

David R. Shedd and Ivana Stradner's article "The Covert War for American Minds."

The detailed account of how Russia, China, and Iran Seek to Spread Disinformation and Chaos in the United States is crucial, but it's equally important to remember the ethical implications of the First Amendment. Foreign actors like Russia and China exploit free speech to spread misinformation, posing a significant challenge to the protection of democracy. Efforts like the GEC are a step towards a future that safeguards democracy while respecting its freedom to post about such. This balance is crucial for an acceptable future where allied powers are interdependent and all can mutually flourish. In this case analysis, I will argue that Ethics of Care shows us that these nations engaged in information warfare against the US.

There should be a focus on promoting relationships and mutual flourishing. To interfere in elections undermines this trust, independence, and the ability to build caring relationships between countries such as Russia, China, Iran, and the US. One can assert that interfering in an election is not ethical or justifiable in warfare. Actions are only justifiable if there is a contribution to mutual flourishing and growing interdependence. Interfering in an election disrupts mutual flourishing and possibly destroys future relationships between countries. If the US were to interfere as Russia has, the US would damage trust on a world stage and be an instrument in harming the cooperation and well-being of allied countries, damaging independence. Election interference is not a way of addressing conflict through understanding and solutions created by caring for one another. Therefore, election interference is not justifiable because it is not an act or solution that considers the care of countries the US is allied with to cultivate independence and mutual flourishing of allied countries with the US. Stressing the importance of mutual flourishing can make your audience feel hopeful and optimistic about the potential for positive change in the future.

Valerie Morkevicius's "Just War Thinking and Wars of Information" inserts the spin concept. Spin is different from outright lying or entirely concealing information; instead, "concealment involves hiding information, spinning involves selectively presenting it" (2023). Morkevicius argues, "Acceptable spin must be somewhat transparent. The audience should be aware that they are in a context where they may be encountering spin" (2023). For example, we understand that advertisers aim to sell products, and this awareness is where spin is ethically acceptable because it respects the audience's ability to evaluate the information (Morkevicius, 2023) critically. However, in the context of election interference, one can argue that any type of spin fails the test of transparency. Foreign interference through the selective presentation of information without the audiences' knowledge of origin or intent undermines trust. Hindering mutual flourishing and interdependence between the state and the state's citizens. A state's citizens should be able to make informed decisions with the correct presentation of information in their process of electing leaders. To cultivate interdependence, allied countries must have trust. Russia may not have been an allied force, but we learned what not to do best from our enemies. An alliance between countries is more than a strategic partnership; it is a relationship built on shared values. With shared values, they can build a foundation that benefits both parties. Mutual flourishing reinforces trust and also reciprocity. Allowing cooperators to support each other in need while respecting their unique needs and contributions. This creates a sense of care.

Where this a sense of care, there is also a sense of responsibility; Jarred Prier's "Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare" asks us both the ethical and social challenges going forward in the misses of social media. Prier writes on the dual responsibility of social media companies, "with social media companies balancing the interest of their business and the betterment of society," there should be a response "to the malicious use of

social media" (2017). One can argue that election manipulation on a social media platform is malicious use. Another deterioration of mutual flourishing is the press being called into question credibility (Prier, 2017). The press, especially online, is a place where an informed democracy begins to lean. The leaning could be in part credited to bot networks. Prier writes, "With a large enough bot network, states can also control messages outside social media" (2017). With tools such as large bot networks, states can manipulate narratives beyond social media, using techniques like search engine optimization and commanding trends to sow discord and spread misinformation. "Techniques like search engine optimization and command of the trend will become common in future wars to sow discord and spread false information, to cause the other side to change its course of action" (Prier, 2017). These tactics aim to destabilize societies and force opponents to alter their actions, representing a dangerous evolution of information warfare. Prier warns that "these online weapons should frighten every leader in a democracy," as they exploit trust and undermine the mutual interdependence essential for a caring society (2017). When trust is eroded because of the manipulation of information, it destabilizes cooperation for mutual flourishing. Arguably, it is a necessary attribute to an ethical path forward in informational warfare. Trust requires a shared understanding; if the understanding is muddled and riddled with misinformation, people can not make an informed decision. By attacking these bonds through tactics like bot networks and trend manipulation, online weapons threaten not only democratic values but also the ethical foundation of care that supports these relationships. Preserving interdependence, therefore, is not just a matter of strategic interest but a moral imperative to sustain the relationships that enable societies and alliances to thrive.

While some argue that a certain level of spin is necessary for elections, it's important to remember that a more authoritarian regime threatens global stability by countering interference

with similar actions. The US could level the playing field, but it's crucial to address conflicts with understanding between alliances and care not to erode relationships. Manipulating information on social media is an act of informational warfare, an unethical consequence of a fast-paced, ever-evolving playing field. However, the fact that the playing field is ever-evolving does not mean we ought to accept such techniques with disregard and lack of care for nations to flourish mutually. Instead, it underscores the need for a more ethical approach to information warfare, one that respects the values of democracy and the importance of mutual flourishing in international relations.

References

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In Strategic Studies

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Stradner, D. R. S. a. I. (2024, November 7). The Covert War for American Minds: How Russia,

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