

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



False-Information: Solutions Without Censorship

Major Anonymous

JCSP 49

Exercise Solo Flight

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2023.

PCEMI n° 49

Exercice Solo Flight

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté le Roi du chef du Canada, représenté par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2023.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 49 - PCEMI n° 49
2022 - 2023

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

False-Information: Solutions Without Censorship

Major Anonymous

“This paper was written by a candidate attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

« La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale. »

False-Information: Solutions without Censorship

Connectivity and the speed in which we can share information and opinions has but increased exponentially over the last several decades. With said connectivity has come significant societal optimization be it in healthcare, service delivery or access to the world wide web. However, with increased connectivity and maturing of said capabilities has also come exploitation of the medium. While we can attribute – or not – the use of internet and connectivity amongst civil society to bring forth good, the inverse is also applicable.

Disinformation, misinformation and mal-information - the effect remains the same – a growing distrust within society which erodes our trust in democratic processes. Though one could certainly look to allegations in more recent US elections for examples of such erosion, doing so implies that US democracy is but the exclusive victim. Instead, similar and more provoking examples might instead inform us of the hazards of false-information.

The aim of this paper shall remain situated in the risks from such activities upon the societal confidence in democratic institutions. Those who operate and perpetuate false-information rely on societal fractures and seams to survive. These fractures are often exploited by drawing partial truths despite intentions to create confusion. It may be a picture, membership to a specific organization or the attendance of a given event. By presenting uncontested facts alongside constructed realities and lies, consumers are challenged and struggle to develop a coherent reality based on plausibility vice conspiracy.

By recognizing the components that define ‘false-information’ this paper will aim to understand how authors, promulgators and consumers interact with that information. Case studies of similar yet nuanced instances of false-information within the democratic process will communicate how societies can defeat false-information. An examination will then be conducted to understand the moral/mental component to false-information to best understand how and why it is promulgated and what society can do to counteract the conflict of truths.

Though nuances, regardless of size, exist amongst the definitions of dis-information, mis-information and mal-information, a common definition will be developed. Such a definition is not aimed at limiting the conversation but instead aimed at moving beyond the factor to instead understand the implications and consequences. There is certainly an important recognition that activities in this space occur along a spectrum of severity. Ultimately, the aim remains with the understanding moral hazards and democratic erosion that occur when such activities dominate discourse and erode democracy. Most importantly, we will see how select democracies attack the problem of false-information and positive impacts for civil-society.

DEFINING THE DEFINITION

Though conceptually different from one another, mis-information, dis-information and mal-information, for the purposes of this argument – are bad. Though the nuances are great and of importance, they all negatively impact our trust in democratic society.¹ As intention certainly lies at the heart of the transgression, the term chosen for this argument shall be ‘false-information’. In certain examples the intent of the false-information may be less clear but it will be explored to understand the complex nuances of harm. The term ‘false-information’ as a learning tool should not be limited to the definition here forth mentioned as doing so negates the likelihood of its evolution. This definition and paper more importantly does not aim to address information warfare though nuances of such activities by nature find themselves within the soon to be established definition of ‘false-information’.

Mis-information is most often characterized as information that is false – such a characterization remains neutral from the intention to harm following the promulgation of said information.² Mis-information aligns more specifically with the idea that people are mis-informed.³ The deliberate omission or mis-use of terminology, restraints and constraints are but examples of mis-information. The growth of mis-information particularly within the information space challenges a society’s understanding of the problem as mis-information quickly becomes genuinely held beliefs.⁴ When society is only afforded limited segments of information for the purpose of generating an opinion, that opinion is ultimately based on partial truths scattered amongst known truths. As such, as mis-information plays a role in false-information, we must ensure to recognize the divulgence of partial truths in the promulgation of opinion and knowledge.

The Brookings Institute in their coverage of dis-information and its evolution through the NATO Air Campaign in Lybia titled ‘How Dis-information Evolved in 2020’ characterize dis-information as partially false narratives that aim to challenge perceptions of the status quo.⁵ Their article, albeit oriented to define the growth dis-information by select organizations who by-design question attribution and seek legitimacy by masquerading within a space of legitimacy.⁶ They outline the steps taken by dis-information actors within the space to appear legitimate yet non-attributable.⁷ In certain instances, it was the proxy use of marketing firms or similarly public relations firms to develop focused messaging campaigns – despite the questionable truthfulness of the content. This type of false-information more clearly highlights the prepotency amongst actors to demonstrate societal acceptance and concurrence amongst segments of society. Thus, as dis-information plays a key role in the definition of false-information, the recognition that within false-information are questions of attribution and false legitimacy

¹ ‘How to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation.’

² ‘How to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation.’

³ Kuklinski et al., ‘Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship’.

⁴ Kuklinski et al., ‘Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship’.

⁵ Goldstein and Grossman, ‘How Disinformation Evolved in 2020’.

⁶ Goldstein and Grossman, ‘How Disinformation Evolved in 2020’.

⁷ Goldstein and Grossman, ‘How Disinformation Evolved in 2020’.

is key.⁸ Further, within dis-information exists considerable sunk costs to appear legitimate which demonstrates the levels of scope of influence and capacity of said actors.

Finally, mal-information refers to segments of information nested in truth but exaggerated to generate a ‘genuinely held opinion’ on the matter.⁹ This varies but slightly from mis-information because it implies the exaggerations of truths while the former implies but the communication of said truths. Similarly, Forbes recognizes mal-information as ‘often stemming from the truth but is exaggerated or contextually misrepresented in ways that can mislead and cause potential harm.’¹⁰ This idea of ‘exaggerating’ information to generate a response or influence opinions will most certainly play a large component in our examination of false-information and its’ impact on society.¹¹

As such, our definition of false-information has several key concepts that we must consider when executing case studies. Certainly critical to this examination is the concept of intent which is found both in mis-information and mal-information.¹² Accordingly, exaggeration of and the deliberate omission of information found again in mal-information but equally within dis-information.¹³ Finally however, we must consider attribution which will play a large roll in this paper as attribution in certain instances is rather clear while in others – think dis-information – is actively and deliberately avoided.

KENYA

A great example of democratic processes being impacted by the deliberate use of false-information are the 2022 Kenyan elections. Understanding of course that Kenya is a former British colony that sought and received independence from Britain in 1963, Kenya is nonetheless a new democracy in Africa.¹⁴ Albeit new, Kenyan democratic processes and state services are considered to be one of the better on the continent. Kenya enjoys a relatively strong economy and is sought as a leader amongst nations on the African continent.¹⁵ An example of this leadership is the Kenyan engagement and leadership within the African Union in its efforts to combat terrorists both in Kenya as well as in Sudan and South Sudan.¹⁶

Kenya sought and received independence from Britain in 1963 which came after a multiyear rebellion called the Mau Mau Rebellion¹⁷. This uprising took the lives of hundreds of thousands of Kenyans and destabilized both the nation and the region but

⁸ Goldstein and Grossman, ‘How Disinformation Evolved in 2020’.

⁹ ‘How to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation.’

¹⁰ Carpenter, ‘Get The 411 On Misinformation, Disinformation And Malinformation’.

¹¹ Carpenter, ‘Get The 411 On Misinformation, Disinformation And Malinformation’.

¹² ‘How to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation.’

¹³ ‘How to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation.’

¹⁴ CIA.ORG, ‘Kenya - Country Summary’.

¹⁵ Latif Dahir and Walsh, ‘Kenya Elections A Fiercely Fought Election in Kenya, an African Powerhouse’.

¹⁶ Vanier, ‘AlJazeera: What’s Driving the Recent Unrest in Kenya?’

¹⁷ BBC WorldNews, ‘Mau Mau Uprising: Bloody History of the Kenya Conflict’.

reinforced the need for the autonomous rule of Kenya.¹⁸ What makes Kenya a great example is there more recent history with post-electoral violence. Specifically looking at the 2007 election whereby delays in announcing a winner destabilized the country and led to a number of very violent clashes between political parties, distinct cultural groups and the Kenyan Security Forces.¹⁹ Referred to as the 2007 and 2008 Kenyan Crisis these events led to the deaths of some 1,000 Kenyans. However, the crisis also reinvigorated the social and civil society need to pursue open, fair and transparent democratic elections.²⁰ Albeit recent, the 2007 elections we're not executed in an environment saturated with social media, news media and accordingly false information.²¹

In hopes of avoiding a repeat of the 2007 Kenyan Crisis, Kenyan political leaders and the state further developed and empowered the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IECB).²² This commission entrusted with and responsible for the rollout and execution of elections across Kenya would be the adjourning authority in both establishing the election process and validating the winner.²³ However, similar to the 2007 election crisis some political parties and prominent members of Kenyan society fermented rumors to question the authority, legitimacy and independence of the IECB.²⁴ While some news agencies and maligned actors illegally gained access to polling data in the IECB network, others reported the establishment of fake polls and even ballot destruction.²⁵ Similarly, rumors circulated that the Kenyan Defense Forces had been mobilized in and around both Nairobi and Mombasa.²⁶ Contrary though and in pursuit of absolute impartiality the IECB established a public access portal whereby anyone could download statistic data on voting by ridings, candidates and political parties²⁷. However, the same web portal provided a weak point for again maligned actors to exploit and forensically analyze polling data. This forensic analysis, lead to further mistrust in the electoral results as polling data varied from news outlet to news outlet.²⁸ Further, certain platforms like TikTok and Facebook promulgated a particular video that garnered some half a million views depicting a political candidate with a knife to his throat.²⁹ These were but examples of how false-information was used to exploit emotions and fear that created distrust amongst members the Kenyan electorate.

Ultimately the elections were so close that the IECB was required to delay the release of results to ensure no error and also to avoid a repeat of the 2007 election violence.³⁰ In fact, pulling data determined that president Hutto won but with only 50.5

¹⁸ BBC WorldNews, 'Mau Mau Uprising: Bloody History of the Kenya Conflict'.

¹⁹ Cooke, 'Background on the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya'.

²⁰ Cooke, 'Background on the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya'.

²¹ Cooke, 'Background on the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya'.

²² Mosero, 'In Kenya's 2022 Elections, Technology and Data Protection Must Go Hand-in-Hand'.

²³ Mosero, 'In Kenya's 2022 Elections, Technology and Data Protection Must Go Hand-in-Hand'.

²⁴ Mwai, 'Kenya Elections 2022: Misinformation Circulating Online'.

²⁵ Latif Dahir and Walsh, 'Kenya Elections A Fiercely Fought Election in Kenya, an African Powerhouse'.

²⁶ Olivia, 'Disinformation Was Rife in Kenya's 2022 Election'.

²⁷ BBC WorldNews, 'Kenya Elections 2022: Win or Lose, Why Raila Odinga's Election Challenge Matters'.

²⁸ Olivia, 'Disinformation Was Rife in Kenya's 2022 Election'.

²⁹ Mwai, 'Kenya Elections 2022: Misinformation Circulating Online'.

³⁰ Egbejule, 'Kenyan Observer Group Says Projections Tally with Election Result'.

percent of casted ballots.³¹ Though minor skirmishes and unrest we're reported in certain parts of Kenya, civil society remained calm and respected the results. Though legal challenges would ensue, the Kenyan Supreme Court would later validate the election results confirming the winner to be President elect Hutto.

Of particular interest are the results of a subsequent Cambridge Analytics study that determined between 2021 and 2022 internet usage across Kenya increase some 7.4% and that at the time of the 2022 elections some 42% of Kenyans have access to the internet.³² A separate Reuters Institute survey suggests that at least 75% of Kenyan news consumers struggle to distinguish between real and fake news online.³³

The 2022 Kenyan Election appears to be very much a turning point in the Kenyan democratic process. Despite the fact that the official opposition Mr. Odinga and his party claimed corruption up to including legal proceedings, Mr. Odinga supported the supreme court's findings.³⁴ Similarly in President elect Hutto's acceptance speech, he conveyed the importance of the official opposition and their critique of his government and their policies.³⁵ This recognition amongst political powers, despite the results, demonstrates how Kenyan civil society can excel politically and civilly when required.

This recognition amongst the political class that cooperation is essential for the future of Kenya is but a first step in the ongoing unification Kenyan society. However, some eight months later Kenya is experiencing civil unrest in part due to growing impatience amongst the same electorate.³⁶ The ongoing lack of employment, economic opportunity and tangible improvements across the nation appears to be waning the patience of Kenyans.³⁷ Similarly, and rightfully so, Kenyans are becoming increasingly impatient and frustrated with the Kenyan Defense Forces inability to improve the security situation along the borders of Uganda and South Sudan.³⁸ The ongoing and increasing costs of these military activities as well as the recent deployment of Kenyan Defense Forces to the Democratic Republic of the Congo have called into question the priorities of the ruling government.³⁹

This Kenyan case study highlights the inherent risks of false-information on democratic institutions but equally how civil society can effectively overpower the inherent risks. However, such mitigation is short lived and must be accompanied with tangible improvements for an increasingly impatient civil society. Society as a whole can overcome the impacts of false-information by further engaging with the information, those who promulgate it and finally those with whom it is concerning. The bound from

³¹ Olivia, 'Disinformation Was Rife in Kenya's 2022 Election'.

³² Kemp, 'Digital 2022: Kenya'.

³³ Kemp, 'Digital 2022: Kenya'.

³⁴ Latif Dahir and Walsh, 'Kenya Elections A Fiercely Fought Election in Kenya, an African Powerhouse'.

³⁵ Siddiqui, 'Kenya Election Latest Updates: William Ruto Declared Winner'.

³⁶ Latif Dahir and Walsh, 'Kenya Elections A Fiercely Fought Election in Kenya, an African Powerhouse'.

³⁷ Vanier, 'AlJazeera: What's Driving the Recent Unrest in Kenya?'

³⁸ Vanier, 'AlJazeera: What's Driving the Recent Unrest in Kenya?'

³⁹ BBC WorldNews, 'DR Congo Conflict: Why Kenyan Troops Are Joining the Battle'.

government moderation to government censorship is very short – hence the need and benefit for society to self-regulate and avoid placating to lies.

BRAZIL

Again, as to why Brazil, and not the United States when discussing false-information influencing democratic processes. While the promulgation of false information in US elections both at the federal and state levels have consumed media coverage over the last several years - an examination of how the same effect has plagued Brazilian politics is arguably more relevant. But again, why Brazil? Brazil, the 5th largest country in the world and the largest in both South America and Latin America, has some 217 million citizens and shares many similarities to the United States.⁴⁰ Classified as an ‘emerging power’ in the region and similarly under the Human Development Index a ‘developing country’, Brazil has a vast and globally connected economy.⁴¹ With the 8th largest GDP in the world but equally the 81st largest GDP per capita the distribution of wealth and power amongst its citizens remains ambiguous.⁴²

Unfortunately, political instability in Brazil is best described as a tradition. Brazil’s independence from its colonial power of Portugal occurred on August 29th 1825.⁴³ Since independence, Brazil has experienced periods of great democracy and economic growth but equally periods of military authoritarian rule. Political and economic power distribution amongst its regional, ethnic and cultural cross-sections of society have created a turbulent history of political engagement.⁴⁴ Economic power and inequality across Brazil was further fragmented during its military dictatorship that lasted some 21 years, ending on 15 March 1985. Following the return of democratic institutions in 1985, democratically elected political control across the country has existed across the political spectrum.⁴⁵ Leadership has leaned far left enacting socialist policies but equally far right favoring both capitalists and libertarian policies. There exists a certain tradition in Brazilian politics where leaders are often embroiled in scandal prior to and upon their departure from elected office.

Three poignant examples of this tradition are those of Dilma Rousseff the 36th president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro is there any 38th president of Brazil but also includes the current president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who is both the 39th and 35th president. Dilla Rousseff was ultimately impeached as president of Brazil by the National Senate following allegations of corruption which would later be known as the Petrobras scandal often code named ‘Operation Car Wash’.⁴⁶ This scandal accused the significant portion of Brazil's elected officials of bribery, embezzlement and general malfeasance. This not only brought down president Rousseff but also targeted the previous president Lula as

⁴⁰ CIA.GOV, ‘The World FactBook: Brazil’.

⁴¹ CIA.GOV, ‘The World FactBook: Brazil’.

⁴² CIA.GOV, ‘The World FactBook: Brazil’.

⁴³ Kiprop, ‘When Did Brazil Declare Independence?’

⁴⁴ Kiprop, ‘When Did Brazil Declare Independence?’

⁴⁵ Napolitano, ‘The Brazilian Military Regime, 1964–1985’.

⁴⁶ Cardoso, ‘What Is Brazil’s President Dilma Rousseff Accused Of?’

well.⁴⁷ President Bolsonaro, having more recently vacated his position as President has fallen victim to accusations of corruption and abuse of power. Even president Lula who was vindicated during the ‘Operation Car Wash’ court proceedings - based off of procedural errors - remains embroiled in other investigations and proceedings alleging him of similar bribery and extortion claims.⁴⁸ President Lula’s term of Brazilian President is scheduled to end in 2026.

Scandals affecting Brazilian presidents is not limited to their time in office but equally their conduct before becoming elected officials. For instance, Dilla Rousseff actively opposed military authoritarian regime in the 1970s having been charged and found guilty by military court of subversion and jailed in November 1970.⁴⁹ Her claims abuse and torture whilst in custody were later validated following the publication of a state investigations into the military’s monopoly on control and violence.⁵⁰ Bolsonaro himself was embroiled in the military justice process for his articles published in a right-of-center magazine discussing the poor pay and living conditions of serving Brazilian Armed Forces members.⁵¹ Shortly after, Bolsonaro would be accused of planning to bomb various military units across Rio de Janeiro. Subsequent legal proceedings convened in front of the Military Supreme Court of Brazil found him not guilty of the bombing plot.⁵² He was however found guilty of professional misconduct for his comments with the popular magazine and equally lying during court proceedings. Bolsonaro would later leave the Brazilian Army after 15 years of military service and enter municipal politics in 1988.⁵³

Following the defeat of president Lula (1st term as president) in 2010 by President Dilma Rousseff, the security and economic forecast of Brazil looked bleak. The ongoing rise of violent crime and economic disenfranchisement across the nation mobilized Brazil to elect a right-of-center politician. Bolsonaro, elected in 2018 took office on the 1st of January 2019 and would represent a conservative shift of the ruling political leadership in Brazil. Bolsonaro would employ a number of techniques to improve the economic competitiveness of the country both domestically and abroad whilst implementing a ‘tough on crime’ approach to justice reform.⁵⁴ The 2018 Brazilian elections would represent the first steps of political polarization for the country and would but be amplified in the 2022 elections.

Entering the 2022 Brazilian national elections there appeared but two strong presidential contenders for office of the President. Lula, who had just been acquitted based off of technicalities from his 2018 ‘Operation Car Wash’ scandal would once again pursue the presidency.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Bolsonaro was completing his 4th year as President

⁴⁷ Phillips, ‘This Article Is More than 5 Years Old Brazil’s Ex-President Lula Sentenced to Nearly 10 Years in Prison for Corruption’.

⁴⁸ Phillips, ‘Brazil’s Ex-President Lula Sentenced to Nearly 10 Years in Prison for Corruption’.

⁴⁹ Ray and Wallenfeldt, ‘Dilma Rousseff: President of Brazil’.

⁵⁰ Ray and Wallenfeldt, ‘Dilma Rousseff: President of Brazil’.

⁵¹ Silva, ‘THE PRAGMATICS OF CHAOS’.

⁵² Silva, ‘THE PRAGMATICS OF CHAOS’.

⁵³ Financial Times Staff, ‘Who Is Jair Bolsonaro? Five Facts about Brazil’s Far-Right President-Elect’.

⁵⁴ Financial Times Staff, ‘Who Is Jair Bolsonaro? Five Facts about Brazil’s Far-Right President-Elect’.

⁵⁵ Phillips, ‘Brazil’s Ex-President Lula Sentenced to Nearly 10 Years in Prison for Corruption’.

whilst already fermenting accusations of electoral fraud.⁵⁶ Similar to the false-information plaguing the Kenyan elections, the access to social media and online news agencies would create a climate favoring and fraught with false-information.⁵⁷ Political polarization and identity-politics of Brazilian society would be abused to garner support of the Brazilian electorate.⁵⁸

Brazil, being primarily evangelical would see the exploitation of moral, ethical and religious beliefs to sway voters.⁵⁹ The tactics would accuse intermittently Lula and Bolsonaro of having made pacts with the devil and draw on their previous scandals to question their suitability for office.⁶⁰ Similarly, Lula would often be accused of favoring and supporting illicit gang activity. While on the other hand, Bolsonaro would be accused of accepting financial kickbacks, money laundering and financially profiting on the backs of Brazilians.⁶¹ Key election topics surrounded primarily crime reduction strategies, economic disenfranchisement, environmental protection of the amazon, economic growth, and international engagement.

As the election date grew closer and as polling suggested that Lula was leading, Bolsonaro would suggest the electoral system is corrupt.⁶² Further Bolsonaro and his supporters suggested that without exception they would not accept the election results.⁶³ Reminiscent to the January 6th attacks on the US Capital, on January 8th 2022 Bolsonaro supporters stormed the Brazilian capital complex in Brasilia looking to nullify the election results and restore Bolsonaro as President.⁶⁴

While the international community would rally behind Lula in recognizing him as the democratically elected president of Brazil, the promulgation of false information created significant political unrest across the country and fermented fears of a military coup d'état by Brazil's Army.⁶⁵ In fact, the commander of Brazil's Army would later be fired for failing to respond adequately during the early moments of the January 8th Brasilia siege.⁶⁶

GENUINE HEARTFELT BELIEF

Now that we have established an understanding of what false-information is and also how it manifested itself in both Kenya and Brazil we need to understand why it is inherently dangerous. At the crux of this issue, being false-information, is this notion of genuine heartfelt belief. More specifically conflicts of fact and fiction force information consumers to draw conclusions. These conclusions are made through the critical

⁵⁶ Watson and Davies, 'Lula Sworn in as Brazil President as Predecessor Bolsonaro Flies to US'.

⁵⁷ Harden, 'Brazil Fell for Fake News: What to Do About It Now?'

⁵⁸ Financial Times Staff, 'Who Is Jair Bolsonaro? Five Facts about Brazil's Far-Right President-Elect'.

⁵⁹ Osborn, 'The Battle for Brazil's Evangelicals'.

⁶⁰ Harden, 'Brazil Fell for Fake News: What to Do About It Now?'

⁶¹ Watson and Davies, 'Lula Sworn in as Brazil President as Predecessor Bolsonaro Flies to US'.

⁶² Nicas, 'Brazil Counted All Its Votes in Hours. It Still Faces Fraud Claims.'

⁶³ Nicas, 'Brazil Counted All Its Votes in Hours. It Still Faces Fraud Claims.'

⁶⁴ Moloney, 'Brazil Riots: Arrests Ordered for Top Officials after Capital Stormed'.

⁶⁵ NPR.org, 'Brazil's Army Chief Has Been Fired in the Aftermath of This Month's Uprising'.

⁶⁶ NPR.org, 'Brazil's Army Chief Has Been Fired in the Aftermath of This Month's Uprising'.

examination of both content and curator. When a similar story is being reported by multiple agencies and across multiple platforms, confirmation biases prevails. When these same false-information is based on ‘known’ facts like the criminal records of key figures, even the largest of exaggerations appears plausible.⁶⁷ The road from plausible to reality is lined with the best of intentions and likely false-information.

Although those preparing and distributing false-information are ultimately liable for their actions – tangible consequences remain ambiguous.⁶⁸ A certain responsibility, if not duty, remains with the consumers but also the distributors. In this context the consumers are those individuals who are first absorbing the information and then secondly distributing the information.⁶⁹ These consumers should be validating the raw information and comparing it to what they know or generally believe to be truthful. However, when the notions of true and false, fact and fiction remain fluid - as they are in the 21st century - this task is not easily executed.⁷⁰ More so than ever before, the level of information saturation be it through the internet, social media, print media or TV has likely never presented such an obstacle until now.

Again, while the consumer has a responsibility to synthesize information comparing it against facts in common usage, when suspicious data sets are increasingly prevalent, confirmation bias dominates. When these data sets are easily ‘shared’ and republished at the stroke of a key – the risk of distributing false-information is compounded⁷¹. The polarization of news media has created a polarization of truths and facts. While one would hope and expect a consumer to do their own due diligence in researching and understanding news, the same consumer would hope and expect the same due diligence from news media. However, good or bad, productive and or unproductive, news media is a business aimed at generating income and revenue for its shareholders. While the most noble members of our society believe strongly in truth and transparency of news media these individuals are likely not positioned financially to influence said media. Until society as a whole demand better of news media and of each other the promulgation of false-information will continue.

PREVENTING AGAINST FALSE-INFORMATION

The expectation, the burden, the duty that we expect of consumers becomes increasingly more difficult achieve. Even insinuating that consumers need to be protected suggests that someone should be censoring these data sets ‘to protect society’.⁷² The simple insinuation of a need to censor in hopes of protecting is entirely undemocratic and simply dangerous to suggest.⁷³ Despite the risk, some countries have implemented

⁶⁷ Kuklinski et al., ‘Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship’.

⁶⁸ Olivia, ‘Disinformation Was Rife in Kenya’s 2022 Election’.

⁶⁹ De Witte, ‘What Stanford Research Reveals about Disinformation and How to Address It.’

⁷⁰ Meserole, ‘Order From Chaos: How Misinformation Spreads on Social Media—And What to Do about It’.

⁷¹ Meserole, ‘Order From Chaos: How Misinformation Spreads on Social Media—And What to Do about It’.

⁷² Garcia, ‘A Brazilian “Ministry of Truth” Is in the Making’.

⁷³ Gunter, ‘GUNTER: Truth Will Vanish with Canada’s Internet Censorship Law’.

content moderation of news media and social media.⁷⁴ The participation of citizens within social media or media as a whole is but voluntary. Legitimate and well-founded arguments challenging government censorship and moderation are made but often upon deaf ears.⁷⁵ But how do democracies ignore the distribution of false-information on a platform used by a significant portion of society and who is responsible for fact-checking?

Aside from well-established legal frameworks preventing harassment, character defamation and hate speech, the role of the government in moderation should be limited. Government moderation of speech and ideas is not only counterintuitive to democratic principles but it is the proverbial slippery slope to autocracy. Recent moderation and censorship of news media across Russia is proof of this inherent and undemocratic risk. Russian state media is heavily censored and moderated to reflect the intent and messaging of the Russian state.⁷⁶ Those Russian news organizations unwilling to subject themselves to Russian state moderation are simply abolished.⁷⁷

The reality that much of this false-information originates in countries where the state holds the monopoly over fact and fictions should not be ignored. Unfortunately, similar examples of government moderation of information have occurred in liberal democracies. Consider for a moment societal opposition around the COVID-19 vaccine, mask mandates and most importantly restrictions on freedom of movement.⁷⁸ While the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine has become increasingly clear the value added of censoring COVID-19 doubters remains open for debate.⁷⁹

Political discourse and social engagement within any society is key for the sharing of ideas but equally the self-moderation of the same. The best moderation and the elimination of false-information is that done by civil society. The recent successful lawsuit filed against Fox News by Dominion Voting is the perfect example of what moderation should look like.⁸⁰ Following the 2020 election in the United States, Dominion Voting alleged that without fact, Fox News actively promulgated the idea that the election was rigged. More specifically, Fox News and senior members of the Republican Party suggested that President elect Joe Biden had not won the election fairly.⁸¹ It was suggested that the Dominion Voting machines changed ballots casted for Donald Trump into ballots for Joe Biden.⁸² A more recent settlement between Fox News and Dominion Voting for an amount of \$787.5 million dollars was reached. The successful lawsuit by Dominion Voting demonstrates that the promulgation of false-information has consequences. Again, this type of censorship and moderation is critical in an increasingly intern-connected democracy but should not be done by the state.

⁷⁴ UN:OHCHR, 'Moderating Online Content: Fighting Harm or Silencing Dissent?'

⁷⁵ UN:OHCHR, 'Moderating Online Content: Fighting Harm or Silencing Dissent?'

⁷⁶ Sherman, 'Russia's Internet Censor Is Also a Surveillance Machine'.

⁷⁷ Sherman, 'Russia's Internet Censor Is Also a Surveillance Machine'.

⁷⁸ Shir-Raz et al., 'Censorship and Suppression of Covid-19 Heterodoxy'.

⁷⁹ Younes and Kheriaty, 'The White House Covid Censorship Machine'.

⁸⁰ Levine, "'Dominion Wins but the Public Loses': Fox Settlement Avoids Paying the Highest Price'.

⁸¹ Queen, 'Fox Settlement Leaves Key Question Unanswered: What's Dominion Really Worth?'

⁸² Levine, "'Dominion Wins but the Public Loses': Fox Settlement Avoids Paying the Highest Price'.

Aside from the obvious financial implications to such a blatant campaign of false-information on the part of Fox News, the truth prevailed. These claims had potentially irreparable impacts on confidence in the American electoral process despite being targeted at a single enterprise.⁸³ To what extent did these claims fuel the January 6th insurrection on the capital may never be known but their role in said event is unequivocal.⁸⁴ Further, across the United States there were voting recounts and doubts raised over the trust in local electoral processes. Though the majority of these recounts were not fruitful in changing the outcome in any election - they were extremely effective in creating doubt and fermenting distrust in the democratic process.⁸⁵ It could certainly be argued that this distrust and political polarization has further placated to the prevalence of identity politics in the United States and likely around the world. However, like the duty and responsibility of engaged citizens and consumers of news media to critique and validate the news for which they are consuming, lies a responsibility amongst politicians to do the same. Political leadership has a role in countering false-information made by their own parties and most importantly supporters. The west is waging a war on itself through false-information and without political leadership, the casualty count will simply continue to rise.

Aside from creating and fermenting doubt amongst citizens, false-information is extremely effective at fermenting identity politics.⁸⁶ The polarizing nature of false-information often redeems one group while villainizing another. This is the classical manifestation of identity politics where there is always a good group and there is always a bad group and your membership within one of these groups is absolute.⁸⁷ The nuanced truth of membership within identity politics is often forgotten and at best categorizes individuals based on a singular factor.⁸⁸ By creating further subjugation through the exploitation of false-information, the use of false-information to destabilize western society has proven to be extremely effective.⁸⁹ A proverbial lifting of the false-information veil is but the only solution to reunite society around shared values.

CONCLUSION

Like in the case of Kenya, exaggerated or entirely false-information and the reporting of military mobilization across the country fermented fears of a violence. The exploitation of social media and general interconnectedness of the electorate in both Kenya and Brazil further polarized their nation. In both cases, the genuinely held fears and beliefs we're exploited by political actors and movements to challenge both truth and ultimately democracy.

The use of false information in both cases reinforced the inherent fragility but equally distrust amongst members of society. However, in both cases clear and tangible

⁸³ Queen, 'Fox Settlement Leaves Key Question Unanswered: What's Dominion Really Worth?'

⁸⁴ Shafer, 'What's Really Behind the Release of Tucker Carlson's Texts'.

⁸⁵ Levine, "'Dominion Wins but the Public Loses': Fox Settlement Avoids Paying the Highest Price'.

⁸⁶ Fisher, 'Belonging Is Stronger Than Facts: The Age of Misinformation'.

⁸⁷ Chua, 'How America's Identity Politics Went from Inclusion to Division'.

⁸⁸ Fisher, 'Belonging Is Stronger Than Facts: The Age of Misinformation'.

⁸⁹ Chua, 'How America's Identity Politics Went from Inclusion to Division'.

leadership on the part of state institutions, leaders within civil society and patriots prevailed. While some countries have mechanisms in place to fact check and critique political discourse, Kenya and Brazil preferred the critical but rational engagement of civil society to maintain calm. Moving forward into an age where the use of false-information is likely to increase, the conduct and transparency of politicians will remain key for informed and democratic elections. Censoring of opinion and thought should be avoided at all costs but creating a society that engages with and criticizes information will lead us towards the truest manifestation of democracy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BBC WorldNews. 'Mau Mau Uprising: Bloody History of the Kenya Conflict'. *BBC World Report*, 7 April 2011. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-12997138>.

BBC WorldNews, Africa. 'DR Congo Conflict: Why Kenyan Troops Are Joining the Battle'. *BBC World Report*, 5 November 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63513678>.

———. 'Kenya Elections 2022: Win or Lose, Why Raila Odinga's Election Challenge Matters'. *Kenya General Election 2022*, 22 August 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-62599219>.

Cardoso, Fernando Henrique. 'What Is Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff Accused Of?' *The Financial Times*, 12 May 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/58401072-167d-11e6-b8d5-4c1fcdbe169f>.

Carpenter, Perry. 'Get The 411 On Misinformation, Disinformation And Malinformation'. *Forbes*, 13 January 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/01/13/get-the-411-on-misinformation-disinformation-and-malinformation/?sh=77dbe8d8256a>.

Chua, Amy. 'How America's Identity Politics Went from Inclusion to Division'. *The Guardian*, 1 March 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/mar/01/how-americas-identity-politics-went-from-inclusion-to-division>.

CIA.GOV 'The World FactBook: Kenya - Country Summary'. *The CIA.gov*, 1 May 2023. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kenya/summaries>.

CIA.GOV. 'The World FactBook: Brazil - Country Summary'. *The CIA.gov*, 2 May 2023. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/brazil/>.

Cooke, Jennifer. 'Background on the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya'. *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (blog), 6 April 2009. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/smart-global-health/background-post-election-crisis-kenya>.

De Witte, Melissa. 'What Stanford Research Reveals about Disinformation and How to Address It.' *The Stanford Press*, 13 April 2022. <https://news.stanford.edu/2022/04/13/know-disinformation-address/>.

Egbejule, Eromo. 'Kenyan Observer Group Says Projections Tally with Election Result'. *AlJazeera Africa*, 16 August 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/16/kenyan-observer-group-says-its-projections-tally-official-results>.

- Financial Times Staff. 'Who Is Jair Bolsonaro? Five Facts about Brazil's Far-Right President-Elect'. *Financial Times Online*, 29 October 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/f99172bc-cae5-11e8-b276-b9069bde0956>.
- Fisher, Max. 'Belonging Is Stronger Than Facts: The Age of Misinformation'. *The New York Times*, 7 May 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/07/world/asia/misinformation-disinformation-fake-news.html>.
- Gallas, Daniel. 'Dilma Rousseff Impeachment: How Did It Go Wrong for Her?' *BBC World News - Reality Check*, 12 May 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36028247>.
- Garcia, Raphael Tsavkko. 'A Brazilian "Ministry of Truth" Is in the Making'. *AlJazeera South America*, 5 May 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/5/5/a-brazilian-ministry-of-truth-is-in-the-making>.
- Goldstein, Josh, and Shelby Grossman. 'How Disinformation Evolved in 2020'. *Brookings Institute Tech Stream* (4 January 2021). <https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-disinformation-evolved-in-2020/>.
- Gunter, Lorne. 'Truth Will Vanish with Canada's Internet Censorship Law'. *The Toronto Sun: Opinion*, 15 April 2023. <https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/gunter-truth-will-vanish-with-canadas-internet-censorship-law>.
- Harden, Christopher. 'Brazil Fell for Fake News: What to Do About It Now?' *Rule of Law and Agile Governance: Wilson Center*, 21 February 2019. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/brazil-fell-for-fake-news-what-to-do-about-it-now>.
- Government of Canada 'How to Identify Misinformation, Disinformation and Malinformation.' Canadian Center for Cyber Security, n.d. <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/how-identify-misinformation-disinformation-and-malinformation-itsap00300>.
- Kemp, Simon. 'Digital 2022: Kenya'. *DataReportal*, 15 February 2022. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-kenya>.
- Kiprop, Victor. 'When Did Brazil Declare Independence?', 18 January 2018. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/when-did-brazil-declare-independence.html>.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich. 'Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship'. *The Journal of Politics* 62, no. 3 (August 2000): 790–816. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-3816.00033>.
- Latif Dahir, Abdi, and Declan Walsh. 'Kenya Elections A Fiercely Fought Election in Kenya, an African Powerhouse'. *The New York Times*, 10 August 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/09/world/kenya-elections>.

- Levine, Sam. “‘Dominion Wins but the Public Loses’: Fox Settlement Avoids Paying the Highest Price”. *The Guardian*, 19 April 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/apr/18/dominion-wins-but-the-public-loses-fox-settlement-avoids-paying-the-highest-price>.
- Meserole, Chris. ‘Order From Chaos: How Misinformation Spreads on Social Media—And What to Do about It’, 9 May 2018. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/05/09/how-misinformation-spreads-on-social-media-and-what-to-do-about-it/>.
- Moloney, Marita. ‘Brazil Riots: Arrests Ordered for Top Officials after Capital Stormed’. *BBC World News - Reality Check*, 1 January 2023. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-64228530>.
- Mosero, Rose. ‘In Kenya’s 2022 Elections, Technology and Data Protection Must Go Hand-in-Hand’. *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*, 8 August 2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/08/08/in-kenya-s-2022-elections-technology-and-data-protection-must-go-hand-in-hand-pub-87647>.
- Mwai, Peter. ‘Kenya Elections 2022: Misinformation Circulating Online’. *BBC World News - Reality Check*, 30 May 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/61591054>.
- Napolitano, Marcos. ‘The Brazilian Military Regime, 1964–1985’. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, by Marcos Napolitano. Oxford University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.413>.
- Nicas, Jack. ‘Brazil Counted All Its Votes in Hours. It Still Faces Fraud Claims.’ *The New York Times*, 10 November 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/10/world/americas/brazil-election-fraud.html>.
- NPR.org. ‘Brazil’s Army Chief Has Been Fired in the Aftermath of This Month’s Uprising’. *NPR: Latin America*, 22 January 2023. <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/22/1150641858/brazils-army-chief-has-been-fired-in-the-aftermath-of-this-months-uprising>.
- ‘O Julgamento Que Tirou Bolsonaro Do Anonimato’. *Politica*, n.d. <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,o-julgamento-que-tirou-bolsonaro-do-anonimato,70002249929>.
- Olivia, Lilian. ‘Disinformation Was Rife in Kenya’s 2022 Election’. *London School of Economics*, 5 January 2023. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2023/01/05/disinformation-was-rife-in-kenyas-2022-election/>.
- Osborn, Catherine. ‘The Battle for Brazil’s Evangelicals’. *Foreign Policy*, 30 September 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/30/brazil-election-evangelicals-bolsonaro-lula/>.

- Phillips, Dom. 'Brazil's Ex-President Lula Sentenced to Nearly 10 Years in Prison for Corruption'. *The Guardian*, 12 July 2017.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/12/brazil-president-lula-convicted-corruption>.
- Queen, Jack. 'Fox Settlement Leaves Key Question Unanswered: What's Dominion Really Worth?' *Reuters*, 21 April 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/fox-settlement-leaves-key-question-unanswered-whats-dominion-really-worth-2023-04-21/>.
- Ray, Michael, and Jeff Wallenfeldt. 'Dilam Rousseff: President of Brazil'. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14 April 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michel-Temer>.
- Shafer, Jack. 'What's Really Behind the Release of Tucker Carlson's Texts'. *Politico*, 3 May 2023. <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/05/03/whats-really-behind-the-release-of-tucker-carlsons-texts-00095182>.
- Sherman, Justin. 'Russia's Internet Censor Is Also a Surveillance Machine'. *Council on Foreign Relations*, 28 September 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/russias-internet-censor-also-surveillance-machine>.
- Shir-Raz, Yaffa, Ety Elisha, Brian Martin, Natti Ronel, and Josh Guetzkow. 'Censorship and Suppression of Covid-19 Heterodoxy: Tactics and Counter-Tactics'. *Minerva*, 1 November 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-022-09479-4>.
- Siddiqui, Usaid. 'Kenya Election Latest Updates: William Ruto Declared Winner'. *AlJazeera Africa*, 15 August 2022.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2022/8/15/kenya-election-latest-updates-uneasy-calm-as-results-awaited>.
- Silva, Daniel N. 'The Pragmatics Of Chaos: Parsing Bolsonaro's Undemocratic Language'. *Trabalhos Em Linguística Aplicada* 59, no. 1 (April 2020): 507–37.
<https://doi.org/10.1590/01031813685291420200409>.
- UN:OHCHR. 'Moderating Online Content: Fighting Harm or Silencing Dissent?' *UN: Human Rights Officer of the High Commissioner*, 23 July 2021.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2021/07/moderating-online-content-fighting-harm-or-silencing-dissent>.
- Vanier, Cyril. 'AlJazeera: What's Driving the Recent Unrest in Kenya?', 30 March 2023.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/inside-story/2023/3/30/whats-driving-the-recent-unrest-in-kenya>.
- Watson, Katy, and Alys Davies. 'Lula Sworn in as Brazil President as Predecessor Bolsonaro Flies to US'. *BBC World News - Reality Check*, 1 January 2023.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-64138739>.

Younes, Jenin, and Aaron Kheriaty. 'The White House Covid Censorship Machine', 8 January 2023. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/white-house-covid-censorship-machine-social-media-facebook-meta-executive-rob-flaherty-free-speech-google-11673203704>.