

**Model United Nations Topic**

***Social Media:***

***Misinformation and Censorship***

Social media has become one of the most dominant forms of communication in the 21st century. Facebook in 2020 has over 2.5 billion active users, and over 500 million tweets are sent each day on Twitter. With so much networking and information being shared, governments across the globe have become concerned about misinformation and ‘fake news’ being spread among populations.

CEOs of Facebook and Twitter, Mark Zuckerberg and Jack Dorsey, have both answered questions from the United States Senate Committee on how their respective platforms can be abused, with misinformation going viral – potentially harming countries’ ability to hold fair elections, damaging democracy. Many governments and organisations around the world have demanded these social networking companies and others work harder on preventing such abuse. Furthermore, there is a deep concern about internet bullying on these sites, and companies are pushed to work harder in preventing it.

At the same time, concern has also arisen on the subject of internet censorship. Recently, Facebook and Twitter have both been criticised for restricting a story about Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden from spreading. And many governments have faced similar criticism for passing laws that increase their powers with regards to internet censorship and surveillance. Some countries have even taken the extreme measure of temporarily blocking internet access to these sites and social networking apps.

The subject of making the internet safe – free from misinformation that that harms the very stability of democracy – is uncontroversial, and all agree that there is a need for rules and regulations so as to prevent abuse. But the question about how far companies and countries should ‘police’ internet communication is a difficult one. When does safety turn into censorship? Who distinguishes factual news from fake news? And what happens when ‘freedom of speech’ falls into ‘freedom to bully’?