# 1AC

#### I affirm the resolution, “Resolved: In a democracy, a free press ought to prioritize objectivity over advocacy.”

## Framework

#### OBS: The Affirmative has no need to specify a plan on how to prioritize objectivity over advocacy or how it would be implemented, since the resolution is only asking whether we OUGHT to do it.

**The affirmative will provide the following definitions:**

#### A democracy is a government characterized by citizen rule and free social cooperation. In order for a democracy to function, citizens must have reliable access to information to govern themselves.

Sonnemaker writes [Tyler Sonnemaker, 2015; Claremont McKenna College; “Objectivity and the Role of Journalism in Democratic Societies,” <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/70981185.pdf>] brett

The health of any democratic society depends greatly on the quality of information available to its citizens. A democracy is governed by its citizens, and when citizens are better informed, they make better decisions about how to structure their laws, government, and the various economic and cultural institutions that make their society just or unjust. Ideally, a society should be “a fair system of social cooperation between free and equal citizens,”2 where everyone is better off than they would be fending for themselves. So, we ought to structure society in a way that benefits everyone — if some people are denied equal basic rights, liberties, and certain levels of justice, it is unreasonable for us to think that they would even want to live in this society. Therefore, we must make political decisions that we genuinely believe would benefit others, and that they would accept these decisions as well. The question that emerges from this is: how might we inform citizens in a way that helps them make political decisions that will improve our democratic society for everyone?

#### “Objectivity” in the press is a sliding scale of commitment to truthfulness, neutrality, and separating fact from opinion.

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To understand it better, it is useful to split objectivity [is] into “three distinct, but closely related ideas: (1) truthfulness, a commitment to reporting information that is factually correct; (2) neutrality, striving for fairness, balance and impartiality; and (3) detachment, separating ‘fact from comment’” (Calcutt and Hammond in Hunter 2015:276). Advocacy, on the other hand, is often seen as the opposite, and said to be what distinguishes journalism from public relations: The former is seen as “scrutiny of interests” opposed to the latter, “advocacy for interests” (Kevin Moloney in Fisher 2016, my highlight).

Yet, there is a long tradition of advocating within journalism, ranging from openly advocating a cause or point of view to selecting and highlighting certain voices and sources over others. No journalism is completely neutral. The notion that it could be has been debunked by a large body of research, all finding that a range of influences, from personal factors to shared beliefs and values within the sector and/or ones society, will affect the journalistic outcome no matter how committed the journalist is to a professional ideology of objectivity (Hallin and Mancini 2004). In fact, there is no journalism without elements of advocacy; rather, it is a question as to what degree (Fisher 2016).

**The value for this round will be morality.** The word “ought” in the resolution implies that there is some predisposed moral reason why we should or should not be doing something. Thus, as the resolution is normative, the value should be morality.

#### The criterion to achieve morality is upholding democratic values.

#### Prefer this criterion for 3 reasons:

#### 1 -- The resolution -- debating about what is important to a democracy begs the question of what is in a democracy’s interests. For example, if you said “a knife ought to cut butter”, then a good knife would cut butter well. Similarly, a good democracy would be effective at promoting democratic values.

#### 2 -- Debate itself -- the fact we as debaters do research on topics to cite unbiased articles and switch sides every round proves that this very activity is dependent on strong democratic values. Upholding democracy should be paramount to institutions like debate and the press alike, even if they do it in different ways.

#### 3 -- Democracy produces the best outcomes and individual liberty for those living within. The level of civilian control over the government matters for every single moral right.

Jones writes [Sean M. Lynn-Jones | March 1998; Associate, International Security Program Editorial Board Member, Quarterly Journal: International Security Former Editor, International Security; Former Series Editor, Belfer Center Studies in International Security; “Why the United States Should Spread Democracy,” <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/why-united-states-should-spread-democracy>] brett

The first way in which the spread of democracy enhances the lives of those who live in democracies is by promoting individual liberty, including freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, and freedom to own private property.22 Respect for the liberty of individuals is an inherent feature of democratic politics. As Samuel Huntington has written, liberty is "the peculiar virtue of democracy."23 A democratic political process based on electoral competition depends on freedom of expression of political views and freedom to make electoral choices. Moreover, governments that are accountable to the public are less likely to deprive their citizens of human rights. The global spread of democracy is likely to bring greater individual liberty to more and more people. Even imperfect and illiberal democracies tend to offer more liberty than autocracies, and liberal democracies are very likely to promote liberty. Freedom House's 1997 survey of "Freedom in the World" found that 79 out of 118 democracies could be classified as "free" and 39 were "partly free" and, of those, 29 qualified as "high partly free." In contrast, only 20 of the world's 73 nondemocracies were "partly free" and 53 were "not free."24 The case for the maximum possible amount of individual freedom can be made on the basis of utilitarian calculations or in terms of natural rights. The utilitarian case for increasing the amount of individual liberty rests on the belief that increased liberty will enable more people to realize their full human potential, which will benefit not only themselves but all of humankind. This view holds that greater liberty will allow the human spirit to flourish, thereby unleashing greater intellectual, artistic, and productive energies that will ultimately benefit all of humankind. The rights-based case for liberty, on the other hand, does not focus on the consequences of increased liberty, but instead argues that all men and women, by virtue of their common humanity, have a right to freedom. This argument is most memorably expressed in the American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness ..." The virtues of greater individual liberty are not self-evident. Various political ideologies argue against making liberty the paramount goal of any political system. Some do not deny that individual liberty is an important goal, but call for limiting it so that other goals may be achieved. Others place greater emphasis on obligations to the community. The British Fabian Socialist Sidney Webb, for example, articulated this view clearly: "The perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the great social machine."25 To debate these issues thoroughly would require a paper far longer than this one.26 The short response to most critiques of liberty is that there appears to be a universal demand for liberty among human beings. Particularly as socioeconomic development elevates societies above subsistence levels, individuals desire more choice and autonomy in their lives. More important, most political systems that have been founded on principles explicitly opposed to liberty have tended to devolve into tyrannies or to suffer economic, political, or social collapse. 2. Liberal Democracies are Less Likely to Use Violence Against Their Own People. Second, America should spread liberal democracy because the citizens of liberal democracies are less likely to suffer violent death in civil unrest or at the hands of their governments.27 These two findings are supported by many studies, but particularly by the work of R.J. Rummel. Rummel finds that democracies-by which he means liberal democracies-between 1900 and 1987 saw only 0.14% of their populations (on average) die annually in internal violence. The corresponding figure for authoritarian regimes was 0.59% and for totalitarian regimes 1.48%.28 Rummel also finds that citizens of liberal democracies are far less likely to die at the hands of their governments. Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have been responsible for the overwhelming majority of genocides and mass murders of civilians in the twentieth century. The states that have killed millions of their citizens all have been authoritarian or totalitarian: the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Nazi Germany, Nationalist China, Imperial Japan, and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Democracies have virtually never massacred their own citizens on a large scale, although they have killed foreign civilians during wartime. The American and British bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan, U.S. atrocities in Vietnam, massacres of Filipinos during the guerrilla war that followed U.S. colonization of the Philippines after 1898, and French killings of Algerians during the Algerian War are some prominent examples.29 There are two reasons for the relative absence of civil violence in democracies: (1) Democratic political systems-especially those of liberal democracies constrain the power of governments, reducing their ability to commit mass murders of their own populations. As Rummel concludes, "Power kills, absolute power kills absolutely ... The more freely a political elite can control the power of the state apparatus, the more thoroughly it can repress and murder its subjects."30 (2) Democratic polities allow opposition to be expressed openly and have regular processes for the peaceful transfer of power. If all participants in the political process remain committed to democratic principles, critics of the government need not stage violent revolutions and governments will not use violence to repress opponents.31 3. Democracy Enhances Long-Run Economic Performance A third reason for promoting democracy is that democracies tend to enjoy greater prosperity over long periods of time. As democracy spreads, more individuals are likely to enjoy greater economic benefits. Democracy does not necessarily usher in prosperity, although some observers claim that "a close correlation with prosperity" is one of the "overwhelming advantages" of democracy.32 Some democracies, including India and the Philippines, have languished economically, at least until the last few years. Others are among the most prosperous societies on earth. Nevertheless, over the long haul democracies generally prosper. As Mancur Olson points out: "It is no accident that the countries that have reached the highest level of economic performance across generations are all stable democracies."33 Authoritarian regimes often compile impressive short-run economic records. For several decades, the Soviet Union's annual growth in gross national product (GNP) exceeded that of the United States, leading Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to pronounce "we will bury you." China has posted double-digit annual GNP increases in recent years. But autocratic countries rarely can sustain these rates of growth for long. As Mancur Olson notes, "experience shows that relatively poor countries can grow extraordinarily rapidly when they have a strong dictator who happens to have unusually good economic policies, such growth lasts only for the ruling span of one or two dictators."34 The Soviet Union was unable to sustain its rapid growth; its economic failings ultimately caused the country to disintegrate in the throes of political and economic turmoil. Most experts doubt that China will continue its rapid economic expansion. Economist Jagdish Bhagwati argues that "no one can maintain these growth rates in the long term. Sooner or later China will have to rejoin the human race."35 Some observers predict that the stresses of high rates of economic growth will cause political fragmentation in China.36 Why do democracies perform better than autocracies over the long run? Two reasons are particularly persuasive explanations. First, democracies-especially liberal democracies-are more likely to have market economies, and market economies tend to produce economic growth over the long run. Most of the world's leading economies thus tend to be market economies, including the United States, Japan, the "tiger" economies of Southeast Asia, and the members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Two recent studies suggest that there is a direct connection between economic liberalization and economic performance. Freedom House conducted a World Survey of Economic Freedom for 1995-96, which evaluated 80 countries that account for 90% of the world's population and 99% of the world's wealth on the basis of criteria such as the right to own property, operate a business, or belong to a trade union. It found that the countries rated "free" generated 81% of the world's output even though they had only 17% of the world's population.37 A second recent study confirms the connection between economic freedom and economic growth. The Heritage Foundation has constructed an Index of Economic Freedom that looks at 10 key areas: trade policy, taxation, government intervention, monetary policy, capital flows and foreign investment, banking policy, wage and price controls, property rights, regulation, and black market activity. It has found that countries classified as "free" had annual 1980-1993 real per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (expressed in terms of purchasing power parities) growth rates of 2.88%. In "mostly free" countries the rate was 0.97%, in "mostly not free" ones -0.32%, and in "repressed" countries -1.44%.38 Of course, some democracies do not adopt market economies and some autocracies do, but liberal democracies generally are more likely to pursue liberal economic policies. Second, democracies that embrace liberal principles of government are likely to create a stable foundation for long-term economic growth. Individuals will only make long-term investments when they are confident that their investments will not be expropriated. These and other economic decisions require assurances that private property will be respected and that contracts will be enforced. These conditions are likely to be met when an impartial court system exists and can require individuals to enforce contracts. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has argued that: "The guiding mechanism of a free market economy ... is a bill of rights, enforced by an impartial judiciary."39 These conditions also happen to be those that are necessary to maintain a stable system of free and fair elections and to uphold liberal principles of individual rights. Mancur Olson thus points out that "the conditions that are needed to have the individual rights needed for maximum economic development are exactly the same conditions that are needed to have a lasting democracy. ... the same court system, independent judiciary, and respect for law and individual rights that are needed for a lasting democracy are also required for security of property and contract rights."40 Thus liberal democracy is the basis for long-term economic growth. A third reason may operate in some circumstances: democratic governments are more likely to have the political legitimacy necessary to embark on difficult and painful economic reforms.41 This factor is particularly likely to be important in former communist countries, but it also appears to have played a role in the decisions India and the Philippines have taken in recent years to pursue difficult economic reforms.42 4. Democracies Never Have Famines Fourth, the United States should spread democracy because the citizens of democracies do not suffer from famines. The economist Amartya Sen concludes that "one of the remarkable facts in the terrible history of famine is that no substantial famine has ever occurred in a country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press."43 This striking empirical regularity has been overshadowed by the apparent existence of a "democratic peace" (see below), but it provides a powerful argument for promoting democracy. Although this claim has been most closely identified with Sen, other scholars who have studied famines and hunger reach similar conclusions. Joseph Collins, for example, argues that: "Wherever political rights for all citizens truly flourish, people will see to it that, in due course, they share in control over economic resources vital to their survival. Lasting food security thus requires real and sustained democracy."44 Most of the countries that have experienced severe famines in recent decades have been among the world's least democratic: the Soviet Union (Ukraine in the early 1930s), China, Ethiopia, Somalia, Cambodia and Sudan. Throughout history, famines have occurred in many different types of countries, but never in a democracy. Democracies do not experience famines for two reasons. First, in democracies governments are accountable to their populations and their leaders have electoral incentives to prevent mass starvation. The need to be reelected impels politicians to ensure that their people do not starve. As Sen points out, "the plight of famine victims is easy to politicize" and "the effectiveness of democracy in the prevention of famine has tended to depend on the politicization of the plight of famine victims, through the process of public discussion, which generates political solidarity."45 On the other hand, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes are not accountable to the public; they are less likely to pay a political price for failing to prevent famines. Moreover, authoritarian and totalitarian rulers often have political incentives to use famine as a means of exterminating their domestic opponents. Second, the existence of a free press and the free flow of information in democracies prevents famine by serving as an early warning system on the effects of natural catastrophes such as floods and droughts that may cause food scarcities. A free press that criticizes government policies also can publicize the true level of food stocks and reveal problems of distribution that might cause famines even when food is plentiful.46 Inadequate information has contributed to several famines. During the 1958-61 famine in China that killed 20-30 million people, the Chinese authorities overestimated the country's grain reserves by 100 million metric tons. This disaster later led Mao Zedong to concede that "Without democracy, you have no understanding of what is happening down below."47 The 1974 Bangladesh famine also could have been avoided if the government had had better information. The food supply was high, but floods, unemployment, and panic made it harder for those in need to obtain food.48 The two factors that prevent famines in democracies-electoral incentives and the free flow of information-are likely to be present even in democracies that do not have a liberal political culture. These factors exist when leaders face periodic elections and when the press is free to report information that might embarrass the government. A full-fledged liberal democracy with guarantees of civil liberties, a relatively free economic market, and an independent judiciary might be even less likely to suffer famines, but it appears that the rudiments of electoral democracy will suffice to prevent famines. The ability of democracies to avoid famines cannot be attributed to any tendency of democracies to fare better economically. Poor democracies as well as rich ones have not had famines. India, Botswana, and Zimbabwe have avoided famines, even when they have suffered large crop shortfalls. In fact, the evidence suggests that democracies can avoid famines in the face of large crop failures, whereas nondemocracies plunge into famine after smaller shortfalls. Botswana's food production fell by 17% and Zimbabwe's by 38% between 1979-81 and 1983-84, whereas Sudan and Ethiopia saw a decline in food production of 11-12% during the same period. Sudan and Ethiopia, which were nondemocracies, suffered major famines, whereas the democracies of Botswana and Zimbabwe did not.49 If, as I have argued, democracies enjoy better long-run economic performance than nondemocracies, higher levels of economic development may help democracies to avoid famines. But the absence of famines in new, poor democracies suggests that democratic governance itself is sufficient to prevent famines. The case of India before and after independence provides further evidence that democratic rule is a key factor in preventing famines. Prior to independence in 1947, India suffered frequent famines. Shortly before India became independent, the Bengal famine of 1943 killed 2-3 million people. Since India became independent and democratic, the country has suffered severe crop failures and food shortages in 1968, 1973, 1979, and 1987, but it has never suffered a famine.50 B. Democracy is Good for the International System In addition to improving the lives of individual citizens in new democracies, the spread of democracy will benefit the international system by reducing the likelihood of war. Democracies do not wage war on other democracies. This absence-or near absence, depending on the definitions of "war" and "democracy" used-has been called "one of the strongest nontrivial and nontautological generalizations that can be made about international relations."51 One scholar argues that "the absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations."52 If the number of democracies in the international system continues to grow, the number of potential conflicts that might escalate to war will diminish. Although wars between democracies and nondemocracies would persist in the short run, in the long run an international system composed of democracies would be a peaceful world. At the very least, adding to the number of democracies would gradually enlarge the democratic "zone of peace." 1. The Evidence for the Democratic Peace Many studies have found that there are virtually no historical cases of democracies going to war with one another. In an important two-part article published in 1983, Michael Doyle compares all international wars between 1816 and 1980 and a list of liberal states.53 Doyle concludes that "constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another."54 Subsequent statistical studies have found that this absence of war between democracies is statistically significant and is not the result of random chance.55 Other analyses have concluded that the influence of other variables, including geographical proximity and wealth, do not detract from the significance of the finding that democracies rarely, if ever, go to war with one another.56 Most studies of the democratic-peace proposition have argued that democracies only enjoy a state of peace with other democracies; they are just as likely as other states to go to war with nondemocracies.57 There are, however, several scholars who argue that democracies are inherently less likely to go to war than other types of states.58 The evidence for this claim remains in dispute, however, so it would be premature to claim that spreading democracy will do more than to enlarge the democratic zone of peace.

## Contention 1: COVID

#### Objectivity is specifically key during pandemics – advocacy alone spreads disinformation and independently kills democracy.

Pimentel says in 2021 O. Ricardo Pimentel, Wisconsin Examiner October 19, 2021, journalist for about 40 years. He was most recently the editorial page editor for the San Antonio Express-News in Texas; the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel before that. He has also worked in various editing and reporting positions in newspapers in California, Arizona, Texas and Washington D.C., where he covered Congress, federal agencies and the Supreme Court for McClatchy Newspapers, 10-19-2021, "We are losing the values good journalism taught," Wisconsin Examiner, <https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2021/10/19/we-are-losing-the-values-good-journalism-taught/> // ella

Everyone should be a journalist. The problem is, few people understand what journalism really is, yet everyone with a social media account is a self-styled journalist these days. Hence the rampant embrace of myriad crackpot beliefs. We are all familiar with these fact-free notions that have stained our collective consciousness like red wine on white shag carpet. For instance: 911 was an inside job. Lee Harvey Oswald was just the fall guy for the real shooter behind the grassy knoll. The moon landing didn’t happen. Beliefs such as these are essentially harmless. They can even be debated at your family holiday gathering or local bar and elicit nothing more than polite nods and charitable but dismissive smiles. No matter how far-fetched, some conspiracy theories do not directly harm others. There are, however, more pernicious beliefs that do real harm. To name just a few: Democrats stole the 2020 presidential election, which Donald Trump won. COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe. These are not harmless. The Big Lie about the stolen election has allowed a lot of people who know better to promote or allow actions that threaten to permanently disable democracy and its institutions. It has allowed our leaders to treat the violent Jan.6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and the attempt to thwart the results of a legitimate election as just another harmless protest by civic-minded do-gooders. The effort to kill democracy is a serious threat. Meanwhile the effort to sow doubt about vaccines has already killed or sickened thousands of people. Expert CDC guidance shows that the unvaccinated are 11 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the vaccinated. Anti-vaxxers have been with us for a while, but these new ones are toying with others’ lives during a pandemic. We have not reached herd immunity and new more dangerous variants of the virus will continue to develop as long as people refuse to get a vaccine. Yes, the anti-vaxxers are a minority. U.S. vaccination rates are nearing 200 million — about 57% of the population. Employers have been requiring vaccinations or proof of negative COVID tests even before President Biden’s mandate takes effect for employers with 100 or more employees. But the damage done by vaccine resisters undermines this progress. How did we reach this life-or-death moment for so many Americans, and for our democracy? Let’s return to this notion that everyone should be a journalist. By this, I don’t mean simply knowing how to gather facts but how to be a consumer of news — of facts. It is a lost art. Journalists have a job that sounds simple but is complex — to ferret out true facts and present them as useful information that allows the reader or viewer to become informed and to make good decisions. These decisions run the gamut from whether a movie is worth spending money on at the theater to what a candidate stands for or what a government policy actually does. And the stories that present these facts are themselves vetted, which means other sets of eyeballs look again at those facts. The facts are fact-checked. This, despite the constant attacks on mainstream media, is what real mainstream journalists do. And what social media “journalists” often do not. Real journalists gather facts in pursuit of a story. The facts with credible sources get in the story. And if there are counter-facts, these, too, are scrutinized. One welcome change, rising out of a long-running debate about journalistic objectivity, is that news has grudgingly moved beyond the he-said, she-said variety in which every point of view is presented as having equal value to its opposite. Journalists now take the added steps of telling you how different presentations of the facts stack up against each other. Real journalists rely on fact-based truth, which is to say truths with facts that are credibly and reliably sourced. In social media, facts don’t have to be credibly and reliably sourced. If they sound true – if they fit because they confirm people’s existing beliefs – that’s good enough. People who view themselves as fulfilling the role of journalists spread misinformation to an audience that is eager to have its pre-existing biases confirmed. But the real crux of the matter is that so many people have forgotten how to be news consumers — how to vet facts. We can blame social media for how misinformation has saturated the landscape, but the real culprit are those unable or unwilling to vet their information. Look, no one is saying — real journalists least of all — that government and scientific pronouncements are to be immediately and absolutely trusted. Journalists make a living from being skeptical. We view our public watchdog role as paramount. It’s a cliché among journalists: If your mother says she loves you, check it out. My beef is with people who don’t check it out. Said another way, they don’t scrutinize the credibility of the sources of their “facts.” They believe what they want to believe. Armed with social media accounts, they fancy themselves journalists, but don’t even know how to be knowledgeable news consumers.

#### Empirics prove

Garcia et al from 2021 Xosé López-García,1 Carmen Costa-Sánchez,2,\* and Ángel Vizoso1 Paul B. Tchounwou, 6-29-2021, "Journalistic Fact-Checking of Information in Pandemic: Stakeholders, Hoaxes, and Strategies to Fight Disinformation during the COVID-19 Crisis in Spain," PubMed Central (PMC), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7908612/> // ella

The public health crisis created by COVID-19 represents a challenge for journalists and the media. Specialised information in healthcare and science has turned into a need to deal with the current situation as well as the demand for information by society. In this context of increased uncertainty, the circulation of fake news on social networks and messaging applications has proliferated, producing what has been known as ‘infodemic’. This paper is focused on the fact-checking of journalistic content using a combined methodology: content analysis of information denied by the main Spanish fact-checking platforms (Maldita and Newtral) and an in-depth questionnaire to these stakeholders. The results confirm the quantitative and qualitative evolution of disinformation. Quantitatively, more fact-checking is performed during the state of alarm. Qualitatively, hoaxes increase in complexity as the pandemic evolves, in such a way that disinformation engineering takes place, and it is expected to continue until the development of a vaccine. Keywords: COVID-19, journalism, pandemic, fact-checking, coronavirus, health, communication, Spain Go to: 1. Introduction: Journalistic Fact-Checking during the COVID-19 Crisis Fact-checking is one of the essential elements of journalism [1,2]; it is an indispensable dimension shared by all journalism professionals throughout its modern history. Hoaxes, ever present in the history of humankind, especially during wars and between wars [3], have been a menace against true and accurate information. However, hoaxes have not been the only threat. The routine use of techniques and methods of the journalistic production to achieve objectivity as a sort of strategic ritual [4,5] was also noticed in the past century as a source of many distortions and interferences in the informative structure. Journalistic production had some weaknesses which were already being exploited in the 1990s, including the ability for the audience to do social research and use available computerized tools [6]. The critiques about how commercial demands impact the essence of media and journalism have been present in the history of technologically mediated communication [7]. The design of strategies by governments of different alignments and in different places to control the media and journalistic contents [8] is one of the aspects that have characterised the evolution of the media and journalism throughout history. These threats for journalism have been translated into the loss of information quality on different stages, something that has accentuated in the transition towards the digital scenario of the network society and that has been recognised by journalists [9]. Several empirical studies have confirmed how many journalists contribute to the education of users, while many others nurture the dormant public opinion scenarios [10]. Although objectivity is an insufficiently defined concept [11] and informative quality is still under discussion since there is no unity of criteria for its analysis, in spite of the many proposals suggested in recent years [12], both questions have actually been present in journalistic debates in the past few decades. Digital journalism has not put an end to these debates—instead, from the very beginning, online media has shown journalistic strengths and weaknesses [13], updating and encouraging some of the old debates about the quality of many pieces of information circulating on different platforms. The quality of the news services is fairly diverse, and users do not always prefer more elaborate and solvent products [14]. Despite the influence of social networks in the core journalistic value of fact-checking [15] and the introduction of more audience-oriented editors, granting a more active role to users [16], and despite the efforts to reinvent journalism in the current societies through studies that analyse how it responds to social, cultural, political, and technological transformations and how journalism keeps true to its own principles [17], the fact is that the evolution of the network society has increased the echo of interference and disinformation. A proof of this is that the World Economic Forum considers it as one of the main threats to human society [18]. Disinformation has been ubiquitous in the communicational scenario and has positioned it in the bullseye of debates of current society, especially due to the recent pandemic [19]. From to perspective of journalism, the disinformation menace is also interpreted as a new opportunity, using up-to-date methods and techniques for creating more interdisciplinary teams that nurture the scientific dissemination processes and with the support of current technologies to reinforce procedures that guarantee the veracity of the informational pieces and contribute to their reinforcement [20]. Nonetheless, despite the elusive nature of fact-checking criteria that apply to journalistic practice and the fact that professionals often use fact-checking as a strategic ritual [21], in recent years, many of the actions to fight disinformation from the journalistic practice have been oriented to the improvement of fact-checking procedures. Since healthy democracies need a healthy media and quality journalism [22], the search of solutions to the weaknesses of journalism in terms of verification have appeared in the form of of fact checking, which offers innovative alternatives that combine the technological and communicational dimension to deal with disinformation [23]. The purpose of fact-checkers and fact-checking organisations is to increase the knowledge through the research and dissemination of facts mentioned in statements, either published or recorded, made by political figures or any other individual whose opinions have an impact on the lives of others [24]. With the proliferation of so-called fake news [25], mainstream and digital media, as well as civic platforms, have initiated sections, work groups, or spaces targeted at the fact-checking of information published by other media, disseminated though social networks or proclaimed by the main political leaders [26]. 1.1. Fact-Checking in Pandemic The first studies indicate that the pandemic has led to an ‘infodemic’, defined by WHO (2020) as an overabundance of information—some accurate and some not—that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. Since March in Spain, an elevated circulation of fake news related to the COVID-19 virus [27] and its consequences has been detected, which is highly contagious and has an increased risk for public health [28].

#### COVID kills the economy and people

Congressional Research Service explains in 2021 Congressional Research Service ,11-10-2021, “Global Economic Effects of COVID-19”, Congressional Research Service, [https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46270.pdf //](https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R46270.pdf%20//) ella

Global Economic Effects of COVID-19 The COVID-19 viral pandemic is an unprecedented global phenomenon that is also a highly personal experience with wide-ranging effects. On September 20, 2021, U.S. viral deaths surpassed the 675,446 total from the 1918 Spanish flu, the previously worst U.S. pandemicrelated death total on record. The pandemic has disrupted lives across all countries and communities and negatively affected global economic growth in 2020 beyond anything experienced in nearly a century. Estimates indicate the virus reduced global economic growth in 2020 to an annualized rate of around -3.2%, with a recovery of 5.9% projected for 2021. Global trade is estimated to have fallen by 5.3% in 2020, but is projected to grow by 8.0% in 2021. According to a consensus of forecasts, the economic downturn in 2020 was not as negative as initially estimated, due in part to the fiscal and monetary policies governments adopted in 2020. In most countries, economic growth fell sharply in the second quarter of 2020, rebounded quickly in the third quarter, and has been mostly positive since. Although lessening, the total global economic effects continue to mount. In particular, the prolonged nature of the health crisis is affecting the global economy beyond traditional measures with potentially long-lasting and farreaching repercussions. Economic forecasts reflect continuing risks to a sustained global recovery posed by a resurgence of infectious cases and potential inflationary pressures associated with pent-up consumer demand fueled by an increase in personal savings. On the supply side, shortages reflect lingering disruptions to labor markets, production and supply chain bottlenecks, disruptions in global energy markets, and shipping and transportation constraints that are adding to inflationary pressures. As some developed economies start recovering, central banks and national governments are weighing the impact and timing of tapering off monetary and fiscal support as a result of concerns over potential inflationary pressures against the prospect of slowing the pace of the recovery. These concerns are compounded by the emergence of new disease variants and rolling pandemic hotspots that challenge national efforts to contain infections and fully restore economic activities. Major advanced economies, comprising 60% of global economic activity, are projected to operate below their potential output level through at least 2024, which indicates lower national and individual economic welfare relative to pre-pandemic levels. Compared with the synchronized nature of the global economic slowdown in the first half of 2020, the global economy has shown signs of a two-track recovery that began in the third quarter of 2020 and has been marked by a nascent recovery in developed economies where rates of vaccinations are high, but a slower pace of growth in developing economies where vaccination rates are low. As a whole, developed economies have made strides in vaccinating growing shares of their populations, raising prospects of a sustained economic recovery in late 2021 and into 2022 and, in turn, a recovery in the broader global economy. However, new variants of the COVID-19 virus and a surge in diagnosed cases in large developing economies and resistance to vaccinations among some populations in developed economies raise questions about the speed and strength of an economic recovery over the near term. A resurgence of infectious cases in Europe, Latin America, Russia, the United States, Japan, Brazil, India, and across much of Africa renewed calls for lockdowns and curfews and threatened to weaken or delay a potential sustained economic recovery into late 2021. The economic fallout from the pandemic has had a disparate impact on certain sectors of the economy, particularly the service sector, and certain population groups and could risk continued labor dislocations. In some cases, workers are reconsidering their career choices and work patterns, which may imply postpandemic economies marked by more varied labor arrangements and altered urban environments. The human costs in terms of lives lost will permanently affect global economic growth in addition to the cost of elevated levels of poverty, lives upended, careers derailed, and increased social unrest. Some estimates indicate that 65 million to 75 million people may have entered into extreme poverty in 2020 with 80 million more undernourished compared to prepandemic levels. In addition, some estimates indicate that the decline in global trade in 2020 exacted an especially heavy economic toll on trade-dependent developing and emerging economies. This report provides an overview of the global economic costs to date and the response by governments and international institutions to address these effects.

## Contention 2: Democracy

#### Misinformation in the press is undemocratic in many ways, such as misleading the public about the Iraq war and allowing Russia to affect media outlets before the 2016 election.

Watts writes in 2021 [Duncan J.; 2021; Department of Computer and Information Science, Annenberg School of Communication, Operations, Information, and Decisions Department, “Measuring the news and its impact on democracy” <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/15/e1912443118>] brett

First, while it is possible that exposure to fake news has more impact than an equivalent amount of exposure to real news, or that online news has more impact than television news, it is equally possible that the opposite is true. For example, recent work has found that subjects rate mainstream publications as more trustworthy than fake or highly partisan sites irrespective of their own partisanship (12), and that deliberation reduces belief in false headlines but not in true ones, again irrespective of partisan alignment (19). Likewise, while television consumption can be dismissed as more “passive” than reading, direct comparisons between television and online news and advertising consistently find better recall of televised content (20⇓–22) especially for low-involvement consumers (23). Ultimately, questions of impact are empirical questions and answering those questions will require making comparisons between different types of content and different modes of production. Second, fake news sites are not the only sources of false information: The mainstream media can also promulgate falsehoods simply by reporting on them (24). In the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War, for example, a large majority of media organizations uncritically repeated the administration’s false claim that they possessed unequivocal evidence that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (25, 26). In August 2009, when Sarah Palin wrote in a blog post that the Affordable Care Act would create “death panels,” the claim was repeated in over 700 mainstream news articles even after it was debunked by a variety of fact-checking organizations (27, 28). More recently, an analysis of Russian disinformation efforts during the 2016 presidential election concluded that these efforts likewise succeeded in reaching the public largely via the credulous reporting of mainstream media outlets (29). Although the motivations and mechanisms driving misinformation in mainstream media differ from sites that intentionally promote falsehoods, the effects may be many times greater; thus, a proper accounting of the prevalence of false information requires a broad consideration of potential sources. Third, misinformation is a much broader phenomenon than outright falsehoods. There are many ways to lead a reader (or viewer) to reach a false or unsupported conclusion that do not require saying anything that is unambiguously false (30). Presenting partial or biased data, quoting sources selectively, omitting alternative explanations, improperly equating unequal arguments, conflating correlation with causation, using loaded language, insinuating a claim without actually making it (e.g., by quoting someone else making it), strategically ordering the presentation of facts, and even simply changing the headline can all manipulate the reader’s (or viewer’s) impression without their awareness. These practices are pervasive in mainstream professional journalism (see, e.g., ref. 31) and are not restricted to political topics, although that is often the focus of research on media bias (32, 33). Inaccurate and misleading coverage is also pervasive in other areas of journalism (34), including important domains for public opinion and democracy such as health (35, 36), science (37), and business (38).

#### Journalistic objectivity critical for sustaining democracy

Sonnemaker states in 2015 Tyler Sonnemaker, 2015, Claremont McKenna College, “Objectivity and the Role of Journalism in Democratic Societies”, [https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/70981185.pdf //](https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/70981185.pdf%20//) ella

The health of any democratic society depends greatly on the quality of information available to its citizens. A democracy is governed by its citizens, and when citizens are better informed, they make better decisions about how to structure their laws, government, and the various economic and cultural institutions that make their society just or unjust. Ideally, a society should be “a fair system of social cooperation between free and equal citizens,”2 where everyone is better off than they would be fending for themselves. So, we ought to structure society in a way that benefits everyone — if some people are denied equal basic rights, liberties, and certain levels of justice, it is unreasonable for us to think that they would even want to live in this society. Therefore, we must make political decisions that we genuinely believe would benefit others, and that they would accept these decisions as well. The question that emerges from this is: how might we inform citizens in a way that helps them make political decisions that will improve our democratic society for everyone? In this essay, I will argue that the institution of journalism plays a vital role in this process, and that to effectively fulfill this role, journalists must report the news objectively. It is not enough to simply leave it at this, however, as many publications today have a glaring misconception of what this ethical norm requires. So, in advocating that journalists should endorse objectivity, I will first examine the historical evolution of this term as it pertains to journalism, as to learn how and why many have come to this misunderstanding. Then, in Chapter 2, I will elaborate on some of the philosophical concepts that provide the foundation for objectivity, showing which ones we should abandon and which we should keep, so that we can reach the correct notion of journalistic objectivity. In Chapter 3, I will switch gears to an explanation of John Rawls’ idea of public reason, which will give us a better understanding of the role of journalism within a democratic society. Specifically, I claim that journalism must safeguard the public political forum, where citizens engage in rational, public deliberation. Finally, in Chapter 4, I will bring these various discussions together by introducing the requirements that Stephen Ward lays out in his theory of pragmatic objectivity, and argue that these are necessary to help journalism legitimize its authority to safeguard this forum. Ultimately, by buying into the idea of public reason, by endorsing a more adequate conception of objectivity, and by using standards of pragmatic objectivity in order to pursue it, I believe journalism can give the public sufficient reason to legitimize its role as the guardian of the public political forum. In doing so, journalism can ensure both that citizens are objectively informed and that the public forum offers them a sphere in which they can effectively participate in the governance of their democracy. Chapter 1 Looking Backward at Objectivity In order to determine whether or not objectivity is a norm that journalism should adhere to moving forward, we must look backward to its origins, considering both where it emerged from as well as what precisely emerged. Additionally, we can improve our understanding of its historical evolution by framing objectivity as it pertains to journalism. First we must examine three philosophical senses of objectivity that are implied by the word, and which are relevant to journalism: ontological, epistemological, and procedural. The ontological sense concerns an object’s correspondence with reality. It ties objectivity (object dependence) to reality, and subjectivity (subject dependence) to the subject’s particular perspective — such that something is objective “if it actually exists, independent of my mind.”3 Epistemic objectivity deals with how we come to know these facts of reality, and thus draws the divide “between well-supported and notwell supported beliefs [about reality].” 4 A fact can be called epistemologically objective if it is discovered by way of unbiased methods of inquiry (i.e. without human error) and grounded in appropriately verified evidence. Finally, objectivity in the procedural sense focuses on how we make decisions in practice, specifically in the realms of public life and societal institutions such as law or government. Thus, “a decision procedure is objective if it satisfies a number of relevant criteria that reduce the influence of irrelevant considerations or bias.”5 While these three senses of the word objectivity are discrete concepts, they are interrelated. In the following chapters, my attempt to revamp an outdated model of journalistic objectivity will reveal some of this interplay. For now, it is sufficient to grasp that a claim about something’s objectivity, philosophically speaking, may be directed at any of these senses of the word. Given this understanding of the word objectivity, we can now construct at least a “working” definition of objectivity that will guide this historiography. Steven Maras, in his book Objectivity in Journalism, spends barely four pages and makes only a cursory swipe at actually defining the concept. He rightly observes that this is a difficult project as it is a complex and evolving notion, and as I will show later, an attempt to draw hard boundaries is more likely to lose an otherwise supportive audience. That being said, Maras identifies three key aspects — values, process, and language — which, taken together, address the essential idea of journalistic objectivity. While there are numerous values that generally accompany objectivity, Maras points to three that seem to safely make the list, as identified by Everette Dennis: 1. Separating facts from opinion. 2. Presenting an emotionally detached view of the news. 3. Striving for fairness and balance…6 Process refers to the collective practices of journalists and editors that provide epistemic and procedural objectivity and “are central to the commitment to verification and truth underpinning objective methods.”7 While specific processes may not be identical across various media, publications, and forms of journalism, they all represent the application of objectivity to the activities of reporting and editing. Lastly, the language of objective journalism plays a critical role in convincing the reader that “‘the account can be trusted because it is unadorned.’“8 This involves using a rhetorical style that clearly, concisely, and accurately retells events, facts, and details. Further, as journalists generally try to respect the “invisible frame” — that is, their work in framing a story should be unobservable to readers — the language they use must be neutral enough in its connotations that readers do not perceive the reporter as the one shaping the story, but rather feel the story unfolding as it would naturally and independently of her or him. This is nowhere near an exhaustive definition of journalistic objectivity (I will delve further into this concept in subsequent chapters, and in several cases, show where the existing notions that Maras identifies ultimately fail us). It does, however, give us a focal point to bear in mind as we examine how the norm arose within the profession of journalism. We can envision journalistic objectivity as a metaphorical tree. Our three senses have illuminated for us the various parts or properties of trees in general (branches, leaves, roots, etc.) that we should focus on. Maras’ definition has identified the trunk and some branches that, at first glance, seem sturdy. Now, we can dig beneath the surface to trace its historical roots. Later, with a better understanding of the tree’s architecture and its structural integrity, my project will consist both of reorienting our tree to ensure that it grows towards the “sun,” as well as showing several different branches that are in fact sturdier and more useful for the tree’s growth.

#### The recent Russia conflict proves-disinformation ramps up conflicts

Abbruzzese 22 [[Jason Abbruzzese](https://www.nbcnews.com/author/jason-abbruzzese-ncpn843466) Feb. 24, 2022, Russian disinformation, propaganda ramp up as conflict in Ukraine grows, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/russian->disinformation-propaganda-ramp-conflict-ukraine-grows-rcna17521]

Russia’s effort to spread disinformation and propaganda across the internet and through foreign and domestic media about its invasion of Ukraine started weeks ago — and it’s expected to ramp up now that the conflict has begun. Disinformation experts say that they have seen a concerted effort from Russian leaders and state-backed media to push a false narrative around the reasons for invading Ukraine, and that they expect that to continue as both international pressure and even some domestic Russian resistance to war grows. “We’re going to see a huge onslaught,” said Jane Lytvynenko, senior research fellow at Harvard University’s Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy. “And we need to be prepared for that.” Lytvynenko said people should be prepared for a wide variety of disinformation and propaganda, including the use of authentic images and video to push false narratives. “We know that propaganda is a part of every war, and we know that after every attack we see a flood of propaganda,” she said. “This propaganda can take many forms. It can try to take videos out of context and claim for them to be something else. It can show Russian attacks as more powerful than they actually were. “They can create the illusion that Ukraine is not fighting back when it is. It will also play on gaps in knowledge on Western audiences in particular who have not been paying attention to a war that has been going on for eight years.” Scale of Russia's attack on Ukraine captured in pre-dawn explosions, bombed apartments FEB. 24, 202200:58 Videos and images have already begun to pour out of Ukraine, many showing destroyed military vehicles and explosions. And during a conflict, disinformation and propaganda can also be a tool used by all sides. Some media that is circulating has been found to be recycled from other conflicts, including one post from a verified Ukrainian military Facebook page that posted what purported to be Ukrainian military action but appeared to be footage from a conflict in Syria in 2020.

#### TERMINAL IMPACT: US-Russia war would be devastating and lead to extinction.

Owen Cotton-Barratt et al, 17 - PhD in Pure Mathematics, Oxford, Lecturer in Mathematics at Oxford, Research Associate at the Future of Humanity Institute; “Existential Risk: Diplomacy and Governance,” <https://www.fhi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Existential-Risks-2017-01-23.pdf>

The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated the unprecedented destructive power of nuclear weapons. However, even in an all-out nuclear war between the United States and Russia, despite horrific casualties, neither country’s population is likely to be completely destroyed by the direct effects of the blast, fire, and radiation.8 The aftermath could be much worse: the burning of flammable materials could send massive amounts of smoke into the atmosphere, which would absorb sunlight and cause sustained global cooling, severe ozone loss, and agricultural disruption – a nuclear winter. According to one model 9 , an all-out exchange of 4,000 weapons10 could lead to a drop in global temperatures of around 8°C, making it impossible to grow food for 4 to 5 years. This could leave some survivors in parts of Australia and New Zealand, but they would be in a very precarious situation and the threat of extinction from other sources would be great. An exchange on this scale is only possible between the US and Russia who have more than 90% of the world’s nuclear weapons, with stockpiles of around 4,500 warheads each, although many are not operationally deployed.11 Some models suggest that even a small regional nuclear war involving 100 nuclear weapons would produce a nuclear winter serious enough to put two billion people at risk of starvation,12 though this estimate might be pessimistic.13 Wars on this scale are unlikely to lead to outright human extinction, but this does suggest that conflicts which are around an order of magnitude larger may be likely to threaten civilisation. It should be emphasised that there is very large uncertainty about the effects of a large nuclear war on global climate. This remains an area where increased academic research work, including more detailed climate modelling and a better understanding of how survivors might be able to cope and adapt, would have high returns. It is very difficult to precisely estimate the probability of existential risk from nuclear war over the next century, and existing attempts leave very large confidence intervals. According to many experts, the most likely nuclear war at present is between India and Pakistan.14 However, given the relatively modest size of their arsenals, the risk of human extinction is plausibly greater from a conflict between the United States and Russia. Tensions between these countries have increased in recent years and it seems unreasonable to rule out the possibility of them rising further in

## Contention 3: Polarization

#### Advocacy empirically leads to extreme polarization and inequality gaps

Gurri 21 Martin Gurri, former CIA analyst and the author of The Revolt of the Public and the Crisis of Authority in the New Millennium, Winter 2021, "Slouching Toward Post-Journalism," City Journal, [https://www.city-journal.org/journalism-advocacy-over-reporting //](https://www.city-journal.org/journalism-advocacy-over-reporting%20//) ella

Traditional newspapers never sold news; they sold an audience to advertisers. To a considerable degree, this commercial imperative determined the journalistic style, with its impersonal voice and pretense of objectivity. The aim was to herd the audience into a passive consumerist mass. Opinion, which divided readers, was treated like a volatile substance and fenced off from “factual” reporting. The digital age exploded this business model. Advertisers fled to online platforms, never to return. For most newspapers, no alternative sources of revenue existed: as circulation plummets to the lowest numbers on record, more than 2,000 dailies have gone silent since the turn of the century. The survival of the rest remains an open question. Led by the New York Times, a few prominent brand names moved to a model that sought to squeeze revenue from digital subscribers lured behind a paywall. This approach carried its own risks. The amount of information in the world was, for practical purposes, infinite. As supply vastly outstripped demand, the news now chased the reader, rather than the other way around. Today, nobody under 85 would look for news in a newspaper. Under such circumstances, what commodity could be offered for sale? During the 2016 presidential campaign, the Times stumbled onto a possible answer. It entailed a wrenching pivot from a journalism of fact to a “post-journalism” of opinion—a term coined, in his book of that title, by media scholar Andrey Mir. Rather than news, the paper began to sell what was, in effect, a creed, an agenda, to a congregation of like-minded souls. Post-journalism “mixes open ideological intentions with a hidden business necessity required for the media to survive,” Mir observes. The new business model required a new style of reporting. Its language aimed to commodify polarization and threat: journalists had to “scare the audience to make it donate.” At stake was survival in the digital storm. The experiment proved controversial. It sparked a melodrama over standards at the Times, featuring a conflict between radical young reporters and befuddled middle-aged editors. In a crucible of proclamations, disputes, and meetings, the requirements of the newspaper as an institution collided with the post-journalistic call for an explicit struggle against injustice. The battleground was the treatment of race and racism in America. But the story began, as it seemingly must, with that inescapable character: Donald Trump. In August 2016, as the presidential race ground grimly onward, the New York Times laid down a marker regarding the manner in which it would be covered. The paper declared the prevalence of media opinion to be an irresistible fact, like the weather. Or, as Jim Rutenberg phrased it in a prominent front-page story: “If you view a Trump presidency as something that is potentially dangerous, then your reporting is going to reflect that.” Objectivity was discarded in favor of an “oppositional” stance. This was not an anti-Trump opinion piece. It was an obituary for the values of a lost era. Rutenberg, who covered the media beat, had authored a factual report about the death of factual reporting—the sort of paradox often encountered among the murky categories of post-journalism. The article touched on the fraught issue of race and racism. Trump opponents take his racism for granted—he stands accused of appealing to the worst instincts of the American public, and those who wish to debate the point immediately fall under suspicion of being racists themselves. The dilemma, therefore, was not whether Trump was racist (that was a fact) or why he flaunted his racist views (he was a dangerous demagogue) but, rather, how to report on his racism under the strictures of commercial journalism. Once objectivity was sacrificed, an immense field of subjective possibilities presented themselves. A vision of the journalist as arbiter of racial justice would soon divide the generations inside the New York Times newsroom. Rutenberg made his point through hypothetical-rhetorical questions that, at times, verged on satire: “If you’re a working journalist and you believe that Donald J. Trump is a demagogue playing to the nation’s worst racist and nationalistic tendencies, that he cozies up to anti-American dictators and that he would be dangerous with control of United States nuclear codes, how the heck are you supposed to cover him?” Rutenberg assumed that “working journalists” shared the same opinion of Trump—that wasn’t perceived as problematic. A second assumption concerned the intelligence of readers: they couldn’t be trusted to process the facts. The answer to Rutenberg’s loaded question, therefore, could only be to “throw out the textbook American journalism has been using for the better part of a half-century” and leap vigorously into advocacy. Trump could not safely be covered; he had to be opposed. The old media had needed happy customers. The goal of post-journalism, according to Mir, is to “produce angry citizens.” The August 2016 article marked the point of no return in the spiritual journey of the New York Times from newspaper of record to Vatican of liberal political furor. While the impulse originated in partisan herd instinct, the discovery of a profit motive would make the change irrevocable. Rutenberg professed to find the new approach “uncomfortable” and, “by normal standards, untenable”—but the fault, he made clear, lay entirely with the “abnormal” Trump, whose toxic personality had contaminated journalism. He was the active principle in the headline “The Challenge Trump Poses to Objectivity.” “The goal of post-journalism, according to media scholar Andrey Mir, is to ‘produce angry citizens.’” A cynic (or a conservative) might argue that objectivity in political reporting was more an empty boast than a professional standard and that the newspaper, in pandering to its audience, had long favored an urban agenda, liberal causes, and Democratic candidates. This interpretation misses the transformation in the depths that post-journalism involved. The flagship American newspaper had turned in a direction that came close to propaganda. The oppositional stance, as Mir has noted, cannot coexist with newsroom independence: writers and editors were soon to be punished for straying from the cause. The news agenda became narrower and more repetitive as journalists focused on a handful of partisan controversies—an effect that Mir labeled “discourse concentration.” The New York Times, as a purveyor of information and a political institution, had cut itself loose from its own history. Rutenberg glimpsed, dimly, the nature of the transfiguration he was describing. “Do normal standards apply? And if they don’t, what should take their place?” he wondered. Even if rhetorically framed, these were remarkable questions. Over the next four years, the need for answers would feed the drama in the Times newsroom. There’s reason to suspect that Rutenberg and his colleagues regarded the abandonment of objectivity as a temporary emergency measure. Hillary Clinton was heavily favored in opinion polls; on election day, the Times gave her an 84 percent chance of victory. The election of Donald Trump to the presidency was a moment of profound disorientation for establishment media generally, and for the Times in particular. Not only had the newspaper failed at the new mission of advocacy; it had also failed, egregiously, at the old mission of mediating between the public and the elite sport of politics. In a somber column published the morning after, Liz Spayd, public editor, announced that the Times had entered “a period of self-reflection” and expressed the hope that “its editors will think hard about the half of America the paper too seldom covers.” The reflective mood quickly passed. Within weeks, the Washington Post connected the Trump campaign with fake news on Facebook planted by Russian operatives. By May 2017, less than four months into the new administration, Robert Mueller had been appointed special counsel to investigate potential crimes by Trump or his staff associated with Russian interference in the elections. So began one of the most extraordinary episodes in American politics—and the first sustained excursion into post-journalism by the American news media, led every step of the way by the New York Times. Future media historians may hold the Trump-Russia story to be a laboratory-perfect specimen of discourse concentration. For nearly two years, it towered over the information landscape and devoured the attention of the media and the public. The total number of articles on the topic produced by the Times is difficult to measure, but a Google search suggests that it was more than 3,000—the equivalent, if accurate, of multiple articles per day for the period in question. This was journalism as if conducted under the impulse of an obsessive-compulsive personality. Virtually every report either implied or proclaimed culpability. Every day in the news marked the beginning of the Trumpian End Times. The sum of all this sound and fury was . . . zero. The most intensively covered story in history turned out to be empty of content. Mueller’s investigation “did not identify evidence that any US persons conspired or coordinated” with the Russians. Mueller’s halting television appearance in July 2019 convinced even the most vehement partisans that he was not the knight to slay the dragon in the White House. After two years of media frenzy came an awkward moment. The New York Times had reorganized its newsroom to pursue this single story—yet, just as it had missed Trump’s coming, the paper failed to see that Trump would stay. Yet what looked like journalistic failure was, in fact, an astonishing post-journalistic success. The intent of post-journalism was never to represent reality or inform the public but to arouse enough political fervor in readers that they wished to enter the paywall in support of the cause. This was ideology by the numbers—and the numbers were striking. Digital subscriptions to the New York Times, which had been stagnant, nearly doubled in the first year of Trump’s presidency. By August 2020, the paper had 6 million digital subscribers—six times the number on Election Day 2016 and the most in the world for any newspaper. The Russian collusion story, though refuted objectively, had been validated subjectively, by the growth in the congregation of the paying faithful. In throwing out the old textbook, post-journalism made transgression inevitable. In July 2019, Jonathan Weisman, who covered Congress for the Times and happened to be white, questioned on Twitter the legitimacy of leftist members of the House who happened to be black. Following criticism, Weisman deleted the offending tweets and apologized elaborately, but he was demoted nonetheless. Then, in August, the print edition of the newspaper covered a presidential statement under the headline “Trump Urges Unity vs. Racism.” Before that could be changed, a storm of outrage swept over social media and penetrated into the Times’s newsroom. Condemnation of Trump as the avatar of American racism was as close to a canonical doctrine as the new style of reporting possessed. Deviation was cause for scandal. Internal turmoil forced Dean Baquet, the paper’s executive editor, to hold a “town hall” meeting with his newsroom staff, the transcript of which was obtained and published by Slate. The dramatic confrontation had been triggered by Weisman’s tweets and the heretical headline but was really about the boundaries of expression—what was allowed and what was taboo—in a post-objective, post-journalistic time. On the contentious subjects of Trump and race, managers and reporters at the paper appeared to hold similar opinions. No one in the room defended Trump as a normal politician whose views deserved a hearing. No one questioned the notion that the United States, having elected Trump, was a fundamentally racist country. But as Baquet fielded long and pointed questions from his staff, it became clear that management and newsroom—which translated roughly to middle age and youth—held radically divergent visions of the post-journalism future. Baquet and his editors wished to pursue an institutional approach to advocacy. The influence that the New York Times wields was a function of its standing among other powerful American institutions: so if you wanted to defeat Donald Trump, you needed to maintain the proper tone. In his answers, Baquet, who was 62, often compared the Times favorably to other news organizations and referred to its storied past. When asked repeatedly why, if everyone agreed that Trump was a racist, the use of the word itself was taboo, Baquet turned to the history of the civil rights movement. The best reporters who covered that struggle, he said, by describing injustice had delivered a message “more powerful” than any epithet. Baquet admitted that the survival of Trump after the Mueller investigation had caught the newspaper “a tiny little bit flat-footed.” “Our readers who want Donald Trump to go away suddenly thought, ‘Holy shit, Bob Mueller is not going to do it.’ ” Given the business model, a new scheme of polarization was needed. Baquet proposed to cover “race and class in a deeper way than we have in years.” To the young warriors of the newsroom, this probably sounded like rank hypocrisy. Many belonged to a generation uninterested in history that perceived social life in terms of a cosmic conflict against injustice. Their questions suggested that post-journalism, to them, meant telling the unvarnished truth—which happened to be identical to their political convictions. If Trump lied or made racist statements, journalists had a moral duty to call him out as a liar and a racist. This principle was absolute and extended to all subjects. Since, as one of them put it, “racism and white supremacy” had been “sort of the foundation of this country,” the consequences should be reported explicitly. “I just feel like racism is in everything,” this questioner asserted. “It should be considered in our science reporting, in our culture reporting, in our national reporting.” Unlike management, the reporters were active on social media, where they had to face the most militant elements of the subscriber base. In this way, they represented the forces driving the information agenda. Baquet had disparaged Twitter and insisted that the Times would not be edited by social media. He was mistaken. The unrest in the newsroom had been propelled by outrage on the web, and the paper had quickly responded. Generational attitudes, displayed on social media, allowed no space for institutional loyalty. Baquet had demoted Weisman because of his inappropriate behavior—but the newsroom turned against him because he had picked a fight with the wrong enemy. To the sectarian mind, all institutions are sinful. “I am concerned,” warned a staffer at the town hall meeting, “that the Times is failing to rise to the challenge of a historical moment.” In the final act of the drama, that concern would explode into revolt. When the young reporters proclaimed that racism was everywhere, they were casting a judgmental eye on their bosses. Two days after the town hall meeting, the New York Times inaugurated, in its magazine section, the “1619 Project”—an attempt, said Baquet, “to try to understand the forces that led to the election of Donald Trump.” Rather than dig deep into the “half of America” that had voted for the president, the newspaper chose to blame the events of 2016 on the country’s pervasive racism, not only here and now but everywhere and always. The 1619 Project rode the social-justice ambitions of the newsroom to commodify racial polarization—and, not incidentally, to fill the void left by Robert Mueller’s failure to launch. The project showed little interest in investigative reporting or any other form of old-school journalism. It produced no exposés of present-day injustice. Instead, it sold agenda-setting on a grand scale: the stated mission was to “reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the center of our national narrative.” The reportorial crunch implicit in this high-minded posture might be summarized as “All the news that’s fit to reframe history.” The guiding spirit behind the 1619 Project was Nikole Hannah-Jones, a rising star at the Times and a practitioner of the prosecutorial school of post-journalism. In a long essay that introduced the project, Hannah-Jones placed American history in the defendant’s docket and found it guilty of unrelieved injustice and oppression. The cast of thousands and multiple plot twists of that story were quite literally reduced to black and white, with whites eternally the villains and falsifiers—not even Lincoln came off looking good—and blacks as redeemers of the nation. “Our democracy’s founding ideals were false when they were written,” the article began. “Black Americans have fought to make them true.” The 1619 Project has come under fire for its extreme statements and many historical inaccuracies. Yet critics missed the point of the exercise, which was to stake out polarizing positions in the mode of post-truth: opinions could be transformed into facts if held passionately enough. The project became another post-journalistic triumph for the Times. Public school systems around the country have included the material in their curricula. Hannah-Jones received a Pulitzer Prize for her “sweeping, provocative, and personal essay”—possibly the first award offered for excellence in post-journalism. The focus on race propelled the Times to the vanguard of establishment opinion during the convulsions that followed the death of George Floyd under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer in May 2020. That episode replaced the Russia collusion story as the prime manufacturer of “angry citizens” and added an element of inflexibility to the usual rigors of post-journalism. Times coverage of antipolice protests was generally sympathetic to the protesters. Trump was, of course, vilified for “fanning the strife.” But the significant change came in the severe tightening of discourse: the reframing imperative now controlled the presentation of news. Reporting minimized the violence that attended the protests, for example, and sought to keep the two phenomena sharply segregated. News out of step with the reframing mission was exiled to the opinion pages—a loophole that would bring to a climax the family melodrama within the organization. Less than two weeks after Floyd’s death, amid spreading lawlessness in many American cities, the paper posted an opinion piece by Republican senator Tom Cotton in its online op-ed section, titled “Time to Send in the Troops.” It called for “an overwhelming show of force” to pacify troubled urban areas. To many loyal to the New York Times, including staff, allowing Cotton his pitch smacked of treason. Led by young black reporters, the newsroom rebelled. Once again, the mutiny began on Twitter. Many reporters had large followings; they could appeal directly to readers. In the way of social media, the most excited voices dominated among subscribers. As the base roared, the rebels moved to confront their employer. The day after the Cotton op-ed appeared online, Times employees sent a letter to Times decision makers, expressing “deep concern” over the piece. This document marked the logical culmination of the process that Rutenberg’s article had begun four years earlier. Objectivity now jettisoned, the question at hand was whose subjective will should control the news agenda. The letter’s authors made a number of striking assumptions. First, the backdrop was an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, a story “that does not have a direct precedent in our lifetimes.” The place of the New York Times in that struggle was at issue. Second, some opinions were dangerous—physically so. Cotton’s opinion fell into that category. “Choosing to present this point of view without added context leaves members of the American public . . . vulnerable to harm” while also jeopardizing “our reporters’ ability to work safely and effectively.” Third, the duty of the newspaper was less to inform than to protect such “vulnerable” readers from harmful opinions. By allowing Cotton inside the tent, the Times had failed its readership. This was the essence of post-journalism: informational “protection”—polarization—sold as a commodity. Objectivity had crumbled before the dangerous Trump. On the question of who decided the danger of any given piece, the newsroom rebels presented a number of broad demands. Future opinion pieces needed to be vetted “across the desk’s diverse staff before publication,” while readers should be invited to “express themselves.” The young reporters felt that they had a better fix on what readers wanted than did their elders. Given the generational divide on social media, this was almost certainly true. “Revolutions tend to radicalization. The same is true of social media mobs: they grow more extreme until they explode.” The letter triggered yet another town hall meeting, this time with opinion-page editor James Bennet. It did not go well. Two days later, Bennet was fired. As the rebels demanded, the Cotton op-ed was detoxified with a long-winded editor’s note. The op-ed never appeared in the Times’s print edition. The influence over the news agenda of the younger, more radical, newsroom voices, we can infer, was now large and growing. Older reporters and editors were unlikely to confront them: none wished to share Bennet’s fate. The history-reframing mission is now in the hands of a deeply self-righteous group that has trouble discerning the many human stopping places between true and false, good and evil, objective and subjective. According to one poll, a majority of Americans shared the opinion that Cotton expressed in his op-ed. That had no bearing on the discussion. In the letter and the town hall meetings, the rebels wielded the word “truth” as if they owned it. By their lights, Cotton had lied, and the fact that the public approved of his lies was precisely what made his piece dangerous. Two weeks after the Cotton controversy, the Times published an essay by Wesley Lowery, a Pulitzer Prize–winning black reporter, titled “A Reckoning over Objectivity, Led by Black Journalists.” Equating objectivity with “whiteness,” Lowery called for “moral clarity, which will require both editors and reporters to stop doing things like reflexively hiding behind euphemisms to obfuscate the truth.” The Trump administration and the Republican Party, Lowery urged, should be labeled as what they are: a “refuge to white supremacist rhetoric and policies.” In the post-Bennet moment of post-journalism, editors at the paper were inclined to agree. Revolutions tend to radicalization. The same is true of social media mobs: they grow ever more extreme until they explode. But the New York Times is neither of these things—it’s a business, and post-journalism is now its business model. The demand for moral clarity, pressed by those who own the truth, must increasingly resemble a quest for radical conformism; but for nonideological reasons, the demand cannot afford to leave subscriber opinion too far behind. Radicalization must balance with the bottom line. The final paradox of post-journalism is that the generation most likely to share the moralistic attitude of the newsroom rebels is the least likely to read a newspaper. Andrey Mir, who first defined the concept, sees post-journalism as a desperate gamble, doomed in the end by demographics. For newspapers and their multiple art forms developed over a 400-year history, Mir writes, the collision with the digital tsunami was never going to be a challenge to surmount but rather “an extinction-level event.”

#### Polarization ruins democracies

Crane 22 David M. Crane, Founding Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. He is the Founder of the Global Accountability Network and is also a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Syracuse University College of Law. He is the author of Every Living Thing: Facing Down Terrorists, Warlords, and Thugs in West Africa—A Story of Justice. He was assisted by Kanalya Arivalagan, 1-6-2022, "The End of Democratic Peace in the Age of the Strongman," No Publication, <https://www.jurist.org/commentary/2022/01/crane-david-democratic-peace-age-of-strongman/> // ella

Democracy gives way to authoritarianism in different forms. In one of the forms, political polarization is the first step to whittling away at democracy. This can be seen today in the United States when both sides choose to ignore the other or argue without listening. In the United States, we are facing a major political shift brought upon by circumstances over the past five years. Political polarization continues to weaken and challenge our faltering Republic. With this political radicalization, the uncertainty of the pandemic, and with ever-growing social desperation in this economy, this strain on our democratic ideals continues. In general, this is a phenomenon that all liberal democracies face around the world.

#### Polarization internally ruins democracies

Mccoy 18 Jennifer Lynn Mccoy, Distinguished University Professor of Political Science, Georgia State University, 10-31-2018, "Extreme political polarization weakens democracy – can the US avoid that fate?," Conversation, [https://theconversation.com/extreme-political-polarization-weakens-democracy-can-the-us-avoid-that-fate-105540 //](https://theconversation.com/extreme-political-polarization-weakens-democracy-can-the-us-avoid-that-fate-105540%20//) ella

A collaborative research project I led on polarized democracies around the world examines the processes by which societies divide into political “tribes” and democracy is harmed. Based on a study of 11 countries including the U.S., Turkey, Hungary, Venezuela, Thailand and others, we found that when political leaders cast their opponents as immoral or corrupt, they create “us” and “them” camps – called by political scientists and psychologists “in-groups” and “out-groups” – in the society. In this tribal dynamic, each side views the other “out group” party with increasing distrust, bias and enmity. Perceptions that “If you win, I lose” grow. Each side views the other political party and their supporters as a threat to the nation or their way of life if that other political party is in power. For that reason, the incumbent’s followers tolerate more illiberal and increasingly authoritarian behavior to stay in power, while the opponents are more and more willing to resort to undemocratic means to remove them from power. This damages democracy. Are Americans now stuck in animosity and anger that will undermine democracy, or can the nation pull out of it? Politicians divide Our research finds that severe polarization is affected by three primary factors. First, it is often stimulated by the rhetoric of political leaders who exploit the real grievances of voters. These politicians choose divisive issues to highlight in order to pursue their own political agenda. In other words, what a leader says is as important as what she or he does. Since launching his campaign, President Donald Trump has vilified so-called external enemies such as “criminal and rapist” Mexican immigrants, terrorist Muslims and foreign allies out to drain America’s coffers through “unfair trade deficits.” Now, the president is targeting internal enemies. He has famously labeled the media “the enemy of the people” and recently accused the Democrats of unleashing an “angry mob” unfit to govern. Such unprecedented attacks by a president of the United States seemed designed to discredit his critics and delegitimize his political opponents. But they also trigger the dynamics of polarized politics by reinforcing the notion that politics is an “us versus them” contest. By August 2017, just eight months after Trump took office, three-quarters of Republicans had negative views of Democrats, and 70 percent of Democrats viewed Republicans negatively. This was a large increase compared with the mid-1990s, when about 20 percent of each party had unfavorable views of the other party. Even more disturbing for democracy, roughly half of voters of each party say the other party makes them feel afraid, and growing numbers view the policies of the other party as a threat to the nation. America’s recent political polarization did not begin with Trump. It has been growing since the 1990s and accelerated under President Barack Obama, when the Tea Party formed in reaction to his election, and bipartisanship broke down in the Congress. By 2016, 45 percent of Republicans felt threatened by Democratic policies, and 41 percent of Democrats viewed Republican policies as a threat, up nearly 10 points in just two years. Our research shows that in extreme polarization, people feel distant from and suspicious of the “other” camp. At the same time, they feel loyal to, and trusting of, their own camp – without examining their biases or factual basis of their information. Although this is a common phenomenon long identified by social psychology, it is even more pronounced in the age of social media 24-hour news cycles and more politicized media outlets who repeat and amplify the political attacks. Most dangerously, words can unleash actual violence by avid supporters seeking approval from the leader or simply inspired to carry out an attack against the designated “enemy,” as we saw when supporters of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela attacked a media mogul whom Chávez had labeled public enemy number one. Similarly, last week an avid Trump supporter sent pipe bomb mailers to prominent Trump opponents, and the killings in a synagogue in Pittsburgh were carried out by a man who used similar language to Trump’s assertion that the U.S. was being invaded by a caravan of Central Americans. Polarization, though, is a two-way street. Both sides now How the political opposition reacts is the second factor explaining the impact of polarization on democracy. If the opposition returns the bitter rhetoric with similar political hardball and demonizing language, they risk locking in place a cycle that leads to entrenching the politics of polarization. A perceived political win may in fact prove to be an eventual defeat. That happened in 2013 when the Democratic Party changed the long-standing rule that nominees to federal judgeships needed 60 Senate votes to end debate and move to a confirmation vote. To overcome Republican obstruction under Obama, the Democrats who held a majority in the Senate at the time abandoned that rule and decreed that only 51 votes would be needed for all federal judgeships – except the Supreme Court. Eventually the majority party becomes once again the minority. That’s what happened when Republicans gained the majority in 2014 and blocked Obama’s last nomination for a Supreme Court justice. When Democrats retaliated by filibustering Trump’s first nominee for the Supreme Court, the Republican Party escalated the fight and abolished the century-old filibuster rule even for the highest court in the land. They approved Justice Brett Kavanaugh with only a single Democratic vote.

#### Thus, for all these reasons, I urge an affirmative ballot. I now stand open for cross examination.