

A Model for Evaluating Fake News

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ABSTRACT

“Fake news” (FN) is slowly being recognized as a security problem that involves multiple academic disciplines; therefore, solving the problem of FN will rely on a cross-discipline approach where behavioral science, linguistics, computer science, mathematics, statistics, and cybersecurity work in concert to rapidly measure and evaluate the level of truth in any article. The proposed model relies on computational linguistics (CL) to identify characteristics between “true news” and FN so that true news content can be quantitatively characterized. Additionally, the pattern spread (PS) of true news differs from FN since FN relies, in part, on bots and trolls to saturate the news space. Finally, provenance will be addressed, not in the traditional way that examines the various sources, but in terms of the historical evaluations of author and publication CL and PS.

Keywords—fake news; computational linguistics; pattern spread; provenance; trust

I. INTRODUCTION

The term “fake news” (FN) was officially ushered into the lexicon when the Oxford Dictionary added the term in 2017^[1]. While the term is frequently used and definitions vary, the problem of deceptive data is serious and exposes a profound and underlying flaw in information and network security models. This flaw is trust in entities without verification of the content that they exchange.

“Trust but verify”^[2] is an old proverb that, until recently, resulted in trust at the expense of verification. Trust in journalists historically resulted from the reputation of the journalist as well as the news organization (publisher). However, publisher reputations of news organizations can vary widely, and the line between news and entertainment continues to

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blur^[3]. The journalistic integrity of news organizations, while an interesting discussion, is not the focus of this effort; however, defining, measuring, and characterizing fact-based news is.

Our historical method of placing trust in reporters and news organizations is under attack^[4]. When a reporter can be discredited for \$50,000^[4] and a news story can be staged for \$200,000^[4], the facts within their context must be preserved and protected. Protection begins with understanding of the value asset that is to be protected. In the case of news, the assets include the story (data and metadata) as well as the reporter and publisher.

Insurance companies rely on statisticians to determine the value of items that they insure^[5], allowing for reasonable prediction of repairs and replacements. Data in general could benefit from a similar model, and news data specifically needs an immediate solution that is accurate and efficient.

In some cases trust was assumed without any evidence of trustworthiness (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), resulting in large groups receiving news from social media sites^[6]. In other cases, trust is granted based on reputation, as is the case with news sites^[7]. In all cases, the changing role of the news media due to the internet results in a rush to deliver news first.

Any solution to FN must consider the full scope of information or the “totality of information”^[8]. The customization of the fake narratives and the targeted delivery demand that an effective solution fuse non-technical disciplines with traditional technical responses. The attacks may originate from any source, although the Russian-based attacks are quite sophisticated^[9] and have gathered quite a bit of attention.

There are aspects of the Russian approach that warrant inclusion into the framework, even if the implementation becomes uniquely Western. The Russian term “protivoborstvo” describes the intentionally created rhetorical game that is foundational to FN; this rhetorical game can partially be addressed using CL and machine learning (ML), illustrating one example of interdisciplinary fusion.

FN and deceptive information campaigns can be thought of as opening shots in future information conflict that supports hybrid warfare^[10,11]. This framework may provide guidance for countering deceptive information campaigns. We have no cyber equivalent for “trust but verify” (yet). The purpose of this paper is to introduce a framework for evaluating FN. This framework may provide the cyber equivalent of trust but verify^[12] for FN. In addition to countering Russian FN efforts, this framework provides a foundation for examining the quality of data and may assist analysts in evaluating other news stories or events.

II. BACKGROUND

Falsehoods and deception in political discourse are a long-standing problem in an industry where words matter. Deception and propaganda have a long history: the Trojan Horse serves as an example of one of the earliest deceptions^[12]. The internet makes possible the ability to deliv-

er deceptive messages to a larger audience and social media data made possible the customization of deceptive data^[13]. Data science techniques performed by Cambridge Analytica^[14] made possible the rapid customization of messaging. Chatbots exacerbated the problem through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) software that could dynamically adjust to and manipulate user responses^[15].

There are many ways that facts can be distorted, resulting in altered perceptions, but there are a limited number of ways that facts can remain faithful to their original creation. This provides an entry point into the solution. Thus, attempting to model deceptive data is similar to attempting to model malware or any other host of cybersecurity problems. Deception is unbounded; therefore, attempting to model or predict deceptive data is difficult and subject to continual change. Facts, however, are constrained, allowing for more accurate modeling. While deceptive data may have several common features, all of these features should be examined in the context of the factual data that the deception is designed to conquer.

In order for deceptive data to be effective, the data should elicit an emotional response^[16]; otherwise, the data would be quickly forgotten. The response does not always need to be strong; this avoids the suspicion of hyperbole. Trust must be gained regarding deceptive data, and while trusted users can shorten the time required, a little initial skepticism is normal. Russian deceptions build the FN foundation by offering an alternative view or narrative that is designed to sound reasonable^[17-19].

A. What is Propaganda?

Propaganda is information or ideas that are spread by a group, such as a government, with the goal of influencing a targeted group's or person's opinions through the omission of facts or by secretly emphasizing only one narrative of the facts^[20]. Oftentimes deliberately used to control, influence, or change the cognition of the targeted group, propaganda entwines fundamental elements of psychology and technology in service of the goal. Psychological aspects of propaganda include campaigns to win the minds, means, and measures of message distribution, which requires a behavioral science understanding of message creation and application^[21]. The past is understood through the information that was recorded and left behind by the scribes of the particular time. Chronicles and annals provide contextual understanding of the past; however, these writings contain the biases of the scholars, historians, clergy, rulers, and ordinary citizens in local communities^[22].

In order for propaganda to be effective, the source or purveyor needs to fully understand the values of its target audience, thus rendering the target's intellect ineffective. The most accomplished propagandist discerns and plays on its target's values, morals, needs, or fears^[16]. This goal can be achieved subtly or overtly based on the values of the target.

Taylor suggests that the earliest form of propagandist imagery occurred in the Neolithic Age^[23]. The use of war propaganda may be found in Neolithic cave paintings, where imagery

carved in the wall commemorated battles. The carvings on cave walls illustrated clans' victorious battles; clans made them celebrate their victories and intimidate other tribes^[23].

Ancient Greece also offers some of the first examples of propaganda. Speech was utilized for conveying persuasive messages. Ingram provides the example of Confucius' writings, the *Analects*, which were used to persuade^[16]. The men who read these writings were supposed to live a more meaningful existence. From Ancient Greece to Alexander the Great to the pharaohs of Egypt, propaganda was a weapon of choice to change targets' cognition. Egyptian pharaohs' propagandist messages were prestige, nobility, and imperial legitimacy exemplified by grandiose architecture^[24].

The Roman Empire largely influenced civilization, reaching into Italy, the Mediterranean, Britain, North Africa, Portugal, and the Persian Gulf. Dating back to 48 B.C., Gaius Julius Caesar (Julius Caesar), father of Caesar Augustus (Augustus), the first emperor of Rome, used political manipulation to win the support of the people^[25]. Julius Caesar wrote war memoirs chronicling the achievements of the civil war between Gaul and Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) and the spoils of victory. Caesar sent runners to deliver war memoirs to be read before a crowd in a public area as the battle progressed^[25]. This action showed the recognition of both message craft and delivery speed since the common people, or plebeians, were not literate, and Caesar knew he needed their support. This early form of propaganda resulted in Julius Caesar being heralded as a hero^[25].

Patriotism was tied to the military, and only Roman citizens could be members of the military force; thus, the fighting force was respected and feared by all. In addition, Julius Caesar had a strong reputation for looking after the Roman legions. Caesar's focus on public opinion and strong concentration on providing for his military forces was a major reason the memoirs were successful, and the strong public opinion paved the way for Augustus^[25,26]. Augustus used writings as a means to deliver public information; these writings manipulated the events to tell stories from Augustus' perspective. Statues, monuments, and coins were also used to spread the image of Augustus as a strong military leader, a statesman, and peacekeeper^[25].

In addition to the spoken word, propagandist messaging was also accomplished through imagery, and this form of messaging remains popular today. In the early Stone Age, depictions of war were carved on cave walls; later, they were drawn on paper or scrolls. As propaganda matured, messaging was imprinted on clothing incorporated through imagery. This included stunning regalia and insignia-laden outfits^[21].

Eighteenth-century propagandists successfully used political cartoons and caricatures to directly communicate with their intended audiences^[16]. The caricatures and prints were biased in nature and oftentimes made fun of or poked individuals. The convergence of humor and politics in this new approach was well received.

Propaganda continued to be a means of influence in times of conflict. During the Civil War, cartoons became a popular propaganda medium. Animated movies and political and military cartoons became an attractive means for distributing propaganda^[27]. Propagandist cartoons can be divided into two categories: cathartic and ad justice^[28].

A cathartic cartoon was successful when the message convinced people that they had nothing to fear from the enemy. An ad justice cartoon was designed to spur action and could be considered successful when the message inspired voluntary enlistment in the Union forces, for example. One famous cartoon was Thomas Nast's "Compromise with the South," from September 1864. This propagandist-cartoonist used the symbols of his trade to guide the audience toward a certain predisposed objective; his cartoons condemned the idea of compromise by emphasizing the lives that had been sacrificed for the cause^[28].

According to Hinkleman, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is considered an advanced work on the use of propaganda as a way to collect large numbers of supporters^[28]. The book masterfully pulled the audience into accepting only the author's views as true and shifted blame for previous failures away from himself to the other Germans leaders, thus perpetuating a victim mentality^[27,28]. *Mein Kampf* appealed directly to emotions formed from values and biases rather than logic. The blending of anti-Semitism and nationalism provided a way for Germany to survive—through anti-Semitism as a form of nationalism or love of country.

Hinkleman observes that Hitler believed that good propaganda targeted emotion and not intelligence or the facts. Hitler played on the hatred and despair felt by lower-class Germans. By preying on these Germans' poor economic status and fear of being unable to provide food and clothing for their families^[28], Hitler elevated emotions using reason. Combining Hitler's emotional elevation with Western societies' need to assign blame^[29] and cultural mores^[30] regarding uncertainty, avoidance, and fear of the unfamiliar, the Jewish population, along with other non-Aryan groups, were assigned the blame for the economic problems of Germany.

The United States used radio and movies to disseminate propaganda during World War II. Both Japan and the U.S. held competitions to create patriotic theme songs. Each soldier serving in the U.S. military was issued a songbook containing songs such as "Anchor Aweigh" and "Marine Corps Hymn." The songbook was part of standard issue^[31]. Japan, in an interesting twist, used American songs as propaganda to make American GIs homesick and weaken the American forces. Furthermore, the Japanese Government forbade the playing of American music at home^[31].

The Japanese were portrayed negatively in the media by focusing on physical characteristics such as crossed eyes and bucked teeth. The Japanese were referred to as "Japs," "back-stabbing monkeys," and "sneaky yellow rats"^[31] in an attempt to dehumanize them, with the goal of shaping behavior and inciting desired actions^[16].

Music with propagandist lyrics serves to convey meaning to the intended audience. Propagandist music instills a general feeling or emotion and, with the proper message, serves as a mechanism for the transmission of propaganda. Music, in general, makes messaging easier to retain due in part to patterns and repetition^[33].

Similarly, movies are a natural medium for propaganda. A moviegoer becomes a type of “hypnotized person” vulnerable to suggestions presented by a film^[31]. High-quality visual and audio design serves to reinforce the message^[32,33].

The message creation aspects of propaganda continue to evolve, growing more sophisticated and polished as technology improves and knowledge grows. As topics, phrases, and various aspects of crafting a message change, the important thing to remember is that the goal remains the same. Of equal importance is that a message has no value until it has been delivered, received, and interpreted.

The technological and behavioral aspects are loosely grouped as “message delivery.” Advancements in communication, military strategy, and technology and fluctuating partisan-elite rapport and populace contribute to the changing landscape of message delivery^[16]. According to Ingram, scholars and scientists in modern times study, determine, and understand propaganda campaigns and techniques and equate said campaigns to daily societal issues^[16].

“Falsehoods fly, and the truth comes limping after it”^[34]. Beginning with the runners used by Julius Caesar to deliver false messages as battles raged and continuing through to the written press and, more recently, images that travel at line speed, falsehoods continue to fly. Meanwhile, the facts surrounding an event take time to be researched and identified

With the invention of the printing press and print engravings, propagandists were able to print their messages on a mass scale. After 1880, messages were further impacted with the inclusion of photographs^[21]. Photographs could be staged or real, and the black-and-white images, eventually becoming full-color, made a real impact on targets’ cognitive perception. Eventually, motion pictures—first presented in black-and-white and, later, in color—captured society’s attention^[21].

During the literary age, propaganda was produced through pamphlets, newspaper articles, advertisements, flyers, billboards, and any other means that could alter or change an individual’s cognitive perception. Later, satirical caricatures and cartoons were used for target audiences. Propaganda campaigns utilized a new visual element which proved to be quite successful^[16].

In addition to literary campaigns and structural campaigns, propaganda messages have also been waged through radio, satellite, and broadband communications. During the Vietnam War, radio airwaves were laden with propaganda both for the United States and Vietnam^[35]. Radio stations, including The Voice of America, the BBC, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty, transmitted both attributed and unattributed messages to their targeted audiences^[16].

Twentieth-century propagandists utilized multiple means of delivery for their messages,

using advertising and other techniques to convey the intended message to targets^[21]. All of these methods were asynchronously delivered. In the 21st century, technological advances in communications, computers, networks, smartphones, and the internet of things make a broader landscape available to propagandists and enable media saturation. For example, social media's role in the Arab Spring resulted in a new trusted news source for users. The rise of social media has made this new landscape more user-friendly and, perhaps more importantly, more trustworthy.

More recently, internet usage introduced a 21st-century feature: the ability to rapidly disseminate deceptive data both asynchronously and synchronously. Initial dissemination relied heavily on bots and trolls to establish a starting point. Once the starting point had been established, the dissemination reached the targets directly through the trusted channels of social media and social media trust relationships. Furthermore, the timing of the release of deceptive data took advantage of the inability to rapidly discern truth, allowing the falsehoods to fly. This strategic timing release of deceptive information is also known as weaponized information^[36]. This timed, mass release of weaponized information gives sources more control over the spread than they enjoyed previously. This synchronous component relies on a mixture of "true believers" (also known as "useful idiots") acting as trolls, paid trolls, and AI-controlled chatbots.

The new landscape continues to grow and the amount of information available in this new environment is so rich that a new discipline, data science, has emerged. New technology utilizing data science techniques allows for more accurate target identification and continuous bombardment with specially crafted messages from trusted or quasi-trusted sources. The volume of these messages that reinforce values can effectively alter the target's perception. When the targeted user seeks to verify the content of a message, a large number of similar messages are returned, and the target now knows that other people share the same values and beliefs.

B. Countering Propaganda

Research into CL shows that news can be accurately separated into truth, falsehoods, and satire through the analysis of linguistic features^[37]. The credibility toolkit provides the ability to assess news articles along the axes of reliability and objectivity as well as potential social media communities that might be interested in the content of the article^[38]. The toolkit provides visualization tools to assist in interpretation. Thus, CL may offer a means of performing preliminary tagging of a news article for rapid evaluation of that article's veracity. In addition to CL, a reputation analysis and PS may also offer valid insights that assist in the evaluation of a news story's veracity.

The initial response to FN relied on fact checking through sources such as Snopes^[39], PolitiFact^[40], and other fact-checking sites. This method has worked well for years, but is time-intensive and easily overwhelmed with the volume of FN stories that are generated throughout the course of a campaign. Fig. 1 provides an example of a hashtag associated with a fact-based

narrative and fig. 2 illustrates the fact-based narrative overlaid with the hashtag associated with the fake news narrative^[41]. Thus, fig. 2 shows the fact-based narrative being easily overwhelmed by the fake narrative.

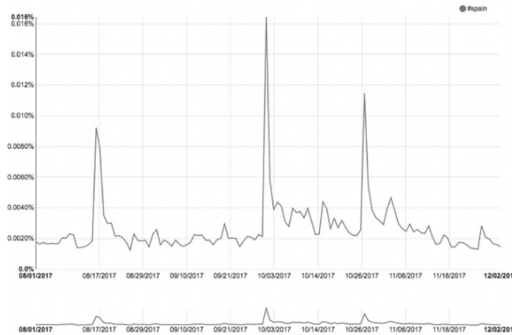


Figure 1: Hashtag associated with fact-based narrative

Fig. 1 shows the activity on #spain from August 1, 2017, to December 1, 2017, with the actual vote taking place on October 1, 2017, the highest of the three peaks^[25].

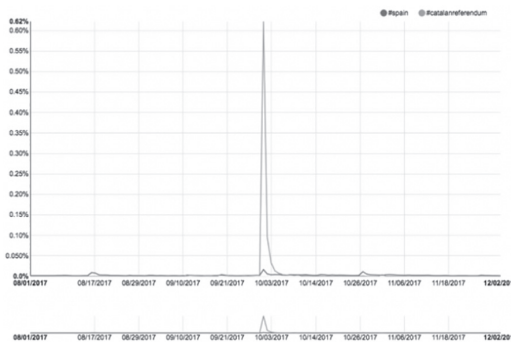


Figure 2: Fact-based hashtag overlaid with fake hashtag

The steep, peaked line in fig. 2 shows the rapid and intense injection of the #catalanreferendum hashtag associated with the fake narrative in the same time window as #spain. Notice the high volume and the very short time-line for the fake narrative^[41]. By introducing the fake narrative so close to the election (much like the introduction of Clinton’s emails^[42] and Macron’s emails^[43]), the target has little to no time to respond; thus, the information at this point is weaponized and active.

The volume associated with fake narratives is problematic because if the reader attempts to look up the story, a large number of the same narratives will be returned, thus validating the fake narrative to the reader. It takes time for fact-checking sites to perform research and post their findings, and when the source of the fake story is a friend, other close relationship biases are at play. Readers who are unable to determine the veracity of a news story oftentimes lack the time and resources to look up the story in question; instead, they rely on mental shortcuts such as biases^[44] and source reputation to determine trustworthiness^[45].

The reliance on reputation has been exploited in two ways. The first is through the use of popular social media applications, where, through the targeting of groups, multiple trusted entries become access points for individual members into society-at-large. Consider social media's original mission of bringing together like-minded people to share information in the spirit of friendship and fellowship^[46,47]. These platforms have also provided a channel for the distribution of FN since the content on these sites is also promoted as news stories. These same sites, such as Twitter, became trusted news sources due to their role in the Arab Spring^[48].

While social media sites have recently come under fire for the distribution of FN, these same sites were commended for their role in the Arab Spring. The second manner in which reputation has been exploited is the discrediting of reporters. A recent report on FN revealed that a journalist could be discredited for \$50,000 and a news event, such as a protest, can be staged for \$200,000^[4]. When these events are considered collectively, the use of reputation analysis becomes problematic. Furthermore, reputation analysis is vulnerable to the flux problem that has plagued domain name system servers.

The issue of trusting sources is complex and long-standing, as is the history of verifying trust. The handshake was one of the earliest examples of verifying trust^[45]. Referred to as "data fidelity," the verification of trust in the virtual environment is more difficult^[49,50]. A solution to this is proposed in detail in section III of this paper.

Old models may serve as inspiration in the design of the newer models for FN evaluation. Blind trust without verification of the information that is disseminated has been exploited. Trust in news sources continues to be manipulated. Untruths not only spread fast, but automated bots can persuade doubtful readers through interactive dialogue. The purveyors of propaganda have carefully profiled their targets, values, and beliefs before crafting their messages. The old adage about bringing a knife to a gunfight can now be replaced with bringing a gun to a bot fight.

III. PROPOSED MODEL

The model for evaluating FN relies on three areas: CL, PS, and source provenance (SP). Each area will be discussed in greater detail in the following subsections. CL findings can feed the PS and SP, while PS also can feed SP.

$CL \rightarrow PS ; CL \& PS \subseteq SP$

A. FN Content Analysis Using Computational Linguistics (CL)

There are several unique characteristics associated with FN, such as the size of the story in relation to the headline^[4] and the use of descriptive words and other features^[16]. As noted earlier, attempting to model the numerous characteristics of the ever-changing, deceptive data is not an efficient method, but modeling the facts or ground truth data (GTD) is.

This study requires researchers to enhance the existing RPI software with the intent of expanding the rating of the software to place event stories (from AP, Reuters, and Bloomberg) as GTD or μ in the distribution. As stories become embellished, the markers increase, resulting in the growing value of deviations. We will use a number of other unreliable sources to assess which markers are especially useful to track. Conversely, when stories omit key pieces of information, the markers will decrease or unrelated events will be used to fill the space; these unrelated events are oftentimes distractors which use a technique commonly referred to as “whataboutism”^[4]. Finally, traits such as repeating the same point three times^[4] will be considered a deviation measure. Fig. 3 depicts the proposed scoring scale.

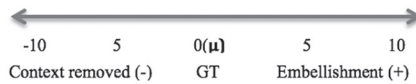


Figure 3: Scoring scale for CL output

The proposed scoring scale uses the AP/Reuters/Bloomberg results as the basis for scoring (0) or μ . The deviations from this in either direction reflect the deviations from the original event. A deviation score of -10 would indicate the story was likely taken so far out of context that the story is no longer recognized. Similarly, a story with a +10 deviation score would indicate that the story was so radically embellished that the original event may no longer be the central theme of the story.

The resultant score is an average of the criteria scores obtained from parts of speech, tone, ratios, etc. The overall score becomes a label used for both storage and signal identification. The storage label becomes relevant for comparisons used in SP, and can be useful when a story originates without the GT sources. The second use for the overall CL score, signal identification, is explained in the PS subsection.

B. FN in Motion: The Pattern Spread (PS)

Earlier background discussion highlighted both temporal and volume aspects of FN distribution. From Julius Caesar’s runners to print media to radio, television, and, more recently, the internet, the speed of distribution has minimally kept pace with news and, in some cases, outpaced news^[51]. Before the advent of the internet, mass propaganda delivery tended to be asynchronous in nature, but with the fusing of AI and data science, chatbots can be deployed at a large scale, allowing for interactive dissemination at scale. All events leave traces, and digital events are no different. While some stories follow a meme-like pattern^[52], the FN PS differs; this will be further discussed in future work.

The PS of FN offers an opportunity to revisit and reexamine aspects of signal processing. The noise level on the internet is very high, making the signal more difficult to identify. This noisy environment provides an opportunity for the identification and labeling of news stories using the techniques described in CL. The labeling should result in a picture of the environment resembling a pre-painted, paint-by-numbers picture in which the various labeled items ideally form clusters.

Fig.1 and fig. 2 show the difference in the spread of a fact-based hashtag and a FN-associated hashtag. The indiscriminate use of bots and trolls resulted in the obvious signal, but China has shown that a different signal can be as effective^[4]. Nevertheless, in the cases of Russia and China, automated software was used, and software is most efficient at patterned repetition.

Understanding the PS of a fact-based narrative is the first signal that requires identification. Once removed from the noise field, the remaining clusters can be identified and each deviation from the fact-based narrative can then be characterized numerically. Numeric characterization can be used when performing analytics in SP processing.

By performing the operations in the specified order of CL preceding PS, an additional benefit may possibly be had in the identification of the interactive behavior patterns. Ideally, 21 general PS signals should be initially detected. Naturally, ML algorithms will need to be evaluated to determine which one offers the greatest accuracy.

Detection of bots in general and chatbots specifically will require additional analysis. In addition, determining the chatbot signals in chatbots designed to increase amplification in efforts to persuade will likely require AI^[53]. In those cases, once identified, the dialogue can be analyzed through some of the CL techniques addressed previously. This particular aspect of FN is a separate but related effort.

C. Source Provenance (SP)

Data provenance has a long history of research that precedes the introduction of FN. Data provenance details data origination and the process through which the data arrived into the system^[54]. According to this definition, data provenance can be likened to quality assurance processes surrounding software development where, once again, the job of reliability or, in this case, the veracity component of examining the content remains ignored. This area can also be revisited and the solution can be more robust than with digital ledgers^[55,56], where entities can collude to lie.

By maintaining archive data on fact-based news, FN, and the values associated with these stories, additional information can be extracted on authors and publishers. Publishers' and authors' reputations can be manipulated in an attempt to decrease^[4] or increase their credibility. Thus, reputation analysis becomes problematic. However, by maintaining the first two elements of CL and PS and associating those values over time with both authors and publications, new patterns will emerge.

In the simplest cases, instances in which reporters are artificially discredited will be easily detected when examining the body of an author's or publisher's work. Additionally, temporal analysis can detect trends in the same body of works indicating a trend toward FN or fact-based narratives. If authors move to different publishers or publishers change names in an attempt to hide bad reputations, the characteristics of their previous work remain, allowing for the matching of emerging entities to existing bodies of work found in the archive.

This final area of FN determination relies heavily on the first two areas being developed. Both areas are in the early stages of development, so quite possibly other features will become relevant in the SP area. In spite of the lack of details, the basic concept can be drawn, recognizing that changes will be incorporated.

IV. DISCUSSION

The proposed model, while not perfect, offers a robust approach that can be easily modified or presented in an easily understood manner. Most credible news stories will likely fall within two standard deviations of the fact-based event reported. By focusing on the wording of fact-based narratives and characterizing these narratives, a certain robustness is built in for Byzantine behaviors which may arise as the propagandists attempt to tailor messages to match the rules of fact-based narratives. This may be less problematic as the text would have to be less emotionally appealing, possibly resulting in lower efficacy.

A more significant problem with this model would likely be related to linguistic traits and slang expressions across languages, cultures, subcultures, and tribes. The potential to inaccurately score an article is present. This work would benefit from the involvement of other experts, including linguists and social scientists..

A more interesting and potentially more challenging scenario revolves around the improvement of automated behaviors to more accurately reflect human behaviors. This may affect the PS component of the model. Historically speaking, the behavior of presenting propaganda first may also offer insight into detection. As FN pattern signals become better understood, temporal analysis will also provide additional new insights. Finally, as the archive grows and more data analytics are performed on the archived data, the ability to distinguish the fact-based narratives from the FN narrative will likely grow in sophistication.

V. EXAMPLE CASE

Before processing can begin, rules must be examined and tested. The first processing component relies on the translation of propaganda rules into computational linguistic rules. An example of one of the rules of propaganda is that the message must appear interesting to the target and use an attention-getting distribution medium^[57]. Thus, attention-grabbing headlines complete with pictures displayed on websites and social media sites would be an example.

In English, verbs are action words and adverbs are descriptor words; these words are used to convey what happened and provide details capable of eliciting a response. Thus, the article length and the rate of adverbs may provide a possible marker as a metric deviation from fact. Of course, these alone are not sufficient, but serve as an example for illustrative purposes. Also considered but not measured in this particular example is the role of context in describing event news.

One assumption suggested that the news wire (AP News, Reuters, or Bloomberg) would report the fact-based narrative, and the model suggests that the fact-based narrative should serve as μ . The example chosen occurred in 2016, when candidate Clinton collapsed at the 9/11 ceremonies in New York City. The source sites were selected based on a Google search for “Clinton collapse 2016.” The news sites were NBC News, the Washington Post, Fox News, and the New York Post. An additional opinion piece was selected with the purpose of providing observational data on this type of publication.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{IF (WordCount} \geq \text{APWordCount) then} \\ &\quad \text{diff} = 1 - \left(\frac{\text{WordCount} - \text{APWordCount}}{\text{APWordCount}} \right) \\ &\text{else} \\ &\quad \text{diff} = \left(\frac{\text{WordCount} - \text{APWordCount}}{\text{APWordCount}} \right) \end{aligned}$$

Figure 4: % difference equation

As expected, the AP News story word count was in the middle of the group; it ranked third of six in order of low to high word count. The word count for the smallest story was 179 words and the largest story was 1,331 words. Because only one story was selected for this effort, there are no average values for news stories and no standard deviations (σ). The results of the word count are shown in table 1. The corresponding bar chart is depicted in fig. 5. Percent-based differences were calculated using the logic displayed in fig. 4.

Source	Word Count	% Change
AP News	840	0
Connor Post	923	+10%
Fox News	179	-79%
NBC	885	+5%
New York Post	693	-17%
Washington Post	1331	+58.5%

Table 1: News article word count

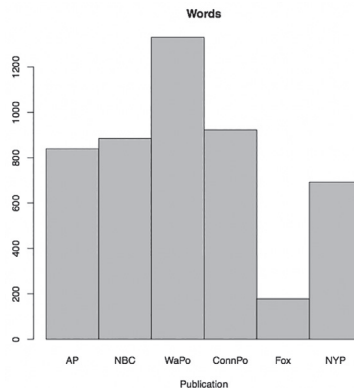


Figure 5: News article word count

The most dramatic differences can be seen with Fox News and the Washington Post. The negative differences associated with with Fox and the New York Post suggest the potential for missing context, where part of the narrative may be missing. Missing context results in the reader having to mentally complete the story by relying on existing cognitive biases. The further the measured distance from the μ in the negative direction, the greater the potential for the reader to rely on cognitive biases. The New York Post and, to a lesser extent, the Connor Post show a significant deviation.

The Washington Post showed a large deviation in the opposite direction in terms of word count, suggesting that, minimally, the publication embellishes, but, in the absence of σ , measures to determine normal variance are not yet available. Additionally, rules that separate context from propaganda would require translation into CL terms and software. Presently, much of the CL software requires modifications due to the cleaning of terms that are typically used in propaganda but are problematic for CL (e.g., “them”).

In both cases of strong deviation from the AP story, there are no measures of variance, or σ , since this is an exemplar while the research continues to determine the optimal list of weighing factors. Word count determines the positive or negative assignments and initial weight of the deviation. The weights will be modified over time as algorithms are tuned and the archive grows.

Another measure is the usage of adverbs. Because the stories are of varying lengths, the measure uses percentage values obtained by dividing the total number of adverbs in an article by the total number of words in that article. Fig. 6 shows the equation used to calculate the percentage change from the AP adverb percentages. Table 2 shows the resultant numeric differences and fig. 7 depicts the bar chart representation of the adverbs.

$$change = \left(1 - \left(\frac{\%Adverbs}{\%APAdverbs} \right) \right)$$

Figure 6: Equation to determine adverb distribution rate derivation from AP News

Source	# Adverbs	% Adverbs	% Change from AP
AP News	19	2.3	0
Connor Post	45	4.9	+113%
Fox News	3	1.7	-26%
NBC	30	3.4	48%
New York Post	32	4.6	100%
Washington Post	50	3.8	65%

Table 2: Adverb rates per article

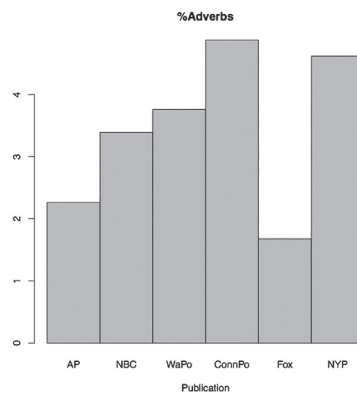


Figure 7: Adverb rates per article

Adverb usage helps to add context to the word findings. If verbs are considered action words, then adverbs are the action descriptors that are capable of adding urgency, confusion, or other emotions designed to manipulate emotional response. Descriptors the nouns and verbs that they define more dramatic.

Working off of the assumption that AP News provides the baseline, a quick examination of the values shows that the Washington Post has the most adverbs; however, when examined in the context of the number of words, the Connor Post (opinion article) and the New York Post show greater deviance from AP News. This positive deviance suggests embellishment, whereas the deviation by the Washington Post and NBC suggests a level of bias in the article. The Fox News deviation may be too small to measure for this particular example; however, when combined with the small word count, the possibility that a partial fact is being reported must be considered.

While not counted in this example, other items of interest include the punctuation deviations and paragraph sentence counts. The Connor Post and Fox both had the punctuation character “?” in their stories. This use of the “?” was of interest for two reasons. The first reason is that, by asking a question, the article provides an entry point from which it draws in readers, with the hope of engaging them in the process. The second is that most news stories use a period; thus, “?” or “!” are used for special stories that are designed to elicit a response that is most likely emotional.

One other observation that may result in a marker for opinion pieces is the number of sentences in a paragraph. In the opinion piece (Connor Post), the vast majority of paragraphs contain three or more sentences. This finding was in contrast to all of the other news articles, which typically contained single-sentence paragraphs or two-sentence paragraphs.

As the remaining criteria emerge and deviations from fact-based narratives (AP, Reuters, and Bloomberg) are determined, the differences can be averaged, creating the overall tag values for the articles. The tagged value is used to assist in defining characteristics that will be used to define training data characteristics for use in ML algorithms. Table 3 contains the overall deviation values for the six sources. The values for this table were simple averages obtained through the equal weighting of inputs (words and verbs). The overall percentage values were divided by 10 to create the measure off μ , which was used to fit the overall article scoring scale.

Source	Overall %Value	μ Distance
AP News	0	0
Connor Post	61.5%	6.15
Fox News	52.5%	-5.25
NBC	26.5	2.65
New York Post	58.5	-5.85
Washington Post	61.5	6.15

Table 3: Overall deviation measures

While some of the values suggest a high deviance, they should be considered in the context of a single story lacking a corpus of data for baselining and comparison. As mentioned earlier, separating context from propaganda terms improves the fidelity of the model, as does the tuning of algorithm weighting. One key finding was that, as suspected, the AP News story served as a good center point because, in both word count and adverb rates, there were entries above and below the AP News values.

In addition to fact-checking, trending may also be useful in tuning. The values seen in column three of table 3 represent the final value with which the news article is tagged. This assigned number can be used to tag or identify the article for observation in the larger stream of articles in the second processing phase of PS analysis. PS analysis will likely be highly dependent upon AI/ML techniques for both tagging and classification.

The remaining description is of a proposed archive where results from CL and PS can be stored and made available for additional analysis. The archive has not yet been built, but there are certain pieces of information that are of interest to this area of research. Of note, the archive is not designed to compete with existing archives; rather, the archive is designed to augment existing archives. The archive, which primarily provides historic data on meta-fields, should supplement other news archives. The archive is designed to encourage additional studies by other researchers. The design of the archive proposed here is preliminary in nature; records will most likely be stored as comma-separated value records. Table 4 provides a brief description for each of the fields.

Field	Description
Identifier	Unique record identifier
Author(s)	Vector contains names of article author(s)
Author(s)-score	Average total CL score for author's other work
Publisher	Publisher name
Publisher-score	Average publisher CL score
Links	Vector with link information to the news story and other archives
Metadata profile	Vector containing the values
Topic	Story topic and related information
Overall article score	Deviation score for the article from μ
Comparative scores	List of other CL scores for each of the components used in the overall article score
Related stories	List of related stories
Event date	Date of the news event
Publication date	Date of publication

Table 4: News archive fields

Putting together all three components of this model, the ability to evaluate any news story will ultimately be supported by all three components. The entire process is designed for both efficiency and the ability to use any single component with high assurance. Fig. 8 depicts the overall process flow.

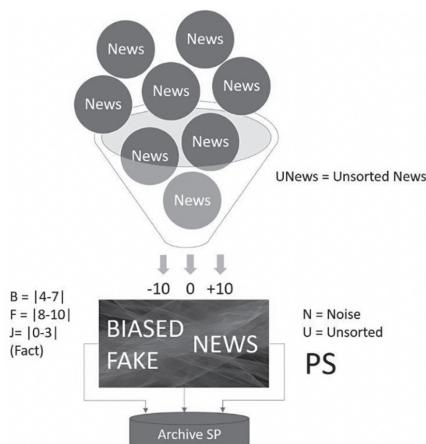


Figure 8: Overview of news processing

VI. CONCLUSION

The high efficacy and the low cost make propaganda a useful weapon in warfare. The ability to manipulate trust through various media relies on a flawed trust model that relies on object-oriented constructs^[29], resulting in a loss of context. The model presented provides contextual evaluation of news stories and offers a rapid and less subjective way to evaluate any news article and provide an objective measure of the distance between the GT (or fact-based) event and the narrative being presented.

Through the use of agreed-upon event reporting metrics, this model provides a starting point for evaluating FN in an objective manner. The ability of CL to identify FN has been shown to work on a large scale in a similar model^[37]. The PS mechanism shows promise but has not been executed on a large scale to date^[41]. The archives are being populated at several higher learning institutions, and these institutions are expanding beyond English language-based stories. The archive created for this project will augment existing archives by providing metadata characterizations and other relevant information that can add to other data mining efforts.

The ability to perform temporal analysis on the archives that are being built offers great promise because the findings can be combined with cultural and linguistic models that may ultimately identify vulnerable traits and ways in which populations can be quickly inoculated based on the identified traits. While Cambridge Analytica used data science techniques on personal data to identify potential targets, data science combined with cultural frameworks can be used for benevolent purposes.

We conclude with the observation that propaganda has been a long-standing problem with FN on the internet, elevating the effectiveness of this tool. Stand-alone point solutions run the risk of repeating the mistakes of the signature-based model that prevailed during the early days of internet security: they created a false sense of security. Therefore, the ultimate solution will likely take time and require the contextual evaluation of events. We suggest that the model presented here can meet these new and comprehensive requirements. ♥

VII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Clay Hampton; the Purdue School of Engineering & Technology, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis; and Steve Hutchinson, ICF Incorporated, L.L.C.

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