

Doctored Sunak picture is just latest in string of political deepfakes

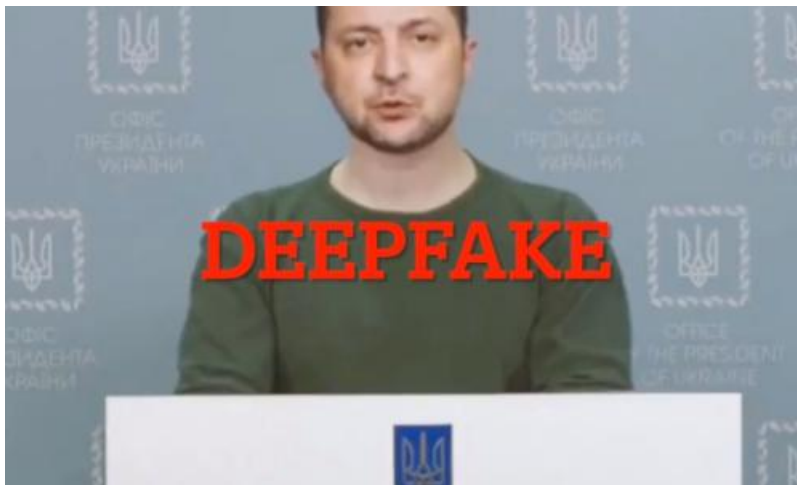
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Author: Dan Milmo

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The row over a manipulated photo of Rishi Sunak pulling an imperfect pint is the latest example of doctored or deepfake images attempting to disrupt politics. Using false information or imagery to alter public opinion is not new but breakthroughs in artificial intelligence threaten to take deception to a new level. Here are some recent examples of image-based disinformation.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy Last year a video appeared of the Ukrainian president calling on his soldiers to lay down their weapons and return to their families. It was an amateurish example of a deepfake, the term for a hoax that uses AI to create a phoney image, most commonly fake videos of people. The clip, of unknown provenance, was clearly fake and unconvincing. It was also taken down by mainstream social media platforms including Facebook and Instagram.

Turkish election Days before Turkey's parliamentary and presidential election in May, the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, showed a political rally a video purportedly of his main challenger, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, receiving an endorsement from the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK). The PKK is designated as a terrorist organisation in Turkey, the US and the UK. The video was in fact two separate clips edited together but an independent factchecking group said the video was widely circulated online nonetheless. Erdoğan won the election. Another presidential candidate, Muharrem İnce, withdrew from the race after the release of a purported sex tape, which he said was a deepfake.

Donald Trump The power of AI-generated deepfakes was underlined when convincing-looking images of Donald Trump being arrested were circulated in March, although they were openly flagged as being fake by their creator. However, the former president's rival for the Republican nomination, Ron DeSantis, was criticised in June for using AI-made images of Trump hugging Anthony Fauci, the former White House chief medical adviser, in a campaign video. Fauci is a figure of hate for many US conservatives.

Joe Biden The US president is a regular target of deepfakes, including the use of AI-generated voice tools. In one video in February, an AI-generated version of Biden's voice is used to attack transgender women while another in the same month had Biden announcing that men and women would be drafted to fight in Ukraine.