DEEPFAKE AS POLITICAL WEAPON. LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES BECOMING TARGETS AS WELL

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Summary: Although political deepfakes are generally considered extremely deceptive bits of disinformation, the research on their social and political effects is scarce and there are virtually no studies on how they are used to hack local politics. The present study contributes to cover this gap.
Key words: Political deepfakes, local politics, deepfakes effects, political communication, disinformation war; Ukraine, Russia;

1. Introduction

There is a strong, historical consensus about the vital role of viable public information in supporting working democracies[1]. The famous Lippmann-Dewey debate, which marked the

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[1] Marwan Albahar, Jameel Almalki, "Deepfakes: Threats and countermeasures systematic review", in *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology*, vol. 97 (22), 2019, p. 3242. See also Tom Dobber, Nadia Metoui, Damian Trilling, Natali Helberger, Claes de Vreese, "Do (microtargeted) deepfakes have real effects on political attitudes?", in *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 26 (1), 69-91, 2021, p. 69.

propaganda version of the age of swords and shields which raises the question how citizens can defend themselves against deepfakes. In the form of an experiment, the MIT Media Lab's artificial intelligence tool, Deep Angel, is step by step learning and testing deepfake-spotting skills. But will it be enough? Or in order to protect themselves from deepfakes, people have to use their own common sense and intellect and as a last resort truly embrace who they are as individuals, encouraging us to become more human and caring.

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