



Pekka Kallioniemi @P_Kallioniemi

Mar 26, 2025 · 26 tweets · [P_Kallioniemi/status/1904869965192114526](#)

In today's Vatnik Soup, I'll talk about the takeover of social media by illiberal, populist influencers. For the last ten years, social media has been dominated by these voices and it is one of the main reasons for the political rise of people like Trump and Orban.

1/25



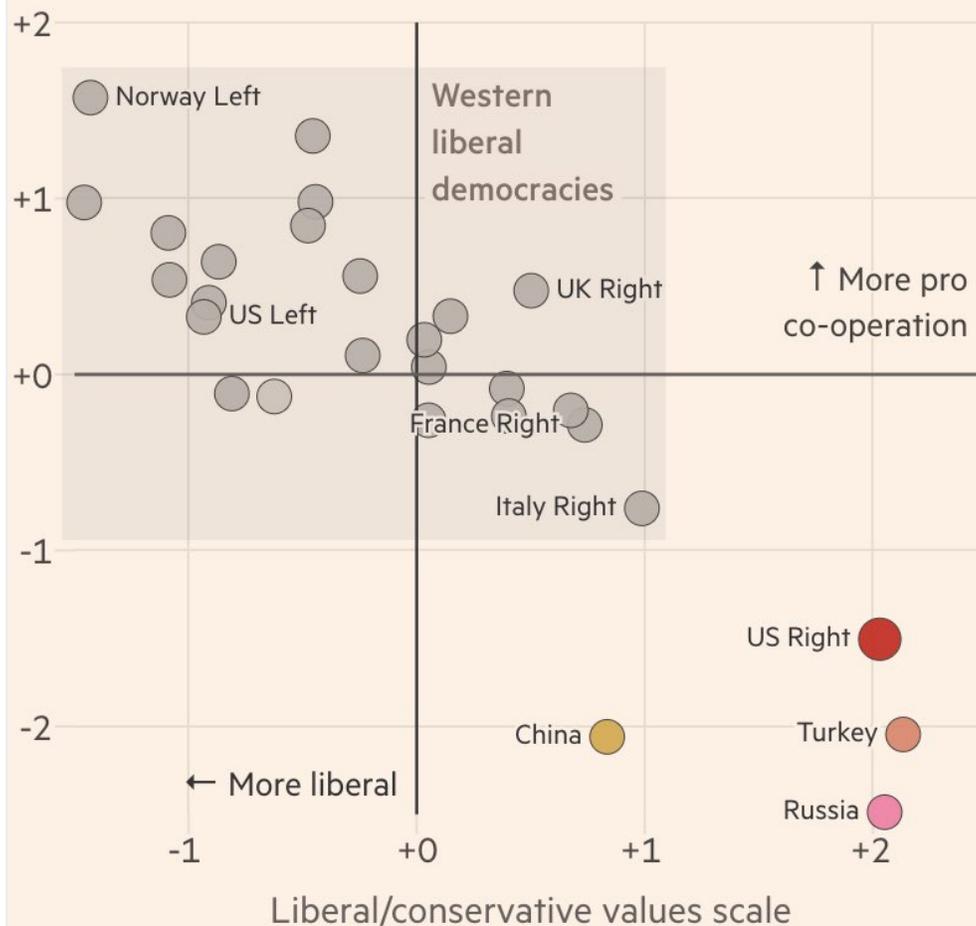
“Illiberal populists” like Trump reject democratic norms while claiming to speak for “the people.” They centralize power, attack institutions, and push nationalism over rights. Elections exist, but checks & balances erode. This is democracy in name, autocracy in action.

2/25

The US right is now closer to Russia than the west in many of its values

Liberal values and attitudes to international co-operation among countries' political movements

International co-operation scale



Source: FT analysis of World Values Survey

FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch

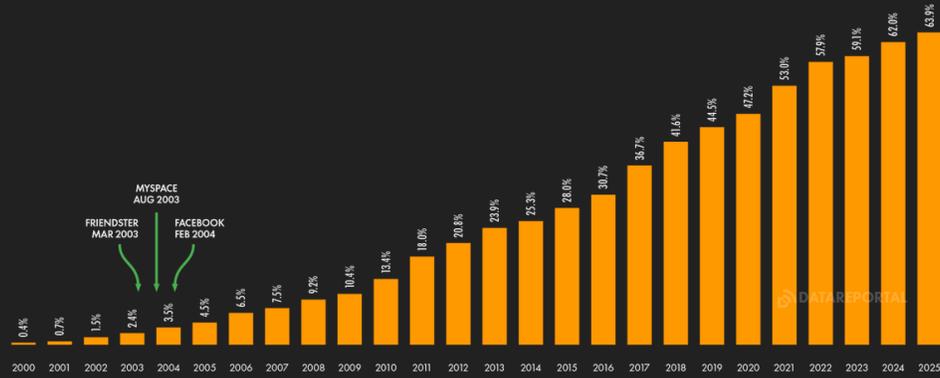
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The media landscape has changed drastically over the past two decades. The Internet and social media have changed how we interact online & how we consume media, but it has also become our main source of news. In many ways, social media companies have control over information.

FEB 2025

SOCIAL MEDIA TIMELINE: ADOPTION

NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA USER IDENTITIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL GLOBAL POPULATION



346

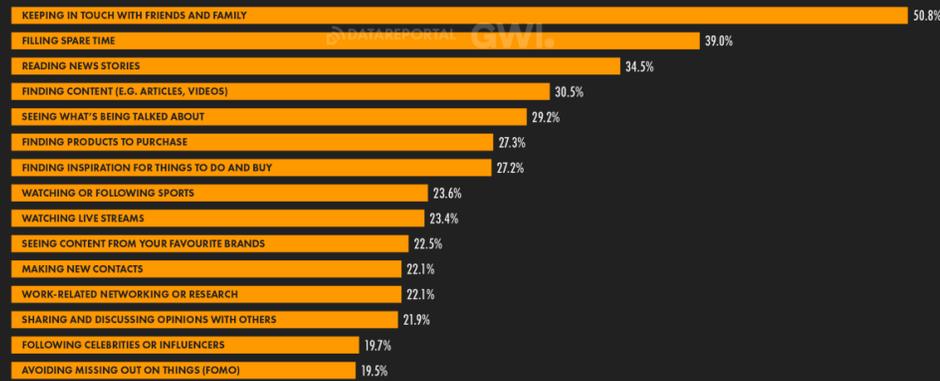
SOURCES: KEPIC'S ANALYSIS; COMPANY ADVERTISING RESOURCES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS; CNNIC; BETA RESEARCH CENTER; MEDIASCOPE; OCDF; ARAB SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT; TECHRAA; CAPEBAZAR.
NOTES: BASED ON ACTIVE USER FIGURES FOR THE LARGEST SOCIAL NETWORK OR INSTANT MESSAGING SERVICE BY GEOGRAPHY AT THE START OF EACH YEAR. **ADVISORY:** SOCIAL MEDIA USER IDENTITIES MAY NOT REPRESENT UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS, SO VALUES DO NOT REPRESENT SOCIAL MEDIA PENETRATION. **COMPARABILITY:** SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY CHANGES BASE KEYWORDS. SEE NOTES ON DATA.



FEB 2025

MAIN REASONS FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

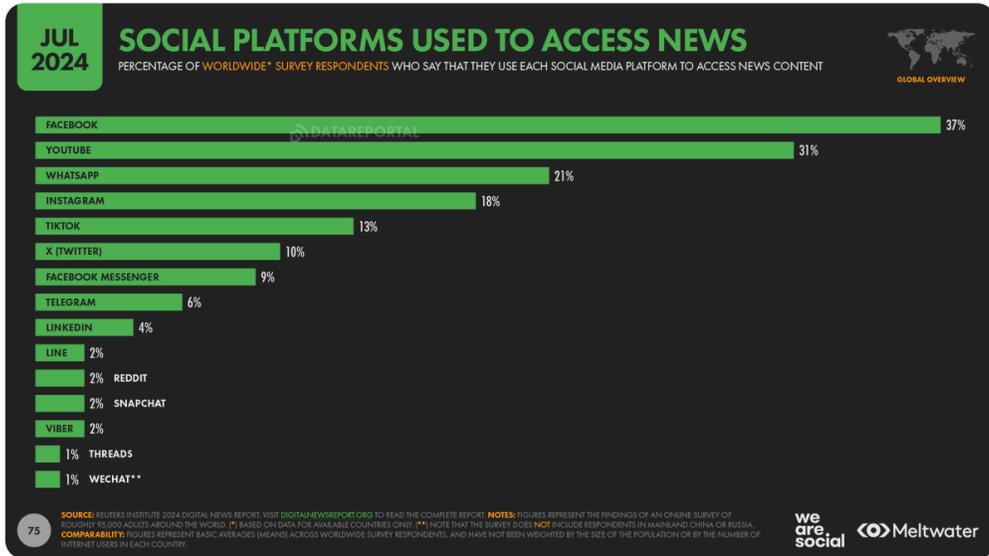
PRIMARY REASONS WHY SOCIAL MEDIA USERS AGED 16+ USE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



362

SOURCE: GWI (Q1 2024). **NOTE:** FIGURES REPRESENT THE SHARE OF INTERNET USERS AGED 16+ WHO REPORT USING AT LEAST ONE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM OR MESSENGER SERVICE IN THE PAST MONTH. **COMPARABILITY:** CHANGES IN AUDIENCE COMPOSITION AND SURVEY METHODOLOGY. SEE NOTES ON DATA.





In the early days, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube gave diverse voices a chance to challenge mainstream narratives. But all of these companies had a problem – how to make money with all this? In the beginning, most of these companies were bleeding money.

4/25



Videos

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Most Viewed Today | [This Week](#) | [This Month](#) | All Time Videos 1-20 of 100

 Evolution of Dance 06:00 Added: 3 months ago From: judsonlaiply Views: 27,783,328 ★★★★★ 31035 ratings	 Pokemon Theme Music Video 03:14 Added: 7 months ago From: smosh Views: 13,536,776 ★★★★★ 39370 ratings	 Real Life Simpsons Intro 00:59 Added: 4 months ago From: TexMachina Views: 8,102,305 ★★★★★ 12472 ratings	 Myspace - THE MOVIE! 11:16 Added: 5 months ago From: gogtea Views: 6,824,675 ★★★★★ 10569 ratings	 Hey clip 03:25 Added: 10 months ago From: tasha Views: 6,725,421 ★★★★★ 21615 ratings
 comic soccer 03:25 Added: 4 months ago From: hviek61 Views: 6,424,715 ★★★★★ 5807 ratings	 guitar 05:20 Added: 6 months ago From: guitar90 Views: 6,156,392 ★★★★★ 46546 ratings	 Urban Ninja 03:05 Added: 10 months ago From: mrWoot Views: 6,152,568 ★★★★★ 22807 ratings	 lion sleep tonight 01:03 Added: 6 months ago From: p4v3ouriz Views: 6,078,744 ★★★★★ 4534 ratings	 MARK LEUNG'S CRAZY COMPUTER BUG 00:11 Added: 5 months ago From: markeung Views: 6,070,304 ★★★★★ 9596 ratings

A global community of friends and strangers answering one simple question: **What are you doing?**

What are you doing?

Thinking about sending my little sister something

Update

Once you join, the first thing you'll want to do is type your first ever Twitter update.

No pressure, just put something simple.

1 2 3 

Recent Public Updates

- 
TC DM: "The Things You Said" - perfect walking beat pace [less than 10 seconds ago](#) from im
- 
Phil Gyford Off for dinner (roasted vegetables) while watching "How Music Works with Howard Goodall". [less than 10 seconds ago](#) from im
- 
SarahM Tony and I just had A Moment in Trader Joe's [half a minute ago](#) from mobile

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Password [Forgot?](#)

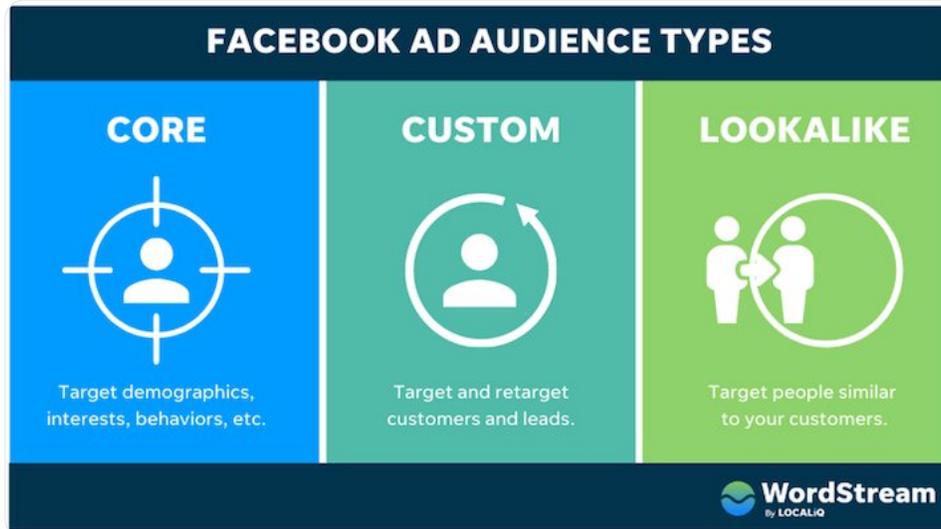
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The solution for this was of course targeted ads. Once platforms like Facebook had enough information about us, they could make sophisticated guesses about what type of products or services we'd enjoy, and offered us ads based on that information. But for this to work,...

5/25



Facebook agrees to halt targeted ads for UK user after legal challenge

Meta has agreed to stop targeting adverts at an individual Facebook user after she filed a lawsuit against the tech giant.



By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

26 Mar 2025



Source: www.unsplash.com

The Costs of Targeted Advertising on Children and Mental Health

A high school senior implores policymakers to emphasize the safety of children as social media evolves

by Arun Cacodcar

November 4, 2024



...the platform needed two things: 1) data that we shared, and 2) people spending more time on their platforms. The data part was easy, as people were more than happy to share information about their lives. For the latter, you needed something called recommendation algorithm.

6/25

The Cambridge Analytica Files
Cambridge Analytica

This article is more than 7 years old

Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach

Whistleblower describes how firm linked to former Trump adviser Steve Bannon compiled user data to target American voters

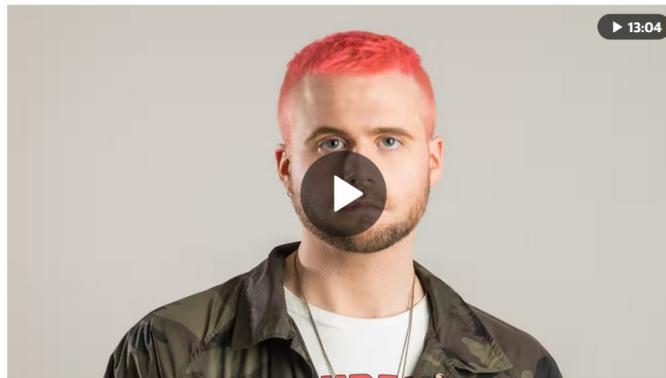
- ['I made Steve Bannon's psychological warfare tool': meet the data war whistleblower](#)
- [Mark Zuckerberg breaks silence on Cambridge Analytica](#)

Carole Cadwalladr and Emma Graham-Harrison

Sat 17 Mar 2018 23.03 CET

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484



Cambridge Analytica whistleblower: 'We spent \$1m harvesting millions of Facebook profiles' - video

ELON MUSK FOUGHT GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE — WHILE PROFITING OFF GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE

Musk made hay of his legal battle against secret surveillance but continued selling X user data to a company that facilitates government monitoring.



Sam Biddle

March 25 2024, 12:16 p.m.

Share

Today's recommendation algorithms prioritize engagement over safety. They analyze what you like, share, and comment on to predict what will keep you scrolling. This creates a feedback loop that reinforces your biases, shaping your experience without you realizing it.

7/25

MIT
Technology
Review

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SILICON VALLEY

The Facebook whistleblower says its algorithms are dangerous. Here's why.

Frances Haugen's testimony at the Senate hearing today raised serious questions about how Facebook's algorithms work—and echoes many findings from our previous investigation.

By Karen Hao

October 5, 2021

CULTURE, HEALTHCARE, LAW, REGULATION

New report urges legislation to address addictive social media algorithms harming children



BRIANNA KRAEMER

MARCH 7, 2025



Social media on cell phone (Source: Pexels)

For conspiracy theorists and anti-establishment thinkers, these algorithms were like horse tranquilizer to big tech billionaires, and it got them HOOKED. Russia was the first actor to realize this and used it large-scale to affect people's worldviews in the West.

TECH

YouTube radicalized the Christchurch shooter, New Zealand report concludes

PUBLISHED TUE, DEC 8 2020-6:23 AM EST

Sam Sheard
@SAM_L_SHEARD

SHARE f X in

KEY POINTS

- The Australian terrorist who killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch was radicalized by YouTube, according to a report from The New Zealand Royal Commission.
- New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she plans to talk to YouTube's leaders about the platform's role in the mass murder.
- YouTube has been linked to radicalization and white supremacist content before and the Alphabet-owned company has been accused of using algorithms that push viewers toward more polarized content as they use the platform.

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NOW

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TRENDING NOW



Crossbow killer Kyle Clifford watched Andrew Tate videos before rape and murder spree

MURDER | CRIME AND COURTS | WOMEN'S RIGHTS | Thursday 6 March 2025 at 6:34pm



Kyle Clifford watched Andrew Tate videos 24 hours before his killing spree, courts heard.
Credit: PA/AP News

Wednesday, March 26, 2025
11:24 am (Paris)

Le Monde

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LES DÉCODEURS • ONE YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE

NEWS ANALYSIS
William Audureau

Why conspiracy theorists and the Kremlin echo each other's disinformation

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Western conspiracy theorists and the Kremlin have each spread similar disinformation online.

Published on March 2, 2023, at 8:00 pm (Paris), updated on March 2, 2023, at 9:12 pm | 4 min read
[Lire en français](#)

But other influencers like Kim Dotcom, Russell Brand, and Ozempic-Alex (Jones) soon followed, as they realized that they could amass large online audiences by spreading bullshit. And over time, other illiberal content creators mastered engagement, using outrage,...



Kim Dotcom 
@KimDotcom



Russia claims that US Democrats used Ukraine bio lab profits to fund political campaigns and that they partnered with Big Pharma (Pfizer, Moderna, Merck), George Soros and Bill Gates to set up biological research in Ukraine. Is this a James Bond movie now? rt.com/russia/555328-...

12:17 PM · May 12, 2022



511 Retweets 58 Quotes 1,369 Likes 78 Bookmarks



Tweet your reply

Reply



Kim Dotcom  @KimDotcom · May 12, 2022



Are there still investigative journalists who want to dive into this? I don't know if any of this is true but the Hunter Biden laptop was full of Ukraine bio lab presentations and documents. What the hell is going on? In my mind this raises questions about the origin of Covid-19.



88



245



1,112



Kim Dotcom  @KimDotcom · May 12, 2022



I know all sides are engaging in propaganda. But this claim is such a bold allegation from Russia. Totally embarrassing if unfounded. Pfizer made \$100 billion in the last 12 months, mostly vaccine sales. Democrats are into Big Pharma and bio labs and Covid was just a coincidence?



47

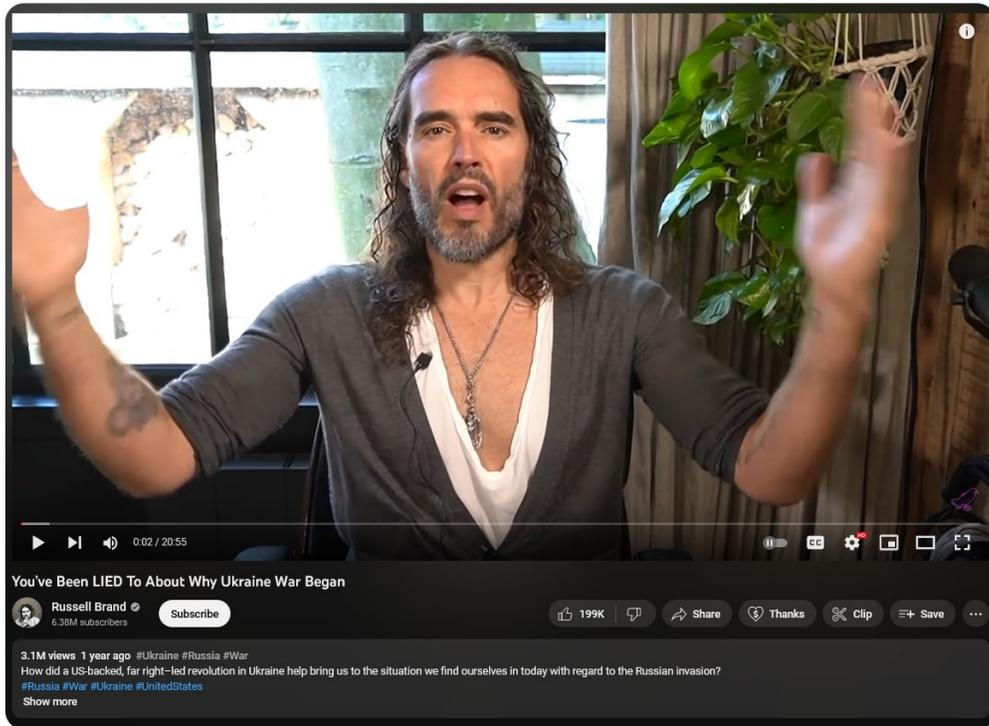


117



629





...sensationalism, and algorithm manipulation to dominate social media feeds. Joe Rogan became the world's biggest podcaster by fueling conspiracy theories and outrage, and his political shift to the right was evident to some of us years ago.



Got a Tip?

Newsletters

U.S. Edition ▾

VARIETY

Home > Digital > News

Dec 4, 2024 5:00am PT

Joe Rogan Again Had the No. 1 Podcast on Spotify for 2024

Streamer says more than one-third of top 50 podcasts in U.S. are now available as video episodes

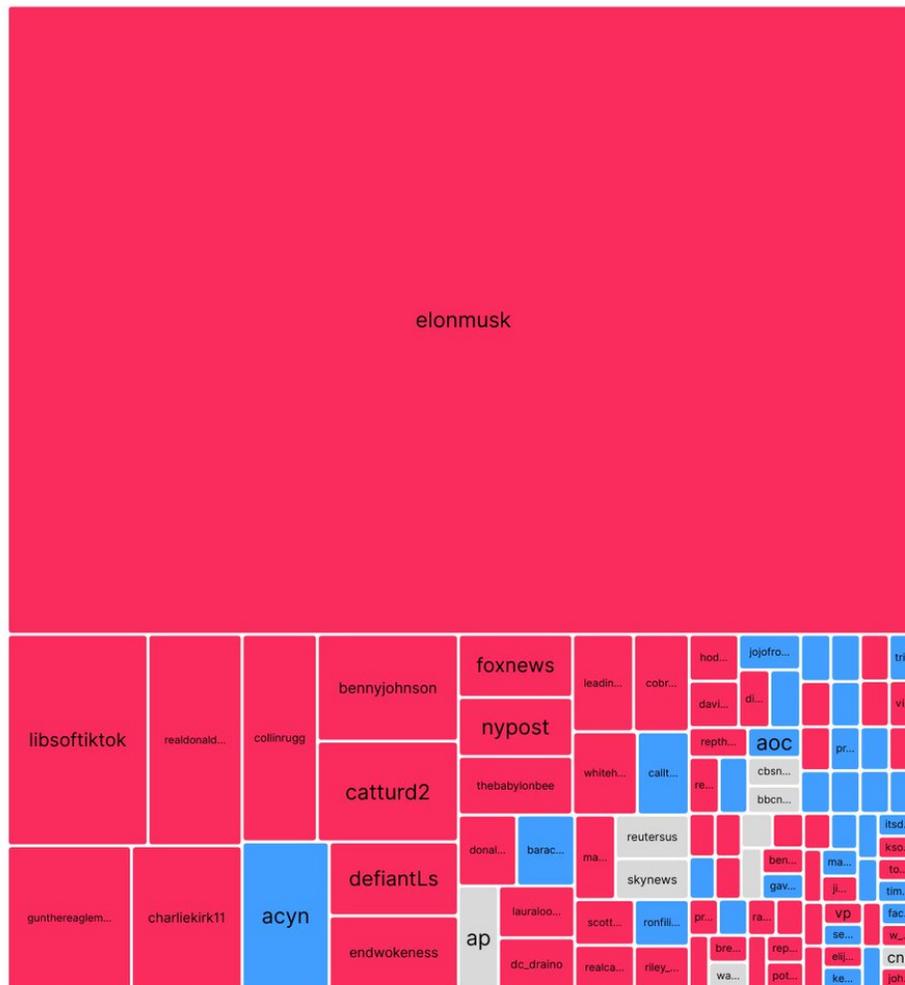
By Todd Spangler ▾



The Joe Rogan Experience/Spotify

Here on X/Twitter, illiberal and populist accounts dominate the engagement when it comes to politics and news. Elon by far has the biggest reach, followed by accounts like @libsoftiktok, @endwokeness and Kremlin-paid pro-Trump propagandist @bennyjohnson.

100 Top Political X Accounts by Total Post Views, YTD 2025



Source: CAP Action. Data Shows Total Post Views for 100 Major News & Politics Accounts from 1/1-3/20/2025

The podcast world is also absolutely dominated by the illiberal creators. The images below illustrate this shift: influencers like Joe Rogan, Charlie Kirk and Russell Brand have massive audiences, while liberal figures have comparatively smaller followings.



Matt Wallace ✓
@MattWallace888

Subscribe

This Rothschild Temple in the middle of the Arizona desert is one of the 9 pillars. VERY DISTURBING THINGS HAPPEN IN THE CAVERNS UNDERNEATH IT ⚠️ Should I risk getting banned and release EVERYTHING?



 Readers added context they thought people might want to know

This is "Centre of the World in Felicity" and its open to all tourists who wants to look inside it. It costs \$3 for entry into the pyramid where the official center of the world spot is. It is not owned by Rothschild or malicious in any way.
californiathroughmylens.com/center-of-the-...

Do you find this helpful?

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Context is written by people who use X, and appears when rated helpful by others. [Find out more.](#)

6:19 PM · Aug 1, 2023 · 5.2M Views



6,449 Reposts 390 Quotes 33.4K Likes 1,671 Bookmarks



David Sacks @David... · 20 May ⋮
Where is Zaluzhny?

887 128 436 1M



Ian Miles Cheong @stillgray ⋮

Replying to @DavidSacks

He's dead.

3:40 · 20 May 23 · 58.7K Views

2 Retweets 21 Quotes 53 Likes



Conservative Cam @TheC... · 20 May ⋮
Replying to @stillgray and @DavidSacks
Who?

4 1 4,472



Ian Miles Cheong @st... · 20 May ⋮
Commander in chief of the AFU.

7 3 4,298



At the same time, long-form investigative journalism has moved behind paywalls, making it less accessible and in today's economy, it's almost a luxury. Meanwhile, clickbait, short-form videos, and algorithm-driven outrage dominate the public's attention.

What's the American Base on Greenland? Here's What to Know.

Since World War II, American forces have been stationed on the island. Today, from a remote outpost, they watch the skies.

▶ Listen to this article · 5:37 min [Learn more](#)

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Like Trump, many illiberal influencers also challenged the idea of truth, and especially fact-checking. Again, their content prioritized emotions over factuality, and today the truth doesn't even matter anymore as long as the information reinforces one's worldview.

AP WORLD U.S. POLITICS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS SCIENCE FACT CHECK ODDITIES BE WELL NEWSLETTERS

Jasmine Crockett Trump's elections order Napster Stefon Diggs World Cup 2026 AP SETS T SUPPORT

POLITICS

Meta eliminates fact-checking in latest bow to Trump

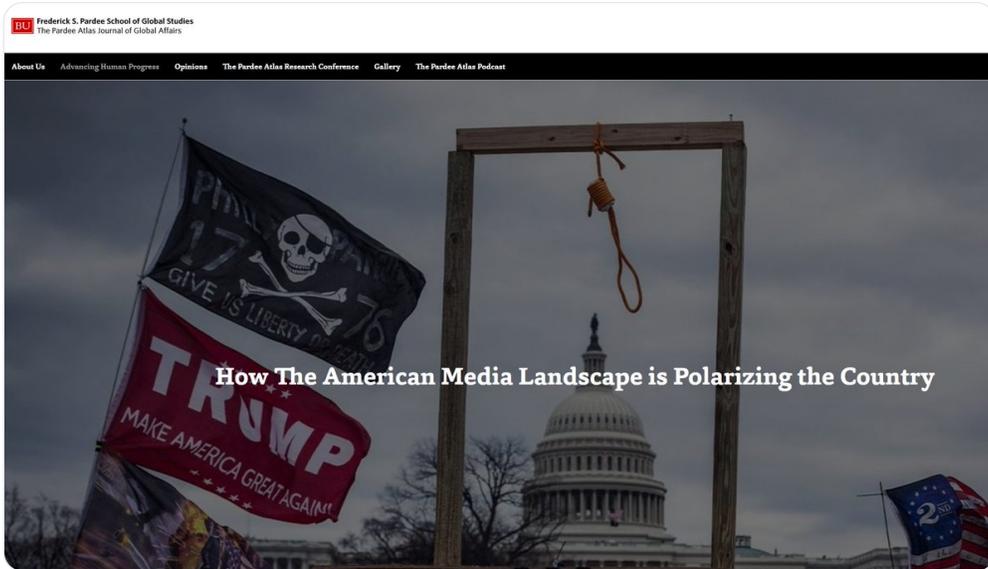


1 of 6 | The company said it had decided to end the program because expert fact checkers had their own biases and too much content ended up being fact checked. Instead, it will pivot to a Community Notes model that uses crowdsourced fact-checking contributions from users. The AP Read More

BY [KELVIN CHAN](#), [BARBARA ORTUTAY](#) AND [NICHOLAS RICCARDI](#)
Updated 2:57 AM GMT+2, January 8, 2025

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In the US, media polarization has reached extreme levels, with entire segments of the population inhabiting completely different informational realities. Illiberal, pro-Trump media ecosystems frame mainstream institutions as corrupt, fostering deep distrust in journalism.



/ CITY JOURNAL

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The New York Times Magazine
Andrey Mir
How the Media Polarized Us
The shift from ad revenue to the pursuit of digital subscriptions has turned journalism into post-journalism.

/ From the Magazine / The Social Order Summer 2022 / Share

Public trust in the media has hit an all-time low. Common explanations for this crisis of credibility include bias, polarization, and fake news, but these causes are themselves effects of the tectonic, and generally overlooked, shift in the media's business model. Throughout the twentieth century, journalism relied for its funding predominantly on advertising. In the early 2010s, as ad money fled the industry, publications sought to earn revenue through subscriptions instead of advertising. In the process, they became dependent on digital audiences—especially their most vocal representatives. The shift from advertising to digital subscriptions invalidated old standards of journalism and led to the emergence of [post-journalism](#).

And Trump played a massive role in this shift. Starting already in 2015-2016, he attacked traditional media by labeling them “fake news,” undermining trust in reputable journalism. This narrative became a core part of his political identity.

Trump's false or misleading claims total 30,573 over 4 years

Analysis by [Glenn Kessler](#), [Salvador Rizzo](#) and [Meg Kelly](#)
January 24, 2021 at 3:00 a.m. EST



The Fact Checker counted a total of 30,573 false or misleading claims made by President Trump during his White House tenure. Here's what we learned. (Video: Adriana Usero/The Washington Post)

By relentlessly attacking outlets like CNN, The New York Times, and The Washington Post, Trump primed his supporters to reject any reporting critical of him. Instead, they turned to illiberal media and influencers for “real” news.

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Trump gets \$15m in ABC News defamation case



Robin Levinson-King

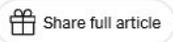
BBC News

14 December 2024

Updated 15 December 2024

Inside Disney's Decision to Settle a Trump Defamation Suit

Talks started and finished on the same day, after Disney decided that fighting the lawsuit could potentially hurt the company and protections for the press.

 Listen to this article · 6:38 min [Learn more](#)  Share full article    327



Lorenzo Bevilaqua/ABC



By Brooks Barnes
Reporting from Los Angeles

Dec. 18, 2024

Fast forward to today, and Trump isn't just calling the media "fake" — he's openly demanding the shutdown of outlets like CNN and MSNBC. What started as delegitimization has escalated into calls for outright censorship. So much for freedom of speech.



This trend isn't just in the US. Populist movements worldwide – from Putin's Russia to Modi's India and Orbán's Hungary – have leveraged social media's engagement-driven algorithms to amplify their messages and solidify their power.

Revealed: Meta approved political ads in India that incited violence

Exclusive: Ads containing AI-manipulated images were submitted to Facebook by civil and corporate accountability groups

Hannah Ellis-Petersen in Delhi

Mon 20 May 2024 12:00 CEST

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India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, with the Facebook chief, Mark Zuckerberg. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

The Facebook and Instagram owner Meta approved a series of AI-manipulated political adverts during India's election that spread disinformation and incited religious violence, according to a report shared exclusively with the Guardian.

SPECIAL SERIES

Untangling Disinformation

How Russian operatives covertly hired U.S. influencers to create viral videos

SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 · 12:01 AM ET

HEARD ON MORNING EDITION

By Shannon Bond, Jude Joffe-Block, Caitlin Thompson



3-Minute Listen

+ PLAYLIST

TRANSCRIPT



Political commentator and YouTuber Benny Johnson (left) speaks with Eric Trump, a son of former President Donald Trump, during the 2024 Republican National Convention in Milwaukee. Johnson made videos for Tenet Media. The Justice Department accused a company matching Tenet's description of working closely with employees of Russian state broadcaster RT to covertly spread pro-Russian narratives in the United States. Johnson says he was not aware of Tenet's ties to Russia.

Daniel Slim/AFP via Getty Images

At the same time, the owners of major social media platforms are shifting policies to favor illiberal narratives. Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Jeff Bezos are shaping their platforms to align more with illiberal media and political interests.



Since Trump's return to power, Musk has openly engaged with far-right figures on X, reinstated banned extremists, and reduced moderation efforts. Zuckerberg's Meta has also adjusted its algorithms, favoring viral political content that often leans right.



By —
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Press

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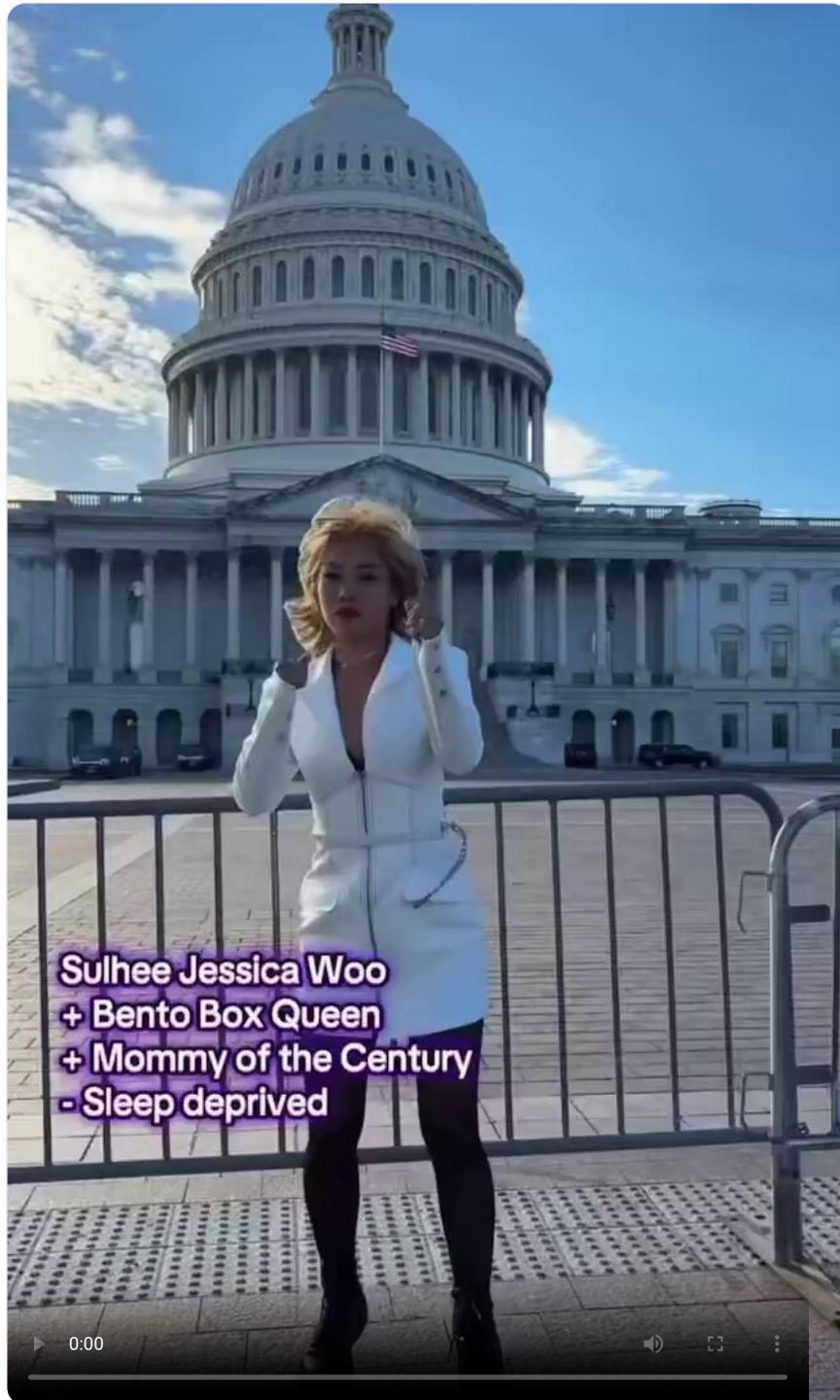
Elon Musk restores conspiracy theorist Alex Jones' X account, reversing Twitter's ban

Nation Dec 10, 2023 12:02 PM EDT

This consolidation of power – where billionaire tech moguls control the flow of information – raises serious concerns about the future of democracy and journalism in the digital age. Especially when these billionaires align strongly with authoritarian leaders like Trump.



And what about liberal creators? Outside of TikTok, where influencers like Luigi Mangione are praised and Gal Gadot is demonized, few stand out. In the US, the Democrats have totally lost the connection to their voter base and don't even have a real message anymore.



To conclude, illiberal and populist political forces saw the power of social media a long time ago, whereas the liberals relied too much on the status quo, which led to a total media takeover by the former.

And today, we are seeing the results of this.

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Wat

Markets →			Fear & Greed Index →	Latest Market News →
DOW	42,587.50	0.01% ▲		Wall Street bonuses hit record high
S&P 500	5,776.65	0.16% ▲		Vietnam approves Elon Musk's Starlink
NASDAQ	18,271.86	0.46% ▲		Tesla's No.1 rival is practically taunting

Twitter confirms completion of Elon Musk's \$44 billion acquisition deal

By Clare Duffy and Donie O'Sullivan, CNN
 4 minute read · Updated 1:16 PM EDT, Fri October 28, 2022

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01:46
Elon Musk just bought Twitter. Here are the winners and losers

New York (CNN Business) — Elon Musk has completed his \$44 billion acquisition of Twitter, the company confirmed in a securities filing Friday, putting the world's richest man in charge of one of the world's most influential social media platforms.

The 2nd edition of “Vatnik Soup — The Ultimate Guide to Russian Disinformation” is officially out!

You can order your copy here:

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE
TO RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION

Vatnik Soup — Klear•art
 Do your friends believe Ukraine is full of neo-Nazis and secret biolabs? Do you feel overwhelmed by propaganda and lies every time you go online? Does your mom think Tucker Carlson sounds reasonable?...

<https://www.klearart.eu/webshop/p/vatnik-soup>

