

## Did Facebook engage in Information Warfare?

In the article "What Facebook Did to American Democracy," Alexis C. Madrigal presents a case on how Facebook's algorithms impacted the 2016 presidential election. He touches on the design of the algorithm. The algorithm is created to maximize user engagement. This would mean presenting posts that may be misinformation or contain sensitive or divisive topics. This kind of environment aided in the spread of false information. As a result, there was increased political tension and polarization. The presence of Ubuntu could combat this issue. Ubuntu is a foundational moral principle in sub-Saharan African ethical systems. It consists of the idea that moral goodness is achieved by realizing one's humanity. This could be done through targeted ads and bot accounts. In this Case Analysis, I will argue that the lack of Ubuntu, shows us that Facebook did engage in information warfare because its algorithms promoted divisive content, and further that they were partly responsible for the election outcome because their platform was exploited for manipulation and misinformation.

In "Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare," Lt Col Jarred Prier speaks on the weaponization of social media platforms. As time goes on, platforms can be used to conduct information warfare. It is essentially a way to reach a mass amount of people and influence the public train of thought. As stated in the article, the use of social media as a tool of modern warfare should not be surprising. Prier mentions "narrative control," which is when people or organizations utilize social media to manipulate narratives on a topic. Acts such as these can completely derail and shape the perception of matters. As displayed in Madrigal's "What Facebook Did to American Democracy," Facebook posts and Facebook's algorithm are designed to maximize engagement. Posts and information of any kind on any platform thrive on engagement. This may deal with promoting sensationalized content, divisive content, and simply misinformation. The spread of misinformation or any information for that matter is exponential. False narratives reach people very quickly. For a platform, it is typically always best for engagement to be up, not necessarily even caring about the reliability of the information. This can obviously be bad in terms of influence, especially around major events such as elections. Ubuntu suggests that true human essence and rights

come from communal relationships. Rights and individuality are meaningful only within the context of a community. Ubuntu also suggests that each person is connected. From a perspective of this philosophy, Facebook's algorithms should prioritize the well-being of the community, rather than merely maximizing user engagement. However, I wouldn't expect this out of a company. Businesses are simply trying to gain a profit, unfortunately, morals may not come first. Ubuntu's principles would suggest that Facebook should redesign its algorithm. It would require an algorithm that promotes accurate information and discourages sensational or divisive content for clicks. For the record, this responsibility also lies in the hands of the users. Ubuntu also focuses on transparency and accountability. Facebook should ensure that the algorithms are created for the good of the public and do not inadvertently promote harmful content. Following the ethics of Ubuntu would call for some sort of community leader efforts to combat misinformation and maintain the integrity of information. Social media platforms would also have to address foreign interference. Similar to national security in general, social media platforms could collaborate more and more effectively with international entities. It is ideal to utilize all resources to identify and combat foreign entities attempting to manipulate narratives. In the ways of Ubuntu Facebook should prioritize for better narrative control. Social media's vast reach and ability to shape perceptions make it an effective medium for narrative control. The real-time nature of social media, along with its widespread accessibility, means that messages can be amplified with unprecedented speed. This makes social media an attractive tool for those with bad intentions seeking to mold the malleable public opinion. As stated in the article, narrative control is known as an extremely powerful weapon, and it should be treated as such and protected.

Keith Scott's "A Second Amendment for Cyber? Possession, Prohibition and Personal Liberty for the Information Age" is about the ins and outs of personal liberty in the digital era. Scott makes use of an analogy between the right to bear arms and the right to possess digital tools. Scott mentions cyber possession as being similar to physical weapons. Delving further into the metaphor, Scott argues that just as the Second Amendment provides individuals with the right to bear arms for self-defense, a similar framework could be applied to the digital space. This concept of "cyber

possession" involves individuals having the right to own and use digital tools and information. This would include software, encryption, and cyber defenses. This would also come with responsibilities. There needs to be a way to prevent misuse and ensure safety. Given the context, the idea of cyber possession acts as a double-edged sword. They can empower individuals by giving them protection for their privacy and information, however it can also be weaponized. As mentioned previously, digital tools can easily be used maliciously, such as to drive false narratives and manipulate public thought. Creating a culture of digital responsibility and ethics aligns with Ubuntu's principles. It helps safeguard the community from the negative impacts of cyber possession. An interconnected community can resist authoritarian control as it is then a unified resistance. Community support will make people less susceptible to manipulation. Coining the term '2nd Amendment for Cyber' really puts into perspective how important it is to be responsible in the digital space. The article states that the vast majority of users are unaware of the many different ways in which information can be compromised. This would then leave these individuals open and exposed to influence operations. These operations are going to have ill intentions and must be combatted with rights such as a 2nd Amendment of Cyber. A right such as this emphasizes the importance of individuals being able to protect their own digital information from unauthorized access and surveillance, which is very important in the information age. By having access to digital tools, individuals are given the ability to secure their own data, similar to how owning a firearm may provide a sense of security. When mentioning this subject, we must keep in mind that this is too much power to have without responsibilities and regulations. Once again, similar to firearms, cyber possession would also need to be balanced with regulations in order to prevent malicious use of digital tools. Hacking can very easily take place. The concept of a "Second Amendment for Cyber" seems obvious, though is a relatively new term brought up by Scott. Applying the philosophy of Ubuntu to this concept does a great job of highlighting the need for ethical use. This concept brings up the idea that there may be other traditional laws and rights that may could have parallels to the new digital space. If we go down this path, it is important not to overdo it. We must keep in mind that these are new times and technology is advancing with the times, rules should do the same.

Did Facebook engage in Information Warfare? I would say that the nature of all social media would point to yes. Information warfare is simply a certain use of information to gain a competitive advantage in some way shape or form. This can happen deliberately or by accident. Essentially, you can think of it as propaganda. This can also occur through the spread of multiple people. A mass number of posts can lead to Information warfare, it does not have to be one entity. Inaccurate information is still inaccurate information regardless of the source. The strategic use of media utilized to spread specific narratives and suppress others is very prominent in this day in age. The concept of information warfare is increasingly relevant as time goes on. The philosophy of Ubuntu provides solid guidelines on how to operate. Ubuntu promotes shared responsibility which is important when dealing with issues such as these.