

## Propaganda

The polarization we see in society today is easily traced to people's news feed. If your only sources of information about what's going on in the world are the algorithms of social media, then most of what you know ain't so.

All throughout history, after every advance in communication technology, there was a period of dishonesty, often followed by disaster. Hitler had three at once; radio, movie theaters, and loudspeakers that could produce a huge crowd mentality. Putin, Trump, Xi, and the rest of the world's autocrats have the internet, which enables an exponential level of convincing propaganda. In the US, many millions of people have been sucked down an algorithm and are trapped in Trump's cult, sponsored by Putin, Fox and the rest of the far right propaganda machine. It's a dire warning to see Trump's cult waving the American Flag just like Hitler's cult waved the Swastika.

Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and all the other pervayers of propaganda on social media are much more complicit in our problem with propaganda than Donald Trump. What enables a cult is control of perspective. Algorithms have become a serious threat to our democracy, as large, heavily armed gangs reminiscent of Hitler's brown shirts openly challenge our democratic institutions, motivated by brazen lies.

According to the independent fact checkers, Trump told around 22,000 lies during his 1,460 days in office, yet was almost never called on them. Just because lying is legal, doesn't mean it's not dangerous. Trump's lies are simple and easy to see, and to a large part, are dependent on Putin's lies, which are much more complex and devious, but if it's all a person sees, either one works.

Propaganda can be subtle. The talking head on Fox News says the vaccines were developed under the Trump administration. The reality is that most of the development was done during the Obama administration. The final development was done during the Trump administration, but, except for a contract to buy it if it worked, was done largely without their help, was initially rolled out by systems already in place when Trump took office, and was mostly rolled out by the Biden administration.

How do we get ourselves out of this mess? The single overwhelming characteristic of Trump's hardcore base is an ignorance so basic that truth would be meaningless, but we could work around the edges in a targeted way. It takes guts to admit that you've been conned. Confrontation will only drive people deeper into their delusional obsession with the many utterly false conspiracy narratives on social media. We shouldn't judge them. Under the right circumstances, just about anyone can fall prey to a skilled con artist. The goal is to broaden people's perspectives until they can see the lies. They need to be enticed into the vast perspective of the world available to them if they can just break away from their tunnel visioned algorithms of propaganda and take a look around.