The age of (dis)information – A study of AI & integrity.

Nabhjyot Arora, Freelance Analyst
Dr Shreshth Chhabra, Associate Professor, DC Business School, Indore

Abstract –
Technology has progressed in leaps and bounds. Information revolution is not a buzzword anymore. The rate at which information is generated and transferred is phenomenal. But amongst all this information explosion, is the fear of disinformation – misaligned information intended to deceive or misinform public. Such tactics are used not only by individuals to defame celebrities or personal rivalry but is also as part of large campaigns.
This paper highlights the (mis) use of such information generation and spread using artificial intelligence.
Keywords – AI, Disinformation, Integrity, data protection, deepfake.

Introduction: Disinformation & Information Integrity

"The European Commission's Action Plan against Disinformation" defines "disinformation" as any false or misleading information that is created, presented, and disseminated for economic gain, or to intentionally deceive the public, and which may cause public harm. (Galligher, R. & Tanner, S. Global Disinformation Lab. 2023). Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a key role in exacerbating the role of disinformation and generating deepfake videos and images with the use of voice cloning and generative text, which makes it critical for the policymakers to regulate and moderate disseminated information. (Helmus, C. T. RAND, 2022).

"The European Commission's Action Plan against Disinformation" defines "misinformation" as "false, but not created with the intention of causing harm". (Galligher, R. & Tanner, S. Global Disinformation Lab. 2023). The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe defines misinformation as "the unintentional spread of inaccurate information shared in good faith by those unaware that they are passing on falsehoods. Misinformation can be rooted in disinformation as deliberate lies and misleading narratives are weaponized over time, fed into the public discourse and passed on unwittingly." (UNRIC).

Misinformation & Information Integrity

The spread of misinformation increases the risk of exposure to academics and learners, with respect to, utilizing the information and maintaining integrity against manipulation of data. (Doss, C. Mondschein, J. Shu, D. Wolfson, T. Kopecky, D. Fitton-Kane, V. A. Bush, L. & Tucker, C. (2023). The risk of exposure to deepfakes among education stakeholders has increased as learners and educators rely on videos to obtain and share information.

The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe defines "information integrity to the accuracy, consistency and reliability of information; which is threatened by disinformation, misinformation and hate speech." (UNRIC). Deepfakes can be considered as an attribute of misinformation and intended as disinformation to cause harm and damage making it critical for policymakers and academics.

Political Polarization & Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools enable influencing election results with campaigns undertaken

to mislead voters, impersonate candidates, and influence election results. The US Federal Communications Commission banned robocalls that use AI-generated voices, which can be used for extortion based on spreading misinformation. (Garimella, K. & Chauchard, S. 2024).

The psychological impact of disinformation exacerbates biases based on "echo chambers", which acts as a tool for political polarization due to highly personalized data generation and capture based on machine learning. (Disinformation Social Media Alliance. 2024).

Machine learning enables a system to detect fraud and learn patterns to perform tasks without the requirement for explicit programming. The European Union (EU) initiated regulation of AI to ensure development in science and technology, healthcare, manufacturing, transport, and clean energy. (European Parliament. 2023).

Data Protection & European Commission (EU)

The European Commission enables big tech corporates to uphold the codes of practice on disinformation, in addition to, raising awareness on digital safety to combat disinformation and facilitate safety regulations. (Chhabria, P. 2024. World Economic Forum). The European Union (EU) database enables management of critical infrastructure, education and vocational training, public services and public policy, law enforcement, migration and border control management, academia and political campaigning for application AI based models. (European Parliament. 2023).

Political Campaigning

AI is used in deepfakes and political campaigns, which could affect elections and erode trust in the electoral processes, candidates, and institutions. A deepfake generated clip circulating on "TikTok" indicated US support for Taiwan, indicating interference in local politics in Taiwan (The Republic of China). Mass popularization of artificial intelligence (AI) resulted in the spread of misleading information which can disenfranchise voters. (Chan, K & Swenson, A. AP News. 2024).

European Parliamentary Elections

The "European Parliamentary Elections" in 2024 had the leaders German Chancellor Scholz, UK Prime Minister Starmer, and Marine Le Pen as the target of deepfakes. The European Parliamentary Elections in June 2024 and Snap National Elections in France and United Kingdom in June – July 2024, with the aim to generate distrust, disruption and confusion, and influence public opinion. (Riedl, M. 2024).

Elections in the United Kingdom (UK)

Elections in the United Kingdom (UK) were targeted by fake news operation "CopyCop" in connection with disinformation network affiliated with Russia: Doppelganger. The operation included spreading fictitious articles about the war in Ukraine, where manipulating of information was undertaken by the AI bots to generate strategic results. Automated accounts were used to generate policy stance based on astroturfing which results in generation of a narrative to influence election bias and results. Information laundering undertaken by credible news outlets to generate deepfakes controversial statements which could be either misinformation or disinformation. (Stockwell, S. The Strategist. 2024).

Deepfakes in the European Union (EU)

The European Parliamentary Research Service undertook study on "Deepfakes in European Policy" which indicates potential misuse of AI technology. (Syvak Nazar, U. Y. Young European Ambassadors. 2024). The Ukraine-Russia Conflict involved generation of deepfake videos of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy capitulating to Russia, where "President Zelenskiy was speaking from the presidential lectern to back down from the conflict and put down the weapons"

which resulted in deception and widespread ridicule in March 2022. (Pearson, J. & Zinets, N. Reuters. 2022).

Elections in France

The AI generated videos depicted image of tractors and straw bales in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris (France) to exacerbate the impact of tractors' protests. Europe is undergoing a migrant crisis which was used to generate animosity by exacerbating housing crisis generated by deepfake in Ireland. (Canetta, T. European Digital Media Observatory.2024).

Elections in Slovakia

Electoral campaigning in Slovakia in September 2023 recorded sharing of a suspicious audio file which was an alleged recording of a telephone conversation between Michal Šimečka – The Chairman of Progresívne Slovakia and the journalist Monika Tódová – which involved discussing purchasing of votes from the Roma Community and manipulation of elections in favour of the Progresívne Slovakia. (Meaker, M. Wired. 2023).

The European Commission's Action Plan Against Disinformation

European Union Act

Deepfakes are regulated by the European Artificial Intelligence Law, which was proposed in April 2021, by the European Commission. Article 52 (3) of the AI Act requires transparency from the creators where anyone who creates or disseminates a deepfake must disclose its artificial origin and provide information about the techniques implied which make the AI technology less suspectable to deception and manipulation. (European Parliament. 2023).

Tech Accord to Combat Deceptive Use of AI in 2024 Elections

The Tech Accord signed at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) depict challenges posed by deepfakes in electoral processes. The political parties in the European Union (EU) – Center Right European People's Party (EPP), Center Left Party of European Socialists (PES), and the right wing European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR) signed a voluntary code of conduct ahead of elections in June 2024. (Goujard C. 2024).

Digital Services Act (DSA)

Social Media Platforms are required to ensure political advertising and AI deepfake are labelled under the content moderation law "Digital Services Act". The DSA regulates online intermediaries and platforms such as marketplaces, social networks, content-sharing platforms, app stores, and online travel and accommodation platforms. Its main goal is to prevent illegal and harmful activities online and the spread of disinformation. It ensures user safety, protects fundamental rights, and creates a fair and open online platform environment. (European Commission). Google, Facebook owner Meta, and ChatGPT agreed to create tools such as watermarks and detection techniques to debunk deepfake videos. (Cerulus, L. Roussi, A. & Volpicelli, G. Politico. 2024).

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