.** The proliferation of video recording technology

has fueled a reckoning with police violence in the United States, recorded by bystanders and body-cameras. But in a world of pervasive, compelling deepfakes, the burden of proof to verify authenticity of videos may shift onto the videographer, a development that would further undermine attempts to seek justice for police violence. To counter deepfakes, high-tech tools meant to increase trust in videos are in development, but these technologies, though well-intentioned, could end up being used to discredit already marginalized voices. Recent police killings of Black Americans caught on camera have inspired [massive protests](#) that have filled U.S. streets in the past year. Those protests endured for months in Minneapolis, where former police officer Derek Chauvin [was convicted](#) this week in the murder of George Floyd, a Black man. During Chauvin's trial, another police officer [killed](#) Daunte Wright just outside Minneapolis, prompting [additional protests](#) as well as the officer's resignation and arrest on [second-degree manslaughter charges](#). She supposedly mistook her gun for her Taser—the [same mistake](#) alleged in the fatal shooting of Oscar Grant in 2009, by an officer whom a jury later found [guilty](#) of involuntary manslaughter (but not guilty of a more serious charge). All three of these tragic deaths—George Floyd, Daunte Wright, Oscar Grant—were documented in videos that were later used (or, in Wright's case, seem likely to be used) as evidence at the trials of the police officers responsible. Both [Floyd's](#) and [Wright's](#) deaths were captured by the respective officers' body-worn cameras, and multiple bystanders with cell phones recorded the [Floyd](#) and [Grant](#) incidents. [Some commentators credit](#) a 17-year-old Black girl's video recording of Floyd's death for making Chauvin's trial happen at all. The growth of the movement for Black lives in the years since Grant's death in 2009 owes much to the rise in the availability, quality, and virality of bystander videos documenting police violence, but this video evidence hasn't always been enough to secure convictions. From [Rodney King's](#) assailants in 1992 to [Philando Castile's](#) shooter 25 years later, juries have [often declined](#) to convict police officers even in cases where wanton police violence or killings are documented on video. Despite their growing prevalence, police bodycams have had [mixed results](#) in deterring excessive force or impelling accountability. That said, **bodycam videos do sometimes make a difference, helping to convict officers** in the killings of Jordan Edwards in Texas and Laquan McDonald in Chicago. Chauvin's defense team [pitted bodycam footage](#) against the bystander videos employed by the prosecution, and lost.

### **Technology requires assumptions, and those assumptions are usually built on racist datasets. We need to pull back the veil and show how these algorithms are coding racism Benjamin, Professor, 2019**

Ruha, Assistant Professor of African American Studies, Princeton University, Race After Technology, Polity Books,

**Problem solving is at the heart of tech. An algorithm, after all, is a set of instructions, rules, and calculations designed to solve problems.** Data for Black Lives co-founder

Yeshimabeit Milner reminds us that “[t]he decision to make every Black life count as three-fifths of a person was embedded in the electoral college, an algorithm that continues to be the basis of our current democracy.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, even **just deciding what problem needs solving requires a host of judgments; and yet we are expected to pay no attention to the man behind the screen.**<sup>20</sup> As danah boyd and M. C. Elish of the Data & Society Research Institute posit, **“[t]he datasets and models used in these systems are not objective representations of reality.**

They are the culmination of particular tools, people, and power structures that foreground one way of seeing or judging over another.”<sup>21</sup> **By pulling back the curtain and drawing attention to forms of coded inequity, not only do we become more aware of the social dimensions of technology but we can work together against the emergence of a digital caste system that relies on our naivety when it comes to the neutrality of technology.** This problem extends beyond obvious forms of criminalization and surveillance.<sup>22</sup> It includes an elaborate social and technical apparatus that governs all areas of life. The animating force of the New Jim Code is that tech designers encode judgments into technical systems but claim that the racist results of their designs are entirely exterior to the encoding process. **Racism thus becomes doubled – magnified and buried under layers of digital denial.** There are bad actors in this arena that are easier to spot than others. Facebook executives who denied and lied about their knowledge of Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election via social media are perpetrators of the most broadcast violation of public trust to date.<sup>23</sup> But the line between bad and “neutral” players is a fuzzy one and there are many tech insiders hiding behind the language of free speech, allowing racist and sexist harassment to run rampant in the digital public square and looking the other way as avowedly bad actors deliberately crash into others with reckless abandon.

## Economy Extension

**Deepfake tools create risks for wide-spread harms and misinformation like in politics**  
**Bateman, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2020**

Jon, July, Deepfakes and synthetic media in the financial system, Assessing Threat Scenarios,  
<https://perma.cc/98EP-QX6K>

Rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are enabling novel forms of deception. AI algorithms can produce realistic “deepfake” videos, as well as authentic-looking fake photos and writing. Collectively called synthetic media, **these tools have triggered widespread concern about their potential in spreading political disinformation. Yet the same technology can also facilitate financial harm. Recent months have seen the first publicly documented cases of deepfakes used for fraud and extortion.** Today the financial threat from synthetic media is low, so the key policy question is how much this threat will grow over time. Leading industry experts diverge widely in their assessments. Some believe **firms and regulators should act now to head off serious risks.** Others believe the threat will likely remain minor and the financial system should focus on more pressing technology challenges. A lack of data has stymied the discussion. In the absence of hard data, a close analysis of potential scenarios can help to better gauge the problem. In this paper, ten scenarios illustrate how **criminals and other bad actors could abuse synthetic media technology to inflict financial harm on a broad swath of targets.** Based on today’s synthetic media technology and the realities of financial crime, the scenarios explore whether and how synthetic media could alter the threat landscape.

## Domestic Extremism Extension:

**Companies are granted immunity when it comes to terrorism and extremism under Section 230. Hiding behind no liability that Section 230 gives them, allowing companies to profit off terrorism and monitor their websites whenever it fits their interest bests Rubin, MSNBC 2023**

Jordan, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023 "Supreme Court tosses terrorism claim against Twitter, doesn't mess with Section 230"  
<https://www.msnbc.com/deadline-white-house/deadline-legal-blog/supreme-court-twitter-google-terrorism-internet-regulation-rcna75879> Kales ★

The Supreme Court on Thursday threw out a claim against Twitter under an anti-terrorism law for platforming ISIS propaganda. More broadly, in a similar appeal against Google, the court passed on deciding the scope of legal protections for internet companies in a case that had huge implications for how the internet functions. Those huge implications related to Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, which states: "No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider." The decades-old law has been crucial to the creation and functioning of the modern internet but has come under scrutiny (including from Justice Clarence Thomas) for leaving so-called Big Tech companies immune from liability. That led to concern in *Gonzalez v. Google* that the justices could upend those liability protections and thus the internet itself. **Specifically, the issue was whether Section 230 protects internet platforms from lawsuits stemming from their algorithms. The family of Nohemi Gonzalez sued Google after the American was killed in a 2015 ISIS attack in Paris. Her family sued under the Antiterrorism Act, alleging the company aided and abetted terrorism in recommending ISIS videos on YouTube (which Google owns) and thus helping the terror group recruit members, plan attacks and instill fear. But during the oral argument in February, it didn't sound like the justices were interested in upending Section 230 immunity.** The Google case was argued the same week as the similar case against Twitter, which also involved the Antiterrorism Act. That raised the prospect that a ruling against the plaintiffs in that case, *Twitter v. Taamneh*, could scuttle the Google case. That's because a ruling that the companies aren't liable under the terrorism law would mean the justices wouldn't have to reach the broader Section 230 immunity issue. And that's basically what happened on Thursday, with the justices ruling in favor of Twitter and then, citing that ruling, siding with Google. **In a unanimous opinion by Thomas in the Twitter case, the court called the allegations "insufficient" to establish the company aided and abetted ISIS. Then in a short, unsigned opinion in the Google case, the court noted that the allegations in there were "materially identical to those at issue in Twitter" and that the complaint "likewise fails to state such a claim."** That enabled the justices to get around the immunity issue in the Google case, where the justices wrote in that unsigned opinion that they "decline to address the application of §230 to a complaint that appears to state little, if any, plausible claim for relief." The Google case is sent back to a lower court for further consideration.

## Framing Extension

**The infocalypse must be solved at the platform level -- there is no alternative**

**Avadya, University of Michigan 2018**

Aviv, Chief Technologist, Center for Social Media Responsibility at University of Michigan, and Knight News Innovation Fellow, Columbia University, Washington Post, What's worse than fake news? The distortion of reality itself

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2018/02/22/digital-reality/>

**Which hurts civilization more: no one believing anything, or everyone believing lies? If we fail to take immediate action to protect our news and information ecosystem, we may soon find out. We are careening toward an infocalypse** — a catastrophic failure of the marketplace of ideas. I am even more deeply concerned about the future of our democracy now than I was in mid-2016, when I was one of the few

[raising the alarm](#) about social media creating an explosive breeding ground for misinformation. Facebook and its brethren have

begun to take this threat seriously, but **the next threat — the distortion of reality itself — is fast**

**approaching**. Advances in communications technology and artificial intelligence are making it easy to create audio or video content with potentially dangerous consequences, from making it appear that a world leader is ordering a nuclear strike to simulating your spouse's voice on the phone asking for a bank password. As individuals and institutions, we must ensure that we trust the trustworthy and disregard the disingenuous. **Representative government requires** accountability, and accountability

requires **discerning knowledge. But technology is disrupting that edifice of knowledge, and if we don't act quickly enough, it may soon bring us past the point of no return.** So what can

we do? In short, we need massive investment across industry, civil society and government, to understand and mitigate threats to our information ecosystems. And we need it now. The landscape of these threats will change rapidly over the next few years and will manifest in very different ways across different regions and systems. The funding vehicles, incentives and institutions that we develop to address them must therefore be adequately nimble and able to quickly reallocate resources as threats evolve. As of now, there are a few particularly promising mitigations that deserve immediate consideration: 1. Monitoring the information ecosystem In order to react to emerging threats to our information ecosystem, we need systems in place to track and understand how it is changing, if it is improving and where it might need to be shored up. In 2016, for example, I was able use an off-the-shelf analytics tool to determine that a significant proportion of the most popular news consumed through online platforms was inaccurate or misleading. With access to better data and investment in human judgment and fact-checking to establish baseline truths, this type of effort could be ongoing and respond to new challenges and platforms. This is the focus of my current work, as it informs all potential mitigations and can help us understand their effectiveness. 2. Fostering responsible research and design As machine learning technology advances and technology platforms scale, our information ecosystem is being deeply impacted. Organizations that are researching or deploying these new systems need to be able to understand the potential consequences of their creations.

Unfortunately, there is no established body of experts with the motive and resources to evaluate how these systems could impact the world. In the medical research and the drug industry, institutional review boards help evaluate new studies to ensure they are ethical. AI researchers and platform technologists need similar in-house or third-party societal impact review boards to help them evaluate the potential unintended consequences of their work. 3. Implementing authenticity infrastructure We need to proactively develop systems that can efficiently determine if, for example, a video is real or manipulated and convey this information to the end user. This is especially important for journalists, diplomats, courts and political leaders. Initially, forgery detection may work well enough. Very soon, however, we may need to build and deploy an enormous amount of new technical infrastructure to proactively validate that a video was captured at a particular time and place. Either way, platforms and even browsers would need to incorporate these authenticity stamps in a way that has real impact for users. They must affect the psychology of belief formation, as merely labeling something as forged is not likely to be sufficient. 4. **Ensuring information markets reward reality**

**Our current information ecosystem still strongly rewards misinformation, sensationalism and divisiveness over reality, accountability and civic connection.** Whether you are a Russian troll, a

Myanmarese monk preaching ethnic cleansing or even an established newspaper, that's where the attention and money lies. **We need to fix this at the distribution platform level** and perhaps even at the societal level. This may require anything from changing how popularity of content on Facebook equates to more prominent play in news feeds to improving media literacy to creating a fund to reward those who catch forgeries.

# **The Negative** **On Case**

## **No Inherency:**

### **Companies:**

#### **No Inherency: Tools are being created now to fight deep fakes and disinformation**

##### **Heath, Axios AI 2023**

Ryan, Axios AI, 10/23, Researchers, activists try to get ahead of AI driven election misinformation,

[https://www.axios.com/2023/10/10/ai-misinformation-elections-response?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsletter\\_axioswhatsnext&stream=science](https://www.axios.com/2023/10/10/ai-misinformation-elections-response?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axioswhatsnext&stream=science)

**New products, guides and accountability initiatives are flooding the inboxes of election authorities** and participants **in response to the wave of generative AI tools** that have been released in 2023. Why it matters: Major tech companies have been cutting back their internal investments in election integrity work, and the newest AI companies lack the resources and relationships to effectively manage the risks their tools pose to elections. AI deepfakes moved from curiosity to [serious problem in the Slovakian election](#) Sept. 30, including a fake video that purported to show the defeated candidate buying votes. [Audio deepfakes became a flashpoint](#) at the U.K. Labour Party's annual conference, when fake audio of Keir Starmer — the poll favorite to become Britain's next prime minister — was circulated purporting to show him bullying staff and criticizing the conference's host city. What's happening: **Columbia University and Sciences Po in Paris have launched an innovation lab to monitor AI influence on elections and "design and test interventions that strengthen democratic societies."** Led by Rappler CEO and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa and Camille François, a researcher known for her work uncovering [Russia's 2016 election disinformation campaign](#), the lab is part of a digital literacy project backed by [\\$3 million from the French government](#). **The Integrity Institute, led by former Meta elections staff, has expanded its election integrity best practices guide — urging platforms and new AI players alike to set public benchmarks for their efforts.** [AI and You](#), founded by National AI Advisory Committee member Susan Gonzales, plans a campaign showing viewers what AI-generated deepfake election ads look like. The end goal, Gonzales told Axios, is to educate the target audience of young people of color, who can then educate older family members. **Services like [Nooz.ai](#) have debuted features that perform language analysis of news stories and official documents to help users spot manipulation efforts.**

#### **Open AI is working with most of the major AI platforms to prevent misuse**

##### **Newton, Platformer, 2024**

Casey, May 7th, Inside Open AI's new plan for fighting deepfakes,

<https://www.platformer.news/open-ai-deepfakes-election-c2pa/?ref=platformer-newsletter>

On Tuesday, **OpenAI [joined the steering committee](#) of a little-known but increasingly powerful standards body known as the Coalition for Content Provenance and**

**Authenticity, or C2PA.** In doing so, the company waded into one of the most critical debates about democracy in the age of artificial intelligence: how will we know that what we are seeing online is real? And what should tech companies do when they spot a fake? With just under six months to go in the US presidential campaign, the biggest social networks have mostly managed to stay out of election coverage. With the top match-up a repeat of 2020, the candidates and their respective positions are well known by many voters. Whatever happens in November — and unlike in the epoch-shifting election of 2016 — it is difficult to imagine a scenario in which platform policies play a decisive role in the outcome. At the same time, that doesn't mean platforms will have an easy time this year. Elections [affecting half the world's population](#) are scheduled to take place, and after years of layoffs, platforms will be monitoring them [with much smaller trust and safety teams than they once](#) had. And there's at least one complicating variable that companies like Meta, Google, and TikTok have never had to manage in an election before: generative artificial intelligence,

which threatens to overwhelm their platforms with synthetic media that could spread misinformation, foreign influence campaigns, and other potential harms. At this point, anyone whose Facebook feed has been [taken over by Shrimp Jesus](#) — or simply perused [the best AI fakes from this year's Met Gala](#) — knows how easily AI-generated words and images can quickly come to dominate a social platform. For the most part, the outlandish AI images that have attracted media coverage this year appear to be part of a standard spam playbook: quickly grow an audience via clickbait, and then aggressively promote low-quality goods in the feed for however long you can. In the coming weeks and months, platforms are likely to be tested by a higher-stakes problem: people attempting to manipulate public opinion with synthetic media. Already we've seen deepfakes of [President Biden](#) and [Donald Trump](#). (In both of those cases, incidentally, the perpetrators were connected to different rival campaigns.) Synthetic media targeted at races at the local, state, and national level is all but guaranteed. In February, the big platforms [signed an agreement](#) at the Munich Security Conference committing to fight against deepfakes that attempt to deceive voters. But with a flood of fakes expected to begin arriving any week now, what steps should Instagram, YouTube, and all the rest be taking? There are two basic tasks here for the tech companies: figure out what's fake, and then figure out what to do about it. The first, and arguably most difficult task for platforms is to identify synthetic media when they see it. For a decade now, platforms have worked to develop tools that let them sniff out what Meta calls "inauthentic behavior": fake accounts, bots, coordinated efforts to boost individual pieces of content, and so on. It can be [surprisingly hard](#) to identify this stuff: bad actors' tactics continually evolve as platforms get wise to them. The C2PA was founded in 2021 by a group of organizations including Microsoft, Adobe, Intel, and the BBC. **The goal was to develop a royalty-free, open technical standard that adds tamper-proof metadata to media files.** If you create an image with Photoshop, for example, Adobe adds metadata to the image that identifies the date it was created, the software where it originated, and any edits made to it, among other information. From there, anyone can use a free tool like [Content Credentials](#) to see where it came from. **OpenAI said in January that it would begin adding this metadata to images created with its DALL-E 3 text-to-image tool and its Sora video generation tool. In joining the C2PA, the company is endorsing this metadata-driven approach to help tell what's real from what's fake.** "The world needs common ways of sharing information about how digital content was created," the company said [in a blog post](#). "Standards can help clarify how content was made and provide other information about its origins in a way that's easy to recognize across many situations — whether that content is the raw output from a camera, or an artistic creation from a tool like DALL-E 3." Of course, there are some big flaws in any plan that relies on metadata. For one thing, most media uploaded to social platforms likely isn't made with a tool that adds content credentials. For another, you can easily take a screenshot of an AI-generated image to eliminate its metadata. To fully solve the problem, you need to try several different things at once.

## **No Inherency: Private companies are already creating solutions to deepfakes** **Nagumotu, New Hampshire University Law School, 2022**

Kavyasri, JD Candidate, University of New Hampshire School of Law, Deepfakes are taking over social media: Can The Law Keep Up?

[https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu\\_pp113-157.pdf](https://law.unh.edu/sites/default/files/media/2022/06/nagumotu_pp113-157.pdf)

**The rise in the creation of deepfakes consequentially created a need to develop tools to detect them. Sensity, a company founded in 2018 based in Amsterdam, started researching deepfakes and dubs itself "the world's first visual threat intelligence company."**<sup>30</sup> In their 2019 report, Sensity **detected 14,679 deepfakes online** and, in 2020, found that the number rose to 49,081.<sup>31</sup> The trends indicated that the numbers of deepfakes available online were nearly doubling every six months.<sup>32</sup> Even though early deepfakes involved pornographic content, the recent popular deepfakes targeted people who were popular politicians and internet celebrities. **In September 2019, Facebook launched a Deepfake Detection Challenge (DFDC).**<sup>34</sup> The public contest encouraged people to develop autonomous algorithmic detection systems to identify deepfake videos.<sup>35</sup> Participants were given a raw dataset with 38.5 days' worth of video recorded by 3,500 actors, some of which were manipulated deepfakes.<sup>36</sup> **Over 2,000 participants submitted multiple models each with new algorithms to detect deepfakes.**<sup>37</sup> The winning model was able to detect 82% of the deepfakes that it was exposed to.<sup>38</sup> **The House Intelligence Committee on Intelligence met in 2019 to have an open hearing on "the national security threats posed by AI-enabled fake content,"** what can be done to detect

and combat it, and what role the public sector, the private sector, and society as a whole should play to counter a potentially grim, 'post-truth' future."<sup>39</sup> The hearing tried to examine the profound questions raised by deepfakes about national security and democratic governance. <sup>40</sup> **The tangible result of the hearing was the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) funding a media forensics project aimed at finding ways to automatically screen for deepfakes. <sup>41</sup>**

## **No Solvency:**

The plan won't solve -- deepfakes still exist, and definitions of what is considered a "deepfake" will differ

Ray, New South Wales Law Journal, 2021

Andrew, Visiting Fellow, Australian National University College of Law, Disinformation, Deepfakes, and Democracy, University of New South Wales Law Journal,

[https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Issue-443\\_final\\_Ray.pdf](https://www.unswlawjournal.unsw.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Issue-443_final_Ray.pdf)

**Protection against deepfakes cannot be left to the social media platforms** on which they are shared. While some platforms have developed policies to combat deepfakes,<sup>57</sup> this type of remedy is insufficient for three reasons. First, **even where a video is removed by the platform this does not necessarily counter the harm, and without legal powers to compel the social media platforms, an affected party cannot seek a retraction or public recognition that the video was fake.** Second, **not all social media companies' current disinformation policies address deepfakes, nor is there a guarantee that existing policies are sustainable.** Third, **definitions of 'deepfake' may vary between social media platforms** and may not capture all videos that have been edited to mislead viewers – for example, current disinformation policies do not capture the Nancy Pelosi example discussed above.<sup>58</sup> **In order to ensure consistent, and therefore fair, treatment of political deepfakes, measures must be captured in law rather than left to discretionary company policy.** This approach also ensures that Parliament can set appropriate limits on what type of videos are or are not captured by the law, and tailor appropriate exemptions.

**Deepfakes will always outpace deepfake detection tech**  
Ullrich, Columbia Law School, 2022

Quentin J. JD Candidate, Journal of Law and Social Problems, Is This Video Real? The Principal mischief of deepfakes and how the Lanham Act Can Address It,

<https://jlsplaw.columbia.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/213/files/2022/01/Vol55-Ullrich.pdf>

Despite these efforts, **technologists and legal scholars remain concerned that deepfake creators will continue to outsmart current and emerging detection tools.**<sup>67</sup> Hany Farid, a computer scientist at the University of California at Berkeley, has expressed concern that **those working on detection are "out-gunned" 100 to 1 by those creating deepfakes.**<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, **even if effective detection tools are developed, it may be difficult to spread awareness about the deepfake, or it may be too late—the harm caused by the deepfake may have already taken place.**<sup>69</sup> Moreover, some scholars have noted **the public may not trust detection tools, even those that are effective.**<sup>70</sup> Public distrust in social media companies, for example, may impede acceptance and adoption of such companies' deepfake detection tools.<sup>71</sup> **Even if detection tools become effective at removing harmful deepfakes from public view, such tools fail to disincentivize the creation of harmful deepfakes ex ante.** For these reasons, **the only resort for victims of deepfakes may be ex post, through the courts, whose adversarial system and power to sanction may provide the trustworthiness and disincentivizing power needed combat pernicious deepfakes.**

**The affirmative is censoring free speech, which isn't the goal of Section 230. Violations of the 1st amendment will get struck down by the Supreme Court.**

**Robles, FIU Law, 2022**

Christian Sarceno, Florida International School of Law Review, Vol. 16, No. 1, Section 230 is Not Broken: Why Most Proposed Section 230 Reforms Will Do More Harm Than Good, and How the Ninth Circuit Got it Right

<https://ecollections.law.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1512&context=lawreview>

The idea is that tech companies should receive Section 230 immunity only if they refrain from viewpoint discrimination, which is reminiscent of First Amendment constitutional requirements.<sup>65</sup>

**The proposals liken the times when a platform removes, blocks, or mutes user generated content based on political beliefs to prohibited state actor censorship under the First Amendment that should deprive the platform of its Section 230 immunity.**<sup>66</sup> One example of these proposals is Senator Josh Hawley's proposal, which would require internet platforms to pass a political neutrality audit from the Federal Trade Commission to obtain Section 230 protections,<sup>67</sup> and another is U.S. Representative Louie Gohmert's proposal, which would require platforms to sort user generated content in chronological order rather than moderating content's prominence and visibility based on their own criteria.<sup>68</sup>

Leaving aside whether political bias in online platforms is as prevalent or problematic as proponents of political neutrality reforms to Section 230 claim, a thorough reading of Section 230 or its legislative history simply does not suggest that political neutrality had anything to do with the law.<sup>69</sup> Section 230 was intended "to remove disincentives for the development and utilization of blocking and filtering technologies."<sup>70</sup> As such, **Section 230 was meant to promote, not dissuade, the use of censors, such that websites could filter objectionable content without triggering liability. Furthermore, parallels between the social media platforms and public forums or other such attempts to tie Section 230 and the First Amendment are disingenuous or at least inaccurate.**

First Amendment obligations fall entirely on government actors, not private actors.<sup>71</sup> The First Amendment protects, not prohibits, the rights of private actors against compelled speech.<sup>72</sup> **If there are any First Amendment factors to be considered in website filtering or blocking of user generated content, they would be in favor, not against, the rights of private actors to decide which content they wish to promote.**<sup>73</sup> It is therefore no surprise that Florida's Stop Social Media Censoring Act, which would have fined social media platforms for banning some political candidates, and was largely a legislative response to Trump's Twitter ban, was blocked by a federal judge before it could take effect, partially due to First Amendment issues.<sup>74</sup> At least inasmuch as it concerns Section 230's original policy goals, political neutrality was not and should not be relevant.

**The plan would be a huge reform that incentivizes companies to pretend they don't know what is going on and actually stop the moderation they currently are using**

**Robles, FIU Law, 2022**

Christian Sarceno, Florida International School of Law Review, Vol. 16, No. 1, Section 230 is Not Broken: Why Most Proposed Section 230 Reforms Will Do More Harm Than Good, and How the Ninth Circuit Got it Right

<https://ecollections.law.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1512&context=lawreview>

**This approach,** originally proposed by Danielle Citron and Lawfare editor-in-chief Benjamin Wittes, would carve out from Section 230 defendants who fail to take "reasonable steps to prevent or address unlawful uses of their services."<sup>96</sup> This proposal has the stated aim of "eliminat[ing] the immunity for the worst actors," so-called "Bad Samaritans," who were debatably not envisioned to be covered by the immunity provided in Section 230.<sup>97</sup> Other than a full repeal of Section 230, it **is perhaps the**

**most sweeping and burdensome of all proposals,<sup>98</sup> and it would likely require “expensive and lengthy factual inquiries** into all evidence probative of the reasonableness” of the internet platform’s behavior.<sup>99</sup> Unlike targeted proposals, an across the-board reasonableness requirement would have far-reaching consequences. **It would immediately deprive businesses of Section 230’s biggest procedural benefits, as more cases would have to go to trial for factual determinations rather than be dismissed, increasing the costs of the litigation.**<sup>100</sup> **These procedural losses will lead to the elimination or exit of internet services**, much like what occurred after FOSTA-SESTA, but on a much wider scale because of its more sweeping nature.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, a “reasonable steps” inquiry is vague and will likely remain unpredictable for businesses. **This will result in businesses either under-moderating, if they believe erroneously that their moderation practices are reasonable enough when they are not—facing unexpected and possibly enormous financial liability—or over-moderating due to cautiousness, resulting in more collateral censorship, as internet services remove legitimate borderline content out of fear that a judge might otherwise hold their practices unreasonable.**<sup>102</sup> Reasonableness itself is an amorphous term that is likely to develop and evolve over time as technologies and public attitudes change, resulting in businesses who are left behind by their peers to suddenly face liability where they were once deemed to have acted reasonably. Finally, a “reasonable steps” condition before immunity is granted would run contrary to the objective of Section 230 to encourage internet moderation.<sup>103</sup> A reasonable standard would not only catch “Bad Samaritans”, but it would also catch those that are negligent in their services. Leaving aside whether the law should protect those that negligently allow illegal conduct to thrive in their website, if taking reasonable steps is too burdensome for an internet platform and it does not want to close its business, it is once again faced with the moderator’s dilemma that prompted Congress to take action in the first place.<sup>104</sup> After all, CompuServe shows us that even before Section 230, an effective way to avoid liability was just to take a completely hands-off approach to moderation.<sup>105</sup> Other courts have found CompuServe to have established persuasive precedent in this area, at least inasmuch as it concerns defamation.<sup>106</sup> There is little reason to believe that courts will decide cases any differently after such an amendment, as liability for internet platforms that take this hands-off approach (and therefore have no reason to know of any illegal material) was not prevalent even before Section 230.<sup>107</sup> Even in the offline world where Section 230 does not apply, courts have found book publishers, for example, not liable for defamatory statements if they did not engage in any substantive editing or writing of the book.<sup>108</sup> As UNC law professor David S. Ardia wrote, “[m]any of the intermediaries that invoked section 230 likely would not have faced liability under the common law because they lacked knowledge of and editorial control over the third-party content at issue in the cases.”<sup>109</sup> By erasing Section 230’s procedural benefits, the disincentive to moderating that sparked Section 230’s passage in the first place simply returns along with the rising litigation costs, and this reformed Section 230 will therefore fail to meet its policy goals.<sup>110</sup> **Rather than engage in some content moderation, which if insufficient may be seen as negligent by a court and result in financial liability, it would be safer from the point of view of the internet platform to leave every internet user to fend for themselves and hope that courts will find that the passive nature of their business practice absolves them from liability.** A reasonable standard that erases Section 230’s procedural benefits would make Section 230 almost entirely pointless and would needlessly punish platforms for engaging in content moderation when they fail to meet this reasonableness standard. Putting on an internet blindfold is a tried-and-true method of avoiding liability exposure that is likely to persuade at least some businesses to rethink their online moderation practices. Rather than encourage this, it is better to incentivize platforms to do some content moderation—even if they do so poorly or do not devote enough resources to it—by offering Section 230’s legal shield even when they are incompetent or unreasonable. **Section 230 allows these platforms to change their moderation policies over time as they learn what works and what does not without worrying about the** meaning of abstract concepts like reasonableness and the **potential or real litigation costs** that come alongside a reasonableness standard.

**Plan would fail, companies would over moderate and hurt free speech if threatened with liability claims**

**Terr, The Fire, 2023**

Aaron Terr. Published on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression. “Why repealing or weakening Section 230 is a very bad idea”

<https://www.thefire.org/news/why-repealing-or-weakening-section-230-very-bad-idea> Kales ★

**Section 230 made the internet fertile ground for speech, creativity, and innovation, supporting the formation and growth of diverse online communities and platforms. Today we take for granted that we can go online and find many different places to speak our**

**minds, connect with people**, and share and view photos, videos, music, art, and other creative content. **Repealing or weakening Section 230 would jeopardize all of that.** As I explained in Part 1, Section 230 “gives ‘interactive computer services’ — including discussion forums, hosted blogs, video platforms, social media networks, crowdfunding sites, and many other services that host third-party speech — broad immunity from liability for what their users say.” The statute “also grants the services broad immunity from liability for declining to host, publish, or platform third-party speech.” **Without Section 230, websites would be left with a menu of unattractive options to avoid lawsuits over their users’ speech. Many would likely change their business model and stop hosting user-generated content altogether.** creating a scarcity of platforms that sustain our ability to communicate with each other online. **This changed landscape would entrench the dominance of large platforms that can afford to defend endless lawsuits and devote extensive resources to moderating vast amounts of user content.** Surviving platforms would moderate content more aggressively and maybe even screen all content before it’s posted. That isn’t a recipe for a thriving, free-speech-friendly internet. If you think Twitter and Facebook go too far with content moderation now, just imagine how much more aggressively these platforms would moderate if threatened with liability for users’ speech. None of these platforms have the capacity to carefully review all content, let alone make consistently accurate judgments about its legality. They would likely tweak their algorithms, which already produce lots of false positives, to take down even more content. Section 230 doesn’t just protect platforms from liability for unlawful content created by others: It also facilitates the prompt dismissal of frivolous lawsuits, often in cases that don’t even involve unlawful speech. Without Section 230, many of these lawsuits would still cause platforms major headaches by requiring them to engage in extensive discovery and pretrial motions. What’s more, pre-approving posts would destroy an essential feature of so many websites: their users’ ability to interact with each other in real time, to comment on current events while they’re still current. **It would also limit platforms’ growth, constraining the amount of new content based on a platform’s capacity to review it.** You might ask: Can’t platforms just take a hands-off approach like CompuServe? Recall from Part 1 that, before Section 230 was enacted, a federal court ruled CompuServe — which did not moderate its forums’ content — couldn’t be held liable for allegedly defamatory speech posted by a third party in one of those forums. But even a platform that took that approach would be liable for posts they knew or had reason to know about. That still means reviewing an unmanageable number of complaints about allegedly unlawful content, not to mention maintaining a speech-limiting notice-and-takedown system. Inevitably, complaints would come from people simply annoyed or offended by a user’s speech, and **many platforms would take the easy, risk-averse way out by summarily removing challenged content rather than thoroughly investigating the merit of each complaint.** Plus, one purpose of Section 230 is to promote platforms’ self-governance. Platforms’ exercise of editorial judgment over the content they host is itself expressive, and protected by the First Amendment. It’s part of how many online communities define themselves and how people decide where they want to spend their time online. A discussion forum that wants to be “family friendly” may decide to ban profanity. A baseball forum may limit posts that aren’t about baseball. And an NRA message board may remove messages opposing gun rights. Many platforms restrict spam and self-advertising, for example. Large social media companies can be frustratingly arbitrary in their content moderation. But if every online platform were a free-for-all, we would no longer benefit from the great diversity of communities and discussion spaces on the internet that cater to different people’s interests and desired user experiences.

## AT Democracy:

### **No Link: Misinformation has been going on for a long time, just be smart and skeptical Flam, Bloomberg, 2024**

F.D., Follow the Science Podcast, Bloomberg Opinion, Political Deepfakes will hijack your brain, if you let them  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2024-02-20/how-do-you-spot-a-deepfake-that-s-the-wrong-question>

**Realistic AI-generated images and voice recordings may be the newest threat to democracy, but they're part of a longstanding family of deceptions. The way to fight so-called deepfakes isn't to develop some rumor-busting form of AI or to train the public to spot fake images. A better tactic would be to encourage a few well-known critical thinking**

**methods** — refocusing our attention, reconsidering our sources, and questioning ourselves. Some of those critical thinking tools fall under the category of “system 2” or slow thinking as described in the book [Thinking, Fast and Slow](#). AI is good at fooling the fast thinking “system 1” — the mode that often jumps to conclusions. We can start by refocusing attention on policies and performance rather than gossip and rumors. So what if former President Donald Trump stumbled over a word and then [blamed](#) AI manipulation? So what if President Joe Biden forgot a date? Neither incident tells you anything about either man's policy record or priorities.

**Obsessing over which images are real or fake may be a waste of the time and energy.**

**Research suggests that we're terrible at spotting fakes. “We are very good at picking up on the wrong things,”**

said computational neuroscientist Tiji Grootswagers of the University of Western Sydney. People tend to look for flaws when trying to spot fakes, but it's the real images that are most likely to have flaws. People may unconsciously be more trusting of deepfake images because they're more perfect than real ones, he said. Humans tend to like and trust faces that are less quirky, and more symmetrical, so AI-generated images can often look more attractive and trustworthy than the real thing.

Asking voters to simply do more research when confronted with social media images or claims isn't enough. Social scientists recently made the [alarming finding](#) that people were more likely to believe made-up news stories after doing some “research” using Google.

**That wasn't evidence that research is bad for people, or for democracy for that matter. The problem was that many people do a mindless form of research. They look for confirmatory evidence, which, like everything else on the internet, is abundant —**

**however crazy the claim.** Real research involves questioning whether there's any reason to believe a particular source.

Is it a reputable news site? An expert who has earned public trust? Real research also means examining the possibility that what you want to believe might be wrong. One of the most common reasons that rumors get repeated on X, but not in the mainstream media, is lack of credible evidence. AI has made it cheaper and easier than ever to use social media to promote a fake news site by manufacturing realistic fake people to comment on articles, said Filippo Menczer, a computer scientist and director of the Observatory on Social Media at Indiana University. For years, he's been studying the proliferation of fake accounts known as bots, which can have influence through the psychological principle of [social proof](#) — making it appear that many people like or agree with a person or idea. Early bots were crude, but now, he told me, they can be created to look like they're having long, detailed and very realistic discussions.

**But this is still just a new tactic in a very old battle. “You don't really need**

**advanced tools to create misinformation,”** said psychologist Gordon Pennycook of Cornell University. People

have pulled off deceptions by using Photoshop or repurposing real images — like [passing off photos](#) of Syria as Gaza. Pennycook

and I talked about the tension between too much and too little trust. **While there's a danger that too little trust**

**might cause people to doubt things that are real, we agreed there's more danger from**

**people being too trusting. What we should really aim for is discernment — so people ask**

**the right kinds of questions.** “When people are sharing things on social media, they don't even think about whether it's

true,” he said. They're thinking more about how sharing it would make them look. Considering this tendency might have spared

some embarrassment for actor Mark Ruffalo, who recently [apologized](#) for sharing what is reportedly a deepfake image used to imply

that Donald Trump participated in Jeffrey Epstein's sexual assaults on underage girls. **If AI makes it impossible to**

**trust what we see on television or on social media, that's not altogether a bad thing,**

**since much of it was untrustworthy and manipulative long before recent leaps in AI.**

### **No Link: We're focusing on the wrong threats**

#### **Rogers, 538 Politics, 2024**

Kaleigh, 3/27, States are cracking down on deepfakes ahead of the 2024 election,

<https://abcnews.go.com/538/states-cracking-deepfakes-ahead-2024-election/story?id=1085178>

**21**

There are still a lot of lingering questions about this scandal, but the biggest may be: How worried should we be about AI-generated fakery this election? In an attempt to get out in front of the problem, state legislators have been introducing and passing bans on

deepfakes — media created using AI to impersonate politicians — around elections. **Since January of last year, 41 states have introduced election-related deepfake bans**, [according to tracking by Public Citizen](#). Eight states have enacted laws regulating deepfakes, joining California and Texas, [which in 2019 banned the use of deepfakes in elections](#). But these laws miss some of the AI threats experts say are most pressing and demonstrate how difficult it is to legislate this emerging technology while preserving First Amendment rights. Deepfakes [first emerged more than six years ago](#) and — like so much of the internet — were originally used to generate porn. But the arrival over the last year of commercially available and easy-to-use AI platforms such as ChatGPT and DALL-E has made this technology much more accessible, creating new opportunities — and new threats. This is likely what spurred the sudden cascade of deepfake bans at the state level, said Daniel Weiner, the director of elections and government at the Brennan Center for Justice. "Reasonably convincing deepfakes are easier for ordinary people who don't have a lot of resources or a lot of technical skill to create," Weiner said, adding that AI is a "threat amplifier" that has exacerbated existing risks to democracy, such as disinformation (risks that have also increased since 2020 for reasons unrelated to AI). The new state laws vary in exactly how they approach the problem of misleading, AI-generated content around elections. A [law enacted last week in Wisconsin](#), for instance, requires any campaign audio or video content that includes AI-generated media to include a clear disclaimer. A law [enacted in New Mexico earlier this month](#) also requires disclaimers, while making it a crime if a deepfake is used within 90 days of an election with the intent of altering the voting behavior of the electorate. (Something like the Biden deepfake might fall under this.) Some lawmakers have argued laws like this are infringing on freedom of expression — so legislators sometimes have to thread the needle between protecting free speech and preventing misleading content from interfering with elections. For instance, [a Georgia bill](#) that passed the state House in February would make it a felony to "publish, broadcast, stream or upload" a deepfake within 90 days of an election with the intention of impacting the election or misleading voters — but it also specifically carves out exemptions for satire, parody, journalism and campaign ads so long as they include a disclaimer. The bill had bipartisan support in the state House, but some legislators still worried it infringed on freedom of speech, with [one Republican state legislator](#) saying it "threatens to erode the bedrock of freedom." The carveouts written to thread that needle can also make the laws too specific and cause them to miss some of the other risks to democracy that AI creates, according to Josh Lawson, the director of AI and democracy at the Aspen Institute. While state and federal laws have primarily focused on deepfakes that impersonate politicians, experts like Lawson are more concerned about other types of deceptive content, such as using AI to generate mass texting campaigns that target voters with custom misinformation to, for example, tell them their polling location has changed. This kind of tactic predates AI (just [ask any Canadian](#)), but the new technology makes it easier and more precise. During a recent briefing with **the National Association of Secretaries of State**, Lawson and other experts **presented** attendees with **six AI risk scenarios that threaten democracy, and none of them had to do with politicians being impersonated. Instead, they included fake local news sites, AI-augmented phishing schemes to gain access to election systems, or voice cloning to imitate local election officials and disseminate false information to disrupt voting. "Legislators have perhaps over-calibrated on deceptive use of imagery depicting candidates,"** Lawson said. Indeed, while the Biden robocall deepfake impersonated the president, the message wasn't designed to make Biden look bad by implicating him in a fake gaffe or scandal — rather, it was about discouraging voters from going out on election day. And this kind of risk isn't always covered by the new laws being introduced.

## **Link Turn: Deepfakes are a net benefit to democracy**

### **Llorente, Council on Foreign Relations, 2023**

Raquel Vazquez, Dec. 18th, Council on Foreign Relations, To Protect Democracy in the Deepfake Era, We Need to Bring in the Voices of Those Defending it at the Frontlines, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/protect-democracy-deepfake-era-we-need-bring-voices-those-defending-it-frontlines>

**The recent elections in Argentina were marked by the widespread use of AI in campaigning material.** Generative AI has also been used to target candidates with embarrassing content (increasingly of a sexual nature), to generate political ads, and to support candidates' campaigns and outreach activities in [India](#), the [United States](#), [Poland](#), [Zambia](#), and [Bangladesh](#) (to name a few). The overall result of the lack of strong frameworks for the use of synthetic media in political settings has been a climate of mistrust regarding what we see or hear. **Not all digital alteration is harmful**, though. Part of my work involves identifying how **emerging technologies can foster positive change**. For instance, with appropriate disclosure, **synthetic media could be used to enhance voter education and engagement**. **Generative AI could help create informative content about candidates and their platforms, or of wider election processes, in different languages and formats, improving inclusivity or reducing barriers for underdog or outsider candidates. For voters with**

disabilities, synthetic media could provide accessible formats of election materials, such as sign language avatars or audio descriptions of written content. Satirical deepfakes could engage people who might otherwise be disinterested in politics, bringing attention to issues that might not be covered in mainstream media. We need to celebrate and protect these uses.

## **No Impact: US Democracy is fine, the negative is all hype**

**Pandley The Guardian, 2021**

Maneesh, Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>, Guardian Live, US Democracy resilient, will survive onslaught, <https://www.sundayguardianlive.com/world/us-democracy-resilient-will-survive-onslaught-experts>

The new President and American democracy face the threat and a litmus test for their survival. While the polls and democracy groups are bringing the narrative of “democracy under threat” in the wider public discourse, political scientists and diplomatic experts are, in fact, positive about the “resilience inherent in American democracy”. Professor Walter Andersen, a former diplomat and South Asia expert in Johns Hopkins University, is optimistic despite the “siege of the Capitol”. He says: “I do not see any real danger to the democratic system in the US. The institutions that sustain a democratic order like a free press, independent political parties and an independent judicial system remain strong as always. Moreover, the US is a federal system in which the states could restrain efforts to assert excessive federal power. During war, the central government has asserted powers which people at the time felt could threaten democracy (such as withdrawal of the writ of habeas corpus during the US Civil War), but these special powers were withdrawn at the conclusion of the war.” Elaborating his point Andersen says: “War crises however probably remain the major threat to democracy. Donald Trump took actions which many saw as threatening to democracy, but the negative reaction to them was vehement. Political legitimacy in the US depends on adhering to democratic norms and there is resort to courts and the legislative branch if the executive takes actions which are judged as threatening. The three branches of the federal government (executive, judicial and legislative) are each very sensitive to any effort to undermine their powers.” Echoing Andersen, another expert on political affairs and Director in Hudson Institute, Dr Aparna Pande is confident that American democracy has the strength to survive and it has “indeed bounced back.” Pande says: “Democracy is fragile and the price of democracy is constant vigilance, strengthening institutions, and renewing the faith in the democratic process. Democracies the world over are facing challenges, the United States is no different. While many Americans and others around the world were shocked by what they saw for a few hours on 6 January, they should also have been relieved by what they saw right after—the refusal by American leaders to allow any violent attempt to prevent them from completing their constitutional duties. And two weeks later on 20 January, there was a display of bipartisan support for President Joe Biden, expressing their solidarity and support.” Andersen feels the media polls and surveys stating “US democracy as fragile and insecure” as negative public statements. “The recent elections where the Democrats replaced Trump and that transition was accepted as legitimate by the vast majority. No doubt that the country is divided politically, but there is also a general agreement that the foundations of the democratic system, including the press, must be sustained.” Pande sees a hope in how the FBI is taking out “loose cannons and possible threats out of the security duty”. Pande says: “I am not someone who sees this as a real threat to US democracy. Every democracy faces challenges but the US has shown that even if there may have been fraying at the edges, the oldest democracy

**has built institutions—from the media to the judiciary to the legislature, both at the federal and local levels—that have the ability to withstand such attempts.**

**Impact over-hyped: Democracy at risk is fearmongering by Democrats to increase voter turnout.**

**Linker, The Week, 2021**

Damon, Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>, “Do Democrats really believe Republicans pose an existential threat to democracy?” THE WEEK,

<https://theweek.com/feature/1006142/do-democrats-really-believe-republicans-pose-an-existential-threat-to-democracy>

**Do Democrats really believe Republicans pose an existential threat to democracy?**

**They say they do**, every day — in Congress, in op-eds, on cable news, in fundraising emails. **But do their actions** in the White House and on Capitol Hill confirm or **believe it?** The answer, I think, is the latter. This doesn't mean that Democrats are intentionally lying to the country about the threat that Donald Trump and his staunchest allies pose to American democracy. But it might mean that many **Democrats are lying to themselves** about it. **If these Democrats really believed what they are saying about this threat, they would be making different decisions about the party's priorities.** What would Democrats be doing differently **if they truly thought that the country's other major party was working to eliminate free and fair elections?** **They would be prioritizing election reform.** Not necessarily the kind of things contained in the seemingly doomed Freedom to Vote Act, which is a grab bag of reforms that federalize elections and make it easier to vote in various ways. I have no objection to eliminating some barriers to voting, but that doesn't address the vulnerability Trump exposed in the aftermath of the 2020 election. That vulnerability had to do with how votes are counted, how electoral votes are allocated, and how both are certified within states and in Congress. This would mean, at the very least, overhauling the poorly drafted and dangerously ambiguous Electoral Count Act of 1887. It's possible that will happen between now and the party's likely loss of Congress in next year's midterm elections. But **it's hardly been a priority for Democrats.** What has been? **Attempting to pass a massive spending bill favored by the most progressive factions of the party.** As Matthew Yglesias noted in a recent Substack post, this is the kind of high-risk behavior one would expect if Democrats were simply trying to get as much done before they lose control of Congress in the normal back-and-forth of electoral politics. It **is not the kind of behavior one would expect from a party convinced that with their next victory Republicans are going to rig the system so that Democrats can never win power again.** What kind of behavior would one expect? Probably, as Yglesias points out, the kind of poll-driven calculus advocated by David Shor, the data-crunching Democratic strategist well known for advising the party to stop listening to the demands of progressive activists and lead with their most broadly popular proposals. That's because Shor has been partially driven to this position by his conviction that American democracy is in grave danger. This is consistent — as is his defense of Democrats working to add states to the country in order to boost the party's prospects in the Senate. **If American democracy truly is at risk of being snuffed out in the near future by the GOP, Democrats should be more concerned about that than anything else, and acting accordingly.** Yet the party — very much including its leader in the White House, who ran for president warning about Donald Trump posing a potentially fatal threat to “the soul of America” — has chosen a different course. Rather than seeking to pass reforms to ensure Republicans can't overturn election results at the state level or in Congress and then supporting a large but smaller, more tightly focused spending bill that would be widely embraced, Democrats have acted like this was an ideal time to dole out favors to every flavor of progressive activist in the party. The result has been a decline in popularity for the president largely driven by a precipitous loss of support from Democratic-leaning independents. Now, it's true that some on the left tilt their heads, squint their eyes, and otherwise work very hard to convince themselves that this way of proceeding is actually the best way of responding to the danger posed by Republicans — by addressing the economic problems confronting all Americans, including those attracted to Trumpian lies about election fraud. But that, again, is how you would talk and think if you considered the GOP a normal party offering an alternative slate of policies for the country. It's not a serious response to a movement supposedly hell-bent on overturning American democracy in favor of fascism or something fascist-adjacent. But then **why continually invoke a rhetoric of alarm?** Perhaps **because it's extremely effective at driving up turnout for Democratic candidates.** One could say the same about most Republican invocations of voter fraud. Though telling Republicans that Democrats will inevitably cheat may convince a few GOP voters not to bother showing up on Election Day, **it probably convinces** far more that **the party needs every single vote it can get to overcome a system rigged against them.** There's already some anecdotal evidence that Democrats are helping themselves with

this two-step — talking as if the GOP is an existential threat to democracy but acting as if the really important thing is passing progressive legislation. Just look at the Virginia governor's race, where early voters are citing fear of Trump (who is of course no longer president) as their primary reason for supporting Democrat Terry McAuliffe against Republican Glenn Youngkin. **This doesn't mean the Democrats are engaging in a deliberate ruse. It means they're folding their fears about Trump and the GOP into their ideological agenda and then campaigning on election anxiety while rewarding partisan supporters when they turn to governing.**

### **Impact Turn: Democracies don't always protect Human Rights**

**Conrad, University of California Merced, 2013**

Courtenay R. Oct. 18th, University of California Merced, Scholars.org, Why Democracy Does Not Always Improve Human Rights,

<https://scholars.org/contribution/why-democracy-does-not-always-improve-human-rights>

Democracies are less likely to violate the human rights of their citizens than non-democracies, as scholarly research on government repression documents. But democracy is not a panacea. My research on government torture suggests that **democratic institutions** intended to limit state repression **do not always prevent violations of human rights, and they sometimes actually make them worse.** In its Convention Against Torture, the United Nations defines torture as the purposeful inflicting of extreme mental or physical pain by government officials or their agents. Under this definition, torture includes everything from beatings, electrocution, and water boarding to the withholding of food and water. Of the human rights to physical integrity — the rights not to be tortured, killed, or politically imprisoned by your government — torture is the most common, and according to some reports, has increased over the last three decades. I draw upon my own research and other scholarly studies to explicate three conditions under which democratic institutions fail to constrain government torture. When and How Democracies Fall Short Democratic governments have institutions such as contested elections, freedom of expression, institutional separation of powers, and independent courts that, on average, tend to decrease violations of human rights. However, **when democratic governments face violent dissent,** these institutions fail to have any limiting effect on torture. Facing violent opposition, **governments of all kinds almost always respond with rights violations** that include torture. Leaders who feel threatened turn to torture to obtain information from and to intimidate the opposition. That may not seem surprising — but it is surprising that the potential of democratic institutions to prevent abuses goes away when governments face dissent. Basic realities of democratic governance help make sense of this failure to prevent or stop torture. **In a democracy, ordinary citizens who themselves feel threatened may be less likely to hold the government accountable for human rights violations.** For example, preliminary survey research suggests that Americans are more accepting of government torture when it is directed at an individual with an Arabic name. Torture as a government practice is difficult to contain once it gets off the ground. A country that starts down this path is likely to continue even when it faces domestic and international criticism for its behavior. From 1981 to 1999, over 90% of countries that were reported to have used torture in one year continued to use it in the following year. Executives do not have full control over the use of torture because they delegate its implementation to agents like members of the military and the police. To eliminate the use of torture in the United States, therefore, top-level executives — the president, governors, mayors — would need to monitor and control every member of the military, every police officer, and every intelligence agent. Such a high level of oversight is very difficult to achieve, especially in a decentralized federal system where executives have limited powers. Separated Powers and Divided Authority **Many democracies** — and certainly the United States — **are marked by**

**institutional divisions of governing authority** even at the national level, and **such separated powers can stand in the way of efforts to stop or prevent repressive practices.**

## **AT Populism:**

**Uniqueness: Populism is inevitable, lots of structural factors.**

**Rohac, Kennedy, Singh, Center for American Progress, 2018**

Dalibor, Liz, and Vikram, May 10th, Drivers of Authoritarian Populism in the United States, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/drivers-authoritarian-populism-united-states/>

In the United States, **the appeal of authoritarian populism has gone hand in hand with a decline of trust in government and a rise in partisan polarization.** Increasingly in the United States, **the government is seen as unresponsive** to citizens' concerns and captured by well-organized special interests. Voters are also acutely aware of Washington's growing political dysfunction and the federal government's inability to "get things done" and respond to the public's policy preferences. At the ballot box, however, voters often re-enforce the extreme partisanship that contributes to this dysfunction. Although **the U.S. economy** has recovered from the 2008 financial crisis, it **is still characterized by sluggish productivity growth and looming structural change that threatens jobs at the lower end of the education and skills ladder. The recovery was also highly unequal,** with certain sectors, demographics, and regions doing extremely well and others never getting back on track. Rightly or wrongly, voters see many of the emergency measures adopted in the aftermath of the crisis as benefiting the well-connected few at the expense of everybody else, while none of those responsible for the crisis were held accountable.<sup>1</sup> Economic considerations also shape attitudes toward **race, immigration, and globalization.** Western societies, including the United States, are becoming more diverse, especially in urban centers. Cosmopolitan urban centers, such as the metropolitan areas on the East and West Coasts, are seeing concentrations of economic dynamism, growth, and new opportunities. Combining diversity, openness, and economic dynamism, cities have grown into an economic and cultural antithesis of the less diverse and economically stagnant exurban and rural areas.

**No Impact: Populism does not degrade the liberal order.**

**Soderbaum, University of Gothenburg, 2021**

Frederik Associate Research Fellow at UNU-CRIS, Associate Professor at the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg, "Contestations of the Liberal International Order", Cambridge University Press, ebook

**Most assessments of populist responses to the LIO focus on what populist movements claim to be against, rather than the kinds of foreign policies their leaders actually deploy once in power.** One could argue, of course, that this is what populism is all about: it thrives on rejecting the established order, rather than providing a positive and clearly defined countervision. However, **recent studies show that populist governments around the world frequently engage in various sorts of international cooperation,** not least on a regional scale (Burner, 2019; Copelovitch & Pevehouse, 2019; Destradi & Plagemann, 2019; Ruggirozzi & Tussie, 2012; Verbeek & Zaslove, 2017; Wajner, 2019). **In Europe, many populist-nationalist parties** are sceptical of the European Union (EU) but nevertheless **support European cooperation** and integration (De Spiegeleire et al., 2017: vi). In some instances, populists have even created regional institutions of their own, such as the Visegrad Group (V4) of Central and Eastern European states and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). This Element is motivated by **the failure of existing literature** on the

contestation of the LIO **to reconcile the engagement of a significant number of populist governments in international and regional cooperation with their image as nationalists, sovereigntists, and unilateralists.** A main reason for the conspicuous silence on this subject is that analyses from within the discipline of International Relations have focused on state positions or institutional characteristics as drivers of contestation, while neglecting domestic politics (Bdrzel & Ziirn, 2021; see also Acharya, 2018; Slaughter, 2017).

### **No Impact: The need for survival and rationality prevent populists from starting all out war**

**Cooper, American University, 2016**

Louis, American University, "Reflections on U.S. Foreign Policy" at the U.S. Intellectual History Blog (July 16, 2014). 12-6, "WPTPN: Will Populist Nationalism Lead to Great-Power War?," <http://duckofminerva.com/2016/12/wptpn-will-populist-nationalism-lead-to-great-power-war.html>

Several reasons present themselves. First, nuclear weapons have given the prospect of a global war, or any great-power war, a possibility of civilization-ending finality that it did not have in the past. Second, **the security architecture created under U.S. leadership after World War II has arguably worked to reduce the likelihood of major armed conflict among the great powers.** Third, the existence of a network of international institutions, both inside and outside the UN system, has pushed in the same direction. Fourth, it is very possible that, as John Mueller and

Christopher Fettweis have argued, **decision-makers have to come see great-power war as "subrationally unthinkable,** or not even part of the option set for the great powers." [ii] The extreme destructiveness of the twentieth century's world wars, fueled partly by developments in technology, might well have produced long-term effects on how leaders and publics think about global or great-power war, in a way, for instance, that the Napoleonic Wars, for all their horror and bloodiness, did not. Phil Arena's recent contribution to this series argues that if the U.S. under a Trump administration signals an unwillingness to defend its allies, then Putin might be tempted to gamble on an invasion of the Baltics or Kim Jong-Un similarly might gamble on an invasion of South Korea (and that would drag in China). Putting aside Kim Jong-Un for the moment as a special case, let's consider Putin. As long as NATO exists – and Trump, despite his statements about the unfairness of the distribution of cost burdens, has not suggested, as far as I'm aware, that he wants to dissolve the alliance – then Putin would have to assume that an attack on the Baltics would trigger a NATO response. Even if Putin does not see great-power war as unthinkable or outside his "option set," one would assume that **for reasons of pure self-interest he would not want to risk a**

**nuclear war.** Nor, one might think, would he want to jeopardize the prospect of better (from his standpoint) relations with a U.S. administration less concerned with, among other things, his commission of war crimes in Syria or his annexation of Crimea than the Obama administration has been. For these reasons, I'm not too worried that the advent of the Trump administration will lead to a war with Russia over the Baltics. The Korean peninsula is, perhaps, a more worrisome situation. Chances are, however, that Trump, after taking office, will be prevailed upon to make reassuring noises about the U.S. commitment to South Korea, and that should suffice to deter Kim Jong-Un from doing anything too rash. The cautionary point here, admittedly, is that it's not clear whether Kim can be counted on to behave in a minimally rational fashion. Putin, whatever one might think of him, is rational. It's not entirely clear whether Kim is. However, if Kim is irrational then all bets are off regardless of what U.S. policy pronouncements are forthcoming.

World politics is not invariably cyclical and states can learn from experience (as even Gilpin acknowledged). **If one admits this and pays due attention to history, then it is plausible to think that the force of populist nationalism, as expressed in more erratic and/or less 'internationalist' official policy, will not, whatever its other effects may be, increase the low likelihood of a global war.**

## **AT Foreign Interference:**

### **No Uniqueness: China isn't trying to undermine democracy, that's just Cold War hype White, Reporter, 2021**

Hugh, The Interpreter, August 2nd, China Threatens the west's primacy, not its democratic systems, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-threatens-west-s-primacy-not-its-democratic-systems>

**Some Western leaders, including [Scott Morrison](#), have begun to describe the contest with China in starkly<sup>1</sup> ideological terms, as a defense of democracy against authoritarianism.**

They say China threatens to replace the democratically based "liberal international order" with a new order founded on the principles and practices of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which would endanger democratic societies everywhere. **It is all very reminiscent of the old Cold War.** This narrative has obvious appeal to leaders seeking support at home for their hard line on China, but does it work abroad? Here on The Interpreter, there has been a [live debate](#) about **framing the contest with China this way**, with some arguing that it **risks alienating many countries with shaky democratic credentials whose support we seek against China.**

I think this is a problem, but the debate misses a more important issue. It is not just a question of whether the ideological [Cold War](#) framing is good tactics, but whether it is true. Does China really pose the kind of threat that the Soviet Union posed? I don't think it does, for two reasons. Even if Beijing does seek to undermine democracy around the world, is there any reason to think it might succeed? The first relates to China's intentions. As former Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade secretary [Peter Varghese](#) among [others](#) has argued, **there is no evidence that Beijing seeks to remodel the world in its image. China is not like the Soviet Union** in its heyday, which really did aim to make the world communist. The CCP will do whatever it can to protect its own system from being undermined from without, but unlike the Soviet Union – and many in the West – it does not seem to believe that this requires the rest of the world to adopt its model. But intentions can change, so the stronger reason to doubt the Cold War view of our contest with China relates to its capabilities. **Even if Beijing does seek to undermine democracy around the world, is there any reason to think it might succeed?** Here again, the contrast with the Soviet Union is instructive. Take the contest of ideas. It is hard now to remember that during the early post-war decades, the Soviet Union offered a fully- developed and comprehensive vision of global order, national organisation and human life that many people, both in the West and in the decolonising "third world", found compelling. Moscow-affiliated communist parties were significant players in the domestic politics of many countries, including key US allies such as France, Italy and Japan. It is now clear that the challenge this posed to liberal democracy was weaker than it seemed, but the challenge was nonetheless real. There is no analogy with China today. **In no western country does anyone advocate the adoption of China's political system or the acceptance of a Chinese-led global order,** and while many leaders in the developing world may long to copy the CCP's political and economic achievements, few if any acknowledge it as an ideological model or would welcome its hegemony.

### **No Link: Foreign Interference in elections won't succeed Shabab, BuzzFeed News 2016**

Hamza technology policy reporter for BuzzFeed News State Election Officials Confront Fears Of Election Day Hacking, BuzzFeed, 9-9-2016

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<sup>1</sup> Starkly: Clear, sharp, or severe

[https://www.buzzfeed.com/hamzashaban/state-election-officials-confront-fears-of-election-day-hack?utm\\_term=.tkb76qeB8#.ju2VRwDeK](https://www.buzzfeed.com/hamzashaban/state-election-officials-confront-fears-of-election-day-hack?utm_term=.tkb76qeB8#.ju2VRwDeK)

But **despite the growing concerns over foreign meddling coming from Congress, intelligence experts, and the Clinton campaign, state election officials say American voters have little to fear.** “There are over 9,000 jurisdictions that operate elections at a **very local level, so that’s both a blessing and a curse.**” Denise Merrill, Connecticut’s secretary of state and president of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), a nonpartisan organization that represents the country’s top state election officials, told BuzzFeed News. **“It really saves us from worrying too much about cybersecurity — we have other concerns, but that’s kind of not one of them.”** Merrill was appointed by NASS to join Homeland Security’s special working group on election cybersecurity. The group’s goal is to build closer ties between the federal government and local election officials, and also to consider designating state voting systems as “critical infrastructure,” akin to dams and power grids, granting election offices additional resources and protections from the federal government. Merrill, along with the secretaries of state and election officials representing California, Florida, Ohio, Minnesota, Colorado, and Iowa, told BuzzFeed News that **pre-Election Day simulations, paper trail audits, and the fact that voting machines are not connected to the web provide strong safeguards to the electoral system.** State election officials emphasized that **the recent hack into voter registration databases differs from the risks faced by their offices, because these databases aren’t directly tied to voting on Election Day and because voting machines cannot be accessed remotely through the internet.** “That’s **the voter registration system, which is not at all connected to the actual voting,**” Merrill said, adding **that in almost every state, voter registration is completed on paper.** “There are backup paper systems for every process in our election, and that means cybersecurity is not the concern that it’s being portrayed to be nationally.”

**No Impact: Competition is inevitable, but US’s political dysfunction will prevent us from doing anything.**

**Gates, Former Secretary of Defense, 2023**

Robert, Former Secretary of Defense, President Bush and President Obama, Foreign Affairs, The dysfunctional superpower,

[https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/robert-gates-america-china-russia-dysfunctional-superpower?utm\\_medium=newsletters&utm\\_source=weekend\\_read&utm\\_content=20240210&utm\\_campaign=NEWS\\_FA%20Weekend%20Read\\_021024\\_The%20Dysfunctional%20Superpower&utm\\_term=FA%20Weekend%20Read-012320](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/robert-gates-america-china-russia-dysfunctional-superpower?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=weekend_read&utm_content=20240210&utm_campaign=NEWS_FA%20Weekend%20Read_021024_The%20Dysfunctional%20Superpower&utm_term=FA%20Weekend%20Read-012320)

**The United States now confronts** graver threats to its security than it has in decades, perhaps ever. Never before has it faced **four allied antagonists** at the same time—Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran—**whose collective nuclear arsenal could within a few years be nearly double the size of its own.** Not since the Korean War has the United States had to contend with powerful military rivals in both Europe and Asia. **And no one alive can remember a time when an adversary had as much economic, scientific, technological, and military power as China does today.** The problem, however, is that at the very moment that **events demand a strong and coherent response from the United States,** the country cannot provide one. Its **fractured political leadership**—Republican and Democratic, in the White House and in Congress—**has failed to convince enough Americans that developments in China and Russia matter.** Political leaders have failed to explain how the threats posed by these countries are interconnected. They have failed to articulate a long-term strategy to ensure that the United States, and democratic values more

broadly, will prevail. Chinese President [Xi Jinping](#) and Russian President Vladimir [Putin](#) have much in common, but two shared convictions stand out. First, each is convinced that his personal destiny is to restore the glory days of his country's imperial past. For Xi, this means reclaiming imperial China's once dominant role in Asia while harboring even greater ambitions for global influence. For Putin, it means pursuing an awkward mixture of reviving the Russian Empire and recapturing the deference that was accorded the Soviet Union. Second, both leaders **are convinced that the developed democracies—above all, the United States—are past their prime and have entered an irreversible decline.** This decline, they believe, is evident in these democracies' growing isolationism, political polarization, and domestic disarray. Taken together, Xi's and Putin's convictions portend a dangerous period ahead for the United States. The problem is not merely China's and Russia's military strength and aggressiveness. It is also that **both leaders have already made major miscalculations** at home and abroad **and seem likely to make even bigger ones in the future. Their decisions could well lead to catastrophic consequences** for themselves—and for the United States. Washington must therefore change Xi's and Putin's calculus and reduce the chances of disaster, an effort that will require strategic vision and bold action. The United States prevailed in the [Cold War](#) thanks to a consistent strategy pursued by both political parties through nine successive presidencies. It needs a similar bipartisan approach today. Therein lies the rub. The United States finds itself in a uniquely treacherous position: facing aggressive adversaries with a propensity to miscalculate yet incapable of mustering the unity and strength necessary to dissuade them. **Successfully deterring leaders such as Xi and Putin depends on the certainty of commitments and constancy of response. Yet instead, dysfunction has made American power erratic and unreliable, practically inviting risk-prone autocrats to place dangerous bets—with potentially catastrophic effects.** Xi's call for "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" is shorthand for China becoming the dominant world power by 2049, the centenary of the Communists' victory in the Chinese Civil War. That objective includes bringing Taiwan back under the control of Beijing. In his words, "The complete unification of the motherland must be realized, and it will be realized." To that end, Xi has directed the Chinese military to be ready by 2027 to successfully invade Taiwan, and he has pledged to modernize the Chinese military by 2035 and turn it into a "world-class" force. **Xi seems to believe that only by taking Taiwan can he secure for himself status comparable to Mao Zedong's** in the pantheon of Chinese Communist Party legends. **Xi's aspirations and sense of personal destiny entail significant risk of war.**

**No Impact: The aff's foreign interference scenario is hype at worse, and plays into the hands of foreign operatives trying to destroy democracy**

**Belogolova et al 2024**

Olga, Director of Emerging Tech, Johns Hopkins, Lee Foster and Thomas Rid, Alperovitch Institute, and Gavin Wilde, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, former US National Security Council Staff, Foreign Affairs, 5/3, Don't hype the disinformation threat, [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/dont-hype-disinformation-threat?utm\\_medium=newsletters&utm\\_source=twofa&utm\\_campaign=East%20Asia%E2%80%99s%20Coming%20Population%20Collapse&utm\\_content=20240510&utm\\_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%202017](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russian-federation/dont-hype-disinformation-threat?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_campaign=East%20Asia%E2%80%99s%20Coming%20Population%20Collapse&utm_content=20240510&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%202017)

Such statements, from across the political spectrum, have several troubling things in common. **They blame foreign interference for problems whose origins are clearly domestic. They imply that foreign disinformation is effective at influencing a significant proportion of U.S. citizens; it is not. And they are often presented without evidence.** To be clear, foreign influence operations can impose some costs on open societies that encourage the unfettered exchange of ideas. But **the self-serving and misleading way that some public officials and researchers talk about propaganda does not serve American democracy, especially during a contentious election season.** In fact, **when officials exaggerate the efficacy and impact of foreign influence operations, the ones who benefit the most are the very regimes that produce it.** To avoid inadvertently assisting adversaries, American officials and investigators must steer clear of two pitfalls. Downplaying the threat of foreign disinformation campaigns risks making it easier for bad actors to take advantage of an unprepared public. But the reverse is also true: **overstating the**

**power of propaganda risks amplifying not only the original falsehood, but also an even more corrosive and polarizing narrative—that American politicians are somehow remote-controlled, and that U.S. citizens don't have agency.**

WHO'S PARROTING WHOM? Often, Russian disinformation echoes talking points by the American far right, rather than the other way around. Last fall, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican from Georgia, wrote on X, "Anyone who votes to fund Ukraine is funding the most corrupt money scheme of any foreign war in our country's history." She included a link to a debunked article published by the Strategic Culture Foundation, a Russian intelligence front already sanctioned by the Treasury Department for its role in interfering with U.S. elections in 2020. The article falsely claimed that Ukrainian President [Volodymyr Zelensky](#)'s advisers had bought two yachts for \$75 million. Two weeks after Green's tweet, Senator J. D. Vance, a Republican from Ohio, repeated the false claim on a podcast hosted by Steve Bannon, a right-wing provocateur who served as a high-level adviser to President Donald Trump. "There are people who would cut Social Security, throw our grandparents into poverty," Vance fulminated. "Why? So that one of Zelensky's ministers can buy a bigger yacht?" This dynamic, whereby American conspiracy theorists and foreign intelligence operatives feed off one another in a vicious circle, is not new. During the [Cold War](#), the KGB carried out active measures against Moscow's rivals, exploiting existing social fissures by, say, picking up and amplifying rumors in a target country. Then as now, foreign operatives rarely invent political divisions or conspiracy theories: they magnify existing ones. Often, Russian disinformation echoes talking points by the American far right, rather than the other way around. In the 1980s, the Soviet and the East German security services conducted a propaganda campaign code-named Operation Denver, promulgating the baseless claim that the U.S. Army created HIV in a biological warfare lab at Fort Detrick, Maryland. This pernicious and polarizing myth had a far reach. In 2005, long after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the American pop stars Kanye West and Adam Levine released a hit single that included the lyric "I know the government administered AIDS." But it would be a mistake to attribute that rumor, or the extent of its reach, to outside influence peddlers. Historians have demonstrated that communist intelligence agencies did not invent the myth. Rather, the performers latched on to a conspiracy theory that had emerged on its own in the [United States](#), after far-left activists had concocted the story and initially spread it. The fire had already been lit; the communists merely added fuel. In a counterintuitive twist, for U.S. adversaries, a propaganda campaign may receive its biggest boost after it has been uncovered. The U.S. government exposed and sanctioned the Strategic Culture Foundation as a front for Russian intelligence well before Greene cited it as a source on social media. Yet Russia's foreign intelligence agency did not shut down the exposed front; it doubled down by pushing out more fake news stories. Russian intelligence officers are likely designing their campaigns so that such falsehoods will gain even more traction once the subterfuge is revealed. Once exposed as propaganda, a phony story about Zelensky's advisers' purchasing luxury yachts serves to amplify the idea that politicians, political commentators, and some significant portion of the voting public are unwitting stooges of foreign influence or even in cahoots with the enemy. More than foreign interference itself, it is this corrosive mistrust that poses the gravest threat to American democracy. As the U.S. presidential election approaches, **an unhealthy fixation on foreign**

**disinformation has researchers and organizations rushing to publicize bold claims about the reach of foreign influence. There are powerful incentives to overhype the extent and power of foreign disinformation campaigns. For some investigative outfits and firms, a big exposé can bring press coverage, bigger budgets, investment dollars, grants, and reputational gains, even if the exposed activity does not warrant so much attention.**

Overhyped reports can make [Russia](#)'s active measures that much more successful. Before exposing a foreign influence operation, public officials and analysts at research organizations and security companies must ask themselves a few hard questions. **Are their claims directly backed up by hard evidence**—evidence that they are able and willing to share with the broader research community? Will exposure breathe new life into a concocted story? And will it undermine the public's trust in public institutions and the media, thus serving the interests of adversaries? Journalists, too, should not draw dubious lines from cause to effect, repeat shaky claims about who is responsible, assert without appropriate evidence that an attempted disinformation operation was successful, quote sources without scrutinizing their assertions, or speculate about why a suspected adversary may have engaged in deceptive practices. News outlets covering the investigative reportage of other organizations and statements by public officials must take greater care not to repeat misleading claims. The very incident that prompted McCaul's remarks about his own party being "infected" by Russian propaganda illustrates this dynamic. NBC News [reported](#) on McCaul's comments, subtitled its article, "How Republican lawmakers echo Russian propaganda"; the story claimed that Republicans were "parroting" covert foreign disinformation. Outlets ranging from [The Wall Street Journal](#) to the [BBC](#) have made similar claims. A closer look at the facts in these cases, however, reveals the opposite: that Russian disinformation was parroting the American far right. Disrupting propaganda efforts by malign foreign actors is important work, but it must be done thoroughly, accurately, and proportionally. **Exaggerating the effects of foreign influence campaigns serves only the foreign operatives. It fosters a conspiratorial outlook, in which shadowy enemies are supposedly creating wedge issues, dissenters are merely parroting foreign spies, and trust in open democratic debate is eroded.** Most important, false claims of clandestine foreign interference absolve U.S. leaders of responsibility for the health of our political discourse.

## AT Racism:

**Link Turn: The technology the platforms will deploy to detect deepfakes fails for some skin tones, hurting marginalized communities more.**

**Farah, The Guardian, 2023**

Hibaq, The Guardian, 9/17, Deepfake detection tools must work with dark skin tones, experts warn,

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/17/deepfake-detection-tools-must-work-with-dark-skin-tones-experts-warn>

**Detection tools being developed to combat the growing threat of deepfakes –**

realistic-looking false content – **must use training datasets that are inclusive of darker skin tones to avoid bias, experts have warned.** Most deepfake detectors are based on a learning strategy that depends largely on the dataset that is used for its training. It then uses AI to detect signs that may not be clear to the human eye. This can include monitoring blood flow and heart rate. However, **these detection methods do not always work on people with darker skin tones, and if training sets do not contain all ethnicities, accents, genders, ages and skin-tone, they are open to bias, experts warned.** Over the last couple of years, concerns have been raised by AI and deepfake detection experts who say bias is being built in these systems.

Rijul Gupta, synthetic media expert and co-founder and CEO of DeepMedia, which uses AI and machine learning to assess visual and audio cues for underlying signs of synthetic manipulation said: **“Datasets are always heavily skewed towards white middle-aged men, and this type of technology always negatively affects marginalised communities.”** “At DeepMedia, instead of being race blind, our detectors and our technology actually look for a person’s age, race, gender. So when our detectors are looking to see if the video has been manipulated or not, it has already seen a large amount of samples from various ages and races.” Gupta added that deepfake detection tools that use visual cues, such as blood-flow and heart-rate detection, can have “underlying biases towards people with lighter skin tones, because darker skin tones in a video stream are much harder to extract a heart rate out of”.

The “inherent bias” in these tools means that they will perform worse on minorities. “We will see an end result of an increase of deepfake scams, fraud and misinformation caused by AI that will be highly targeted and focused on marginalised communities”, Gupta says. Mutale Nkonde, AI policy adviser and the CEO and founder of AI for the People, said the concerns tap into larger exclusions minorities face. **“If we’re gonna have a technology that is maintaining the security of some people it really should maintain the security of all and, unfortunately, the technology isn’t quite there yet.”** Nkonde said.

## AT Economy:

### **Low risk of large harms from deepfakes in financial markets, not a unique threat**

**Bateman, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2020**

Jon, July, Deepfakes and synthetic media in the financial system, Assessing Threat Scenarios, <https://perma.cc/98EP-QX6K>

**Deepfakes and synthetic media do not pose a serious threat to the stability of the global financial system or national markets** in mature, healthy economies. But they could cause

varying degrees of harm to individually targeted people, businesses, and government regulators; emerging markets; and developed countries experiencing financial crises.

Technically savvy bad actors who favor tailored schemes are more likely to incorporate synthetic media, but many others will continue relying on older, simpler techniques. Synthetic media are highly realistic, scalable, and customizable. Yet they are also less proven and sometimes more complicated to produce than “cheapfakes”—traditional forms of deceptive media that do not use AI. A bad actor’s choice between deepfakes and cheapfakes will depend on the actor’s strategy and capabilities. **Financial threats from synthetic media appear more diverse than political threats but may in some ways be easier to combat.**

Some financial harm scenarios resemble classic political disinformation scenarios that seek to sway mass opinion. Other financial scenarios involve the direct targeting of private entities through point-to-point communication. On the other hand, **more legal tools exist to fight financial crime, and societies are more likely to unite behind common standards of truth in the financial sphere than in the political arena.**

These ten scenarios fall into two categories, each presenting different kinds of challenges and opportunities for policymakers. Six scenarios involve “broadcast” synthetic media, designed for mass consumption and disseminated widely via public channels. Four scenarios involve “narrowcast” synthetic media, tailored for small, specific audiences and delivered directly via private channels. The financial sector should help lead a much-needed public conversation about narrowcast threats. Organizations facing public relations crises are especially vulnerable to synthetic media. Broadcast **synthetic media will tend to be most powerful when they amplify pre-existing negative narratives or events.**

As part of planning for and managing crises of all kinds, organizations should consider the possibility of synthetic media attacks emerging to amplify the crises. Steps taken in advance could help mitigate the damage. Three malicious techniques appear in multiple scenarios and should be prioritized in any response. Deepfake voice phishing (vishing) uses cloned voices to impersonate trusted individuals over the phone, exploiting victims’ professional or personal relationships. Fabricated private remarks are deepfake clips that falsely depict public figures making damaging comments behind the scenes, challenging victims to refute them. Synthetic social botnets are fake social media accounts made from AI-generated photographs and text, improving upon the stealth and effectiveness of today’s social bots.

## **AT Domestic Extremism:**

**Section 230 is the answer to how extremist ideology spreads, but there are two other bigger problems, access to guns and the ideology itself**

**Edmund, Center for American Progress, 2022**

Marissa, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Center for American Progress. “Guns Are Fueling the Rise in Domestic Extremist Violence Across the Country”

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/guns-are-fueling-the-rise-in-domestic-extremist-violence-across-the-country/> Kales ★

**Violent domestic extremism is on the rise and firearms are a pillar of this extremist ideology. A March 2021 assessment by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence found that domestic violent extremists motivated by white supremacy and anti-government ideology are the most lethal threats facing this country.** Guns are the weapon of choice for domestic extremists, and **easy access to guns plays a significant role in the frequency and lethality of these attacks. The January 6 insurrection** on the Capitol Building by Trump supporters, militia groups, and right-wing extremists—some of whom were armed—**was the result of anti-government propaganda and right-wing messaging suggesting that the election of President Joe Biden was fraudulent. This anti-government rhetoric and the dangerous attacks that result do not exist in a vacuum.** For years, right-wing extremists have used this ideology as a basis for their dangerous attacks, such as the Bundy standoff in 2014 that led to hundreds of anti-government extremists taking up arms against federal agents. Then, just this year, an 18-year-old white supremacist used an AR-15 to shoot and kill 10 Black people and injured an additional 3 people in a Buffalo supermarket. In order to address the rise in domestic extremism, **Congress and the administration must do more to keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous and radicalized individuals. Some solutions to address this crisis include: Requiring permits to purchase firearms** to ensure a more thorough examination is done before a person can purchase a gun **Reinstate the federal assault weapons ban** to prevent the exceptionally deadly weapons from being available to the public Enact federal extreme risk protection order (ERPO) laws to allow firearms to temporarily be removed from people experiencing crises **Prevent individuals convicted of hate crimes from accessing firearms** Improve congressional oversight over the gun industry in order to hold manufacturers accountable for profiting off of weapons of war Radicalized individuals who are emboldened by the gun lobby and far-right politicians often have far too easy access to firearms and greatly contribute to the rise in domestic extremism. **Guns are a weapon of choice for domestic extremists and drive mass shootings**

## **AT Framing:**

**Ignore the affirmative's vague framing of "infopocalypse." These "worst case scenario" predictions are not helpful for policy making.**

**Habgood-Coote, University of Leeds 2023**

Joshua, Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Science, University of Leeds, Former Vice-Chancellor's Fellow, University of Bristol, Epistemology Specialist, March 9th, Deepfakes and the epistemic apocalypse, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11229-023-04097-3> Although it is not particularly common to explicitly use the phrase 'post-truth' in discussions of deepfakes (but see Chesney & Citron, 2019b), **we find similarly vague and underspecified terms sprinkled throughout the discourse. See: 'fucked-up dystopia' (Schick, 2020), 'the infopocalypse' (Ovadya, 2018), and 'reality apathy' (Warzel, 2018). These terms encourage us to think in very general terms about our epistemic predicament, avoiding specific or precise evaluation of practices or institutions. We encouraged to think that the question at issue is are things fundamentally broken, or basically fine? and to treat all evidence of epistemic dysfunction as supporting a general pessimism about the present. This attitude can easily shade into nihilism: if our epistemic culture is fundamentally broken, we might think that it is simply beyond recovery. Proponents of the Epistemic Apocalypse narrative propound a false history of recordings, according to which the widespread malicious manipulation of recordings is a relatively recent phenomenon. We have seen that this history is false: the manipulation of recordings was historically widespread, and in some contexts was prevalent.** Forgetting the history of photographic manipulation both encourages us to think of deepfakes as a novel problem, and amplifies our perception of the seriousness of the problem. There is also an important thread of political conservatism in commentary on deepfakes. In the final chapter of Deep Fakes and the Infocalypse, Nina Schick (2020) discusses several parts of a response to deepfakes: (i) raising awareness about misinformation and deepfakes, (ii) supporting credible journalism and fact-checking organisations, (iii) developing technical tools for detecting deepfakes, and authenticating reliable information, and (iv) developing institutions for counteracting political misinformation. Revealingly, she describes ii) and iii) as defence strategies. These interventions are not themselves bad; the problem is that Schick's focus is on shoring up 'establishment' sources of journalism, failing to reckon with the underlying problems with contemporary journalism.

**Disruption is inevitable, we touched up photos for centuries**

**Carino et al, Marketplace Tech, 2023**

Meghan McCarty Carino, Jesus Alvarado, podcasters, and Josh Habgood Coote, University of Leeds, Marketplace Tech, May 8th, Should we worry about deepfakes and an epistemic apocalypse?

<https://www.marketplace.org/shows/marketplace-tech/should-we-worry-about-deepfakes-and-an-epistemic-apocalypse/>

Habgood-Coote: **It's important to look at the history of deepfakes. There's a whole lot of practice in the late 19th century of people touching up portraits to make them look better. Actually, at the end of the 19th century in journalism, all photographs that were printed in newspapers in the United States were to some lesser or greater extent changed and modified to make them look better.** And what they did, they came up with a set of social norms against faking. So this isn't to say that the problems are not going to be serious around

deepfakes and other kinds of faking, but the long problems with history, and throwing away possible solutions, if we forget that history. McCarty Carino: It's interesting talking about the role of technology in all of this, because I think we've talked a lot about it with social media — the idea that it has allowed for this kind of proliferation of misinformation and threatened democracies and all of these things. But I think that there is a discussion to be had about whether the way that people are using social media in this way is sort of a symptom of, as you say, social practices that were happening before social media allowed for this, or whether the technology kind of instigated this kind of thing. Habgood-Coote: Yeah, so I kind of got into this topic by thinking about discourse around fake news and [post-truth](#) around 2017. And it was pretty clear that a lot of the discourse around fake news and post-truth was almost acquiring the kind of character of a moral panic discourse, where it was like, **“There's this terrible problem, society is going to collapse, democracy is going to collapse.” And none of the people who were writing about real problems about misinformation and propaganda were paying attention to the longer history of decline in trust, not just in media sources, but in various kinds of social quote-unquote authority sources and the political causes of those phenomena.** So there's a way in which the cart is before the horse.