

Threat of Cyber Propaganda and Electoral Consequences for Indigenous Americans

Disruptive social media accounts are appropriating Indigenous ideology and exploiting it through cyber manipulations, strategic intrusions, and coordinated warfare. This behavior references Indigenous American stereotypical names, tribes, and terms which are employed by non-natives for retail commerce, political messaging, and environmental activism. One result of such activity has been a US Presidential election cycle revolving around political candidates being criticized using derogatory Indigenous memes.

While most reporting focuses on followers, lost revenue for private individuals from counterfeit merchandise, and influence campaigns; the complexity of the issue goes far beyond unlicensed merchandise and copyright infringement.



More recent headlines describe a deeper issue: "How Russians Attempted To Use Instagram To Influence Native Americans." This behavior by foreign actors has targeted Indigenous populations in order to inflame environmental activists and create greater societal divisions. "These provocative images show Russian trolls sought to inflame debate over climate change, fracking and Dakota pipeline". In a report titled Russian Attempts to Influence U.S. Domestic Energy Markets by Exploiting Social Media from the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (March 2018), they stated "Russia exploited American social media as part of its concerted effort to disrupt U.S. energy markets and influence domestic energy policy." These actions weaken the United States politically, electorally, and economically. "Many of the Russian-linked accounts targeted 'highly visible tension points' in America, including 'protests against pipelines.'" Foreign actors use social media as a vehicle to spread disinformation, polarize society "and work to capitalize on and accentuate American political divisions and public anxiety." However, domestic authorities employ information and disinformation to maintain their authority over Indigenous American populations when their policies are threatened.

The behavior of strategic cyber intrusions, by foreign and domestic actors, towards Indigenous Americans involves several incentives: securing natural resources, the current immigration policy, the 2020 election, and the invisibility of the Indigenous American population within American society.



DRA. SAIPH SAVAGE

Directora del laboratorio
"Human Computer Interaction"
de West Virginia University.

Natural Resources

The targeting of Indigenous Americans on social media focuses on the natural resources that are contained on Indigenous land. The United States' ever-increasing need to maintain their global dominance leaves them seeking new sources of natural resources, such as oil, natural gas, coal, uranium, other rare minerals, and even water.

Russia and other foreign actors would greatly benefit from any disruption to US energy supplies that protests of pipeline construction might produce. One of the most important vestigial areas of US natural resources is held by Indigenous Tribes. Economists have documented the "untapped" wealth held by Indigenous Americans and have promoted policies that would allow these resources to be accessed by non-tribal corporations.

This would require a change in policy regarding privatizing Indigenous land. These actions would be in direct contrast with the current policy toward the Indigenous population, which benefit from nation-to-nation treaties upheld through the US Supreme Court decisions called the Marshall trilogy. (*Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), *Worcester v. Georgia* [1832]) "Many Native Americans view such efforts (privatizing reservations) as a violation of tribal self-determination and culture."

President Trump's previous legal action against Indian casinos and his administration's current policy toward Indigenous Americans has created concern amongst Indigenous tribes. After being elected, Trump's Presidential Transition team created the Native American Affairs Coalition to advise Trump on American Indian policy. Their stated goals were in direct opposition to the progress achieved under President Obama concerning the US Department of Interior's policies toward recognizing the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations.



President Trump supports the privatization of Indigenous land and increased availability of Tribal territories to energy development. Indigenous tribes previously suffered great destruction to their Indigenous identity, sovereignty and land allotment under a similar policy, the Indian Reorganization Act, passed in 1934.

Immigration Policy

Far-right political ideology embraced by extremists and white nationalists as far back as Nazi Germany have appropriated Indigenous elements for political propaganda to express their intolerance of outsiders. "Indigenous people remain potent symbols of outsider oppression for far-right extremism globally." Modern far-right groups in Britain adopt the Indigenous identity to solidify their claim as rightful occupants of their land and to support their anti-immigration ideology against immigrants from mainland Europe and the Middle East. The use of Native American ideology by nationalists employ slogans similar to "The Indians couldn't stop immigration. Today they live on Reservations." These slogans exist as extremist propaganda throughout almost every European country. This extremist ideology is being disseminated across various social media platforms. The behavior is demonstrated in a Reddit discussion from 2 December 2018 about being White and equating residing where you were born to mean that you are "Native" or "Indigenous" to that territory.

European extremist groups have effectively, yet distressingly, employed Native American imagery to promote their ideology of "Indigenous" Europeans protecting their land from African or Middle Eastern migrants; however, the argument of Caucasian Americans protecting their land from Central American migrants crossing the border from Mexico is flawed, especially since cross-border migrants are often Indigenous and Indigenous territories transcend national borders. One tribe particularly affected by the current immigration policy is the Tohono O'odham Nation whose land encompasses US and Mexico territory. A tribal member described life on the border as: "a Berlin Wall-like scenario" with "communities under surveillance."

One explanation as to why violent far-right extremism is on the rise is offered through research focusing on the relationship of financial crises and increased nationalism. Considering this factor, we need to expect anti-immigrant, nationalistic ideology to be a recurrent disruption to modern society as financial crises occur more frequently.



r/The_Donald
u/stonepOny • 303d

+ JOIN

⚠ QUARANTINED

I am white, and I am indigenous. I'm a "Native American". Every single person on the planet is "indigenous", unless they have migrated.

My apologize for my skin color, or whatever, but I must be "Native" to somewhere, no? I'm indigenous to the PNW, but, I'm white and therefore a racist interloper according to the geniuses who lead the DNC (Maxine Waters, and Nancy Pelosi, and Ocasio-Cortez).

143 12 Share

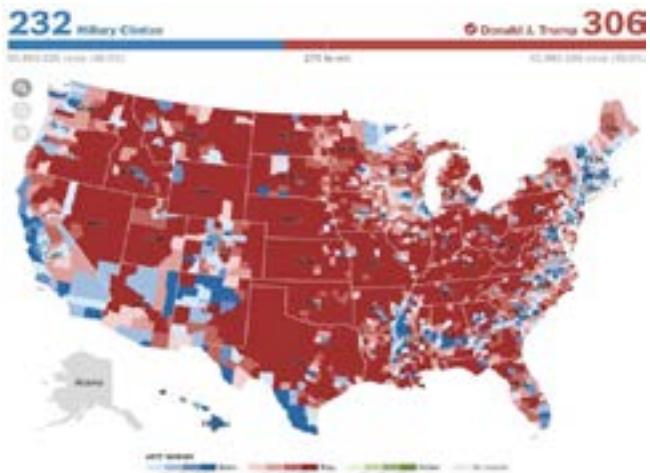
2020 Election

While Indigenous American voters have politically identified as non-partisan, their voting behavior indicates Democratic inclinations. Tribal reservations are geographically located in many swing states and are ideal population centers that can be targeted for cyber disengagement campaigns and voter disenfranchisement strategies. In fact, the states where Indigenous American's population are greatest are the exact states that might swing the election in 2020. Although Donald Trump won the majority of state delegates in November 2016, breaking down the 2016 results shows us that several states could be toss-ups in 2020:



INVESTIGADORA
AMY RUCKES

DLP Lab, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)



- Arizona (Trump 48.1%, Clinton 44.6%) 11 electoral votes
- Colorado (Clinton 48.2%, 43.3%) 9 electoral votes
- Michigan (Trump 47.3%, Clinton 47.0%) 16 electoral votes
- Minnesota (Clinton 46.4%, Trump 44.9%) 10 electoral votes
- Nevada (Clinton 47.9%, Trump 45.5%) 6 electoral votes
- New Mexico (Clinton 48.3%, Trump 40%) 5 electoral votes
- North Carolina (Clinton 46.2%, Trump 49.8%) 15 electoral votes
- Wisconsin (Trump 47.2%, Clinton 46.5%) 10 electoral votes

Arizona, in particular, might be electorally significant in the 2020 election. (While Alaska, North Dakota, and Oklahoma also have significant Indigenous populations; due to the energy politics of the regions, they tend to vote Republican.) Political speculation concerning Arizona in 2016 anticipated that Democrats would secure the Arizona electoral delegates for only the third time in history; however, low voter turnout amongst Indigenous American voters was thought to have been one of the reasons for Trump's win. Low voter turnout amongst Indigenous American voters garners less attention in comparison to other minority voting populations. The strategic value of proposing

policy directed at Indigenous communities has the added significance that the third Democratic primary occurs in Nevada and could prove to be an important state in determining the lead Democratic Candidate. Thus, politically influencing the Indigenous American population might have a greater electoral impact in 2020 compared with previous years.

Furthermore, various derogatory hashtags have been created to harass Senator and Presidential Candidate Elizabeth Warren and disengage voters from supporting her. We discover direct correlations between calls to action among Trump supporters and the use of derogatory hashtags such as #MeSioux that are created to target Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Observing Twitter data concerning the ubiquitous term, Pretendian, which is used in the Indigenous community to refer to a person who falsely identifies as Indigenous, we see evidence of mainstream news outlets using the term to denigrate Sen. Warren even when the topic pertains to her policies and not her ethnic or cultural identity.

Research shows Indigenous voting trends favor Democratic candidates when it corresponds with lower income levels. They write, "Economic factors appear to have had a greater impact than tribal affiliation on American Indian political behavior." (Note that according to the 2000 Census, Indigenous Americans suffer from poverty at a rate double than the national average with national poverty rate of families at 13.6% and Indigenous rate at 27%.) Indigenous voters will potentially play a critical role in the Democratic primary and the electoral college during Presidential elections. There is already evidence that Indigenous po-

pueblos originarios americanos".



OPINION · Published October 16, 2018

**Tucker Carlson:
Elizabeth Warren has
appointed herself
head of the #MeSioux
movement**



By Tucker Carlson | Fox News

pulations are being targeted by disinformation campaigns across various social media platforms.

Invisible Indigenous Americans

While the appropriation and exploitation of the Indigenous identity in the cyber sphere seems to not have gained much attention by media outlets, Russian media outlets take pleasure in covering the story and describing the treatment of the Indigenous people in American. (In fact, Russian media particularly relish in the fact that Indigenous American genes have been discovered to have originated in Russian territory.) Russia media is known for publishing inflammatory news concerning American society, and even promoted a story about a Tohono O'odham man being run over by US Border Patrol agents. "Russian English-language news outlets publish a steady stream of articles about domestic politics and events in the USA and Europe that focus on political dysfunction,



DRA. NORMA ELVA CHAVEZ

DLP Lab, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM)

institutional failure, social division and the negative effects of immigration."

Racist discussions within the echo chamber of Reddit become polarized when fueled by social influence. Due to the void of information concerning minorities, these actions increase exposure to extremist opinions by making disinformation more prominent to people searching for information about minorities. Even late night comedians Stephen Colbert and Bill Maher have begun utilizing the racist Indigenous themes to laugh at politicians Sen. Elizabeth Warren and President Donald Trump. In fact, Indigenous Americans experience "pervasive invisibility," and there exists a "prevailing ignorance" in American society towards the Indigenous American population. Rebecca Nagle describes it thusly, "Invisibility is the modern form of racism against Native people." Due to already present political disenfranchisement amongst Indigenous Americans who live in vitally important electoral regions, these populations are vulnerable target demographics for influence campaigns. Considering the demographics of Native Americans and Multi-racial Native Americans, the population should garner more attention.

The racist attitudes expressed and disseminated online create an atmosphere of psychosocial trauma toward the Indigenous population. The imagery on social media reinforces “harmful stereotypes” and relegates “them as artifacts of the past.” Indigenous minorities’ needs and concerns need to be prioritized for all governmental authorities. Cross-border international immigration policies should be instituted to protect Indigenous migrants. Federal public cyber policies are required to support Indigenous communities from being targeted. Similar to other regions, educational and research resources should be offered to bring understanding and awareness of the threat that cyber propaganda poses to the Indigenous minority populations.



DR. EBER BETANZOS

Auditoría Superior de la Federación



Trump add himself to the country as a business genius. Tucker out here is a terrible statement.
Elizabeth Warren should start calling him #Pretendian

