

The negative effects of technology on the elections

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Introduction

Technology has greatly affected our lives in a myriad of different ways in recent years. From banking, to news, communicating, entertainment, etc., practically every aspect of our daily lives has been changed in some regards thanks to technology and it doesn't seem to be slowing down, as every few years there seems to be an invention that comes along and makes the previous groundbreaking invention seem obsolete. However, as improvements to technology continue to persist, so does the ways in which mis, dis and malinformation (MDMs) by foreign adversaries are spread. With the spread of these MDMs, this brings up the question of if the currently evolving technology is hindering/negatively affecting the election process with the spread of MDMs and are the election workers truly prepared to combat or defend against attacks like this as time goes on?

Types of technologies

To understand how technologies affects the election process, we must define what type of technologies would influence the election. Usually when talking about this subject, the first thing that is always brought up, is the amount of MDMs that is spread on social media form sites like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, etc. This is however not by coincidence, as for most people, especially young people, social media is the only avenue in which they choose to get their information from. This is important to note as social media is by all accounts designed to be an echo chamber to reenforce people's ideologies for the sake of retainment. Meaning that whatever opinion or belief that you might have, the social media app will only show you news and entertainment that caters to your ideology and beliefs. This makes accessing other pieces of information that might challenge peoples preconceived believes quite difficult and can be an easy sanctuary for MDMs.

Effects on the election process

The continues rhetoric of voter fraud and how the election process can not be trusted, puts a lot of unnecessary stress, and worry on the people trying to make the elections run as smoothly as possible. It has been reported that in states with election results were challenged (i.e., recounts and close calls) they received far more threatening messages from voters with messages like, “Georgia Patriots it’s time to kill.” and “You’re gonna die, you piece of [expletive]. We’re going to hang you.” (Greta Bedekovics, 2022). This has gotten to the point where the threats have caused some individuals to take up arms against poll and election officials like the case in 2020, in which two Virginia men were arrested in Pennsylvania after showing up to a convention center armed with multiple handguns and an AR-15 style weapon where the votes for that state were being tallied at. Thankfully they were stopped before any mass attack happened, but something to note is the fact that their truck and their hats had the QAnon logos on them, which is an extremist group that believed “President Donald Trump is leading a secret war against a group of political and Hollywood elites who worship Satan and abuse and murder children.” (Tom et al., 2020). While this sounds absolutely ridiculous that someone would believe in something like this, it is well known that if information, whether it be true or false, is repeated to someone repeatedly as the truth, then the person will believe it to be true, especially if nothing else challenges it, which can ultimately put people’s lives in danger, depending on the lie.

Fighting against MDMs

As seen in the last paragraph, MDMs can have a negative effect on election workers, with threats of violence and retaliation, but how are election workers combating this. Unfortunately,

very little has been done to combat this, with 1 in 5 election officials saying that they would most likely leave before the 2024 elections. One of the biggest concerns with the election, is the type of physical security that election polls will have to keep workers and voters safe. But this is a problem as “basic physical security measures to protect election workers would cost about \$300 million over the next five years.” (Ruby Edlin & Lawrence Norden, 2023), which is hard to pass when the senet can’t see eye to eye on any topic. Other than gaining money for security, the other method to fight against MDMs is to be transparent with the voters to assure them that the elections are safe, fair and are meant to be there to get voters voices across, by providing an official site detailing accurate information in real time.

Conclusion

Election works work tirelessly to provide us with a fair and stable way to vote to get our voices across and it’s a shame that other countries and extremist groups have used citizens to attack our democracy and put their lives in danger. I firmly believe that congress needs to grant election facilities money for better security, because like with the two Virginia men people are more than ready to act on their believes. As it stands right now election workers and facilities are terribly unequipped to counter attacks fueled by false information. Accurate information also needs to reenforced to better fight MDMs or else the issue will never subside and will continue to fester under the surface. There needs to be more done to ensure protection before too many election workers leave, or before something terrible happens and it ends up on the news as a preventable outcome.

Work Cited

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