

# Outline

## Biased Media is a Real Threat to Democracy

### 1) Introduction

#### 1.1) Thesis statement: Democracies

around the globe remain threatened by the increasing biasness of media networks.

as it impacts the political and the social fabric of society. The advent of AI further enlargens the problem.

#### 1.2) Summary of answer

### 2) Understanding Media Bias

#### 2.1) Meaning & and types of media bias

- a) Narrative building
- b) Framing and priming
- c) Misinformation
- d) Use of screentime



2.2) The elite serving nature of media bias

a) Follow the money →

Bezos and Washington

Post, Peter Thiel, Murdoch

and Fox News.

3) Threat to Democracy Through Politics

3.1) Manufactured consent

3.2) Increased polarisation

3.3) Leads to interference

in the political process

4) Threats to Democracy Economically

4.1) Tends to Champion Elite -

favouring Causes

\*) Example: WP's bias

against VP Kamala Harris's

campaign ~~due to~~

4.2) Leads to involvement of

Big Business in Politics

Example: Big Oil lobby

in the US and Europe.



## 5) Threats to Democracy Socially

5.1) Increases Divisiveness

5.2) Leads to Scapegoating of Minorities

Example: UK Race Riots 2024

Brexit and Racism

5.3) Sows Distrust for the Media

## 6) Future Outlook for Media Bias and Democracy

6.1) Advent of AI

a) Lowered cost of producing misinformation

b) Deep fakes and bots

6.2) Difficult to Separate Reality from Propaganda

a) Russian meme farms in

2016 US elections

~~bt~~

6.3) Role of Social Media

a) Networks have social media accounts

b) Echo chambers

c) Engagement farming

d) Social media influencers and

Political parties

2) conclusion



# ESSAY

## Biased Media is a Real Threat to Democracy

Since the 2016 US election, the conversation of media bias has increasingly come to forefront. The extent of the bias could be evidenced from how even non-American citizens could tell you that Fox News favoured Trump and CNN was for the democrats. This blatant impartiality of the media threatens democracy not only through the political sphere but also the social and economic parts. It breeds polarisation, divisiveness and distrust for the media while manufacturing consent for candidates and serving elite interests. With the



advent of AI, the situation is only going to get worse as misinformation becomes easier to spread, coupled with already present issues of echo chambers and political collusion.

~~To first~~ Before delving into its impacts, it is important to understand the types of media bias. The media tends to create a narrative, which is communicated to audience by picking and choosing what to report, how long to report it and who to cast as the villain or hero. The narratives ~~suggest~~ implicitly suggest to the audience of which side to support and which to protest.

Similarly, framing is another technique where the ~~the~~ story is framed under a context which encourages a certain interpretation.



**Priming** on the other hand prepares the audience to interpret a story a certain way before they ~~even read~~ are even exposed to it by using titles, pictures or sound effects in the case of TV.

**Misinformation** is another common practice where an event or story is reported on using incorrect information, incomplete truths or without proper context.

The easiest method is by utilising **screen time**. The more times a story is shown in the **media cycle**, the more likely it is to stay in the audience's mind.

All these techniques are often employed to protect elite serving interests. The claim is evidenced by how billionaires are investing



in the media industry such as Jeff Bezos buying the Wall Street Journal, Peter Thiel and the Murdochs with Fox News, Elon Musk with Twitter / X.

The impact of this bias in the political arena was explained by political scientist and linguist Noam Chomsky as "Manufactured Consent." The concept explains how seemingly free and independent elections are cleverly manipulated by the use of media. The general populace may even be taught to find certain changes acceptable, thereby manufacturing their consent for political decisions which they believe they are ~~waking~~ consenting to freely.

Moreover, since bias means choosing over the other, increased



media bias leads to greater political polarisation. ~~with~~ The partisanship increases and the opportunities for bipartisan collaboration fall.

As soon the independent political process falls victim to interference from non-democratic forces such as private companies or even foreign governments as discovered with the Russian collusion in 2016 US elections and Brexit.

The impacts of media bias extend to the economic sphere as well. The media is often paid to create certain biases, therefore the biases naturally tend to favour the wealthy elite which can afford this sabotage. The most recent example comes from Washington



Post's reporting on Kamala Harris's election campaign. The reporting has generally observed a negative tilt towards Harris's policies which promise increased taxes on the rich.

The economic benefits to be accrued from media sabotage leads to involvement of **Big Business**. Big mega corporations pay millions to bury certain stories and air others. The most glaring example is the **Big Oil Lobby** which influences the reporting on environmental issues to rally voters to vote against environmental policies. Similar ~~issues~~ debates on taxes, subsidies and imports lead to the involvement of corporations in creating media biases.



The social ~~etc~~ fabric is too impacted by media impartiality and has wide reaching implications for the democratic process.

The rising divisiveness among social groups is inflamed by manufactured media biased which impact voting outcomes.

For example, a recent divergence has been observed in the political views of Gen Z males and females, with the former leaning more to the right. This branching has been claimed to be fueled by right-leaning media networks which are funded by the right-leaning parties to secure their voting base.

Another regrettable impact of media bias is the scapegoating of minorities for political causes. Political elements generate



narratives in the media to blame minorities for political failings such as unemployment, rising crime and ~~immigration~~ ineffective policing. The recent UK race riots come at a time when the UK is facing a cost of living crisis and rising crime. The riots were emboldened by right-leaning news channels such as Sky News. A similar pattern was repeated in 2016 with Brexit and rising racism against Eastern Europeans at a time when the UK grappled with inflation. The voting outcomes are impacted by such scapegoating, leading to demonstrable impacts on elections.

Perhaps the most troubling result of media bias is the growing mistrust against the media. Such views have a hugely negative impact on democracy, which relies



citizens to trust social institutions

As ~~more~~ the distrust grows, people seek out other avenues for news or lose interest entirely. Therefore, the distrust bred by media biases leads to fewer individuals participating in democracy as a whole.

The outlook of the issue of an impartial media seems troubling.

The rise of ~~consumer~~ accessible AI products has dramatically reduced cost of generating misinformation and made it even easier to spread. AI chatbots can create an endless stream of news articles, tweets, videos and images that can be used to spread certain narratives.

Similarly, with AI image generators, deep fakes can be



generated with ease. Deep fakes of political figures can ~~vastly~~ significantly impact voting outcomes. A troubling example comes from the New Hampshire democratic primary, where voters received a deepfake video of Biden telling them not to vote.

Moreover ~~the~~ deepfakes can be used to run smear campaigns against opponents or to generate favourable images of oneself.

**Bots** play a similar role on social media, ~~with~~ acting as fake supporters to generate popularity. Thus deepfakes and bots can reliably impact political outcomes, threatening democracy.

Similarly, the ~~quality~~ increased capabilities of AI to mimic human speech, faces and pattern of speech make it difficult



to separate reality from artificial reality. ~~The~~ In the aftermath of the 2016 US election, the involvement of Russian meme farms was revealed. The memes would appear to innocuous and human-made but were really a coordinated effort to subliminally affect political views. Therefore, the line between real and fake is blurring, making it difficult to tell what is a true expression of political beliefs and what is a subliminal effort at sabotage.

The biases of the media external to social media and have significant impact on political views. Firstly, media networks have their own accounts, where their retweets and likes are perceived as endorsements;



The same extends to journalists. Therefore support for certain ideas or accounts may have an impact on political perceptions.

The other common impact is through the creation of echo chambers, which increase polarisation. Individuals are only exposed to a certain perspective, leading to them solidifying their beliefs and losing tolerance for other ideas. Therefore, echo chambers reduce the democratic spirit in general.

Another scourge of engagement farming has plagued social media. Accounts post content that is generated to increase engagement usually by being controversial or contrarian. The increased engagement leads to increased visibility due to the algorithms.



thereby creating an artificial popularity. If more people think a certain viewpoint is more popular, it may impact their voting choices.

Finally, recent times show increased collaboration between political elements and social media influencers. Political parties align with social media influencers to propagate their viewpoints and bias online discussions. Notable example from the US has been Alex Jones, former journalist and podcast host, and his influence in creating right-wing spaces online. Such collusion leads to impacts on the audience of the influencer, often attracting more followers, and spreading certain political narratives.

In conclusion, democracies around



globe remain threatened by the increasing bigness of the media networks. due to its impacts on the political, social and economic spheres of society. With the advent of AI, social media influencers, and improved technology, the problem is further compounded.