



# Securing Electoral Integrity and a Democratic Information Space

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## Disinformation in the context of electoral processes

1. Make truth indistinguishable from falsehood
2. Exponential power of movements, networks, and computational propaganda
3. Grow and pivot
4. Exploit existing social divisions
  - a. Hate speech, gender based violence
  - b. Ethnic divisions
  - c. Religion
5. Co-opt local movements
6. Combine digital and traditional media
7. **Attacks elections processes and democratic institutions more broadly**

## Disinformation in the context of electoral processes

- **Nigeria** in 2018 saw major disinformation campaigns targeting minority groups, driving divisions and the electoral process itself
- **Taiwan**, democratic country threatened by influence campaigns directly by China
- **United States**, focus of both domestically directed and foreign influence campaigns, also strong responses by federal agencies, Election Integrity Partnership and others

How are disinformation and computational propaganda clear threats to democratic institutions and human rights?

- Increases voter confusion
- Decreases voter participation, turnout
- Creates unfair electoral advantages
- Exacerbates triggers for political/electoral violence
- Undermines confidence in electoral institutions and processes.

## What shape does electoral disinformation usually take in the Americas and the Caribbean?

Disinformation campaigns exacerbate political division, target minorities, political dissidents, and women

- In Bolivia, have targeted the voting process
- In Colombia, have targeted minority populations and discouraged voting with threats of violence, particularly during the peace referendum
- In Brazil, organized computational propaganda and political parties coordinate with supporters to spread harmful information, extending to public health
- Women politicians and voters are consistently targets



Relevant legislative initiatives and best practices designed to curb the effects of disinformation in electoral processes

Measures to:

- Restrict online content and behaviors during campaigning and elections
- Promote transparency during campaigning and elections
- Promote equity during campaigning and elections
- Promote democratic information during campaigning and elections

**Particularly targeting domestic actors or social media and tech companies**



## Measures to restrict online content and behaviors during campaigning and elections

### Measures directed at domestic actors:

- a. **Prohibit social media campaigning outside of a designated campaign period**
- b. **Restrict online behaviors that constitute an abuse of state resources**
- c. **Set limits on the use of personal data by campaigns**
- d. **Limit political advertising to entities that are registered for the election**
- e. **Ban the distribution or creation of deepfakes for political purposes**
- f. **Criminalize the dissemination of fake news or disinformation**



## Measures to restrict online content and behaviors during campaigning and elections

### Measures directed at social media and technology platforms:

- a. **Hold platforms liable for all content and require removal of content**
- b. **Prohibit platforms from hosting paid political advertising**
- c. **Hold platforms responsible for enforcing restrictions on political advertisements run outside the designated campaign period**
- d. **Only allow platforms to run pre-certified political advertisements**
- e. **Obligate platforms to ban advertisements placed by state-linked media**
- f. **Restrict how platforms can target advertisements or use personal data**



## Promote transparency during campaigning and elections

### **Measures directed at domestic actors:**

- Require the declaration of social media advertising as a campaign expenditure
- Require registration of party and candidate social media accounts
- Require disclosure and labelling of bots or automated accounts
- Require disclosure of the use of political funds abroad

### **Measures directed at social media and technology platforms:**

- Require platforms to maintain ad transparency repositories
- Require platforms to provide algorithmic transparency



Promote equity during campaigning and elections:

**Measures directed at domestic actors:**

- Cap party or candidate social media expenditures

**Measures directed at social media and technology platforms:**

- Require platforms to publish advertising rates and treat electoral contestants equally
- Compel platforms to provide free advertising space to candidates and parties



Promote democratic information during campaigning and elections:

**Measures directed at domestic actors:**

- Require parties and candidates to issue corrections when party members or supporters share bad information

**Measures directed at social media and technology platforms:**

- Require platforms to offer election authorities free advertising space for voter education

## Final Thoughts and Further Responses

- Carefully consider legislative responses
- Work with EMBs, election observers and civil society on collaborative responses
- Build norms and standards across parties through codes of conduct and linkages to international movements such as:
  - Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace
  - Argentina's Ethical Digital Commitment,
  - Brazil's #NãoValeTudo campaign,
  - Transnational Commission on Election Integrity's Pledge for Election Integrity

## Open Government and Disinformation





