



State-Sponsored Malign Influence Operations

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Free and fair elections are foundational to functional democracies. However, governments have historically sought to influence the outcomes of elections in other countries. How can we use the latest in machine intelligence to protect elections from foreign influence?

Challenges

In modern democracies, hacking voting systems nearly always leaves hard, traceable evidence, so sophisticated state-sponsored actors have developed complex systems aimed at hacking the opinions and actions of voters.

Our first line of defense against foreign interference in our political systems lies with federal and state agencies who monitor our elections and respond to intelligence activities. However, these government entities do not have the authority to intervene when the amplification of foreign-originated messages are conducted by domestic actors.

Technology and media companies have the capability to censor who says what using their platforms, but often eschew involvement in fear of appearing to be political actors, stifling free speech, encroaching on the privacy of their users, or attracting public backlash over unevenly enforced standards.

Research institutions such as think tanks and universities have deep expertise in uncovering state-sponsored malign influence operations, but they lack operational capacity. As such, they frequently find themselves in the position to recommend actions without a clear pathway to implementation.

Our Solution

Code for Democracy uses open-source methods in order to track the origination and propagation of trending narratives and uncover domestic actors amplifying messages of foreign origination. As an independent entity, we are unconstrained in our actions except by what is prohibited by law, allowing us to seamlessly leap from insights to implementation.

Further Reading

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