



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 3: INTERNAL SECURITY
TOPIC: DISINFORMATION

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Tackling the disinformation threat in India

1. Context and Relevance

- The Global Risks Report 2025 identifies misinformation and disinformation as the top short-term global threats.
- These issues threaten democracy, public safety, economic stability, and trust in institutions.

2. Misinformation as a Global Threat

- Misinformation is false information shared without intent to mislead; disinformation is deliberately false.
- AI-generated content, algorithmic bias, and polarization make it harder to separate truth from falsehood.
- These forms of false information can damage public trust, cause health and economic harm, and even incite violence.

3. India's Vulnerability to Disinformation

- India has over 900 million internet users, making it highly vulnerable to digital misinformation.
- Its vast diversity creates fertile ground for politically and socially charged false narratives.
- Misinformation influences voter behavior, weakens economic confidence, and strains international relations.
- Declining trust in traditional media has shifted dependence to social media, where false content spreads quickly.
- India lacks strong regulatory frameworks to combat misleading digital content effectively.

4. Political and Foreign Disinformation in India

- Political parties and influencers often spread fake content for electoral gains.
- Foreign disinformation threats intensified after the 2017 Doklam standoff, especially from Chinese-origin platforms.
- India responded by banning over 300 Chinese apps.



- Studies show 46% of misinformation in India is political, 33.6% general, and 16.8% religious.
- Some foreign platforms have been accused of spreading anti-India narratives and distorting its global image.
- Reduced efforts by tech companies in fact-checking can further worsen the issue.

5. Recommendations by the Global Risks Report 2025

- Launch nationwide digital literacy programs to help people verify information.
- Hold tech platforms accountable through audits, transparency, and risk assessment.
- Train AI developers to build ethical, bias-resistant algorithms.
- Mandate disclosure of funding for online advertisements to counter hidden agendas.
- Introduce content moderation and flagging mechanisms on social platforms.

6. Balancing Regulation and Freedom

- While regulations are necessary, overregulation can lead to surveillance and censorship.
- Both misinformation and state overreach pose a threat to democracy.
- Governments must strike a balance between combating disinformation and protecting free speech.
- Invest in cybersecurity and content moderation capabilities.

7. Need for Cooperation

- National and global cooperation is essential for long-term solutions.
- Civil society, fact-checkers, and tech companies must collaborate to fight disinformation.
- Support independent journalism and provide legal safeguards for journalists and researchers.
- Launch international partnerships and policy coordination to tackle cross-border digital misinformation.

8. Conclusion and Way Forward

- The battle against misinformation is about protecting truth and democratic values.
- India must lead in digital integrity by setting an example as the world's largest democracy.
- The goal is to curb misinformation without suppressing freedom, ensuring unity and societal harmony.



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