

MIKLOS HARASZTI ABOUT THE IMPACT OF DISINFORMATION ON ELECTIONS

MEMO 98: Mr. Haraszi, there is a lot of discussions these days about the role of disinformation and propaganda, how do you see it? Do you see it as a really dangerous trend? Do you see it as really having a potentially negative impact on elections in general?

Miklos Haraszi: I think it (this trend) is growing and that's the future and not in a positive sense. There are two basic dangers and you can see developing in the Russian interference debate in the US elections and in several other countries. One danger is the role of the troll armies paid by government to outsource the otherwise visible propaganda of the ruling party from the taxpayers' money into the hands of invisible actors and even automated actors like bots and the inverse danger of the same issue is blaming otherwise totally legitimate online publications of civil society which is addressing political issues (like it is normal in any election) as illegitimate interference with the job of political parties and the election campaign and blocking, filtering, vilifying, criminalizing all kinds of content and the third issue is maybe the blaming the security issue which is so easy in the age of migrants, terrorism, cyber dangers and fake news. Even the main producers of fake news love to blame others for the issue of fake news. These manipulative, modern, illiberal, populist and technological methods may become major factors in the future elections and it is very important for those who observe, who standardize elections to count on these dangers.