

Title: Democracy's Newest Enemy: Social Media

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With the world becoming increasingly dependent on digital technology, Presidential campaigns in the United States have grown more vulnerable to outside influences shaping public opinion. Social media acts as an intermediary for people across the country to engage in political discourse. But to what extent is social media utilized during Presidential elections and to what extent is it successful? In this literature review, social media is examined in terms of being an influence in the democratic process during the 2016 United States Presidential election. While traditional media has consistently been labeled as a driving force in influencing thought, the rise of social media introduces a new player: one that is free from regulation. This essentially leaves the internet as a playground, not subject to traditional litmus tests used to verify authenticity in traditional media outlets, such as major news networks, newspapers, and articles. After reviewing social media strategies, such as the implementation of fake news stories and inaccurate statistics, in concordance with the consumer's age, education, and consumption of media (typical variables measured in voting), there is strong evidence that social media can be a leading factor in the outcome of elections, due to the ability to tailor stories to the individual, rather than a mass audience. While there is no demonstrated effort to explicitly force a candidate upon a voter, the promotion of biased media to certain individuals can certainly be a plausible factor in the choice of a candidate.

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