

Democracy and Fake News in the Age of Cyberspace*

Siber Uzay Çağında Demokrasi ve Yalan Haberler

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Abstract

This article attempts to evaluate the negative effects of fake news in cyberspace on democracy in today's societies, and to develop measures and suggestions for its negative consequences. For this purpose, we first discussed the social contract theory, which deals with the peaceful and secure coexistence of societies. Then, the relationship between the spread of fake news in cyberspace and the cyber security system that needs to be created against it and the social contract that needs to be rebuilt in today's societies are mentioned. It has been concluded that phenomena such as fake news, misinformation and disinformation which are increasingly common in cyberspace today, have an effect peculiar to the post-truth society and negatively affect the functioning of democracy. It can be claimed that fake news is spreading much faster and more effectively in today's societies thanks to cyber space and it misleads many people. As a result, democratic processes such as elections and election campaigns are also adversely affected. In order to combat fake news in cyber space more effectively, measures such as increasing individual responsibility awareness and cyber literacy among citizens on this issue, establishment of fact-checking programs by governments and social media platforms should be taken. Both public authorities and social media companies should fulfill their responsibilities in this regard.

Key Words: Cyberspace, Democracy, Fake News, Post-Truth.

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Öz

Bu makalede günümüz toplumlarında özellikle siber uzayda üretilen yalan haberlerin demokrasi üzerindeki olumsuz etkileri değerlendirilmeye ve bunun olumsuz sonuçlarına yönelik tedbir ve öneriler geliştirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla önce toplumların barış ve güvenlik içerisinde bir arada yaşamalarını konu alan sosyal sözleşme teorileri ele alınmıştır. Daha sonra yalan haberlerin siber uzayda yayılmasının ve buna karşı oluşturulması gereken siber güvenlik sisteminin günümüz toplumlarında yeniden inşa edilmesine ihtiyaç duyulan sosyal sözleşmeyle ilişkisine değinilmiştir. Günümüzde siber uzayda yaygınlığı artan yalan haber, eksik ve hatalı bilgi verme, yanlış bilgi verme ve yönlendirme gibi olguların hakikat-sonrası topluma özgü bir etki oluşturduğu ve demokrasinin işleyişini olumsuz etkilediği sonucuna varılmıştır. Yalan haberlerin günümüz toplumlarında siber uzay sayesinde çok daha hızlı ve etkili bir biçimde yayılmakta ve birçok insanı yanlış yönlendirmekte olduğu iddia edilebilir. Bunun sonucunda seçimler ve seçim kampanyaları gibi demokratik süreçler de bundan olumsuz etkilenmektedir. Siber uzaydaki yalan haberlerle daha etkili mücadele için vatandaşlar arasında bu konudaki bireysel sorumluluk bilincinin ve siber okur yazarlığın artırılması, hükümetler ve sosyal medya platformları tarafından yanlış bilgilerin doğruluğunun kontrol edilmesini sağlayan haber ve bilgi teyit programlarının kurulması gibi önlemler alınmalıdır. Bu konuda hem kamu otoriteleri hem de sosyal medya şirketleri sorumluluklarını yerine getirmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siber Uzay, Demokrasi, Yalan Haberler, Hakikat-sonrası.

Introduction

This study tries to highlight the changing dynamics of democratic development and electoral politics in the age of cyberspace. It therefore provides a sociological background to the subject of inquiry. In the course of human history, time herald change which shapes human development. The changing dynamics of the world have prompted sociologists to look beyond the old existing physical space and examine the impact of cyberspace on the social phenomenon of the world. The intensification of globalization has coupled with the expansion of the internet and the proliferation of mobile phones have affected social and political relations in the developing world. As a result, social scientists have questioned the nature of our world and seek to evaluate the changes that are creeping into society. Man seeks to understand society to maintain, protect, and control the happenings around him. To do this, society has crafted his web of social and political rules and systems of governance through which the world is governed. Governance systems do not only define the type of society but provide indications of the progress direction and, predict the future of society. An autocratic state, a theocratic state, and a democratic state, present different characteristics for survival, diplomacy, development, and stability.

Democracy practically means free and fair election and free and fair election means democracy. Democracy thrives on electoral politics and reinforces choice which is the basic element of democracy. Certainly, choice is a precondition for development as argued by Staudt (1991:28-29). With the democratic stability and development witnessed especially in developing countries, there is enough justification to review and study the changing dynamics of processes of electoral politics in the age of cyberspace. This is not just a new challenge to understand the relationship between electoral democracy and fake news in cyberspace and political parties, but extend the scope to observe new forms of electoral management, through space, time, and degree of resource, technology and professionalism. Elections influenced the behavior of political parties and these political parties survives on electoral

politics. There is no functioning democracy without political parties of which elections determines legitimacy of political power and authority (Sartori, 1976: 64). Political party's success in election depends on campaigning, resources, and the electoral managing body. It is interesting to note that political party's campaign in today's world of cyberspace cannot be limited to party's message, resources, charismatic leader and the professionalism of a political party.

Obviously, two major events have transformed campaigning in elections; the television and the internet communication system. The television usage in the elections was very effective and influential during the second half of the 20th century and access to internet has also started to be very influential in the 21st century. Thus the 21st century ushered in a new age of cyber development where electoral conflicts have ensued recently. The new technology of mass production of computers and the expansion of the internet provided a space to reduce challenges of democratic and electoral issues, mitigate human interference for transparent and objective elections, increase participation, and improve the credibility of electoral commissions, and fast-track electoral results.

Developing countries all around the world, have witnessed a democratization process and struggled for a political and economic stability after a series of military interventions during the 20th century. With a new uncontrolled and unregulated cyberspace as a result of internet development in the 21st century, elections in some countries have also started to be conducted in this new cyberspace to ease physical disruption with electronic technology. In several countries, even if elections are not held in cyberspace, election campaigns and all kinds of communication related to the election are predominantly done over the internet. However, in recent times, issues of hacking, manipulation of electoral electronic data, stealing of internet data to influence elections, the mainstream media, and the social media have also abused the freedom space through the presentation of fake news raising false alarms which nearly marred the sanctity of these countries' democratic development and the electoral democracy. The electoral commis-

sions in these countries have used cyberspace to update citizens on registration of eligible voters, collating and announcing of results and providing relevant pieces of information through press statements to ensure transparency, fairness, and integrity. Unfortunately, fake news to a larger extent has undermined the electoral process in recent times. The effect of this sparked intermittent hostilities around the electoral areas impacting on an electoral turnout and citizens' participation of elections. It is against this background that this work discusses the relation between democratic development and fake news in cyberspace, and the way forward for knowing and understanding fake news in the age of cyberspace which is vital for democratic development.

Democracy and Cyberspace: A Problem of Politics and Legitimacy

The study realizes the threat posed by disinformation in an unlimited virtual world where "anything goes" in the dark web to adopt the realist assumption of anarchy. This is to explain that the world of cyberspace activities is similar to a world where there is no authority and which is anarchic. The greedy nature of man to satisfy his need will attack other men either covert or overt to realize his dream. Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) argues that the sense of glory, fear, and competition are the elements that cause conflict. These same elements are key to the survival of the authority of a regime or government. And since the election is a competition to control what is in the world of domination to borrow Max Weber (1922), there is bound to be deceit, propaganda, and falsehood in communicating one's objectives in any space of which cyberspace is no exception. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, provide the opportunity for such fabrication of information which shakes the foundation of social and political organization; in this case the roots of democratic society and its foundational institutions. It is within these foundations that humankind incessantly, reproduced themselves through order in a socially constructed society.

The dialectics of right and wrong, subject and object, traditional and modernity have frequently generated ontological, epistemo-

logical and methodological discourse in social science. Thus, critique of subject contradicts the existing knowledge that is believed to be rational and truth. This worldview to truth has always been challenged since the Enlightenment age where Marxist, relativist, postmodernist/poststructuralist have held alternative understanding to the rationalization of knowledge. Scholars such as, Horkheimer and Adorno (2001) and Jürgen Habermas (1989) critique that people in power holds on to power by manipulating public opinion through the mainstream media. These manipulative actions according to Marx “becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him” (Marx, 1978:160). Cyberspace is not just a reproduction of man but the actions in the space have produced a new dialectics. The truth of the bourgeoisie, (the ruling class /the aristocrats/ government perspective) and the truth of the proletariat (the masses, the governed perspectives) are different from each other. The current development of hostility between the regulated mainstream perspective and unregulated social media perspectives, government accounts and the masses accounts generate complex discourse which some scholars attribute to the age of post-truth. The usage of social media rather than the mainstream media by world leaders (like Donald Trump) is considered as the peak of post-truth politics in practice. For some scholars, although post-truth interprets and presents alternative to the knowledge of truth and reality of the world, it is nothing new but a product of postmodern theory. Categorically, post-truth discourse simmer biases, political polarizations, islamophobia, racism, mistrust and the competing claims to legitimacy and authority. It is this attempt to understand the meaning of reality and bridge the gap between theories and practice that fake news takes center stage as an alternative to that which is propagated as the rational truth regardless of the facts on the ground. Therefore, it can be said that there is a close relationship between fake news and post-truth. Fake news is used to produce different “truths” against a political “truth” that is accepted as the only truth and is desired to be accepted as such.

The term 'cyberspace' was coined by William Gibson in his magnum opus, *Neuromancer* in 1984. The terms defy definition but rather apply in a descriptive pattern to refer to the virtual space with which intense interaction of computers for the purpose of communication via audio, video, and electronic print. The space is virtual because it is not physical, but, its broad nature is unlimited. Interestingly, the word as earlier given a brief explanation about it is used interchangeably with the word internet and even refer to social media for the platform it provides for socialization. Further, the concept of cyberspace goes beyond just referring to the internet. It expounds the unlimited virtual space which provides a platform for both covert and overtly political, social, and economic activities that take place to facilitate human interaction. In fact, as a vehicle of globalization and multiculturalism, this realm is an alternative to physical space that man conducts his life. Cyberspace is therefore an extension of a distorted physical space but, rather virtual in character with a capability to satisfy man's need. As a result, activities extend to include funding to crime, buying to stealing, and war to peace. These activities have created a constellation of lexicons such as cyber-crime, cybersex, cyberdiplomacy and cyber politics. Indeed, it is in the realm of cyber politics where democracy is realized in today's world. With the proliferation of internet usage and the advancement of cyber technology in the 21st century, many scholars began to argue that the process of physical election is laborious and could be made easy if the technology is engaged from voting to processing, then to the announcement of result. Although this has been lauded as a good initiation and adopted by many countries, yet, it has also been the source of electoral dispute. A typical case is the election 2000 in the United States of America which made George Bush the president. In recent times, another phenomenon was the issue of Russian Gate against President Donald Trump of which no evidence was found against him for colluding with the Russians to win the election. However, what many agree is the fact that fake news began to play a key role in election victories.

Democracy constitutes two Greek words: that is, “demos” which means the people and “kratos” which means power/rule. Many agree that putting these two Greek words together, democracy refers to the meaning of the rule of the people. Popper (1962) established that democracy is the only way members of society can replace a ruler without involving in a war or taking the lives of others. He argued that democracy allows the smooth transfer of power because members of society have to come to a reasonable agreement to elect their leaders and in this way, peace is ensured. Thus, for Popper (1945), democracy reduces the occurrence of war. Schumpeter (1942) on the other hand viewed democracy as a political system whereby leaders are nominated by the people’s choice through competitive elections. His argument signifies that leaders are elected by the will and agreement of the people (vote) so that these leaders fulfill the needs of the people and society in general. Schumpeter’s (1942) definition further implies that democracy allows any member of the society to stand and compete for political power and this indeed provides them with the opportunity to express their opinion before the electoral committee. The basic argument being established here is that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion in democratic governance. Thus, freedom of expression is a core principle of democracy and no one is to abuse such rights of others. Similar to Schumpeter, Dahl (1963) argues that democracy is a political institution whereby individuals have the legal right to compete and exercise their vote in a free and fair election although Dahl had a “polyarchy” understanding of democracy. From Dahl’s (1963) explanation of democracy, one can argue that democracy provides the tendency and right for individuals to vote and to be voted for. Although scholars have had separate views on democracy, it is clear that almost all of these scholars had a political understanding of democracy and also understood that democracy gives a total right to the people to make decisions about their leaders through votes (inclusion of the people in decision making). Contemporarily, democracy has been defined as the establishment of political structures that allows citizens of a country to recognize their rights and to legally choose their representatives in a free and fair election. In other words,

power resides in the hands of the people and democracy has been summarized to mean the *government of the people, by the people, and then for the people*. This virtually means that democracy has to do with people. Democracy is an act that focuses on people and their best interests. Additionally, democracy has been noted to be the only form of government that gives individuals the power to voice out their opinion and everyone's opinion is to be heard and respected. Equally important, democracy emphasizes the individual's ability to rightfully own property and join any association of his or her choice. Furthermore, democracy enables individuals to know their roles, rights, and freedom as citizens to enjoy such rights and freedoms. Nonetheless, every individual is responsible for their actions. Democracy doesn't discriminate. Everyone is equal before the law. In general, many scholars have argued that democracy should at least have one of the following fundamental features; the separation of powers (that is a separate and independent arm of government), multi-party systems, respect and protection of human rights, freedom to form and join any association, various mediums of communication and then providing the freedom for individual citizens to express their opinions through these communication channels, rule of law and equality, freedom to vote and to be voted for. In other words, for democracy to survive and work in a society, the people must be allowed to select their rulers by voting, the human right must be protected and the rule of equality must be constitutionalized. Democracy has also been classified into direct and indirect forms of rule. Direct rule was largely utilized in ancient Greek city-states. During this time, there was inequality amongst the people of Greek. Individual Greeks could not make their choices and could not publicly express their opinions. By the enlightenment era, the majority of the people in Greek could freely speak up in public and front of their rulers. In fact, to an extent, those with high rank like kings had to even follow the laws. At this time, all Greek citizens were allowed to participate directly in decision making and governmental policies to ensure the developmental wellbeing of the people. This formed the basis of direct democracy. Direct democracy is a type of democracy that allows the members of society to directly take

part or participate in day-to-day (governmental policies) activities of the society. In an indirect democracy, members of society have to choose representatives who will act and present their ideas on their behalf. An indirect form of democracy is being practiced by many countries in recent times.

Darwin's observation of survival of the fittest in the human competitive struggle to outwit and dominate each other has always replicated and reflected in every aspect of man's life as a member of society. Fundamentally, those with greater strength succeed whereas the weaklings with ill-fated weaknesses succumb to failure. This ignited Herbert Spencer (1969) to raise an argument on a type of political system which he regarded as *laissez-faire* (that is the non-interference of government in the general and personal affairs of individuals). Interestingly, he was drawing the attention of the government to put an end to support the weak and lazy individuals in society. He rather encouraged the liberal spirit of hard work among all members of society. For Thomas Hobbes (1651), man's quest to advance his selfish interest creates a condition where each and everyone's hand is against each other. According to him, for this selfish behavior which allows some individuals to infringe on the rights of others to end, he believes people must be controlled. In this way, there should be a sovereign in whose hands rest power and can control the activities of man. On the contrary, J. J. Rousseau (1712-1778) argued that man used to live in a state of nature which was very peaceful. However, modern civilization destroyed this peaceful state of man and caused inequality and abuse of human rights. He emphasized that, for men to live peacefully, there should be an agreement between them which he termed as the *Social Contract*. Thus, for him, the social contract will generate a better life for everyone and will operate to satisfy the *good will of people*. Ideally, throughout human history, many societies have been hit by bad governance. This caused many people to demonstrate against poor political governance and the majority of scholars then came to a relative conclusion that, democracy is the most appropriate form of political governance which enables peaceful co-existence and maintains social order in societies.

Mainly, it was the work of J. J. Rousseau that inspired many scholars to think of democracy as the best form of the political system for all mankind. Even though democracy has gained much support as the best form of political ruling, some scholars have argued otherwise. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle for instance had an aristocratic view of democracy. That is, for them, democracy favors only the knowledgeable (philosophical intellectuals) to the neglect of those who are not. But such views were criticized heavily and it has become widely accepted that, democracy is the only form of government that promotes stability, equality, and freedom of individuals and protects human rights.

It has been argued sociologically and historically that, by the start of the 14th century in ancient Europe, Europeans by then began to develop new ideas regarding their social life and they equally began questioning how they were been ruled by their leaders. European kings were seen as having a God-given talent and right to rule. Regardless of how poor they ruled their societies, the citizenries were stuck with them. It was believed that God had placed them in power and for that reason, they could not be substituted. These long-held beliefs and practices about European society changed by the beginning of the 18th century. Most enlightened European social thinkers at the time questioned the idea that their kings ruled by divine right and also questioned the practice that justified the existence of the nobility and serfs which was usually seen as what kept these societies in order. One of the serious problems it posed during this time was the political revolution that occurred in France which consequently affected and destroyed the monarchy. Besides, this led to the proclamation that no one was above the law and that everyone was equal. Social disorders that occurred at the time ignited social thinkers to think of democracy as the most important tool to ensure social and political stability in this society. Another instance was the argument raised by Karl Marx (1965) which emphasized class conflict in capitalist society. He viewed such society as always being in constant tension and conflict because, for him, in the struggle or process to meet the necessities of life, members of society come to organize them-

selves into two major classes with conflicting interests which in turn generate class conflict. According to him, capitalism allowed for the first time in the history of Europeans, the private ownership of resources, and also created more wealth which resided in the hands of few (bourgeoisies) while the majority (proletariat) remained poor. He believed that, since resources remained in the hands of the bourgeoisie, they could exploit the proletariat. So, in his analyses, capitalism permitted the bourgeoisie to rule the proletariats and this form led to constant chaos in society. He eventually concluded that a communist society is the one that emancipates the members of society from oppression and when adopted, it would transform society to be in order and good shape. Based on this, one can argue that Karl Marx was in total disagreement with a form of a political system in which members of society are being oppressed by the few who own and control the resources. So, to do away with such oppression which generates instability and conflict, communism must be practiced whereby individuals can contribute their quotas according to their ability and they can be rewarded accordingly. In this way, everyone will be happy and society will be in order. Many academic scholars appreciated the work of Karl Marx but they disagreed that communism yields a better result for society to be in order. The argument many academic scholars have held is that democracy is the only system of governance that will liberate individuals from oppression and conflicts. Thus, to them, democracy yields better results than what Karl Marx held.

In general, many societies across the globe have historically been challenged with power struggle and political instability. According to Max Weber (1922), there exist two forms of domination. These are legitimate and illegitimate. He argued that legitimate domination occurs when those that are being dominated understand that, those dominating them have the total right to rule them. However, he observed that there is always a problem when domination is illegitimate. Thus, when those that are being dominated do not come to believe that their rulers have the right to dominate over them because he believed illegitimate domination

is always built on the use of coercion and those being ruled do not willing to succumb to it. History has it that, most countries including parts of Europe and Africa have challenged their authorities on how they ruled them in an illegitimate way (that is a dictatorship, autocratic, despotism, tyranny, and military regime). So, to liberate people from such cruel domination, many have argued and thought that, democracy as a legal and rational rule, should replace such forms of bad governance. What many believe also is that, by end of the 19th century, most countries across the globe have become democratic with the United States of America being the world's best example of exhibiting good democratic values.

In a nutshell, acknowledging that democracy is the best form of government system which ensures stability and development of a nation, is rather unfortunate that the recent influx of internet and social media platforms are bad for democracy and national development. Since democracy allows individuals to express their views as it is their basic rights, social media platforms are increasingly been weaponized in the current information age to disseminate false information (fake news) which is a big threat to democracy. In other words, social media in the current age poses a dangerous threat to democracy and slows down the development of a nation. It can be said that most developed countries today are facing democratic challenges due to the widespread of fake news on social media platforms. To sustain a good democracy for the people many have argued that, social media platforms should be utilized wisely by individuals in the sense that, before information go viral, they might have checked its authenticity. Once this is done, democracy will be sustained and there will be development.

Democracy and Cyber Security

One of the most important issues to be considered in order for democracy to function well today is the relationship between cyber security and democracy. Cyber security and democracy are interrelated in the space of human endeavors, social, economic, political, and psychological security. Security has been the cardinal element of human survival. As a result, society has essentially

recognized the organization of structures to maintain order, stability, and peace in a limited space of man in his physical environment. Politics is one of the structures which ensures distribution of wealth among the members of the society. Politics is the culmination of competition “among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues” (Van Dyke, 1960: 131-134), through a regulated and unregulated space. To paraphrase Onuf, the direction of politics is giving and taking which has to do with contests of wills (Onuf, 1989:5). The mode of politics over the years has always varied in maintaining order in the public space. This is so because politics is not just a social condition of man but also a ritualistic. Politics seeks to arbitrate among men to coexist in harmony and peace. Out of this functionality of politics emerged social contract for order, security, and legitimacy of authority within the political space where democracy is practiced.

Patrick Riley (1982) posits that the social contract theory dates back to ancient times around the 17th and 18th centuries. This theory is relatively associated with social obligations such as the political rights individuals have towards forming a secure, peaceful, and stable society (Lessnoff, 1990:1). In addition, it is a theory that was influential in shaping the political rights of members of society and also ensuring order, security, and stability in societies. Some renowned proponents of this influential theory include Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and J.J. Rousseau (Lessnoff, 1990: 1-5). These social and philosophical thinkers observed, thought about, and reflected on how their societies were totally in disorder and insecure. Later, this ignited them to propose a theory that required members of societies come into agreement or come to organize themselves under one umbrella, or formed a league to ensure stability and order in society. Although the social contract theory has faced a lot of criticism over years, nonetheless, it has helped to shape the political ideology needed in maintaining peace, security, and order in many societies. Succinctly, the social contract theory is based on the idea that assumed a society in havoc, totally disorganized (state of nature) and to fix this disorder, the proponents of the theory suggested men of such society come into a common

agreement to build a better, secured and sustainable society for the well-being of all.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was an English philosopher who grew up in England. The English civil war (1642-1651) ignited him to think about the social contract theory. He noticed at the time, how this society was disorganized, lacked security and protective measures. Jonathan Wolff (1994) asserts based on his observations in his article that during this time, Hobbes thought members of this society were not regulated by law so almost everyone lived up a self-fish life where according to him, “*everyone’s hands was in each -others mouth and life in this condition was nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and short*”. For him, in such a situation of war and lack of security (state of nature), monarchy or a bad ruler is better. He further established that, naturally, men or members of society needed or desired security, protection, peace, and stability. In support of this, it required that men entered into a common agreement to choose a leader (sovereign) who will ensure their safety and well-being. This is what he termed as a *social contract* (Wolff, 1994: 271-278). Thus, societal security and individuals’ safety is based on the contract that they agree together to elect a leader in whose hands rest all these powers. The leader must grant them all their needs including social security, protection of their lives, and preservation of their properties. In turn, anyone who fails to abide by the contract will be penalized according to Thomas Hobbes. He maintained that, by doing this, law, order, and stability will be ensured in societies. Many have argued that Thomas Hobbes’s concept of social contract reflected *absolutism* where everything in society is regulated by a sovereign and who has absolute right to sanction those that don’t follow orders. Thus, in Hobbes’s view, “*Sovereign is absolutely and all the time right*” (Wolff, 1994:274). In nutshell, Thomas Hobbes’s argument on social contract theory implies that men in the *state of nature* lived up a fearful and insecure life. To be safe and protected, they unite under one umbrella through a deal or agreement to elect a sovereign who has the total right to rule, protect them, and equally has the total right to sanction those that disobey. Thus, he believed the only way to replace

the state of nature which has to do with insecurity, war, disorder, and instability is only through the social contract concept of agreement among the people to elect a leader who will see to their affairs and the general progress of their society. His social contract theory though was beneficial in ensuring order and stability in most societies however it was criticized heavily by many scholars and this laid down the foundation for others such as John Locke to look at the concept from a different perspective.

While Thomas Hobbes has argued that, the state of nature was bad and therefore an agreement should be reached by the people to surrender their right to a sovereign who will in turn protect and save them from the state of nature. However, John Locke (1632-1704) has argued otherwise and stated categorically that, the state of nature was not that bad but rather, a peaceful and harmonious state. He disagreed with the Hobbesian idea that, a sovereign was better than the state of nature (Lessnoff, 1990: 10-12). In addition, he argued that a ruler who doesn't rightfully serve and protect the members of the society could be replaced. He believed that individuals are born equal and have equal rights. In view of this, power should not rest in the hands of just one person rather it should be fairly distributed to ensure order in society. In other words, he argued for a representative form of government to ensure order and stability in society. Locke's view on the social contract is based on the protection of property. He argued that members in the state of nature sort for protection and security of their property. According to him, men only come into agreement to seek the protection of their property while they maintain the other rights (such as the right to life and liberty) with them since those rights are considered natural. In other words, Locke's argument on the social contract is based on the concept that members of society are naturally born equal and morally have equal rights. However, since their property is not secure, they only agree to have a deal with a leader who will see to the protection and security of their property. Thus, for him, the protection of the property is important and forms the basis of the social contract theory. He further added that, while men have entered into an agreement to elect a

leader to protect their property, they now begin to experience new societal changes such that law enforcement authority (executive) and adjudicators of the law (judges) will begin to implement laws to ensure order in society. According to him, these law enforcement agencies are to protect the property of individual members of society however, if they fail to then a new agreement could be reached by the people to replace the government (Lessnoff, 1990). In short, Locke differs from Hobbes on the basis of the state of nature. Hobbes believed that the state of nature was full of evil (men were selfish and only fought among themselves) and therefore should be replaced with an absolute sovereign to ensure security and stability in society. Locke, on the other hand, believed that, though members in the state of nature were not regulated by law, they lived a morally accepted life, however, they only needed the security of their property and to achieve this, they entered into an agreement and this is what he termed as the social contract. Locke's social contract theory served a relevant purpose in ensuring security, order, and stability in many societies. Just like Hobbes, he was criticized and this led to a new interpretation of the theory by J.J. Rousseau.

The term *social contract* is largely accredited to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was the first philosopher to coin the term *social contract*. He is known for his famous works on *Social contract theory* and *Emile* which was both published in the same year 1762 (Rousseau, 1994). He based the social contract theory on the ideology that, "Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau, 1994). In other words, contrary to Hobbes, he argues that men were naturally good and lived peacefully in the state of nature. He established that the state of nature was harmonious and all men were free to do anything they wanted in the state of nature. He further added that no one's labor was used, division of labor was absent and no one violated the rights of others. Thus, in this state, everyone lived peacefully and there was no war. He argued that, as soon as society was transformed (beginning of civilization), individuals began to exploit others for their selfish gain, individuals could easily create leisure times for themselves and that was the

beginning of societal distraction and disorder. Having reflected on this, J.J. Rousseau proposed that, a common agreement among the people could create a peaceful and orderly society. This is what he termed as social contract theory. A theory in which the people must agree to work collectively (social pact) in peace for the general good of all to ensure their security, state prosperity, and stability (Patrick Riley 1982). In nutshell, the social contract theory according to Rousseau seeks to address societal problems (security, violence, war) in the way that, men agree through a deal or contract to work together for the common and collective interest to promote peace and order in society. Like the rest of the proponents of this theory, Rousseau's concept gained much ground in maintaining order and stability in society.

It can be concluded that, throughout history, humans have desired peace, security, and refuge which have formed parts of their political, and religious motives. As a result, social contract theory describes the ways members of society agree either to surrender to a leader or to work collectively to protect themselves from harm, danger, and invisible enemy attacks to ensure peace and stability. Comparatively, cybersecurity has prescribed modern and contemporary ways of seeking to address cybercrime issues that pose a threat to security via the internet or cyberspace. Therefore, we can consider cyber security as one of the most important tools to protect democracy in today's world. Social contract theory has therefore been relevant in both pre-modern, modern and postmodern societies to combat societal threats in a way to ensure order, peace and stability in societies.

Cyber security just like other concepts is not a new phenomenon however it has recently gained much attention in the realm of cyberspace. Many scholars have argued that, by the dawn of computer age, necessary steps were taken by computer experts to prevent the data, software applications and other information on the computer from damage, harm or reaching unrecognized members (Burnap et al., 2019). This is to demonstrate that, cyber security is not a new concept however, it has taken a different form in the age of digital technology. In fact, there is no straight rule to defining

cyber security. Scholars have established several and varying definitions of cyber security in many of their literature works (Bayuk et al., 2012). One of the definitions emphasize that, cyber security exists in three forms and deals with the aims as well as the security methods that are used by qualified cyber security officials (Bayuk, 2010) to detect and prevent cyber threat. Prevention, detection, respond, people, process, technology have been noted as some common terms related to cyber security however, confidentiality, integrity and availability remain the three most important terms of cyber security (Bayuk, 2010).

Historically, specific measures have been adopted to protect human life and society. That is to mention that, some of the necessities to the total well-being and survival of humans is to be free from all forms of harm (provision of security). In turn, military and police officials of various societies have adopted security strategies to protect the lives and borders of land from all sorts of danger. In support of this, some works have argued that, primitively, societies have put some level of security measures in place in order to protect their societies from any form of invisible enemy attacks (Bayuk et al., 2012). Further, Wendy Brown (2010) has for instance noted the rate at which contemporary societies have adopted measures to prevent hostile attacks by setting up great walls close to their borders. Examples of such walls in the physical space are the great Chinese wall, the Berlin Wall and the Safety Fence of Israel which is also known to Palestine as Apartheid Wall. The current equivalent of these walls are cyber firewalls. Similarly, with the advent of technologies such as computers, measures have been adopted by computer operators to detect and to prevent computers from damaging (Bayuk et al., 2012). Also, during this time, the physical hazards on computers were mostly controlled by guards who used cards to ensure a person's right to use the computer (Schacht, 1975). Scholar McNeil equally noted that, the early 1970s were unfortunately the years of increased number of computer fraud (McNeil, 1978). In view of this, a computer security measure such as Transport Layer Security (TLS) which was introduced in 1999 to restraint computer

fraudulent activities has ever since remained the most commonly used security measure.

As societies transformed and more digital devices coupled with internet expansion sprung up, different security measures have rather been adopted to restrict the spread of misinformation (Bayuk et al., 2012). In other words, the digital age has ushered in new forms of security methods to control widespread false information. It has been argued that cyberspace is the virtual space where all forms of activity are conducted including the exchange of information by individuals (Burnap et al., 2019). Besides, this cyberspace is regarded as anarchical, virtually unlimited, and where all categories of criminal acts (cybercrime) can equally occur. For this reason, scholars have established that maintaining security and information confidentiality within cyberspace is relatively difficult however, some measures have been inculcated to limit the flow of false information. On this basis, information security has sometimes been used interchangeably with cybersecurity although information security emphasizes more on only information control. Cybersecurity or information security has therefore been defined by some scholars to mean the maintenance of confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information to only authorized users within cyberspace (Burnap et al., 2019). In the democratic elections where the credibility of elections is the evaluation tool and signature of a transparent electoral system, the securitization of cyberspace is very fundamental to the success of democracy. Thus, succinctly, cybersecurity involves peculiar plans developed by digital experts to detect information threat and to restrict unauthorized members from accessing information within the unlimited cybersphere to maintain some level of confidentiality and integrity.

As already indicated above, the new changes and improvements in technologies have morphed communication behaviors among individuals around parts of the world. Although few numbers may not be connected to the internet, many of those that are connected to the internet across the globe can communicate in all kinds of manners including those that are not beneficial to improving hu-

man condition and state of development. In other words, it has been argued that the cybersphere is so wide and unlimited that some individuals across the world may have negatively used this space to disseminate violent and fake information and on how to carry them which could subsequently lead to a state of insecurity. This act is often referred to as cybercrime. McClelland (2011) has pointed out that, many Australians such as individual households, businesses, and government officials are connected to the internet in such a way that, there is often a chance for internet (cyber) crime including fraud, change of identity and misinformation to occur.

McClelland (2011) further added that cybercrime is becoming a serious social menace and global pandemic which is largely outweighing the national drug business. Additionally, there have been many cybercrimes that have occurred in history and the most important one that drew so much attention according to some scholars was the terror attack on the World Trade Center that occurred in New York on 9th September 2001 and which later caused many countries to tighten their security and surveillance rules on terror attacks. This incident also consequently triggered government and Internet Service Providers to tighten internet surveillance and security (Caravelli and Jones, 2019). According to Panetta in the citation of Gienger (2011), by and by, cyberspace is becoming a war zone and there is a need to strive very hard to guard and combat cyberattacks. In addition, digital technology and cyber body experts across nations including the United States Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) have continuously functioned together to restrict information flow via cyberspace. Thus, the dynamics of digital technology have compelled network providers in collaboration with government and cyber professionals to put strict security measures (cybersecurity) in place to reduce the spread of information that will pose danger to the state and which may lead to national insecurity. Similarly, the European Committee of Experts on Crime in Cyberspace (CECC) since its establishment around the 1970s has worked tremendously hard to deal with the internet, digital information-centered is-

sues, and generally cyber-related crimes world-wide. While many have lauded this as a good mechanism, others have denounced it as a measure that does not promote democracy and development.

One way of promoting democracy is by freedom of speech and according to many scholars, the cyberspace has served such purpose, rather in a different form. Poster (1997) has for instance cited the internet (cyberspace) as a platform for promoting democratic liberty. In other words, the best form of democracy has been promoted through the way individuals can freely share and express their opinion via the new digital social space (cyberspace). Furthermore, based on the theory of internet (cyber) neutrality, Froomkin (2003) and Lessig (2006) have argued that, there should be no restrictions on any cyber sites and that all information should be handled equally without any discrimination. Paradoxically, recent approaches in the cybersecurity discourse have allowed discrimination in the information content of some individuals and this has consequently affected democratic communication (liberty to communication). Also, while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has established the need for every individual to enjoy his/her freedom of privacy and to preserve such rights by not allowing any form of an external attack on that right.

However, it has been argued that individuals do not enjoy their privacy rights because some cyber sites like google provide history and all the records of the activities conducted by an individual. With this, cybersecurity methods are used secretly by some cyber experts to interfere in the personal and private affairs of the individual conducted on a cyber site. Foucault, with the *panopticon effect* theory, has argued that, if individuals are of the knowledge that, they are being watched, then it will make them very cautious and powerful in carrying out their activities (Foucault, 1977:104). Foucault's idea points to the fact that, if the cybersecurity approach allows individuals to be aware that they being watched, then it may make them meticulous in carrying their activities online. Similarly, with individual consent that they are being supervised, will likely limit their communication flow online and this is what some scholars have considered being a condition

that could be a hindrance to democracy because individuals will not be able to enjoy their free liberty to communicate. On the other hand, if the cybersecurity approach is used to spy individuals without their knowledge, unfortunately, this may also likely be an infringement on their human right and subsequently an act which doesn't equally promote democracy and nation development. Thus, the security measures (cybersecurity) put in place to limit individuals' communication have been criticized by many academic scholars as an infringement on the rights of individuals in relation to democracy and state development. In short, the cyber space which has been lauded a good digital platform for promoting democracy has also been criticized by others for being a social space which impacts negatively on democracy and draws society backwards due to how investigations on cybercrimes are carried out to control information flow (cyber security).

As indicated above, McClelland (2011) draws on the need for mutual support between countries in order to combat cybercrime given the rate at which it is increasing across the globe. This shows that, the growth of cybercrime needs not only a single country to tackle it but with assistance from other countries globally. In view of this, there has been interference from a nation to the other whereby right to privacy needed for a healthy democracy is not secured; for instance, the interference of USA into other nation's private issues. Brown (2011) argued that, the USA is equipped with highly improved cyber security measures that, it allows them to survey in secret and have information regarding war and other internal activities of the Arab societies. This is where other academic scholars have emphasized on cybersecurity as a threat to a vibrant democracy of a country. Apparently, this has ignited some scholars to address the need of the government and cyber officials to adopt cautious security measures that will reflect human right, rule of law and a healthy democracy in general.

It can be concluded that, the frequent occurrences of online crime including the misuse of the cyber space to disseminate information which poses threat to a nation's development has caused government agencies in collaboration with Internet Service Providers

(ISP) to strengthen security measures (cyber security) to control and safeguard their nations to ensure development. In fact, noting that, cybercrime is a serious pandemic and therefore needs to be resolved by better cyber security mechanism, nevertheless, expansion in cyber security measures have in turn consequently posed threat to democracy (infringement on individual right, secret surveillance on both individuals and nations which undermines the right to privacy) and development in general. Thus, there is a need to address cybercrime issues by implementing cyber security measures nonetheless, the cyber security measures should only deal with vibrant cyber criminals and their unlicensed activity to ensure sustainable democracy and development.

The Rise of Fake News in Cyberspace as a Threat to Democracy

The term fake news is not a new word but assumed prominence during the 2016 election when the presidential candidate of the conservative Republican Party, Donald Trump made the term as a part of his rhetoric for the campaign against certain media houses. The thesis presents Wardle's (2017) definitions that fake news is a broader label of misinformation and disinformation to achieve a certain goal. Wardle (2017) argued that this misinformation action could be subtle and unintentional whereas disinformation is a blatant disregard to the truth which is largely deliberate putting out information to disinform. On the other hand, scholars such as Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) do not delineate fake news into a distinct perspective. They approach any form of falsification of items whether deliberate, unintentional, or mistake to fall in the category of fake news since the impact mislead the victim. This thesis adopts the former definition purposefully, to achieve the target of the study. The work extends its tentacles to draw in the environment, time, degree and the context of false information proliferated in the form of propaganda, text, satire, and article to effect a change to maintain the status quo.

Advancement in technologies is increasingly influencing our world especially on how we connect and communicate via social media. The rise of some social media and communication applications obviously points to the widespread social messaging,

receiving information, and making live videos. Ultimately, these social media platforms are the easiest ways of accessing information however, most information spread via these media is largely false and individuals do not even consider the authenticity of the information before going viral. Just like the eras where rumors were spread 'like wildfire', and had a strong impact by finding people that accept them with no questions. Similarly, in today's internet era, the strength of spreading information lies in the fact that it is believed by those spreading it. Equally important, in this proliferation of the internet era, is the fact that anyone at all can now promote a wide range of information, be it true or not. This is where the issue of fake news comes in.

Centuries ago, it could be said that members of societies relied on their agriculture products for sustenance and better living. Comparatively, in this new digital technology era, most people rely on information for decision making and better living. For instance, most organizations and companies today make use of modern information technology to improve productivity and maximize profits. This is to emphasize that in this new era of digital technology, information matters and this is evident in the way it is easily accessible; and which makes information very important in this new age. While it feels so great, wonderful, and exciting for information to be accessed easily everywhere and at any given point in time during this digital technology era, it is rather unfortunate that not every information is useful or worth changing the lives of individuals today. That is, to say that some information today, impacts negatively on societies and its members.

Fake news has become the latest trending word though, the term is not a new phenomenon. Previously, the term was used to describe similar but diverse forms of ideas such as news propaganda, lies, and political satires. For instance, in the USA, Jefferson during an interaction with his friend in 1807 made an argument that "the man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them; in as much as he who knows nothing is nearer to the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors" (Jefferson, 1807). This example proves that fake news has been in

long existence however currently, the term is used to describe the widespread of false information mostly on social media platforms since these online platforms are now the main sources of news sites for most individuals. The modern world of digital technology has currently challenged the traditional way of delivering news to people as it was the sole work of journalists. However, these days, social media are eventually serving as online platforms that provide opportunities for non-journalists to reach a mass audience. As Wall (2015) puts it succinctly, "Eventually, social media offered a wider platform for non-journalists to engage in journalism". Of course, it is the advent of digital technology that has increased non-journalists to engage in journalism mostly on social media prevailing lots of misinformation, thus, fake news.

Further, social media provides numerous channels including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, through which information can be communicated and the ease at which information can be duplicated, forwarded, and made to reach a large audience at a low cost and without any delay. For instance, Facebook which happens to be one of the most famous social media reported having more than 1.23 billion daily users within December 2016 at the time (Facebook, 2017). Initially, Facebook started as a platform for people to link up with family, old friends, and share photos. Suddenly, it transformed from a social networking site to a news site. A survey carried out in the United States found that 44% of the population get their news from Facebook (Gottfried and Shearer, 2016). Most people now get most of their news from social media with the introduction of new features combined with algorithms that filter out certain content of information and allows them to manipulate some aspects of the information. Social media applications help to facilitate and exchange information at a fast rate, but unfortunately, presently it is a medium for widespread of wrong information, fake news.

The term fake news has been explained in various ways by many scholars. Thus, to mention that there is no specific definition when it comes to the term fake news. Journalist Claire Wardle (2017) defined fake news as a "larger context of misinformation and dis-

information". Wardle (2017) further emphasized that misinformation "the inadvertent sharing of false information" whereas, disinformation "the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false". Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) on the other hand defined fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers".

Although the above definitions of fake news suggest different meanings, however, the common theme running through the definitions is how untrue information is shared to a large audience. Fake news as already indicated is relatively a new phenomenon. The term existed in the early years when it was used to address various concepts such as news fabrications and propaganda to criticize mainstream media. However, fake news has recently taken on a new form due to innovation in technologies and the expansion of the internet. As Claire Wardle (2017) argues, fake news has features as of satire, false context, manipulated context, and most importantly propaganda. This proves that fake news is not a new concept but rather, has recently triggered by modern technologies. Satires are usually news articles with hilarious or amusing content. According to Brewer et al. (2013) "Satirical programs are also acknowledged to have significantly shaped public discourse, opinions, and political trust". 'The Onion' can be identified as most probably the leading USA source of satirical fake news stories.

Propaganda on the other hand can be false stories that specifically serve the purpose of political gains by way of misleading the public. Usually, propaganda contains little fact with a large amount of fiction to influence public perception and perhaps benefit the government. The idea of fabricated story content is to misinform the audience. An example of a fabricated story is "Pope Francis Endorsed Donald Trump" (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Manipulated content involves the alteration of visuals and videos to create less factual stories. The introduction of digital technology has led to an increase in the manipulation of news context especially, those that have to do with images. For instance, colors can be increased or people can be inserted into images. This is

done to seek the attention of the audience. Based on Wardle's (2017) argument about fake news, it can be agreed that the term suggests broader meanings within the scope of propaganda, satires, news fabrication which makes it rarely a new phenomenon although the term gained much concern and popularity during the 2016 USA presidential election. USA president Donald Trump during the 2016 election referred to the term as "something or any idea that reports what he doesn't want to believe". Since then, fake news became the new lexicon in contemporary societies and is now been viewed as posing threats to democracy and election. In fact, what many agree is that fake news has real consequences and it played a key role in Trump's victory. The issue of fake news is critical in modern societies due to the way social media platforms are being weaponized by certain individuals to disseminate false information. This has a real impact on the development of a nation. It can be said that fake news is gradually shifting society away from the real norms, values, and morals of upholding the principle of truthfulness. That is, lies have eventually permeated within societies which is a threat to societal development. For Zelizer (2004) established the notion that "fake news is evoking 'moral fear' and this time he draws on the attention of journalists to uphold the 'God-terms' of facts, truth, and reality in journalism". Ever since the penetration of the internet through societies, many enlightened people have been worried about and have questioned the future of democracy. Low and behold, social media then became the main contributing factor to the spread of fake news and now fake news has been recognized as a serious social canker which poses challenges in the political discourse (election and democracy) and equally seen as an impediment to the general development of a nation. In effect, it is very essential to understand the term fake news most especially in this new digital technology era because of how recent news is altered, manipulated, and published to look real consequently affecting societies. As (Goldman, 2016; Lopez, 2016), put it, "Fake news has real consequences".

Conclusion and Recommendations

We tried to evaluate the negative effects of fake news produced in cyberspace in today's societies on democracy. As a result, we can say that fake news spread much faster and more effectively in today's societies thanks to cyber space and mislead many people. As a result, democratic processes such as elections are also adversely affected. This paper recognizes the urgency of cyberspace in the current virtual world and the need to understand the context of cyberspace, scope and degree of impact is likely to have on democratic dispensation. It presents some solutions to mitigate fake news proliferation in the social and political cyber world. Scientific progress (technological improvement) has currently shaped the mode of activities from communication, economic to politics across the globe. This signifies how modernity's being characterized by technological advancement is playing important roles in various societies around the world. Thus, currently, almost all societies are increasingly making use of modern scientific tools to promote quality communication at a fast rate and to also promote a very good and transparent democratic governance. Additionally, this has meant that individuals have their freedom, justice is playing a role and there is virtually prosperity and progress in societies. Equally important is that the use of modern technological tools has now brought to bear a new mode of elections and voting which are being carried out safely online (e-elections and e-voting) within a short time. All these activities are said to occur over a virtual space in modern societies and this space is known as cyberspace. Many scholars have argued that cyberspace has enhanced societal and democratic development (cyberdemocracy) in modern societies. According to (Barth 2011, Carayannis et al. 2012), "Today's democracy is a sign of healthy democracy and it is the expression of the quality of life, prosperity, innovation, knowledge, and technical know-how". Thus, comparatively and contemporary, most societies with the availability of digital technologies have improved on their mode of governance (cyber democracy) and this is a sign of great development. Acknowledging this, some societies are relatively doing better than

others due to the gap in technological or digital development. In other words, developed countries with their access to advanced technologies have a better form of democracy compared to developing countries. For instance, countries like the USA are advanced in technology and so is their democracy equally developed than other developing countries. Unfortunately, freedom of speech which is used to measure the quality of today's democracy is currently being challenged due to technological advancement in modern societies. The situation is relatively worse in developed countries compared to developing countries. Nonetheless, how information is communicated over the virtual cyberspace is said to be a recent threat to democracy in both developed and developing countries. That is, the issue of fake news is currently a deterrent factor to democratic development in almost all countries around the world. This has led many to ask about the future of democracy in the next advanced technological stage of society as science progresses and society evolves. Briefly, presently in modern society, cyberspace is playing an essential role by enhancing electoral and democratic development. Ferdinand (2003) argued that "cyberspace is serving a good purpose for a high degree of democracy because it ensures the quality of participation for all members or citizens of society". Ferdinand (2003) and many other scholars are questioning the future of cyberdemocracy. Democracy over cyberspace in recent times is providing various channels for disseminating relevant information to many people at a fast rate thus, strengthening democratic participation. Yet, it has been argued that its implication to democracy is not to be underestimated. The implication established by scholars includes overflow of fake information, the occurrences of cybercrime resulting in loss of privacy and freedom of speech, voting apathy as a result of the dissemination of irrelevant information online, while the future implication could be the cost that will be involved in building cyber technologies that will secure individuals privacy online for democratic development.

Election is regarded as one of the essential elements of democracy. The purpose of free and fair election is to promote democrat-

ic development. The cyberspace has shaped the recent electoral processes and it has equally helped in transparent, accurate announcement of electoral results. Yet, there have been unfortunate instances where announcement of election results has been challenging and this almost caused democratic instability. We should make effective use of the cyber technologies to promote free and fair election in order to ensure democratic development. As noted above, societies have evolved and so as the process of democratic governance also changed. Unfortunately, there have been some drawbacks which were not regulated, will hinder democratic and societal development. If some effective measures are taken, this could possibly limit cyberdemocracy problems and could promote democratic development. For instance, some members of the society are still cyber illiterate and this poses threat to effective democracy. It is therefore essential that, Government officials, Media houses, Media Schools and teachers educate the adults, adolescents and children on the issues of cyber activities that poses threat to democratic development. Having done this, it also recommended that, individuals take the necessary step and responsibility upon themselves to share relevant and authentic information via cyber platforms in order to promote democratic stability and development. Individuals must also rely on authentic media sources to retrieve relevant information that will be essential in promoting democratic development. It is very important that, the media platforms work on their systems to prevent manipulation, alteration and delivery of fake information. In other words, media institutions should build fact checking systems to control fake news and to promote democracy. In fact, the issue of fake news is manifested across all nations today due to technological advancement in digital devices which consequently affect democratic development.

The issue of fake news has been cited to be an old phenomenon in relation to propaganda, satire and misinformation. Thus, fake news is nothing new under the sun however, is fueled by improvement in digital technology. Due to advancement in digital technology, most individuals have taken it upon themselves to do the

work of journalists spreading fake news on social media. Equally, most people do not check the authenticity of the information before sharing it with a mass audience. Social media platforms are online platforms that allow individuals to easily share fake news and this news can reach a large audience at a fast rate and cheap cost. Fake news poses a serious problem to democratic societies just as the case in the electoral processes. This implies that some measures need to be taken to curb the issue of fake news. Some of the measures include the following; personal responsibility. Individuals must take the necessary step and as a responsibility upon themselves to check the authenticity of information they read online before spreading it to a large audience. Individuals should equally check their sources of information online. In other words, individuals should rely on well-known and accurate sources from where they receive their news online. They should ensure that they rely on sources of news that can easily be tracked and questioned if they are misinformed. For instance, news sources like CNN can be questioned and easily tracked if there is misinformation and this should be an example of a news source that individuals can rely on to receive their news. If individuals can do this, the issue of fake news can be reduced and political stability can be maintained in nations.

Equally, public education is necessary for curbing the problem of fake news. Government officials, media officials, and media schools should publicly educate people including, adults, adolescents, children, and most especially students on the issue of fake news and its impacts. Also, social media platforms should work on their systems to avoid manipulation and alteration of the information by individuals before it comes out as news. Social media platforms should equally build fact-checking programs (such as *teyit.org* in Turkey) to control fake news. Although Facebook in December 2016 after the election came out and said it has launched its fact-checking program. This sounds good and a better step for regulating fake news. Unfortunately, Facebook's social media platform to date happens to be the platform where fake news is widely spread. Recently, on CNN, it was reported on April 3, 2019,

that, Singapore is passing a bill to regulate fake news on social media, specifically, Facebook and this is bad news for Facebook. The headline of the news captured, "Singapore's "Fake News" bill is bad news for Facebook". This shows the extent to which fake news is harmful for economies and as Singapore has set a good exemplary life by trying to pass a bill to curb the issue of fake news, most countries can also consider inculcating it into their bills. This will serve as a wakeup call for social media platforms to regulate their systems to avoid the spread of fake news. In conclusion, the issue of fake news is manifested in almost all democratic countries today due to advancements in digital technology and this poses serious problems to the political stability and development of nations. It is in this regard that measures such as personal responsibility, public education and fact-checking systems should be inculcated to curb the issue for the development of nations.

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