

Foreword

The 75th issue of TPQ comes at a time when the world is still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic. While not a new phenomenon, the concurrent swell in digital disinformation and misinformation has complicated the public health response on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as further eroded democratic values. Our Fall 2020 issue focuses on key challenges related to disinformation and misinformation, featuring analyses on social media usage, data protection and privacy, fact-checking, and the future of disinformation in a post-COVID-19 world. We are honored to publish this special and timely issue in collaboration with our longstanding partner, Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF).

Foreign interference and manipulation tactics have not only been polluting the digital space, but have also been threatening democratic societies, institutions, and values. Headlining the Fall 2020 issue, Anneli Ahonen, Head of the East StratCom Task Force at the European Union External Action Service, provides an overview of the EU's response to this worldwide threat through the cases of Ukraine and Belarus. The Task Force's efforts to counter disinformation are part and parcel of strengthening the EU's communication with its Eastern neighborhood, explains Ahonen. The author points to online campaigns such as #BeatCovid and EUvsDisinfo as having been particularly effective: the former has helped increase the rate of Ukrainians who see the EU as Ukraine's ally in the fight against COVID-19 from 10 to 32 percent, while the latter has played a vital role in informing Belarusian journalists about Kremlin disinformation tactics in the context of post-election rallies. Concluding that societies are not helpless in the face of disinformation, Ahonen argues that the "infodemic" is an opportunity for democracies to increase their support of freedom of speech and independent, trustworthy media outlets.

Discussing the state of print media in Turkey during the pandemic, General Director of the Press Bulletin Authority, Rıdvan Duran, elaborates on the support mechanisms the Turkish Government has provided to newspapers during this period. Highlighting the significant role of print media in the response to COVID-19, Duran argues that newspapers, despite their uncertain future, continue to be a reliable communication channel by providing accurate and fact-checked information during public crises. Therefore, as part of efforts to ensure newspapers' survival during the pandemic, advertisement costs were determined as force majeure and debt payments were deferred, Duran explains.

With the contentious 2020 US presidential election behind us, Brittany Beaulieu, visiting fellow at GMF, elucidates on the history of malign influence operations

surrounding US elections, with a focus on the 2016 elections. US governmental bodies exposed the Kremlin's interference campaigns and implemented deterrent policies, however Beaulieu argues that President Trump has undermined those efforts by not putting forward a coherent foreign interference policy. It is the question of whether the US can repair its institutional capacity that will determine its success in addressing foreign interference, Beaulieu concludes.

Some of the other topics explored in this issue include data privacy rights, social media platforms' efforts to curb online disinformation, the pivotal role fact-checkers play in combatting fake news in Turkey, and systemic racism within the nursing profession in Canada.

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As always, we look forward to your feedback.

The TPQ Team