

Fake news and deep fakes

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In India, misinformation has resulted in numerous horrific incidents where “fake news” and rumours circulated on Whats Apps have resulted in mob violence and a significant loss of lives all due to misinformation. Though lack of education and understanding within the communities can be blamed, the catalyst has been social media.

In news: Fake news in recent times have increased in social media platforms.

Placing it in syllabus: Internal security

Dimensions

1. Fake news
2. Its Impacts
3. Deep Fakes and its problems

Content:

Fake news:

- The posts shared on social media have the most visible aspect of fake news.
- Fake news may seem new, but the social media platform used is the only new thing about it.
- Though propaganda has been around for centuries, the **internet is only the latest means of communication to be abused to spread lies and misinformation.**

Fake news requires **three different items to succeed** and without any one of these factors, it is unable to spread and reach its target audience.

1. **Tools and services** – for manipulating and spreading the message across relevant social media networks, many of

which are sold in various online communities from across the globe. E.g. paid likes/followers

2. **Social networks** – They have to exist as a platform for spreading propaganda. With people spending more time on these sites as a way to get the latest news and information, their importance in spreading fake news cannot be underestimated.
3. **Motivations** – Sometimes it's simply a desire for monetary gain via advertising and in other cases the goals can vary from the criminal to the political.

An infodemic is an overload of information, often false or unverified, about a problem, especially a major crisis. Quickly spreading in the news, online, and through social media, this information fuels fear and speculation, making the problem worse, not better.

Deep fakes and its problems:

- Deepfakes are the **digital media (video, audio, and images) manipulated using Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.
- This synthetic media content is referred to as deepfakes.
- They make it possible to fabricate media – swap faces, lip-syncing, and puppeteer.
- Access to commodity cloud computing, algorithms, and abundant data has created a perfect storm to democratise media creation and manipulation.
- Synthetic media can create possibilities and opportunities for all people.
- It can be weaponized to inflict harm.

Threat posed by deepfakes:

- They can inflict damage to individuals, institutions, businesses and democracy.
- Nation-state actors with geopolitical aspirations, ideological believers, violent extremists, and economically motivated enterprises can manipulate media

narratives using deepfakes, with easy and unprecedented reach and scale.

- Pornographic deepfakes can threaten, intimidate, and inflict psychological harm and reduce women to sexual objects.
- They can be deployed to extract money, confidential information, or exact favours from individuals.
- Can cause short and long-term social harm and accelerate the already declining trust in news media.
- In the long run, Such an erosion can contribute to a culture of factual relativism, fraying the increasingly strained civil society fabric.

Its Impacts:

Political:

- A deepfake can also aid in altering the democratic discourse and undermine trust in institutions and impair diplomacy.
- False information about institutions, public policy, and politicians powered by a deepfake can be exploited to spin the story and manipulate belief.
- A deepfake of a political candidate can sabotage their image and reputation.
- Voters can be confused and elections can be disrupted.
- A high-quality deepfake can inject compelling false information that can cast in doubt the voting process and election results.
- Deep Fakes contribute to factual relativism and enable authoritarian leaders to thrive.
- An undesirable truth is dismissed as deep fake or fake news.

Economic:

- Rumours circulated on WhatsApp have resulted in mob violence and a significant loss of lives all due to

misinformation.

- They can destroy businesses and harm trade.

E.g. One piece of fake news that has had an overwhelming and extensive impact on India's economy claimed that eating chicken cause COVID-19. It led to stunning losses of Rs 1,500-2000 crores a day. Farmers culled day-old chicks. This impacted India's maize and soya industries as the poultry industry was the biggest buyer of these crops. So in this instant huge numbers of farmers and business were badly impacted by "fake news".

- According to a study done by Cybersecurity company CHEQ, the epidemic of online fake news costs \$78 billion annually in the global economy.
- The report has estimated that fake news has contributed a loss in the stock market value of about \$39 billion a year.

Way forward:

The social media platforms need to continue to improve and make the necessary changes. The citizens need to be educated to recognize the threats of fake news and its deadly consequences, they should think critically when any news is circulated, fake or otherwise.

Some governments have passed legislation to help address issues of fake news. In India **Section 505(1)(b) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)** addresses a wider canvas –spreading false and mischievous content that results in 'fear or alarm to the public, or to any section of the public may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquillity'. Under this law, the convicted can be punished with imprisonment of a maximum of six years and a fine.

Mould your thought:

1. What is a deep fake? Critically analyze the impacts of

fake news in today's world.

Approach to the answer:

- Define deep fake
- Write about fake news
- Explain its political and economic impacts
- What can be done to tackle it?