## 1

#### Settler colonialism is the permeating structure of the nation state – sustained by settler/colonial desire, genocide and erasure become naturalized.

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Much of the scholarship on race, racialization, and settler colonialism has framed the relationship between racialized subjects and settler colonialism in legal or political terms.20 This move makes sense, considering that settler colonialism is, at base, a political project concerned with governance. For example, when Patrick Wolfe critically asserts that settler-colonial invasion is not an event, but a structure, he argues that the “event” of invasion is made permanent through technologies of governance, such as settler laws, policies, and institutions.21 Similarly, Lorenzo Veracini, when distinguishing settlerhood from migration, makes this distinction by suggesting that “settlers are founders of political orders, and carry their sovereignty with them.”22 Like Wolfe, Veracini identifies sovereignty and political governance as the feature that distinguishes settler invasion from migration. Still underexamined in the literature on settler colonialism are the kinds of emotive investments that settler subjects may have in settler coloniality. To be clear, I am not denying that settler colonialism is a political project. However, I do wish to emphasize the significance of desire, which I would argue enables settler-colonial governance and vice versa. This notion that settler colonialism is as much a project of desire as it is a purely political or legal project is certainly clear within the emergent literature on Queer Indigenous studies, which has shown how alternative models of kinship, through figures such as the berdache or two-spirit person, become objects of desire for Queer subjects searching for true or authentic selves and communities.23 For example, in his research on Queer settler subjectivities, Scott Morgensen discusses how Queer Indigenous identities are appropriated by White LGBTQ activists to serve their own goals of building Queer movements without simultaneously challenging the logics of settler colonialism.24 Similarly, in When Did Indians Become Straight? Mark Rifkin underlines how the fetishization of Native social structures by Queer settlers, or liberals more generally, is as complicit with the settler-colonial project as is the repudiation of these social structures by US imperialist politics.25 In each case, argues Rifkin, Native social practices are framed strictly through the lens of cultural difference rather than as integral to processes of governance, and Native sovereignty is undermined.26 The work of both Morgensen and Rifkin points to the ways that relations of desire sustain and reassert colonial power in settler states. For the Queer settlers discussed by Morgensen and Rifkin, it is indigeneity (or a commodified form of indigeneity) which is the object of desire.27 However, I would argue that settlerhood is also an object of desire, and settler-desires also do the work of sustaining colonial power. This is especially true in the case of the racialized subject seeking belonging in settler society or seeking access to the benefits and privileges of the settler society. Moreover, settlerhood is not only an object of desire in and of itself, but desires that are construed as natural or innate—such as “settling down” and starting a family—do the work of constituting settlerhood as natural and happenstance. It is this naturalization in particular which makes settler colonialism so tenacious. More specifically, the political relationship between “Natives” and “settlers” is sustained through the cultivation of settler subjectivities invested not only in asserting settler identity (for example, American, Canadian or Australian), but with seemingly abstract or “universal” aims, objectives, and ideals, such as settling down, heterosexual (heteronormative) love, property ownership, the nuclear family, the separation of public/private spheres, and so on. Incidentally, these are values that dovetail with other political projects. As indicated by Oxford English Dictionary definitions of the word, desire is generally associated with sexual desire, and it is almost always presumed to operate at the level of the individual rather than the collective. As suggested by the literature on critical psychoanalysis, however, the spaces of the psychic and social/cultural/structural are intimately intertwined. The desire I speak of in this paper is a settler/colonial desire, which manifests itself at the collective level even as it expresses itself at the individual level. When settler desire installs itself as individual desire, it makes invisible its structural dimensions. For example, the desire to “settle down” appears to be a neutral, arbitrary, personal desire, delinked from history or politics. In some ways, settler desire is analogous to the construction of race difference that Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks describes in Desiring Whiteness.28 Though she is engaged in a different conceptual task than I am in this paper, there are nonetheless some useful insights to be gleaned from Desiring Whiteness. In it, Seshadri-Crooks draws upon Lacan’s theory of subject constitution to develop a framework for understanding the logic through which race difference is organized. 29 She argues that while the origins of race difference can be historically situated, its effects exceed language.30 However, racial difference assumes the appearance of naturalness and ahistoricity. To do this, racial difference relies upon the order of sexual difference, where sexual difference (via Lacan) is that which cannot be fully articulated by language.31 Racial difference acquires its tenacity and pervasiveness by assuming naturalness and ahistoricity. One could ask a similar question about settler/colonial desire: How do settler desires become naturalized to the point that their violence is erased, their history disappeared? Even as there is recognition that settler colonialism (or its euphemism, “discovery”) has a clear history, and even as there is recognition of First Peoples, the process of settlement itself continues to be construed as benign. Like race, settler coloniality becomes naturalized or made “normal” by relying upon the order of sexual difference, such that the calls to own property or start a (nuclear) family become delinked from their historical contexts and reconfigured as natural, innate, ahistorical desires. At the same time, it should be noted that while settler desires are constructed as innate, settlerhood itself is not marked on the body in the same way as race or sex difference. Rather, the settler/Native distinction is imprinted on the body through race. That is, there is no inherent recognition of settler-ness except through some sense of racial difference, which is often ambiguous. Outside of this, claims to settler status are recognized only through political and legal technologies, such as birth certificates, passports, status cards, and so on. It is perhaps due to this lack of embodied recognition that settler desire is so significant to sustaining colonial power. Indeed, settler/colonial desire is integral to the construction of settler subjectivities, to settler narratives, and to the project of erasure underlying the indigenizing efforts of settler projects. Settler colonialism is able to sustain itself because settler subjects are invested in its project. Because they are framed as belonging to the space of the psychic settler, desires are able to do the work of naturalizing settler imperatives. In other words, they are able to do this work because they are framed as universal human desires. As Scott Morgensen notes in relation to gender difference, “Any naturalisation of Western heteropatriarchy or binary sex/gender also naturalises settler colonialism. . . . Settler colonisation performs the West’s potential universality, by transporting and indigenising Western governance upon territories far from Europe: in settler states that then may appear not to be perpetual colonisers, but rather to be natural sites of Western law.”32 As a key aspect of this naturalization process, desire links settlerhood to the category of the human—with the implication that the binary counterpart to the settler, the “Native,” belongs to the category of the nonhuman. Such was the dilemma that Frantz Fanon described in Black Skin, White Masks. 33 The process of colonization, argued Fanon, institutes the binary of the colonizer/colonized, which seizes the subjectivity of the colonized, denying the ability of the colonized ever to be recognized except through the logic of racial difference.34 For Fanon, only anticolonial struggle held the promise of recapturing the humanity stolen by colonization. Yet, as Denise Ferreira da Silva has argued, the category of the human is always already embedded in the politics of racialization, emerging from historical-material contexts, even as it has the appearance of being natural.35 Claims to humanity rely on the figure of the “Other,” without which humanness cannot be recognized. Da Silva’s analysis thus problematizes the modernist quest for humanity itself. The evocation of humanity, signaled through naturalized desire, is also what facilitates a project of indigenization—wherein it appears natural and inconsequential that settlers belong to, and are legitimate occupants of, land that was acquired through deceptive treaty processes and through policies of genocide and assimilation.36 For example, in Indian Cowboy, love, marriage, and “settling down” are central themes. The film evokes the “American Dream”—the fantasy of marriage, nuclear family, property ownership, and success within a capitalist economy—while simultaneously making invisible the Indigenous histories and claims to land which make the American Dream possible. Because these erasures are enacted through desire—desire constructed as that which is natural, benign, and essentially human—the erasures are neutralized; the effects of their violence are rendered void. The racialized cowboy performs, expresses, and negotiates settler desires, speaking to the inability to occupy particular spaces and subject positions and articulating a demand to do so. In Indian Cowboy, this is suggested by the fantastical representation of this figure—the cowboy is out of grasp in the real world of the racialized subject, relegated to the dream world.

#### Conceptions of objectivity fail into the guise of progress. The truth of Settler Colonialism must be publicly confronted from personal experience which settlers will always encroach upon.

**Brake 7/5** [Justin; Justin Brake is an independent journalist from Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) who presently lives and works in unceded Algonquin territory. A settler with Mi’kmaq ancestry, much of Justin’s work focuses on Indigenous rights and liberation. He is a writer and editor with the Breach and a regular contributor to the Independent. “Built on a foundation of white supremacy””. 7-5-2021. https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/built-on-a-foundation-of-white-supremacy.] SJ//VM

**Objectivity and settler colonialism** “Watch your language.” That was the warning, written into [an op-ed](https://www.saltwire.com/newfoundland-labrador/opinion/pam-frampton-watch-your-language-135558/) title, given by a daily newspaper columnist who took issue with my and other journalists’ use of the term “land protector” in our coverage of the Muskrat Falls resistance. “Reporters should avoid such language, laden as it is with inherent subjectivity,” the columnist went on. “[T]he last thing any journalist wants is to fuel those who are perpetually coiled and ready to yell ‘Media bias!’” The debate over the utility and legitimacy of objectivity in journalism is almost as old as the ideal itself. Objectivity “hinges on a more fundamental belief that there is a knowable world, a way of seeing that, once we set aside our own subjectivities, can be universally achieved or at least universally agreed upon,” journalist Lewis Raven Wallace writes in *The View From Somewhere*. Defenders of objectivity, like The Elements of Journalism authors Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, argue that “[o]bjectivity was not meant to suggest that journalists were without bias. To the contrary, precisely because journalists could never be objective, their methods had to be. In the recognition that everyone is biased, in other words, the news, like science, should flow from a process for reporting that is defensible, rigorous, and transparent.” **“That the prose may have become less ‘blatant’ however suggests that the audience has become more familiar with the genre conventions of colonial discourse. To put it another way: the nation has been built.”** But too often, objectivity is conflated with the views of those in positions of power. In *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers,* Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson detail how, over the course of this country’s short history, Canadian newspapers have supported and advanced settler colonialism. Under the guise of “objective” reporting, journalists have consistently othered and stereotyped Indigenous Peoples, misrepresented them, and outright erased their histories and cultures. “The colonial stereotypes have endured in the press, even flourished,” the authors noted a decade ago. “That the prose may have become less ‘blatant’ however suggests that the audience has become more familiar with the genre conventions of colonial discourse. To put it another way: the nation has been built.” Robert Ballantyne, a Cree-Mohawk grad student at Carleton University and former CBC and *Toronto Star* journalist, is researching anti-colonial reporting methods. He says objectivity “makes it difficult for journalists to confront their own work, as if they are somehow capable of transcending their own backgrounds, biases, and communities.” Armed with what Ballantyne calls a perceived “superpower of fairness,” journalists’ indoctrination in objectivity “can create an almost impossible situation to have difficult conversations and create change if someone believes they are beyond reproach.” Tałtan journalist Candis Callison and her colleague Mary Lynn Young argue in their book *Reckoning: Journalism’s Limits and Possibilities* that “what journalists think happened is deeply related to who they are and where they’re coming from in broad and specific senses – and that there are multiple truths and perspectives that contribute to understanding what ‘really’ happened,” they write. Instead of pretending to be objective, they suggest journalists could be transparent about who they are and where they come from. “Recognizing individual and collective social and historical location needs to become part of the methodology for journalists in order to situate themselves, their knowledge, and expertise within a wider web of relations and entanglements.

#### The alternative is one of decolonization – settlers need to enact an ethic of incommensurability to relinquish settler futurity.

Tuck and Yang 12 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 2012, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, // SJ DL

An ethic of incommensurability, which guides moves that unsettle innocence, stands in contrast to aims of reconciliation, which motivate settler moves to innocence. Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future. Reconciliation is concerned with questions of what will decolonization look like? What will happen after abolition? What will be the consequences of decolonization for the settler? Incommensurability acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework. We want to say, first, that decolonization is not obliged to answer those questions - decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity. Still, we acknowledge the questions of those wary participants in Occupy Oakland and other settlers who want to know what decolonization will require of them. The answers are not fully in view and can’t be as long as decolonization remains punctuated by metaphor. The answers will not emerge from friendly understanding, and indeed require a dangerous understanding of uncommonality that un-coalesces coalition politics - moves that may feel very unfriendly.But we will find out the answers as we get there, “in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give [decolonization] historical form and content” (Fanon, 1963, p. 36). To fully enact an ethic of incommensurability means relinquishing settler futurity, abandoning the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples. It meansremoving the asterisks, periods, commas, apostrophes, the whereas’s, buts, and conditional clauses that punctuate decolonization and underwrite settler innocence. The Native futures, the lives to be lived once the settler nation is gone - these are the unwritten possibilities made possible by an ethic of incommensurability.

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for who best centers indigenous scholarship and resistance-- Any ethical commitment requires that the aff place themselves in the center of Native scholarship and demands.

Carlson 16 (Elizabeth Carlson, PhD, is an Aamitigoozhi, Wemistigosi, and Wasicu (settler Canadian and American), whose Swedish, Saami, German, Scots-Irish, and English ancestors have settled on lands of the Anishinaabe and Omaha Nations which were unethically obtained by the US government. Elizabeth lives on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Nehiyawak, Dakota, Nakota, and Red River Metis peoples currently occupied by the city of Winnipeg, the province of Manitoba, (2016): Anti-colonial methodologies and practices for settler colonial studies, Settler Colonial Studies, DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2016.1241213) // recut SJ DL

Arlo Kempf says that ‘where anticolonialism is a tool used to invoke resistance for the colonized, it is a tool used to invoke accountability for the colonizer’.**42** Relational accountability should be a cornerstone of settler colonial studies.I believe settler colonial studies and scholars should ethically and overtly place themselves in relationship to the centuries of Indigenous oral, and later academic scholarship that conceptualizes and resists settler colonialism without necessarily using the term: SCT may be revelatory to many settler scholars, but Indigenous people have been speaking for a long time about colonial continuities based on their lived experiences. Some SCTs have sought to connect with these discussions and to foreground Indigenous resistance, survival and agency. Others, however, seem to use SCT as a pathway to explain the colonial encounter without engaging with Indigenous people and experiences – either on the grounds that this structural analysis already conceptually explains Indigenous experience, or because Indigenous resistance is rendered invisible.43 Ethical settler colonial theory (SCT) would recognize the foundational role Indigenous scholarship has in critiques of settler colonialism. It would acknowledge the limitations of settler scholars in articulating settler colonialism without dialogue with Indigenous peoplesand take as its norm making this dialogue evident. In my view, it is critical that we not view settler colonial studies as a new or unique field being established, which would enact a discovery narrative and contribute to Indigenous erasure, but rather take a longer and broade\_r view. Indigenous oral and academic scholars are indeed the originators of this work. This space is not empty. Of course, powerful forces of socialization and discipline impact scholars in the academy. There is much pressure to claim unique space, to establish a name for ourselves, and to make academic discoveries. I am suggesting that settler colonial studies and anti-colonial scholars resist these hegemonic pressures and maintain a higher anti-colonial ethic. As has been argued, ‘the theory itself places ethical demands on us as settlers, including the demand that we actively refuse its potential to re-empower our own academic voices and to marginalize Indigenous resistance’.44 As settler scholars, we can reposition our work relationally and contextually with humi- lity and accountability. We can centre Indigenous resistance, knowledges, and scholarship in our work, and contextualize our work in Indigenous sovereignty. We can view oral Indigenous scholarship as legitimate scholarly sources. We can acknowledge explicitly and often the Indigenous traditions of resistance and scholarship that have taught us and pro- vided the foundations for our work. If our work has no foundation of Indigenous scholarship and mentorship, I believe our contributions to settler colonial studies are even more deeply problematic.

## 2

#### Interpretation: The affirmative must define “free press” in a delineated line in the 1AC

#### Multiple types of press that fit into the definition- explicit clarification needed

Cambridge Dictionary, ND, "free press," No Publication, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/free-press

If a country has a [free](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/free) pres[s](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/press), [its](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/its) newspapers, magazines, and [television](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/television) and [radio](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/radio) stations are [able](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/able) to express any opinions they want, even if these [criticize](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/criticize) the government and other organizations:

#### Violation: They didn’t

#### Negate:

#### 1] Shiftiness- they can redefine what free press the 1ac defends in the 1ar which decks strategy and allows them to wriggle out of negative positions which strips the neg of social media DAs, specific news stations DAs, and case answers. They will always win on specificity weighing.

#### CX can’t resolve this and is bad because A] Not flowed B] Skews 6 min of prep C] They can lie and no way to check D] Debaters can be shady.

#### 2] Real World- policy makers will always specify who the actor of change is. That outweighs since debate has no value without portable application.

#### This spec shell isn’t regressive- it literally determines who the affirmative implements the aff through.

#### Fairness – debate is a competitive activity that requires fairness for objective evaluation.

#### Drop the debater – a] deter future abuse and b] set better norms for debate.

#### Competing interps – [a] reasonability is arbitrary and encourages judge intervention since there’s no clear norm, [b] it creates a race to the top where we create the best possible norms for debate.

#### No RVIs – a] illogical, you don’t win for proving that you meet the burden of being fair, logic outweighs since it’s a prerequisite for evaluating any other argument, b] RVIs incentivize baiting theory and prepping it out which leads to maximally abusive practices

## 3

#### Policies that promote objectivity become the pretext for government crackdowns on legitimate journalism

West 17 Darrell M. West (Vice President and Director - Governance Studies Senior Fellow - Center for Technology Innovation Douglas Dillon Chair in Governmental Studies) 12/18/2017, How to combat fake news and disinformation, Brookings, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/>Karan

Government harassment of journalists is a serious problem in many parts of the world. United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur David Kaye notes that “all too many leaders see journalism as the enemy, reporters as rogue actors, tweeps as terrorists, and bloggers as blasphemers.”[[23]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/#footnote-23) In Freedom House’s most recent report on global press freedoms, researchers found that media freedom was at its lowest point in 13 years and there were “unprecedented threats to journalists and media outlets in major democracies and new moves by authoritarian states to control the media, including beyond their borders.”[[24]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/" \l "footnote-24) Journalists can often be accused of generating fake news and there have been numerous cases of legitimate journalists being arrested or their work being subject to official scrutiny. In Egypt, an Al-Jazeera producer was arrested on charges of “incitement against state institutions and broadcasting fake news with the aim of spreading chaos.”[[25]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/" \l "footnote-25) This was after the network broadcast a documentary criticizing Egyptian military conscription. Some governments have also moved to create government regulations to control information flows and censor content on social media platforms. Indonesia has established a government agency to “monitor news circulating online” and “tackle fake news.”[[26]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/#footnote-26) In the Philippines, Senator Joel Villanueva has introduced a bill that would impose up to a five-year prison term for those who publish or distribute “fake news,” which the legislation defined as activities that “cause panic, division, chaos, violence, and hate, or those which exhibit a propaganda to blacken or discredit one’s reputation.”[[27]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/" \l "footnote-27) Critics have condemned the bill’s definition of social networks, misinformation, hate speech, and illegal speech as too broad, and believe that it risks criminalizing investigative journalism and limiting freedom of expression. Newspaper columnist Jarius Bondoc noted “the bill is prone to abuse. A bigot administration can apply it to suppress the opposition. By prosecuting critics as news fakers, the government can stifle legitimate dissent. Whistleblowers, not the grafters, would be imprisoned and fined for daring to talk. Investigative journalists would cram the jails.”[[28]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/#footnote-28) In a situation of false information, it is tempting for legal authorities to deal with offensive content and false news by forbidding or regulating it. For example, in Germany, legislation was passed in June 2017 that forces digital platforms to delete hate speech and misinformation. It requires large social media companies to “delete illegal, racist or slanderous comments and posts within 24 hours.” Companies can be fined up to $57 million for content that is not deleted from the platform, such as Nazi symbols, Holocaust denials, or language classified as hate speech.[[29]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/" \l "footnote-29) The German legislation’s critics have complained that its definition of “obviously” illegal speech risks censorship and a loss of freedom of speech. As an illustration, the law applies the rules to social media platforms in the country with more than 2 million users. Commentators have noted that is not a reasonable way to define relevant social networks. There could be much smaller networks that inflict greater social damage. In addition, it is not always clear how to identify objectionable content.[[30]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/" \l "footnote-30) While it is pretty clear how to define speech advocating violence or harm to other people, it is less apparent when talking about hate speech or “defamation of the state.” What is considered “hateful” to one individual may not be to someone else. There is some ambiguity regarding what constitutes hate speech in a digital context. Does it include mistakes in reporting, opinion piece commentary, political satire, leader misstatements, or outright fabrications? Watchdog organizations complained that “overly broad language could affect a range of platforms and services and put decisions about what is illegal content into the hands of private companies that may be inclined to over-censor in order to avoid potential fines.”[[31]](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/" \l "footnote-31) Overly restrictive regulation of internet platforms in open societies sets a dangerous precedent and can encourage authoritarian regimes to continue and/or expand censorship. This will restrict global freedom of expression and generate hostility to democratic governance. Democracies that place undue limits on speech risk legitimizing authoritarian leaders and their efforts to crackdown basic human rights. It is crucial that efforts to improve news quality not weaken journalistic content or the investigative landscape facing reporters.

#### Gov. crackdowns on media are a form of soft authoritarianism that escalates into complete tyranny

Christensen 21 Christensen, Devin (PhD in Political Science, UNC, Chapel Hill), John Lovett, and John A. Curiel. "Mainstream Media Recirculation of Trust-Reducing Social Media Messages." American Politics Research (2021): 1532673X211023931.

Trump’s consistent hostility and violent reactivity to criticism on Twitter mimicked the media outreach strategies of so-called “soft” authoritarian leaders seeking to undermine democratic norms and institutions in order to consolidate power in themselves. **“Soft” authoritarianism differs from the more brutal “hard” authoritarianism associated with tyrannical regimes such as Nazi Germany and Stalin’s USSR. While infamous authoritarians, such as Stalin or Pol Pot, could compliment their cult of personality with the unfettered coercive power of the state, soft authoritarians are forced to grapple with adversarial democratic institutions that split and balance authority (Gandhi & Okar, 2009; Márquez, 2016, 2018; Schatz, 2009). In order to consolidate power, soft authoritarians must play a long game where they start by undermining these adversarial institutions until the institutions are too weak to resist the authoritarian’s bid for power (Cheibub et al., 2010; Gandhi & Okar, 2009; Márquez, 2016, 2018). The media is one adversarial institution that soft authoritarians must either degrade or coopt in order to consolidate power in themselves.** As Schatz (2009) notes, through “discursive preemption,” the soft authoritarian seeks to “maintain the upper hand in guiding the media to project images that strengthen his position” in a way that “may flirt with outright propaganda” but which maintains a veneer of transparency and legitimacy (207). For example, in 2005, Kazahki President Nazarbaev preempted charges of electoral fraud in his reelection with what appeared to be leaked documents showing that the opposition planned to allege fraud against the regime regardless, which in turn blunted the impact of the scandal (Schatz, 2011). By diluting public discourse with misinformation and false labels of inaccuracy, citizens lose faith in journalistic credibility (Freeze et al., 2020) and “no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so” (Snyder, 2017, p. 65, 71**). Authoritarians then capitalize on growing distrust in institutions by promulgating their own salvation narrative, usually in defense of the “common man” (Schatz, 2009). Effective salvation narratives require the social amplification of a crisis, followed by blaming the “other” for the crisis and other problems that can stick (Waring, 2013; Waring & Glendon, 1998; Waring & Paxton, 2018). By controlling the media, authoritarians can deny wrongdoing, delegitimize their opponents and oppositional institutions (including traditional media outlets themselves), and spin a narrative that the state is sick. The only cure for this sickness, the authoritarian claims, is to trust in the leader and grant them the authority to set things straight (Svilicic & Maldini, 2014).**

#### Authoritarian regimes fail at containing pandemics

Burkle 20 – (Frederick Burkle, Senior Fellow & Scientist, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Harvard University & T.H., “Declining Public Health Protections within Autocratic Regimes: Impact on Global Public Health Security, Infectious Disease Outbreaks, Epidemics, and Pandemics,” Prehospital and Disaster Medicine, Vol 35, Iss 3, June 2020, Cambridge University Press, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/prehospital-and-disaster-medicine/article/declining-public-health-protections-within-autocratic-regimes-impact-on-global-public-health-security-infectious-disease-outbreaks-epidemics-and-pandemics/8D8927B7B4117E07B666E83D8605D085)

Conclusions Lipsitch predicts that some 40%-70% of the world’s population will be infected this year.78 Despite political claims, a vaccine is more likely seen within a year or two at best.79 It is no longer realistic to expect the management of these gaps in infectious disease outbreaks, especially those that threaten to be epidemics and pandemics, are to be capably managed in their present state of willful denial and offenses by many countries, especially those that are ruled by authoritarian regimes.80 Despite resistance to globalization’s health benefits that would markedly benefit the global community during these crises by authoritarian regimes, in 2015, I called for a new WHO leadership granted by the International Health Regulations Treaty that has consequences if violated. I stated: The intent of a legally binding Treaty to improve the capacity of all countries to detect, assess, notify, and respond to public health threats are being ignored. While there is a current rush to admonish globalization in favor of populism, epidemic and pandemics deserve better than decisions being made by incapable autocrats. During Ebola, a rush by the Global Health Security Agenda partners to fill critical gaps in administrative and operational areas was crucial in the short term, but questions remain as to the real priorities of the global leadership as time elapses and critical gaps in public health protections and infrastructure take precedence over the economic and security needs of the developed world. The response from the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network and foreign medical teams to Ebola proved indispensable to global health security, but both deserve stronger strategic capacity support and institutional status under the WHO leadership granted by the [International Health Regulations] Treaty. Treaties are the most successful means the world has in preventing, preparing for, and controlling epidemics in an increasingly globalized world. Other options are not sustainable. Given the gravity of on-going failed treaty management, the slow and incomplete process of reform, the magnitude and complexity of infectious disease outbreaks, and the rising severity of public health emergencies, a recommitment must be made to complete and restore the original mandates as a collaborative and coordinated global network responsibility, not one left to the actions of individual countries. The bottom line is that the global community can no longer tolerate an ineffectual and passive international response system. As such, this Treaty has the potential to become one of the most effective treaties for crisis response and risk reduction world-wide. Practitioners and health decision-makers world-wide must break their silence and advocate for a stronger Treaty and a return of WHO authority. Health practitioners and health decision-makers world-wide must break their silence and advocate for a stronger Treaty and a return of WHO’s undisputed global authority.81 Will China’s unilateral decisions just be a temporary stay as it was post-SARS, or is China capable of adopting, without conditions, the WHO public health requirements they have so far ignored? Autocratic leaders in history have a direct impact on health security. Dictatorships, with direct knowledge of the negative impact on health, create adverse political and economic conditions that only complicate the problem further. This is more evident in autocratic regimes where health protections have been seriously and purposely curtailed. This summary acknowledges that autocratic regimes are seriously handicapped by sociopathic narcissistic leaders who are incapable of understanding the health consequences of infectious diseases or their impact on their population. They will universally accelerate defenses indigenous to their personality traits when faced with contrary facts, double down against or deny accurate science to the contrary, delay timely precautions, and fail to meet health expectations required of nations under existing International Health Regulations, laws, and Epidemic Control surveillance.82 Kavanaugh’s Lancet editorial initially praised Chinese tactics that reflected a level of control only available to authoritarian regimes. As days and weeks passed, it revealed a government that inherently became victims of their own propaganda based on “need to avoid sharing bad news.” He concluded that authoritarian politics inhibited an effective response, and that openness and competitive politics favor a strategically fair public health strategy.83 Democratic nations in comparison to autocratic regimes recognize that public health fundamentally depends on public trust.84 The WHO’s China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease report has applauded China’s eventual response capability and capacity with strict measures to interrupt or minimize transmission chains with extremely proactive surveillance, rapid diagnosis, isolation tracking, quarantine, and population acceptance of these measures, to implement the measures to contain COVID-19 within the country.85 It must not be forgotten that China’s authoritarian rule “put secrecy and order ahead of openly confronting the growing crisis and risking alarm or political embarrassment,” 86 arrested and compelled Dr. Li Wenliang to sign a statement that his warning constituted “illegal behavior,” all of which delayed a concerted public health offensive that led to his death.86 This was an “issue of inaction” that would have contained COVID-19 within China and remains a potent symbol of China’s failures.86 There is no evidence that the authoritarian regime has or will change to prevent this from happening again.87 I suspect China’s sophisticated censorship and propaganda systems will outlast any public health improvements.

## Case

Overview: 1] The aff needs to prove that reporting occurs on vaccination topics – its declining post pandemic so less people are reading articles 2] They also need to prove that shoving facts into vaccine denialists faces would change their minds – there is tons of objective journalism on vaccines already, but anti-vaxxers clearly don’t care. Why would a member of QAnon suddenly convert after the aff? They wouldn’t 3] They need to win that convincing a minority of the population would result in concrete policy action – a majority of people involved in politics already believe in vaccinations anyways, so there’s no solvency.

#### Objectivity creates media bubbles and right wing news.

Kelkar 19 (Shreeharsh. Shreeharsh Kelkar is lecturer in the Interdisciplinary Studies Field Major at UC Berkeley), Engaging Science, Technology, and Society 5 (2019), 86-106, Post-truth and the Search for Objectivity: Political Polarization and the Remaking of Knowledge Production

* Brackets included in original text

In an era where both political parties presided over coalitions that spanned the ideological spectrum, newspapers could practice a detached objectivity through which they could be critical of all political persuasions. **Political polarization however raised serious questions about journalistic objectivity as practiced. As polarization increased, partisans on both sides, especially conservatives, started to accuse mainstream media institutions of exhibiting “journalistic bias.” While journalists and academics studiously followed objective norms and cast themselves as experts, they were always more left-of-center in their own politics. Conservatives, not unreasonably, perceived this as “bias,” and therefore sought to create their own information ecosystem of think tanks and media. Aided partly by regulatory changes, this led to the creation of an alternative right-wing media ecosystem (like cable news channels and conservative talk radio) and new audiences who consumed them. A key feature of this alternative ecosystem was its focus on the biases of mainstream media institutions. The success of the alternative right-wing media ecosystem is reflected in its outsized influence on setting the goals of the Republican Party, a truly unprecedented state of affairs. Political scientists Matt Grossman and David Hopkins argue that “the establishment of an explicitly right-of-center media ecosystem as a conscious alternative to ‘mainstream’ journalism allows conservative media personalities to exert an influence over Republican officeholders and voters that has no true counterpart among Democrats**” (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016a). This has led to an information asymmetry in terms of the news and knowledge that circulates amongst publics of different political persuasions. While the right relies on its alternative information system, the left relies on traditional news media and intellectual sources [e.g. university research] that often implicitly flatter the Democratic worldview but do not portray themselves or their consumers as engaged in an ideological conflict. Similarly, left-of-center think tanks have adapted to conservative upstarts by frequently opposing them in policy debates, but still retain broader ties to scholarly researchers and closer adherence to academic norms. (Grossmann and Hopkins 2016a) The rise of the internet and the growth of internet publishing further complicated matters. The internet took classifieds away from newspapers and magazines, thereby taking away a chunk of their revenue; further, it brought forth a new class of proto-journalists: bloggers, citizen-activists, advocates, who utilized it to reach a broader audience. These new voices did not necessarily subscribe to the established model of journalistic objectivity, where the journalist remains invisible and reports all sides of a conflict. Instead, they created a new genre of writing (embodied today in outlets like Vox and Talking Points Memo) embodying a different style of objectivity: their writing style accords a prominent space to facts but proudly spurns the invisible-reporter view-from-nowhere model of the NYT or CNN. The writer’s loyalties are clear, facts and opinions are mixed, and every side does not get equal (or similar) coverage (Farrell and Drezner 2007).

#### Objectivity doesn’t solve misinformation – their evidence is correlative not causative.

**Karić 21** (Tijana. Tijana Karić is an Humboldt Research Fellow at the Philipps-University Marburg | PhD in Social and Political Psychology), and Janko Međedović. "It doesn’t matter what you watch, but how much you watch: social attitudes, media objectivity, and frequency of informing as predictors of conspiracy beliefs." (2021).

Surprisingly, the objectivity of the media sources participants inform themselves through does not play a significant role in predicting either conspiracy mentality, or specific COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs, leading to the rejection of the second hypothesis. However, this finding is in contrast with previous studies (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2021). Possible reasons for the insignificance of source objectivity for conspiracy theories may lie in several psychological mechanisms. First, the lingering effect of misinformation (Ecker et al., 2017) indicates that the original information leaves traces on attitudes even after (repeated) counter-argumentation, because cognitive representations remain in the memory. The second mechanism is the sleeper effect (Hovland et al., 1949), i.e. the dissociation of the message from the source due to discounting cues (unworthy of consideration because it is not credible). The effect of such information will remain significant for recipient's attitudes because the fake information prevails in the memory while the source fades away, despite the person's awareness of the nature of the source (Krekó, 2020). The third potential mechanism is motivated reasoning, i.e. the theory that conspiracy beliefs are rooted in a wider set of beliefs and serve as advantages for the ingroup, such as the external attribution of blame, collective self-esteem etc. (Krekó, 2015). In our study, media objectivity clearly correlates negatively with social attitudes and with beliefs that the virus is harmless. It might be argued that media objectivity itself does not directly predict conspiracy beliefs, but its relationship with conspiracy beliefs takes place entirely through attitudes: more authoritarian, religious and conservative individuals systematically follow less objective media. However, conspiracy beliefs are not related to which media they follow, but only to attitudinal dispositions. These assumptions require further research

#### OBJECTIVITY IS WHAT MAKES FAKE NEWS POSSIBLE, ANY HINT OF BIAS OR FACTUAL ERROR MAKE THE MEDIA LOSE CREDIBILITY. THIS ALLOWS PEOPLE TO REJECT NEWS REPORTS AS FABRICATIONS

**Winston 20** (Brian. Brian Winston is a journalist who is the first holder of the Lincoln Professorship at the University of Lincoln, United Kingdom. He was a Pro Vice Chancellor for 2005-2006 and the former dean of Media and Humanities), and Matthew Winston. The roots of fake news: Objecting to objective journalism. Routledge, 2020.

Populism 101 holds that disagreeing with the leader is never an honest difference of opinions. To disagree with the leader, criticise the leader, be anything less than fanatically supportive of the leader, is always an attack on not just the leader, but the nation, deliberately intending it harm. Whether a private citizen, a judge, or a journalist, why else would you do it? But enough about all that. The part of this that matters the most in the context of our argument is that tackling this type of Trumpian notion of fakery (which never includes his own fabrications) with endless cross-checked rebuttals is to address the wrong issue. All the advice currently being offered in the marketplace of ideas on how to sort the news from the dross is never going to be foolproof. Only skepticism in the context of one’s own prior knowledge, or ‘collateral experience’ (to use a phrase of Charles Peirce)24 of the world, will ‘protect’ you from the fake, and even that is obviously far from infallible. The rhetoric (at least) of a fake news/news dichotomy, however, must be noticed as it serves to re-enforce a vision of good and bad media which comforts ‘good’ (all too often simply meaning ‘mainstream’) media. This carries a significant cost: the current focus on the dichotomy masks the news media’s deepest problems, which, as we suggest above, are located in the ideology and practice of journalism itself, rather than in the credulity of those who consume it. Trumpian attacks gain traction because journalism promises what it conspicuously fails to deliver: the more loudly it insists on its truth, the greater the threat to its credibility. Fake news flourishes not so much because of pure lying as because seeking to provide unassailable accounts capturing reality in its entirety, the impossible ideal of the news (as supposedly produced by objective journalism), proves indeed to be exactly that – impossible – and so every visible failure can seem like further evidence that the news is not to be trusted. What is most concerning, then, is not fiction shot through with fact and then labelled as journalism, but the truths, such as they are, of well-intentioned journalism appearing to be tainted, whether by lies or otherwise, while claiming a high standard of objectivity, honesty, accuracy, etc. The news’s truth can be undermined by mendacities but is, far more often, compromised by accidental errors of one kind or another. Moreover, it is inevitably also contaminated, at the very least, by incompleteness and subjectivity. As we have explained, hopefully persuasively, these ingredients can never be entirely excluded from the recipe. However hard it may strive to avoid such impurities, they are always present, meaning that journalism itself is always doomed to be impure. Noticing this cannot amount to a crisis. Nor is it valuable to postulate a straightforward dichotomy between truth and falsehood in looking for fake news’s roots. Doing this only obscures the real nature of the issue which is grounded, as it has been for half a millennium, in journalism’s essential challenges. Against that fake news may be presented as a matter of truth and lies, just as it is presented as being a recent and suddenly all-pervasive phenomenon, but, as we will endeavour to demonstrate, that’s just wrong. Naive. Foolish. Deceptive. Fake News.

#### OBJECTIVITY MAKES IT HARDER TO CORRECT FAKE NEWS, REPORTERS AVOID CALLING OUT RIGHT WING LIES IN ORDER TO APPEAR NEUTRAL

**Meyer 20** (Will Meyer (writer) 2/6/2020, The Abuses of Objectivity, New Republic) <https://newrepublic.com/article/156486/abuses-objectivity>

In January 2017, Kellyanne Conway, at that time President Trump’s press secretary, coined the term “alternative facts” on *Meet the Press.* The term was part of a broader move by President Trump and others on the right to discredit journalists, taunting them as “enemies of people” and purveyors of “fake news.” In this environment, the mainstream press doubled down on its commitments to truth-telling and objectivity. *The Washington Post* introduced the new slogan, “Democracy Dies in the Darkness.” *The* *New York Times* aired a pompous ad during the Oscars titled “The Truth is Hard.” The nonprofit ProPublica used the motto “Defend the Facts” in its fundraising. Newsrooms were defending the twentieth-century ideal of impartial journalism, leaning hard on its norms and brand. What a commitment to objectivity meant, however, was often the appearance of fairness. Neutrality meant showing two sides to every story, even in cases where one side’s arguments were much weaker than the other’s. Over the summer, *The* *New York Times* looked into conditions at a Staten Island Amazon warehouse and told the story in a way that was more than generous to management. More recently, the paper was criticized by this magazine for taking its both-sides-style reporting on impeachment so far as to take right-wing conspiracy theories at face value. “Objectivity” also meant veering away from describing figures on the right in unflattering terms—avoiding the words “lies” or “racism”—because those descriptions could be seen as evidence of left-wing bias. Above all, it meant that reporters themselves could not be seen to have any political opinions, because then they would be vulnerable to accusations of impropriety, regardless of the accuracy of what they actually wrote. Just days after the new president was sworn in, NPR’s senior vice president of News, Michael Oreskes, defended his organization’s choice not to call the president elect’s fabrications “lies.” On that same day, January 25, 2017, the popular public radio show Marketplace fired an award-winning transgender journalist, Lewis Raven Wallace, after he wrote a blog post questioning journalistic objectivity. In a follow-up post describing the firing, Wallace notes that the ethics code he was accused of having violated didn’t contain the words “objectivity” or “neutrality.” The show hadn’t received blowback for this transgression (or any of Wallace’s work), nor had he advocated for any particular political position. He merely offered skepticism about the frame, suggesting that as a trans journalist, he could not be impartial about attacks on his humanity. During his firing, *Marketplace* Vice President Deborah Clark told Wallace about leaving the anti-apartheid struggle—choosing journalism *over* activism—as a student: The subtext was that Wallace had to get in line. He didn’t, and paid the price with his job.

#### No impact to fake news.

Miró-Llinares 21 (Fernando. Fernando Miró-Llinares is a Professor of Criminal Law and Criminology, Miguel Hernandez University, CRIMINA Research Center), and Jesús C. Aguerri. "Misinformation about fake news: A systematic critical review of empirical studies on the phenomenon and its status as a ‘threat’." European Journal of Criminology (2021): 1477370821994059.

Finally, it should be noted that few studies were found that address the impact of fake news. Of the articles reviewed, only eight based their research on a specific context in such a way that it was possible to use relevant empirical material to attempt to gauge the impact of fake news within that context. With the exception of one of them – related to Brexit (Bastos and Mercea, 2019) – the remaining seven studies examine fake news in the context of the 2016 US election (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Bovet and Makse, 2019; Grinberg et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2020; Nelson and Taneja, 2018; Shao, Hui et al., 2018). These studies have taken different perspectives (see Table 2) but their results are consistent, as all found substantially small and highly concentrated diffusion and consumption of fake news among a specific profile of subjects, which significantly weakened the initial hypotheses about the relationship between fake news and Donald Trump’s victory (Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017; Silverman, 2015). Studies such as that by Guess, Nyhan and Reifler (2020) have estimated that fake news accounted for 5.9 percent of the news consumed by each user in the month prior to the elections. With regard only to Twitter, Grinberg and co-authors (2019) observed that, during the month prior to the elections, each user was exposed to fake news related to the political campaign 10 times on average, only 1.18 percent of the user’s total exposure to political news. This same research also found that 1.0 percent of their sample consumed 80.0 percent of the detected fake news. These big consumers of fake news were mainly conservative and were characterized by high consumption of all kinds of news. This conclusion regarding the profile of consumers of fake news is shared with other studies reviewed herein (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Guess et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2020; Nelson and Taneja, 2018). These findings are summarized in Table 2, and, as will be considered in greater detail in the Discussion section, none of the existing studies allows a causal relationship to be established between the results of the elections and fake news.

#### Misinformation has no impact and multiple alt causes

Benkler 20 (Yochai. Yochai Benkler is a Berkman Professor of Entrepreneurial Legal Studies at Harvard Law School and the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University), 10/23/2020, The Danger of Overstating the Impact of Information Operations, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/danger-overstating-impact-information-operations>

Let’s get one issue off the table: The evidence that there are Russian information operations aimed at the United States is overwhelming, and whatever debates there can be about the operations should be only about whether they merit the attention given to them, not whether they exist. That said, there is no publicly available evidence that establishes that these operations have made any difference worth caring about. When my co-authors and I [investigated](https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001/oso-9780190923624-chapter-8) the impact of the Russian campaign in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, we found that Russian actors didn’t meaningfully add to the impact of domestic actors. Russian operations mostly took the form of jumping on the bandwagon: disseminating a frame or story that had already been circulating in the right-wing media ecosystem, the mainstream press, or both. For example, we examined Russian Facebook posts or Twitter campaigns about voter fraud that were described in the [indictment](https://www.justice.gov/file/1035477/download) handed down against the Internet Research Agency. We found that these posts and tweets were indeed associated with significant upticks in all online mentions of “voter fraud,” but the causal direction was the opposite of what one might assume if one were seeking Russian influence. In each case, the Russian intervention came days after statements Trump made in a campaign speech or on Twitter. These comments were reported not only on Fox News and across the right-wing media ecosystem but also by major mainstream outlets. It was only after millions of Americans had been exposed to the new intervention on mass media that the Russian posts or tweets began. Occasionally we identified a campaign that we could trace explicitly to, say, [the Podesta email dump and a Sputnik reporter moonlighting](https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001/oso-9780190923624-chapter-7), or the [Guccifer 2.0-Adam Carter-Forensicator line of attack on the Russian origins of the Democratic National Committee hack](https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001/oso-9780190923624-chapter-8)—but all these paled in comparison to the impact of the sustained disinformation campaign that Breitbart, Judicial Watch and the Trump campaign waged that successfully created a vastly overblown [public perception](https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190923624.001.0001/oso-9780190923624-chapter-8) of corruption at the Clinton Foundation. Not to mention then-FBI Director James Comey’s reckless communications regarding the Clinton email investigations—particularly the last-minute announcement of reopening and then closing the investigation—which dominated the media ecosystem and drowned out other stories in the last week before the election. In our current work on the 2020 election, we similarly [found](https://cyber.harvard.edu/publication/2020/Mail-in-Voter-Fraud-Disinformation-2020) that domestic actors are causing more harm than foreign ones. The disinformation campaign that [persuaded](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/MonmouthPoll_US_081120/) half of [surveyed Republicans](https://www.journalism.org/2020/09/16/political-divides-conspiracy-theories-and-divergent-news-sources-heading-into-2020-election/?utm_source=AdaptiveMailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20-09-16%20Pathways%20Report%2022%20Political%20Divides%20and%20Conspiracy%20Theories&org=982&lvl=100&ite=7070&lea=1566432&ctr=0&par=1&trk=) and nontrivial minorities of Democrats that mail-in voting involves major election fraud is coming from President Trump and the Republican Party. Perhaps there are Russian trolls or Facebook pages pushing this or that bit of the narrative. But the disinformation battle about mail-in voting is a mass media campaign driven by political party elites. Any social media impact is a downstream consequence from that. But if Russians are in fact mounting any information operations, shouldn’t the public be vigilant and raise the alarm anyway? Even if they are not the main game in town, they are still doing something that is illegal and against which we should defend, no? The question has to be answered based on the objective of the disinformation campaign. If the objective is to get discrete false facts or frames communicated to target audiences, then yes, researchers and people in government should focus on it and there is no harm in emphasizing the threats of Russian disinformation. There have been excellent discrete studies of Russian propaganda aimed to achieve specific beliefs, such as the [campaign](https://thesyriacampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/KillingtheTruth.pdf) to besmirch the White Helmets in Syria. These studies suggest that researchers certainly need to maintain an effort to monitor and identify, contain, and counter Russian information operations. But most Russian information operations aren’t aimed at pushing concrete facts. It’s widely known that internally, in Russia itself and in its near periphery, the broad strategic thrust that Russian propaganda has focused mostly on is achieving disorientation, a state of “nothing is true and everything is possible,” as Peter Pomerantsev [put it](https://www.amazon.com/Nothing-True-Everything-Possible-Surreal/dp/1610396006) so well. It is that general disorientation, rather than a specific belief in a specific false fact or frame, that renders an opponent ungovernable. Beating the drums about disinformation campaigns aimed at this kind of disorientation is harmful, rather than helpful. If the objective of the campaign is to sow doubt and confusion, to make Americans believe that we have been infiltrated and that Russia is an all-powerful actor messing with our democracy, then overstating the importance of the campaign simply reinforces and executes the Russian plan. To appear powerful and dangerous, all Russian actors need to do is make sure they are described as powerful and dangerous by credible sources in the United States. And for now, it seems that they are succeeding in doing just that. They have made a show of mounting information operations. And although there is no publicly available evidence that these operations have had any meaningful impact on voting or other behaviors and beliefs at a mass population level, their observed efforts have triggered extensive news reporting, published research and government readiness responses. Having triggered an autoimmune response, Russian actors can sit back to enjoy seeing well-intentioned and unwitting instruments report their campaigns widely and give them much more weight than they deserve. At the end of the day, though, propaganda itself was never the true problem. Yes, the United States is in a state of information disorder. As the country’s ineffective response to the coronavirus suggests, the U.S. is becoming ungovernable. But the origins of this disorientation are not foreign. They are part of a much broader decline in trust in institutions in America, and that decline is itself the [result](https://mediawell.ssrc.org/expert-reflections/cautionary-notes-on-disinformation-benkler/) of four decades of broad-based economic insecurity and cynical manipulation of genuine pain by domestic political and media elites. The crisis of democratic societies is certainly worsened by propaganda and disinformation. That propaganda is primarily of domestic origin, harnessed and used by political opportunists. But propaganda is merely the handmaiden. The driving force of democratic malaise is a decades-long extractive political economy. Between one-quarter and one-half of Americans report some measure of significant income or savings insecurity, seeing no future for themselves and their children as they see elites escape ever more rapidly into a stratosphere of wealth and privilege. Stamping out Russian bots or even domestic propaganda can do only so much.