

Digital Disinformation and Electoral Integrity: Legal Responses and Democratic Implications

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The phrase “digital disinformation has emerged as a profound threat to the stability and legitimacy of democratic processes” is broad and powerful. Consider supporting this claim with empirical examples or brief statistical indicators to enhance the evidentiary weight of the assertion.

The sentence “The analysis also integrated normative evaluation...” suggests an evaluative framework. Please elaborate on which normative principles or theoretical constructs guided this evaluation (e.g., deliberative democracy, proportionality, rule of law).

You mention that “fake news... has become increasingly inadequate due to its broad and sometimes politically charged usage.” Consider citing additional academic critiques of this term to substantiate this claim.

The phrase “public trust in elections is a cornerstone of democratic systems” could be more analytically developed. How is “trust” being measured or conceptualized across contexts?

The triadic framework—democratic theory, media effects, and legal theory—is valuable. However, the paper would benefit from clarifying how these frameworks are integrated methodologically or epistemologically in your analysis.

The sentence “The technical architecture of social media is not neutral...” is critical. Consider expanding on how specific platform designs (e.g., TikTok’s For You algorithm) affect disinformation differently than others.

The article references the U.S. Capitol riots and Brazilian elections. It would improve the scholarly rigor to briefly note the primary sources or investigations used to establish these disinformation connections.

The term “affective polarization” is used but not defined. Given its technical nature, consider briefly defining it or providing a footnote citation for clarity.

You reference Section 230 of the CDA but do not address the implications of proposed reforms. A short commentary on recent legislative developments (e.g., the EARN IT Act) would add depth.

The paper mentions Germany's NetzDG. Consider adding a brief critique of its effectiveness or its impact on over-removal of content (false positives), which has been a topic of scholarly concern.

The line "Ensuring that platforms act responsibly without becoming instruments of state control..." raises a key normative issue. Please elaborate on what accountability mechanisms would safeguard against this risk.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The sentence "The central objective is to assess the adequacy and coherence of legal frameworks..." would benefit from a clearer operationalization of what constitutes "adequacy" and "coherence," as these terms can be normative and context-sensitive.

The article states that the narrative review allows for "contextual details, cross-jurisdictional comparisons, and the identification of conceptual linkages." Please specify whether this includes any specific case study countries or regional blocks to clarify the scope.

The list of databases is robust, but the inclusion of Google Scholar requires a justification, as its academic rigor is not always guaranteed. Clarify whether Google Scholar results were cross-verified with peer-reviewed sources.

The sentence "Despite these developments, many experts caution that transparency alone is insufficient..." would be stronger with reference to specific studies or EU expert group reports.

When discussing "platform self-regulation," consider referencing critiques of self-regulation from regulatory theory or public law literature, which highlight transparency and legitimacy concerns.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.