

# The Disinformation Problem: Introduction

BUSHIDO | B2600

# The Werewolf Game



- It is a simple social deduction game invented by a PhD student in Russia .
- Players are assigned roles as villagers or werewolves.
- It is up to the villagers to identify and eliminate the two werewolves by voting them out of the game.
- The aim of the two werewolves is to remain hidden and eliminate up to two villagers at the end of each round
- The game forces players to try and analyze behavior and make decisions based on limited information.
- Werewolves often win in the game because they thrive on deception and manipulation, exploiting mistrust and uncertainty among villagers.
- Overall, it proves that an uninformed majority can always be manipulated by an informed minority.



# What is Disinformation?



- Disinformation is the intentional distortion of the truth to cause an effect.
- Everyone knows that all governments lie, manipulate, and control the truth.
- Disinformation campaigns often consist frequently repeating hyper-negative, extremely critical, or radical opinions.
- In today's global landscape, local areas can be influenced instantaneously by international issues like never before.
- The ultimate goal is to poison a target group's information streams, impact their collective decision-making abilities, and influence their behaviour



## What are Disinformation Campaigns? 🔎

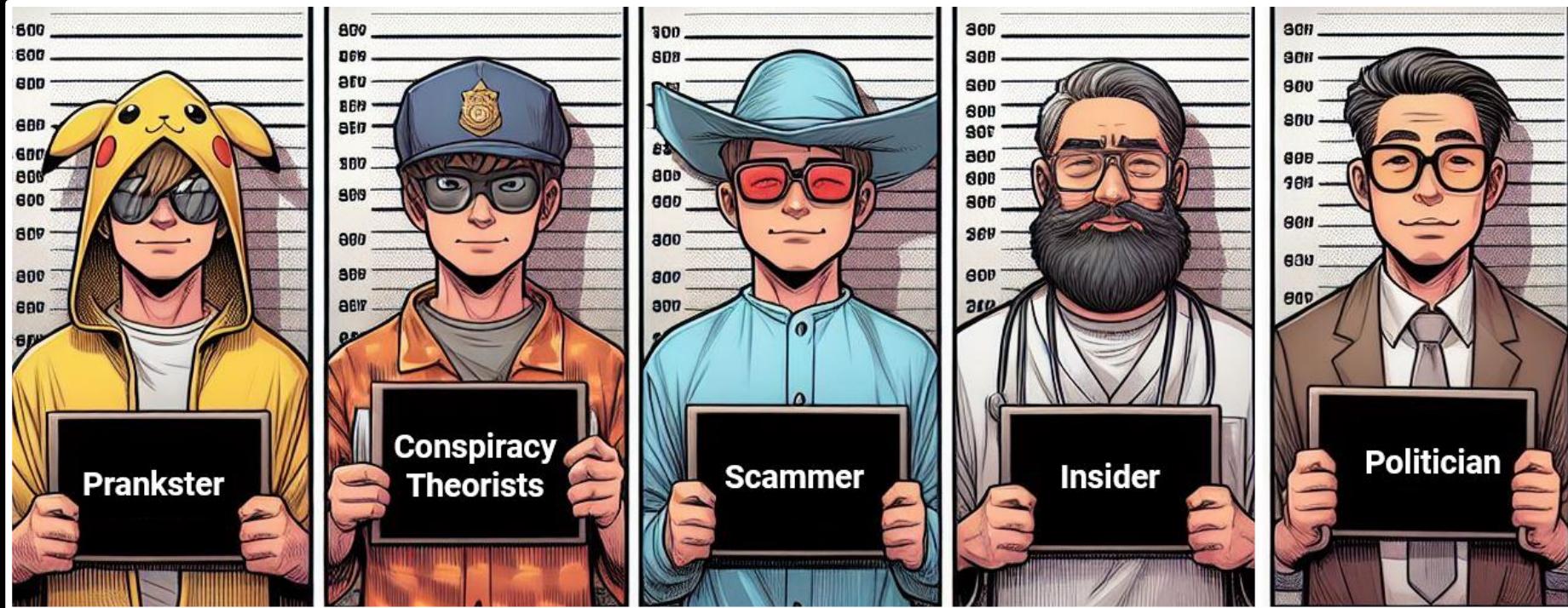
- Hostile states, like Russia, China, and Iran may collectively exacerbate any crises or tensions
- The continually blame every issue on the West for any global problem by default.
- These campaigns lead to isolationist nationalist movements domestically
- These movements question the necessity of Western governments involving themselves in issues around the world.



# Why Countering Disinformation Is So Hard ✗

- Efforts to maintain a free and open information system clash with the need to allow expression, including from the vulnerable or disgruntled.
- While censorship and blocking journalists are to be avoided, hostile state exploitation must be countered.

# The Starters of Disinformation



- Pranksters – They share fake stories as jokes, which could be misconstrued as true.
- Conspiracy theorists – They share unproven theories believing them to be true.
- Scammers – They use fake news to deceive people into giving away money or personal information.
- Insiders – They may claim to have trustworthy information, but their credibility is often unverifiable.
- Politicians – They spread misleading claims for their own agendas.

# The Spreaders of Disinformation



This can also include various individuals or groups:

- **Relatives** – They often spread fake news through chat groups of friends and family, inadvertently or for a reaction.
- **Celebrities** – They have large platforms on social media or TV, may also spread fake news or misleading claims, amplifying their reach and influence.
- **The News** – Unscrupulous news organisations may also spread disinformation through headlines and articles for clicks and advertising revenue.
- **OSINT Accounts** – Hobbyists on social media platforms that often regurgitate unverified breaking news and wild claims without analysis to gain followers and advertising revenue.

# “The Counterfactual Community”

- This is a group of online grifters and conspiracy theorists that pose as commentators, they often run their own podcast, newsletter, and various social media accounts
- Their unofficial mottos are “Believe, Insist, Ignore” and “Question Everything”
- They often characterise themselves as sceptics and cynics
- They regularly use false triangulation, which is using a claim from one source which has been cited by other sources





Martin McCaffrey

It is time to act now. Any 5g tower in your area burn it down! Collect people and stand and fight this. Act now before it's too late!

Like · 12 h



# Common Conspiracy Theories



- Bush did 9-11
- MMR or Flu Vaccines cause Autism (aka Anti-Vaxxers)
- The Great Reset Theory (aka The Covid-19 5G Pandemic)
- The Great Replacement Theory (aka The Slow White Genocide)
- QAnon Theory
- PizzaGate
- The Global Cabal Theory / Shadow Government
- Moon Landing Hoax Theory
- Chem Trails Theory
- Flat Earth Theory
- Lizard People / Anunnaki Theory



# Why Do People Believe Them?



Mistrust of authorities like government, scientific or academic institutions

Inconsistencies in official narratives

Anecdotal evidence from people they trust

Personal connections to single issues

Deep-seated prejudices or beliefs, such as xenophobia, racism, and fascism

Fear of being controlled

Belief in a hero figure

Severe confirmation bias

Misunderstanding scientific evidence

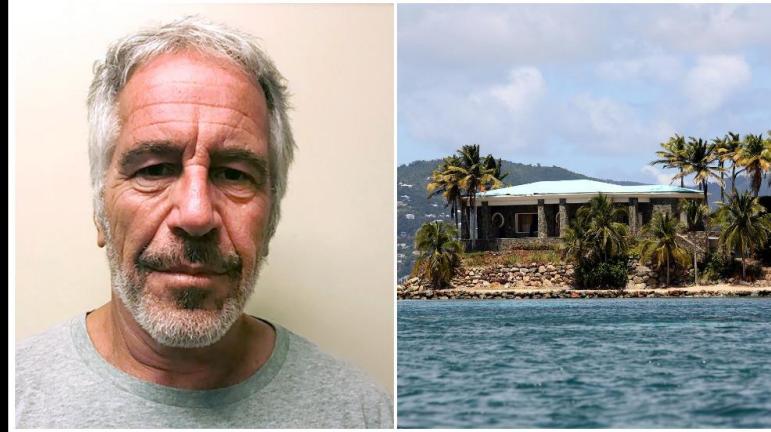
Paranoia and mental illnesses

Susceptibility to fringe beliefs

# Actual Conspiracy Theories



- The Snowden Leaks
- Epstein Island
- Boris Johnson and Party Gate
- Boris Johnson and The Lebedevs
- Boris Johnson and PPE Fraud



# The Zuckerberg-Musk Dilemma



Social media platforms are torn between profit-driven motives and the need to combat disinformation.

They generally aim to avoid promoting dangerous content and try to curb the spread of misinformation.

They rely on engagement for revenue, often resorting to emotionally stirring but potentially inaccurate content.

Combating disinformation on these platforms requires a combination of algorithmic changes and human moderation.

The problem is disinformation operations spread their campaigns across many sites, making them decentralised.

This is causing more people in the West to consider the Chinese Great Firewall option.



# AI-Powered Turbo Disinformation



- The emergence of AI amplifies the problem, with automatically generated content becoming more voluminous and convincing, especially when using cultural references and tailoring disinformation for specific groups or individuals, the same that language translation tools have been.

AI generated text (news articles)

AI created child sexual abuse material (CSAM)

AI generated audio (voice cloning)

AI created celebrity porn

AI generated images (deep fake pics)

AI created revenge porn

Ai generated videos (OpenAI Sora)

AI powered bullying

AI powered bank fraud

# Cyber-Enabled Disinformation



**Cyberattacks are now regularly deployed during political events or during conflicts to spread disinformation**

## Hack-and-leak operations:

- Unauthorized access to private information.
- Leaking selectively edited or contextually distorted content.  
    > Example: **2016 DNC email leaks** – which damaged Hillary Clinton's US presidential election campaign

## News site compromises:

- Infiltration of legitimate news websites or social media accounts.
- Publication of false stories or manipulation of existing content.

> Example: **Qatar's state news agency hack in 2017** – which caused a diplomatic crisis in the Middle East

# Ways We Can Limit Disinformation Campaigns



## Labelling

## Knowing the Source of Information

- News Sites and TV Channels should label the original source, especially the country it was from, for the information report on.
- Governments may mandate the practice of labelling through legislation or censorship.

## Sovereignty

## National Domains in Cyberspace

- Information domains could be considered sovereign, intrusions by hostile states can be then considered national security threats.
- Alliances between poorer countries can be formed to counter the threat as a whole.

## Exposure

## Publicly Calling Out Disinformation Campaigns

- Intelligence agencies have been successful at exposing disinformation operations.
- Intelligence agencies have rapidly declassified intelligence to halt disinformation operations.

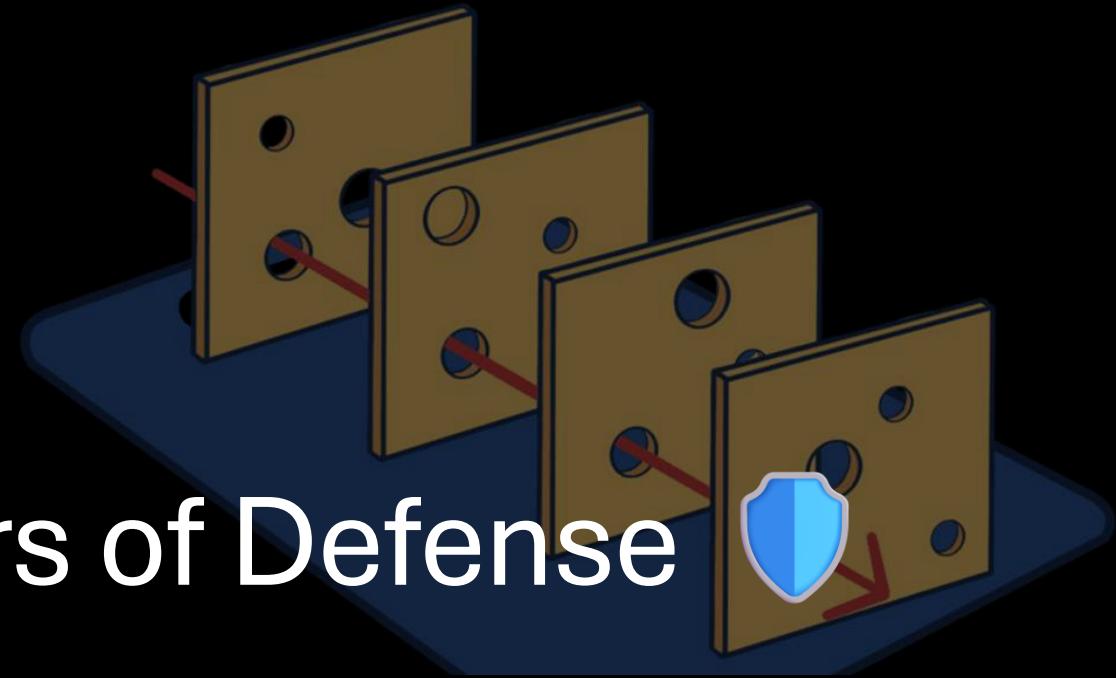
# We Are All Being Targeted By Disinformation



- Have you ever felt constantly distracted?
- Do you often feel depressed whenever you read the news?
- Do you ever feel attacked or offended?
- Are your opinions regularly derided if shared on a public site?
- Do you find that non-issues are often turned into controversies?



\*Hostile states are trying to make you lose faith in our Western systems\*



# Ways To Resist – Layers of Defense

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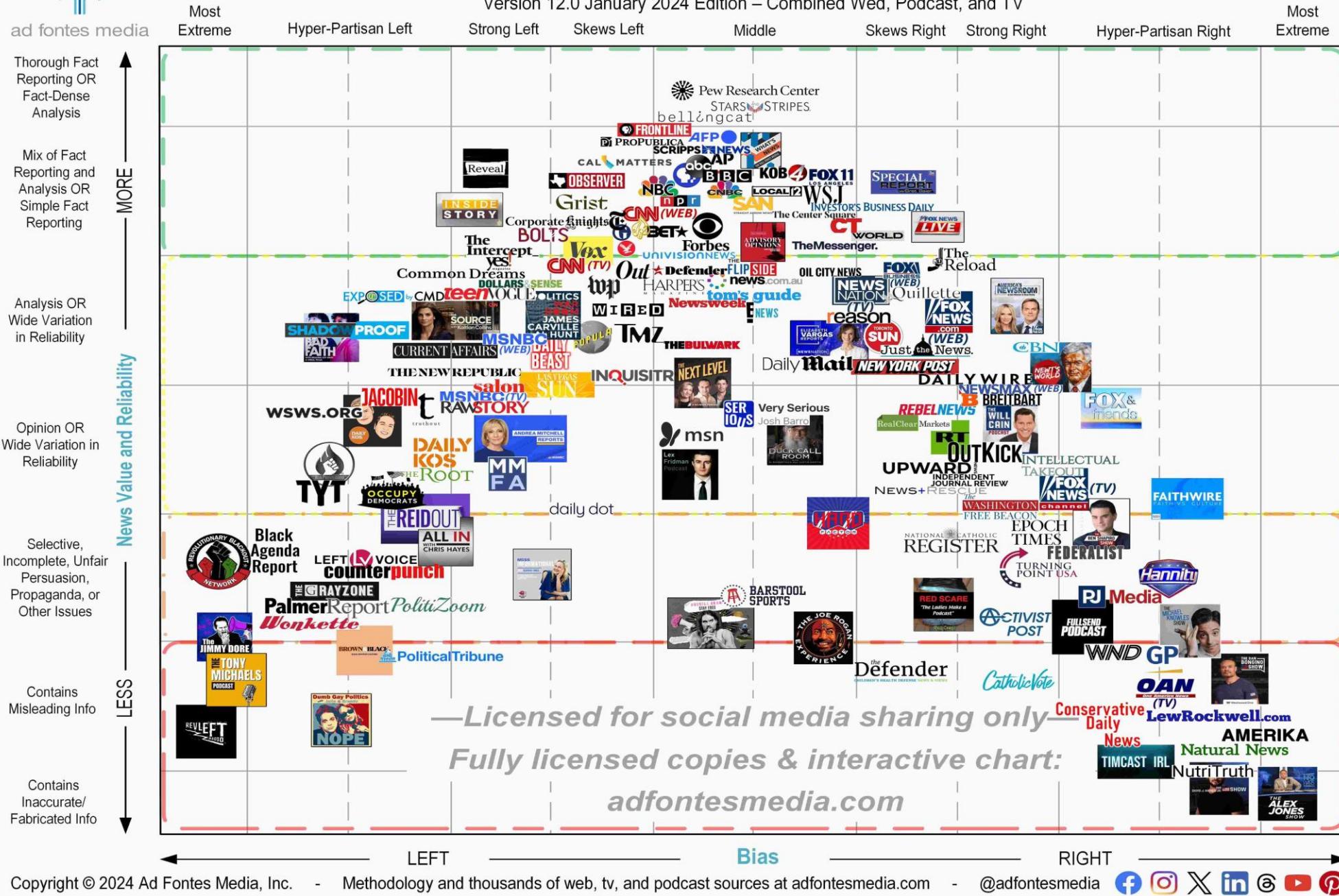
- Be cautious during online interactions – all anonymous users should be taken with apprehension
- All stats can be forged – anyone can purchase social media Followers, Likes, Views, and Comments
- Research the source of your information – and avoid repeating what you saw in a TikTok, Instagram Reel, YouTube Short or a Tweet
- Check Dates – Ensure that the information is current and hasn't been taken out of context.
- Evaluate Bias – Be aware of the biases present in the sources you're consuming

Disinformation is very hard to stop – it will still impact you and those around you



The Media Bias Chart ®

Version 12.0 January 2024 Edition – Combined Wed, Podcast, and TV



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**Fully licensed copies & interactive chart:**

[adfontesmedia.com](http://adfontesmedia.com)

# Resources



- [snopes.com/game](https://snopes.com/game) (Login Required)
- [factcheck.org](https://factcheck.org)
- [politifact.com](https://politifact.com)
- [twitter.com/shayan86](https://twitter.com/shayan86)
- [twitter.com/p\\_kallioniemi](https://twitter.com/p_kallioniemi)

**Snopes True/False Challenge**  
Answers: 0/12 Skips: 0/6



**Claim:** A photograph authentically shows physicist Stephen Hawking attending a conference sponsored by financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein in the Caribbean. (Jan 2024)

**True**    **False**

**Skip**

**FIGHTING DISINFORMATION**  
SINCE 2022



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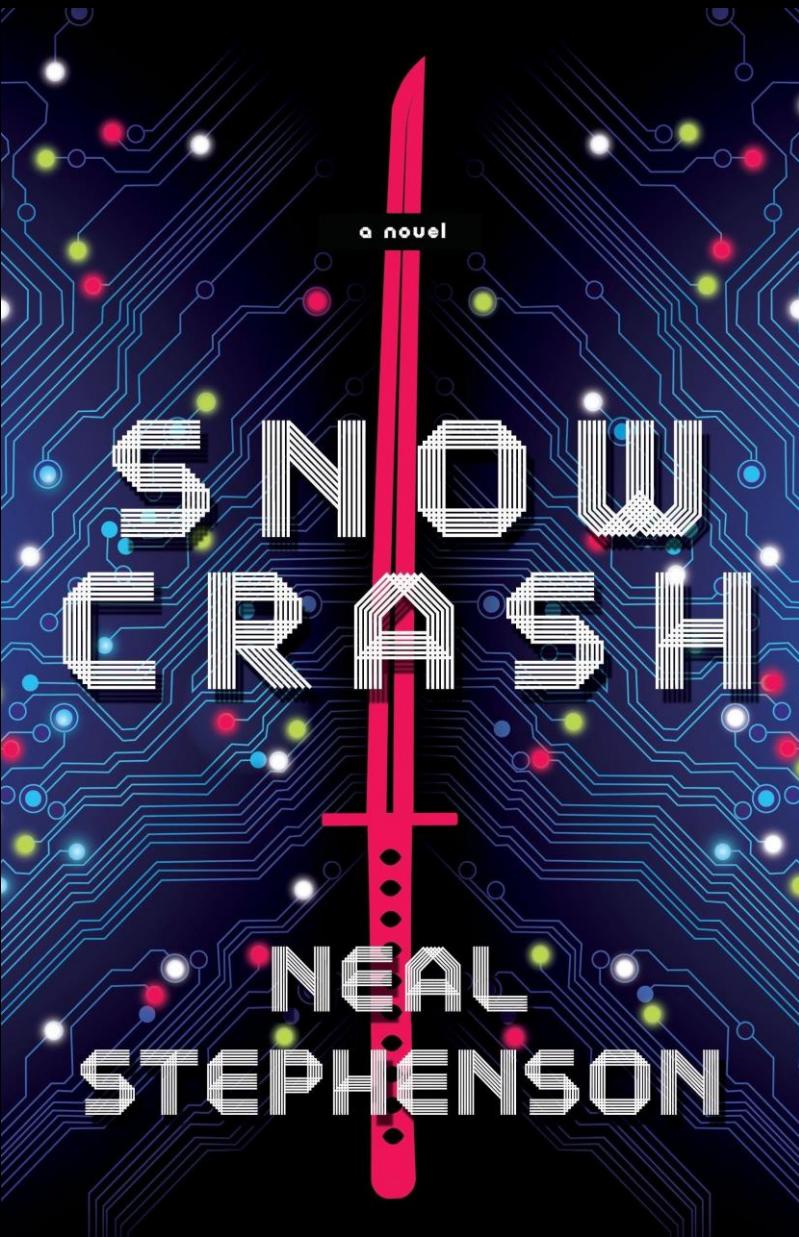
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# Hacking The Human Brain



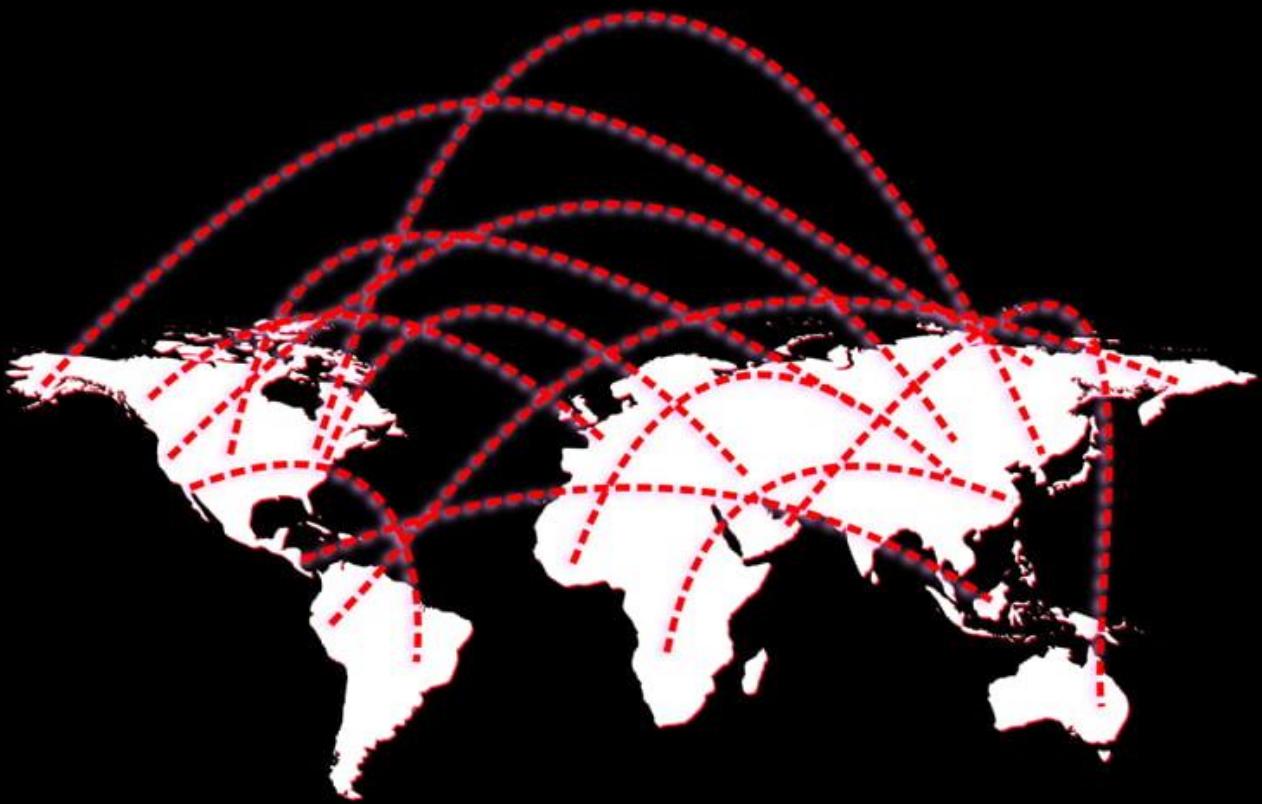
Snow Crash is Neal Stephenson's cyberpunk cult fiction book, published in 1992. It was arguably one of the first to predict computer viruses and the creation of the Metaverse.

The plot involves a computer virus called Snow Crash that affects both the virtual and physical worlds, threatening to destroy civilization. It exploited a flaw in the brain's language-processing system.

It caused individuals who encounter the virus in the Metaverse to become incapacitated in the real world. It was created by a malicious actor and also spread by itself.

Disinformation campaigns often exploit vulnerabilities in human psychology, such as cognitive biases and emotional triggers, to manipulate perceptions and belief.

Disinformation campaigns spread through social media influencing public opinion, undermining trust in institutions, and even inciting violence or destabilizing nations.



THE ONLY WINNING  
MOVE IS NOT TO PLAY.

# References

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- *Thinking Fast and Slow, Book by Daniel Kahneman*
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- *Sandworm, Book by Andy Greenberg*
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