

Spotting Fake News

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A Non-Partisan Micro Lesson
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Introduction

- **All News is Fake News** (not your news or my news)
- There are **two silos** of news, **left** and **right**.
Almost none in the middle, and certainly none that are “not biased.”
- News is biased, **know the bias**
- **Bias in NOT an indication of fake news**
- Hat tip to Scott Adams, many of the items here are from his podcast “Coffee With Scott Adams”



Types of “Fake News”

- **Human Error** - reporter is not an expert in the topic of the article, they get stuff wrong.
 - See also “Gell-Mann Amnesia”
- **Incomplete** ideas or quotes that transmit a inaccurate or deceptive meaning
- Repeating **unverified** quotes or statements as fact
- **Mind Reading** is never valid
 - “The hypochondriac knows he’s not sick” is mind reading
- Outright **fabrications**

More Types of “Fake News”

- Reporting the **worst case** scenario as the main plan
 - e.g. a politician wants to cut fraud from Social Security, it's reported as deliberately cutting social security benefits for seniors.
- Reporting a fact **using a false notion**
 - e.g. not raising taxes keeps things the same, it does not “reduce taxes for the wealthy”
- Reporting **obviously suspicious** reports as true without vetting them
 - e.g. the Russia Collusion Hoax was based on an easily vetted fictional dossier

Gell-Mann Amnesia

- An expert in a specific field reads a news article in that same field and finds many gross errors
- That same expert reads the next news article and receives it as accurate
- Truth: Journalists have limited knowledge of many topics, their news articles are always filled with errors.
 - This is a fact when you work with humans
 - Will it be worse with AI? We'll find out soon enough

List of ways to Spot Fake News

- **Anonymous source** - always fake news
- **Deceptive edits.** Cut the comment short to **reverse its meaning.**
 - e.g. the Fine People Hoax
- The “**prison of two ideas**”
 - An issue is presented as A vs B
 - But **the truth is never A or B**, it's usually something totally different from another direction.
- The statement is **against common sense.**
 - i.e. so outlandish that it does not hold up to **the “really” test.**
 - Really? Really?! Really? no.
 - e.g. The President did not tell you to drink bleach.

Narratives

- The political information distribution complex is a distributor of narratives, and not facts. - Scott Jennings
CNN, 12/12/24, 12:16pm
- Trump was the “breaker of narratives”- Scott Jennings,
CNN
- My analysis: That “distribution complex” includes news, but is far more than the news. It includes politicians, podcasters, commentators, government organizations including intelligence orgs, prosecutors, etc.
- Some news tells “a story” not “the story”



The Fog of War



- Don't believe anything during the fog of war. (S Adams)
 - When an **incident is new** or active, there is often contradicting reports.
 - They can be a mix of right, wrong, close, misinterpreted, incomplete, out of context
- Don't believe anything **in the first 24-48** hours after a huge event. (D Bongino)
- Don't believe **anything coming out of a real war**. Both sides have self serving interests to spin the story their way.

Thoughts on Credibility

- Vet the credibility of all the news sources you use.
- Correlate the stories across different sources *watch for the “wrap up smear”*
- If FoxNews and CNN both report a story the same way, it has more credibility.
- If only one side reports a story and the other ignores it either the story is fake or the other side is pretending it's fake.
- A number without a percent, or a percent without the number is a sign of fake news
 - 50% of two million is one million and 50% of 4 is 2
 - Because the scope of the problem or the risk cannot be determined.

The Wrap Up Smear

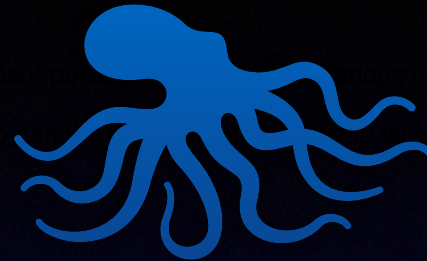
Nancy Pelosi's Technique

- A technique to “merchandise” a negative news story.
- Leak a negative story to a media news maker (like the New York Times)
- Other outlets pick up the story and publish it
- Quote one of the news outlets to “validate” the story you leaked in the first place.
- Let Nancy Pelosi explain it to you
 - Search YouTube or Rumble for “Nancy Pelosi wrap up smear”
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-V_3iF23mo

The Documentary Effect

- A Documentary has 90 minutes or more to **persuade you** of something.
- Documentary **writers are very good** at their craft
- A Documentary **would be boring** if it was not persuasive.
- Watch out for the “documentary effect”
 - Documentaries could be written to **persuade** you of one side of an issue.
 - I’m told (I didn’t confirm it) that a documentary exists that will convince you that Michael Jackson **was** a pedofile. I am told there is another documentary that will convince you he absolutely **was not** a pedofile.

A Technique: The Kraken



- “The Kraken” is a maneuver where an intelligence agent or other adversary tells a prominent person that there is a **nefarious root cause** of a problem. And it is **about to be revealed**. The root cause is outlandish and false with the **intent of making someone look silly** and ruining their reputation.
- Example #1: the 2020 kraken indicating “proof” of election fraud. It was a false story to ruin the lawyer’s reputation. This is where the term originated
- Example #2: Iranian mothership launching drones over New Jersey in December of 2024. There were indeed drones over NJ, but the mothership story sounds like a ploy to make the congressman look dumb.

The Trump Caricature

- The left bias news paints a picture of Trump that is not accurate.
- It describes a caricature of Trump, not the actual person.
 - Trump is not a racist, he is no threat to democracy, he's nowhere near a "Hitler" figure. He is not dumb. He is a superb diplomat. He is a great communicator. He does not lie like the New York Times wants you to believe.
- Tyrus said "Trump had a lot more minorities vote for him in 2024 compared to past republicans simply because they listened to the candidate."
 - Compare that to listening to the fake news caricature of Trump.
- Who else is portrayed as a caricature? (AOC and others)

Additional thoughts and topics

- A **fun hobby**: enjoy spotting fake news in your favorite and most trusted news sources.
- A **last minute** evil story drop is a likely indicator of fake news. (Friday evening, Holidays, election eve)
 - e.g. Kavanaugh, Hegseth
- **Malicious Compliance**: When someone pretends to obey a rule but they are really trying to subvert it.

Carefully Chosen Words

- **Carefully chosen words** are a sign of fake news
 - “ No undercover FBI agents in the capitol on Jan 6”
 - Yet **we know** from official FBI statements that several Confidential Informants were indeed inside the restricted zone and inside the capitol.
- Choose a word that **excludes important aspects**.
 - **Agents vs Assets**
- **Look for carefully chosen or overly specific words**



Too “On the Nose”

- If a story is “too on the nose” then it’s probably fake news.
- A report that makes a claim that sounds perfectly **credible to activists** on one side
- i.e. a report that political activist does exactly what their adversary would expect them to do.

Models can be Fake News

- Models are fake news most of the time
- Have a conversation about models with any engineer to verify this slide
- In a nutshell, models can simulate small or limited things with great precision.
- The bigger the system, the less accurate. Very large systems cannot be modeled accurately at all. It would likely get direction right-ish, but not magnitude.
- Example, weather forecasts
 - Tomorrow's weather forecast is near perfect
 - three day forecast is pretty good and 10 day forecast is close, but often adjusted
 - 1 year out is the Farmer's Almanac, eerily close-looking but not accurate.
- Models are only as good as the weighting assumptions in the algorithm.

Conclusion

- There is Fake News all around
- It takes many forms
- It can be easy or hard to find
- Develop the **skills needed** to recognize and interpret Fake News