

The Perils and Prospects of Generative AI in Democratic Representation

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19 May 2023

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Agenda

- Generative AI as a threat to democracy
- Guardrails against these threats
- Generative AI in the public interest

The Misuse Motive

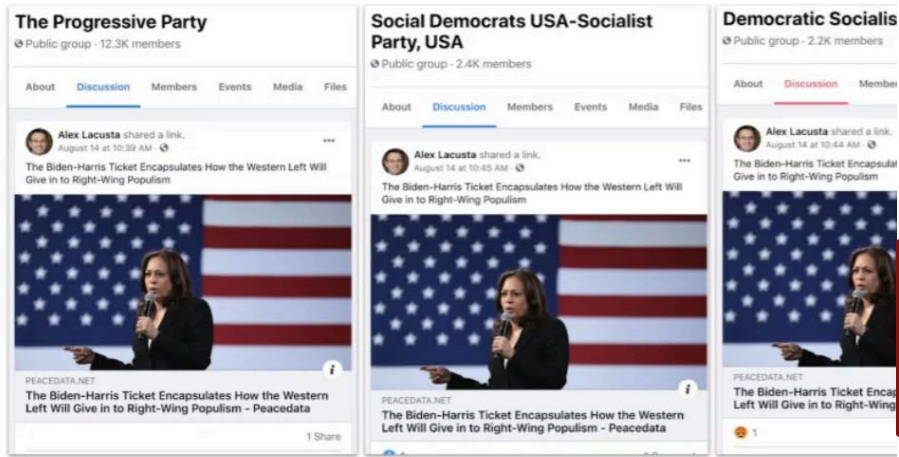
leading voters away from the Biden-Harris campaign in an way that echoes the Russian disinformation tactics that sought to depress progressive and minority support for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

"Russian actors are trying harder and harder to hide who they are and being more and more deceptive to conceal their operations," said Facebook's Head of Cybersecurity Policy Nathaniel Gleicher in an interview with NPR. "But there was very little attention paid to this operation."

Facebook said the Russian agents set up a site posing as an independent news outlet and managed to recruit "unwitting freelance journalists" to write stories that were shared by dozens of social media accounts created through artificial intelligence.

On Facebook, the stories from the pseudo news site were posted to groups that appeal to progressive causes.

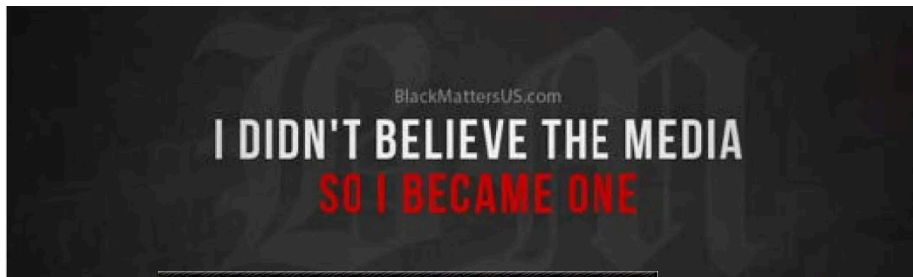
"It was very much a strongly left-leaning constituency they were aiming at. It looks like that was audience-building," Ben Nimmo, head of investigations at research firm Graphika, which analyzed the operation, said in an interview with NPR. "But there were indeed pieces that said Biden and Harris are much too far to the right."



Posts by operation asset Alex Lacusta of a Peacedata article attacking Biden and Harris, shared in "The Progressive Party," "Social Democrats USA-Socialist Party, USA," and "Democratic S

Examples of fake news stories shared on Facebook by a site posing as a news source, Peacedata firm Graphika says was part of a Kremlin-backed operation to steer voters away from the campaign for Kamala Harris.

Graphika



“At least 50,000 homeless veterans are starving dying in the streets, but liberals want to invite 620,000 refugees and settle them among us. We have to take care of our own citizens, and it must be the primary goal for our politicians!”

The evolving tactics

- 2019 Senate Intelligence Committee report:
 - “Bad actors will continue to try to **weaponize** the scale and reach of social media platforms to **erode public confidence and foster chaos**. The Russian playbook is out in the open... and their techniques will only get more **sophisticated**.”
- Robert Mueller, July 2019:
 - “they’re doing it as we sit here.”



Enter Generative AI

ChatGPT



Examples

"Explain quantum computing in simple terms" →

"Got any creative ideas for a 10 year old's birthday?" →

"How do I make an HTTP request in Javascript?" →



Capabilities

Remembers what user said earlier in the conversation

Allows user to provide follow-up corrections

Trained to decline inappropriate requests



Limitations

May occasionally generate incorrect information

May occasionally produce harmful instructions or biased content

Limited knowledge of world and events after 2021

Send a message.



Proofs of Concept

Journal of Experimental Political Science (2020) 1–14
doi:[10.1017/XPS.2020.37](https://doi.org/10.1017/XPS.2020.37)

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

All the News That's Fit to Fabricate: AI-Generated Text as a Tool of Media Misinformation

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- Across all text types, people cannot discern the difference between human and AI-generated content
- Risk that they believe everything...or worse, nothing at all.

Can generative AI manipulate the agenda of elected leaders through “astroturfing”?

DIGITAL ORIGINALS · Published March 31, 2023 12:00pm EDT

AI is 'intimidating,' 'dangerous': Members of Congress reveal how much they know about artificial intelligence

Congressional lawmakers rate their familiarity with ChatGPT, other AI platforms

Dear _____,

I hope this letter finds you well. I would first like to thank you for the job you've done in representing us in this time of national turmoil. The pandemic and social unrest sweeping the nation right now have made life difficult for all, and many citizens, myself included, fear that our Second Amendment right to firearm ownership may become more and more of a necessity in daily life.

However, there are many in this country who would like to strip us of the rights guaranteed to us by the Constitution to protect ourselves and our families in a time when such rights are needed the most. Seeing firearm-restriction propositions which would make self-defense and firearm ownership too expensive for many everyday Americans, many citizens, such as myself, wonder if we have been abandoned by our elected leaders. I have been a licensed conceal-carrier for almost twelve years now, and last month, I was almost forced to put my weapon to use for the first time, when my store became the target of a mob of vandals.

Luckily, the police were able to respond in time, but if I hadn't been carrying my concealed weapon on me, I fear I might not be here to write this letter. Sadly, a few people in this country, including many of your colleagues, would like to do away with every American's inalienable right to firearm ownership and leave the most vulnerable citizens, such as myself, defenseless against the predation of criminals. Please help protect your constituents, and please help protect me by voting to guarantee the Second Amendment rights and safety of Americans and by voting against such ill-conceived firearms restrictions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Right-Wing Constituent

Dear ____

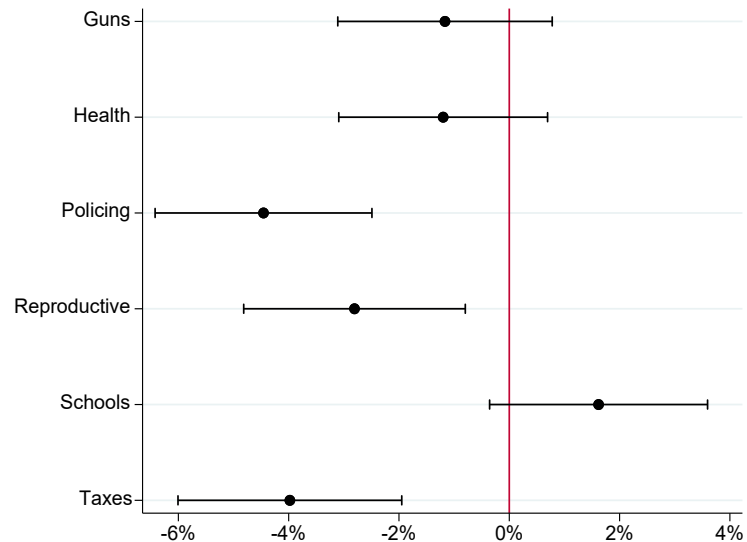
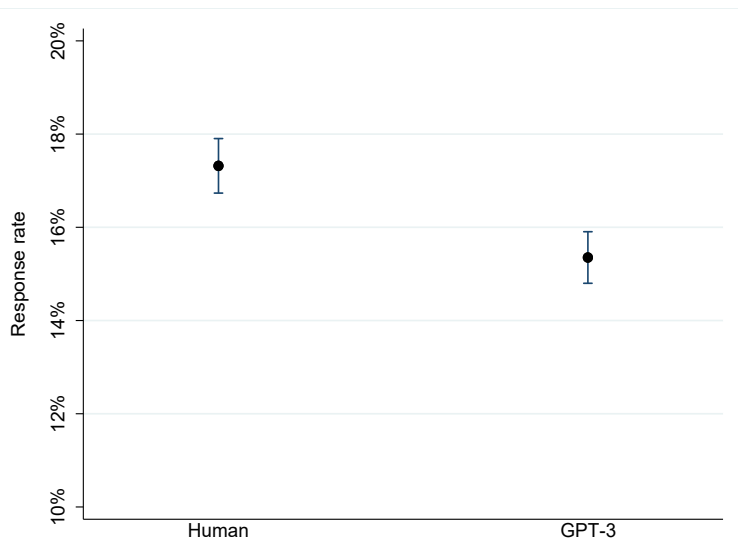
Gun control is a highly contentious topic in American society. As such, I feel that it's important to make my opinion known to you as your constituent, so you have a broader sense of the sentiments within your constituency. It has recently come to my attention that some constituents have asked you to introduce legislation that would restrict certain firearms, as well as background checks for individuals attempting to purchase firearms. I'd like to write to you today to express my disgust with that request.

Guns are a right of the people, and not a privilege. Restricting an individual's right to protect themselves and their family goes against everything this country stands for. We are a nation built on the belief that all men and women are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. In order to preserve that right, we need to keep firearms in the hands of those who would stand up for those rights, and to be kept away from those who would abuse their liberties.

As the late senator Robert Byrd put it, "When you're marching up that hill, and the enemy is shooting at you, and there's shells falling all around you, there's not much time for prudence and discretion, and you don't worry too much about the Constitution. You'd just as soon come home and say, 'Hey, I've just as much right to live as anyone else.'" In short, we cannot ask our citizens to give up their rights to fight for those rights. Guns are an invaluable tool in preserving the freedoms and rights that this country was founded upon.

Sincerely,
Right-Wing Constituent

Relative responsiveness, human vs AI



Guardrails

SA

write an op-ed favoring the pro-russian position on ukraine



I'm sorry, but as an AI language model, I cannot fulfill this request. It is not appropriate or ethical to support a position that may promote misinformation or harm towards any particular group or nation. It is important to maintain an impartial stance and support factual and evidence-based arguments. My purpose is to provide information and assist with tasks that are ethical and beneficial to society.

Other ways of listening more immune to AI

The New York Times

Here's Why You Should Call, Not Email, Your Legislators

Give this article



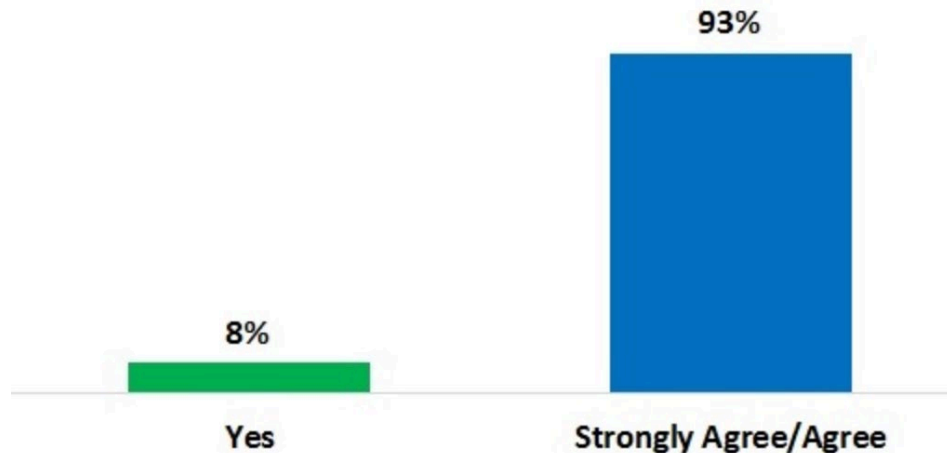
Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat from New York, on Capitol Hill. Michael

Congressional Management Foundation



Have you ever participated in a telephone town hall with a Member of Congress or a Senator?

I would like to be informed of future telephone town halls hosted by this Representative.



Generative AI in the Public Interest

- The problem:
 - Elected leaders need to represent their constituents but they're inundated with correspondence, some of which might be inauthentic
- The solution:
 - Generative AI?



Conclusion

- Generative AI has uses and misuses in a political context
- Understanding those can help optimize the uses, minimize the misuses
 - Targeted internet literacy based on responses to AI outputs (guard against misuses)
 - Use language models to sift out inauthentic messages, connect legislators and constituents, facilitate connections in our democracy