

# Call for papers

## Special Issue in *Policy & Internet*

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### **The (International) Politics of Content Takedowns: Theory, Practice, Ethics**

Content takedowns have emerged as one of the central pillars in the global fight against misinformation and extremism. Despite their increasing ubiquity as disruptive tools in political processes, their true efficacy remains up for debate. We ‘know’, for example, that takedowns have a strong disruptive effect on Islamic State-supporting networks online, but we do not know whether constraining avenues for expression may ultimately accelerate offline acts of violence. We also know that extreme-right networks have weaponised content takedowns as evidence of victimisation and the steadfast erosion of ‘free speech’, often underpinning calls to (violent) action. There is need for caution, too, as takedowns are increasingly applied by authoritarian governments in order to stifle dissent, while in various theatres of conflict, content takedowns may contribute to erasing atrocity and resistance, ultimately disrupting the archiving of war.

These issues bring to mind the dangers of unintended consequences, set against a background where the moderation of online content is increasingly viewed as an essential bulwark against extremism and democratic decline. This interdisciplinary Special Issue seeks to tease out these dynamics to shed light on one of the most prominent practices in the contemporary communicative landscape that has profound implications for modern politics and the possibilities/limitations of online communication—but one that remains to be fully understood.

If you would like to contribute a paper to this Special Issue, please send an abstract of no more than 250 words to James Fitzgerald ([james.fitzgerald@dcu.ie](mailto:james.fitzgerald@dcu.ie)) and Ayşe Lokmanoglu ([ayse.lokmanoglu@northwestern.edu](mailto:ayse.lokmanoglu@northwestern.edu)) by 15 September, 2022.

Author Guidelines for *Policy & Internet* can be found [here](#).

#### Potential topics might include:

- Theorising content takedowns
- The unintended consequences of content takedowns
- The interrelationship between content takedowns and P/CVE
- The discursive construction of content takedowns in far-right extremist networks
- Ethical implications of regulatory framework
- Mental health impacts on content moderators across time and space
- Historicising content takedowns and censorship with regard to ‘extreme’ content

- How/if content takedowns can be wielded as a tool of authoritarian governance
- Theoretical/practical interactions between content takedowns and 'free speech'
- How content takedowns are applied on 'classic' social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and TikTok
- How content takedowns are applied on 'alternative' social media platforms, such as Gab, Truth Social and ...

The Special Issue explicitly welcomes inter-disciplinary scholarship. Submissions are invited from a range of disciplines/fields, including, but not limited to:

- Communication Studies
- Political Science
- (Critical) Terrorism Studies
- (Critical) Security Studies
- International Relations
- Sociology
- Criminology

The Special Issue will take place through collaborative workshops (hybrid/online), where contributors will read each other's drafts and provide feedback towards completion. It is expected that the Special Issue will be published between Winter 2023 and Spring 2024.