Political Ideology, Dogmatism and Fake News

Does Political Ideology Make us Vulnerable to Confirming Fake News?

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“The views stated in this thesis are those of the author and not necessarily those of the supervisor, second assessor, Erasmus School of Economics or Erasmus University Rotterdam.”
In the memory of Amir Tafazzoli,
a friend who left us too soon
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Abstract

Fake news in the political terrain entail severe implications for society. The paper looks into fake news across the political ideology landscape; focusing on confirmation bias effects in fake news consumption. The impact of dogmatism of individual’s beliefs is examined as potential effect augmenter. An online survey with 69 participants was conducted. Respondents provided data about news accuracy assessment, their political ideology and level of dogmatism. Three regression models were estimated, explaining news titles’ perceived accuracy in respects to news ideological consistency, news actual veracity, respondents’ ideological tendencies and level of dogmatism. Results complement previous findings, confirming that individuals do perceive fake news titles as more accurate if they align with individual’s political ideology. However, dogmatism appeared as a non-significant confirmation effect augmenting factor.

(word count: 123)
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1 Introduction

Fake news is a phenomena of many guises and despite the common conception, is not an entirely novel one. Widespread, widely-held, false claims have been present in every society, throughout human history. There are numerous, historical instances of published stories full of exaggerations, inaccuracies, truth-deviations or upfront fabrications. However, the term “fake news” has been only recently brought into the spotlight in an emphatic manner, mainly due to the expansive diffusion of false stories online and the repeated (mis)use of the term in political discourse. Increased concern is sensibly justified particularly considering the immense implications of fallacious information in various, social aspects and democratic procedures.

The link between news and politics is indissoluble and bidirectional. In the sense that news may influence political decisions and beliefs but intrinsic political views might affect news “diets”. The present study aims to investigate the effect of political ideology in fake news susceptibility. It focuses, in particular, on false news that is in accordance with one’s political ideology. It is hypothesized that individuals may be more prone to believing untruthful news when it is consistent with their political beliefs, compared to when they are challenging them.

The voluminous “confirmation bias” literature serves as an ideal starting point for investigating the phenomenon. It robustly posits that individuals search and interpret new information in a partial manner. More specifically, they actively tend to filter out opposing ideas and allow mainly for like-minded ones to reach through. Alternatively, they weigh more heavily the first than the latter (Nickerson 1998). The effect subsists in various cases where human judgment is called upon, for instance jury verdicts (Roach 2009). However, whether the effect applies to news veracity assessment, as well, is still under-charted.

Furthermore, the level of “dogmatism” of individuals’ beliefs has been aptly associated with fake news susceptibility. Bronstein et al. 2019 investigate the association between and find it significantly positive. Thus, dogmatism, in its political manifestation is expected to have augmenting properties over the confirmation effects. The study expands upon the concept of “dogmatism” in political beliefs by exploring its effect upon fake news detection accuracy, in interaction with news ideological consistency.

Research was empirical and data was survey-generated. The data-set consisted of 69 valid responses, which originated from personal network connections and online sources. The primary aim of the survey was to acquire information about participants’ subjective assessment of various news titles accuracy. Additionally, questions addressing participants political ideology inclinations and their dogmatism were also essential for constructing the explanatory measures.

The survey remained active online for a total period of 20 days. Each one of the 69 participants generated 40 Perceived News Accuracy observations for a total number of 2760 observations. Three OLS models were estimated, with Perceived News Accuracy serving as the dependent variable in all three models. It was regressed against four main explanators: (i) one indicating whether a news title/story aligned with the participant’s political ideology, (ii) a second, showing their actual accuracy as determined by third-party checkers, (iii) a third, quantifying each respondent’s ideological tendencies in a “Progressive-Conservative” spectrum and a (iv) fourth measuring the level of “dogmatism” of each participant.
The two main take-aways arising from the analysis, suggest that individuals indeed perceived fake news titles that are consistent with their political ideology as more accurate than inconsistent ones. This is in accordance with previous findings of both more general confirmation bias literature and more specific results concerning news consumption. Furthermore, dogmatism’s augmentative properties over the confirming effects could not be rigorously established, as originally hypothesized. This opens the door for two possible explanations: (i) either dogmatism is an irrelevant factor over confirming news bias effects or (ii) the data-set, due to selection limitations, did not offer enough statistical power to detect dogmatism’s impact.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The “Theoretical Background” section attempts to provide the conceptual foundations necessary for comprehending relevant terms and introduce relevant literature findings. Next, the “Methodology” section is dedicated in explaining the procedures followed and the materials included in the survey, as well as introducing the measures constructed for the empirical analysis. Afterwards, the “Analysis” section looks at the statistical tools used for the data analysis. The “Results” section draws some enlightening inferences emerging from the analysis. The “Discussion” section compares the paper’s findings with respect to previous studies, emphasizes in novel contributions and considers potential limitations. Furthermore, the “Conclusions” section recaps some of the key aspects discussed throughout the paper. Finally, the “Further Discussion” section is included as supplementary but topical material, containing crucial information about the current status of the discourse on fake news while visiting some potential interventions, designed to ameliorate fake news expansion and influence, both in the individual and systemic level.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Background on Fake News

2.1.1 Defining Fake News

The term “fake news” has been interchangeably used to describe various types of misleading information, including propaganda, hoaxes, satires etc. However, it is eminent to redefine the term in its modern essence. In order to do so, Tandoc Jr, Lim, and Ling 2018 advise us to first “think about the nature of real news”. (Real) News is often perceived as the output of a journalistic procedure which meets certain standards of accuracy, independency and integrity. Additionally, above all else, news reporting should be first truth-serving (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2014).

For some analysts, the aforementioned criteria are conventionally not met. They point out that the existence of systemic barriers prevents journalists from being absolutely honest and impartial (e.g. Herman and Chomsky 2010; Tuchman 1978). In particular, they argue that the typical media business model is somewhat different than it usually perceived to be. Whilst news receptors might contribute a monetary amount to the provider, the largest fragment of revenues does not come from consumers but advertisers. In other words, media’s clients are mostly advertisers and their product is public viewingship (McManus 1992). Consequently, the news content should be advertiser-friendly, occasionally in the expense of impartiality. Noticeably, journalists have to operate under multiple forces, whose pressure shapes
the news output. So, given that news is “filtered”, what makes it actually fake?

Before proceeding to answer this question, it should be clarified that there are more general types of misleading information that do not automatically qualify for fake news. Misinformation is defined as “the inadvertent sharing of false information” and disinformation is defined as “the deliberate creation and sharing on information known to be false” (Wardle 2017). When considering intention, fake news usually fall heavily on the “deliberate intent to mislead” category. Consequently, all fake news can be considered disinformation but not vice versa. In order to suffice for news, the events reported ought to be current, significant and relevant (Kershner 2011).

Solemn, academic debate has been focusing on whether the term “fake news” should be used, at all. On one hand, Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral and Wardle and Derakhshan advise to abstain from using the term. They claim that its use can be misleading since many politicians coin the term to discredit oppositional arguments regardless of their validity (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018; Wardle and Derakhshan 2017). On the other hand, Lazer et al. 2018 argue that the use of the term “fake news” is perfectly solid since it reflects specific, scientific meaning, it can attract attention to general misinformation issues and even if the term was dropped for an alternative, the next term can be as easily misused, as well.

For the purposes of this research, the definition of Lazer et al. 2018. will be borrowed. It defines fake news as “…fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent.”. For the rest of the paper the term “fake news” will be used interchangeably with “false news”, “fake content”, “fabricated stories” etc. The alternate use of the terms serves purely repetition avoidance and textual flow. All terms should be interpreted based on the established definition.

2.1.2 Why has Fake News Proliferated?

Internet and specifically social media expansion has radically changed the way people receive news and stay informed. Indicatively, almost 62% of adults in the US declare that they often rely on social media for news (Gottfried and Shearer 2016). Through consumers’ perspective, the reason for this transition from traditional media such as television and radio to online information, is twofold. Firstly, social media offer a cheap or low-cost, instant and almost effortless access to news sources. Secondly, it provides a more dynamic environment where users can easily interact with each other by sharing, commenting, liking and uploading news content (Shu et al. 2017).

However, this shift has consequently allowed for a multitude of unchecked news sources that do not meet some or any of the standards criteria of traditional journalism. The term that is most frequently used to describe this novel, everyone-can-provide-news-information type of news creating is ambient journalism (Hermida 2010).

Despite the fact that the Internet would theoretically connect people of different races, countries, cultures and beliefs, it has been repeatedly accused of creating a “soft-environment” for its users. In other words, people are more likely to search for, visit and share information online that they already find interesting or consistent with their beliefs (or deliberately avoid challenging ones). Scientists usually refer to this phenomenon as “selective exposure” (Sears and Freedman 1967). This phenomenon may find its origin in “cognitive dissonance” theory, which suggests that
when people hold psychologically contradicting beliefs, a balance must be eventually
stricken either by altering the beliefs so they “bridge-over”, by over-weighing one
belief over the other or by introducing a third ameliorating explanation (Festinger
1962). Some scholars suggest that when it comes to politics the effect is even more
profound (e.g. Stroud 2008).

Even if individuals do not exhibit significant selective exposure behavioural ten-
dencies, Pariser 2011 argues that search engines and social media platforms have
incorporated algorithms, which detect users’ surfing patterns and promote relevant
content. Thus, this procedure automatically creates a “filter bubble”. The vast ex-
pansion of the “filter bubble” effect creates “echo chambers” in the sense that users
frequently receive feedback which simply reproduces their original input. Studies
have shown that such an environment is conducive for fake news reproduction and
can lead to ideological polarization (Dylko et al. 2017; Stroud 2010).

Internet and digitalization has also opened the door for automated algorithms,
designed to create and spread news stories on social media. This kind of software is
usually called “social bots” and have multiple functions including content creation
and designing (Lokot and Diakopoulos 2016; Haustein et al. 2016). Varol et al. 2017
estimate that a percentage between 9% and 15% of Twitter accounts are social bots.
Their goal is usually to mimic human users’ online behaviour as close as possible
(Aiello et al. 2012). Some analysts have suggested that bot involvement in the news
sharing procedure has augmented the phenomenon of false news swift mitigation
(Shao et al. 2018). Contrarily, others claim that social bots assist the diffusing of
both false and real news in roughly equal proportion, thus not baring responsibility
for fake news proliferation (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018). In any case, social bots
-regardless of their impact- seem to be a mere symptom rather than the disease
itself. One should keep in mind that social bots are developed by actual individuals
who have particular incentives to create them.

Why would someone create fake news in the first place? Through suppliers’
perspective, the motive for manufacturing fabricated stories can be firstly pecuniary.
Fake content creators usually design their stories to attract attention (click-baiting)
and subsequently sell this publicity to their patrons (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017;
Markines, Cattuto, and Menczer 2009; Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Stone 2015). In
the political sphere, where fake news has stronger presence, there are claims that
ideological motives can also drive users to create fallacious stories intended to either
support certain political candidates or slander their antagonists (Mustafaraj and
Metaxas 2010; Ratkiewicz et al. 2011; Van Bavel and Pereira 2018). Jestin Coler,
the former CEO of an international company called Disinfomedia, which specializes
in faux content creation, claimed in an interview that: “…this is not about money.
It’s about showing how easily fake news spreads.”. Nevertheless, Coler confirmed
that the business was indeed lucrative and this might have motivated him to go on
(Sydell 2016).

2.1.3 Why Should We Care About Fake News?

Numerous experts have raised awareness in the fact that widely-spread, false
information may undermine democratic procedures; for instance determining election
outcomes. The argument was brought forth specially considering the case of 2016
U.S. election (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017; Grinberg et al. 2019; Bovet and Makse
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brought attention to the issue, too, when the journalist Scot Shane interviewed Cameron Harris, a fake content creator. One of Harris’ fake stories, which bore the title “BREAKING: ‘Tens of thousands’ of fraudulent Clinton votes found in Ohio warehouse”, had reached as many as six million individuals forcing Franklin County, Ohio, to conduct an official investigation of the professed incident (Shane 2017). Other studies have been investigating fake news interference in the 2017 French elections (Ferrara 2017).

The degree in which fake stories may have decided the final outcome is debatable among academics but difficult to determine rigorously ex-post. The majority should agree however, that given the opportunity for elections free of fake, political content, people should always prefer it over the alternative. Put differently, a well-informed, participating public is not only a necessary but a sufficient condition for democracies to function properly (Petts and Brooks 2006; Webster 1999).

But even if we, supposedly, did not value truth and political transparency; still, behaviours influenced by false information, potentially entail detrimental, social costs. For instance, although a majority of individuals in the US seek information about health issues in online sources (Fox and Duggan 2013), a substantial amount of this information is of dubious quality (Fahy et al. 2014). More specifically, widespread, pseudo-scientific stories often profess that vaccination is alleged associated with autism. Based on such claims anti-vaccine movements are often responsible for public health threats that could have otherwise been prevented. The Texas, measles epidemic offers a representative case of the dangers arising from vaccination negligence (Hotez 2016). It is estimated that the direct and social costs of a massive evasion of the standard, child-vaccination programme in the US, would be $12.3 billion and $46.6 billion, respectively (Zhou et al. 2005). The adverse repercussions of misleading information in public health issues is exceptionally topical since the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The acute social impact of fake news can be traced to financial markets, as well. In 2013, a fake tweet by the Associated Press account stated that the US President, Barack Obama, had been severely injured in an explosion. The official Associated Press announcement explicitly stated that the account had been hacked and the story was fake. Nevertheless, the fictitiousness of the story did not prevent it from becoming immediately viral. Right after, stock value of $130 billion of worth plunged (Rapoza 2017). This instance perfectly illustrates how markets can mistakenly react to false information.

Even politicians themselves, who usually employ experienced and specialized staff tending their communicative agenda, can occasionally fall victims of false information, too. For instance, the former Pakistani Defense Minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, retaliated Israeli threats of nuclear attack that were apparently fictitious (R. Goldman 2016). It is obvious that, political decisions based on fallacious information can have potentially disastrous consequences for international and domestic relations.

2.2 Fake News, Political Ideology, Dogmatism and Confirmation Bias

Beyond establishing fake news issue relevance, it is pivotal to introduce the three primary concepts with which fake news will be investigated along in the present
study. These concepts three are: (i) political ideology, (ii) dogmatism and (iii) confirmation bias. The following two parts of the section are dedicated to, firstly, defining and briefly explaining these three concepts and secondly, look upon previous relevant literature findings.

2.2.1 Definitions

Ideology
Ideology can be defined as “a set of beliefs and values” which are not necessarily founded on a scientific base” (Honderich 2005). Usually the term is associated with the political terrain and henceforth when referred to, it will be used in this essence. Ideologies have been proven to be linked to both socio-environmental and biological factors. Considering the first, parenting, for instance, appears to decisively shape one’s political ideology (e.g. R. Murray and Mulvaney 2012). On the other hand, neuroscience has recently linked ideologies to biological traits (e.g. Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005; Jost, Nam, et al. 2014; Alford and Hibbing 2004). Ideological tendencies appear to form in early stages of one’s lifetime (Fraley et al. 2012; J. Block and J. H. Block 2006). Additionally, they seem to play a significant role in determining an individual’s brain structure (Nam et al. 2018; Kanai et al. 2011).

Dogmatism
For Rokeach 1954, dogmatism is “(i) a relatively closed cognitive system of beliefs and disbeliefs about reality, (ii) organized around a central set of beliefs about absolute authority which, in turn, (iii) provides a framework for patterns of intolerance and qualified tolerance toward others.”. By extension, dogmatic individuals exhibit unassailable faith in a narrow ideological scope, allowing for little or no space for alternative views. Dogmatism frequently manifest itself in political views and ideologies such as authoritarianism (Rokeach 1956). Henceforth, dogmatism will be referred to in its political essence.

Confirmation Bias
Wason 1960 published a paper investigating whether individuals “seek confirming evidence alone [...] or confirming and dis-confirming evidence [...], in order to draw conclusions in a simple conceptual task.”. Despite the fact that the term “confirmation bias” was not explicitly used in the paper, Wason’s research endeavoured to capture the concept. Ever since, the term “confirmation bias” has been used broadly to describe a variety of cognitive partialities towards like-minded ideas, beliefs or values. It heavily influences individuals’ every-day decision-making in more cases than it would be initially expected (Nickerson 1998). Koriat, Lichtenstein, and Fischhoff 1980 suggest that even avoiding any information that counters our pre-existing beliefs falls into the “confirmation bias” umbrella.

2.2.2 Previous Findings and Hypotheses

Recent scientific research has heavily focused on factors that can render individuals more vulnerable to fake news. Understanding their functioning mechanisms is essential for designing effective interventions. Namely, repetition appears to be a crucial factor that affects judgement. The scientific term to describe the phenomenon is “illusory truth effect”. Empirical findings confirming the effect’s existence appear robust based on multiple variations of analysis (e.g. Gigerenzer 1984; Begg, Anas,
and Farinacci 1992; Bacon 1979). Other researchers focus on “processing fluency”, meaning the “ease with which, individuals process information” (Alter and Oppenheimer 2009). Processing fluency can be manipulated in various ways, such as in respect of semantics (Begg, Anas, and Farinacci 1992), visual (Reber and Schwarz 1999) and phonetic representations (McGlone and Tofighbaksh 2000). Contrarily with the concept of repetition, some analysts have focused on the “truth bias effect”, meaning that individuals exhibit an “true until proven false” mentality by default, when processing new information (Levine and Bond 2014; Levine, Park, and McCornack 1999; Lewandowsky et al. 2012; Street and Masip 2015). The present research sets these factors aside and focuses primarily on the effects of “confirmation bias”.

In the news consumption terrain, confirmation bias effect appear to be profoundly present (e.g. Hart et al. 2009; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Iyengar, Hahn, et al. 2008). For instance, Levendusky argues that partisan media drive receptors to political polars, particularly when there are pre-existing ideological affiliations (Levendusky 2013). This phenomenon is usually referred to as “political polarization” and it reflects the shift of significant part of the population towards the extremes of the political spectrum (Fiorina and Abrams 2008). The same principals seem to apply in cases of established, fake news. Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler 2020 find that throughout the 2016 US elections, Republican supporters visited and shared false information online in a greater degree than Democrats supporters. Sunstein 2009 argues that political polarization via news is a principal explanations of extremistic behaviours, such as conspirology, terrorist attacks etc. Real-life seems to provide confirming instances, such as the “Comet Ping Pong Pizzeria incident”, when a 28-year old man from Salisbury, New York, entered the restaurant armed with an AR-15 rifle. He apparently had read online a fake article claiming the pizzeria was a front for a child-trafficking operation, led by Hillary Clinton (Kang and A. Goldman 2016).

The impact of judgement based on false information becomes more unsettling when taking into account findings which suggest that individuals actively defend their political positions when challenged with counter-opinions but proceed to passively embrace confirming arguments (Strickland, Taber, and Lodge 2011). Whether motivated reasoning -“the tendency to find arguments in favor of conclusions we want to believe to be stronger than arguments for conclusions we do not want to believe” (Kunda 1990)- is the main driver of confirmation bias effects is a controversial issue among the scientific community. Pennycook and Rand 2019 posit that analytical thinking is negatively related with fake news susceptibility even if the stories are belief-confirming. Consequently, individuals are falling for fake stories more due to mental “laziness” rather than partisan reasoning.

The present research also aims to explore effects of dogmatism in news consumption in interaction with confirmation effects. Empirical studies have emphasized that dogmatic beliefs are negatively associated with analytical thinking (Friedman and Jack 2018) and accurate judgement of evidence (Martin 2008). Stanovich and West 1997 argue that the decreased analytical thinking of dogmatic individuals may originate in the de facto contradicting structure of the two aspects. Bronstein et al. 2019 argue that succumbing to fake news is positively related with dogmatism and religious fundamentalism, among other factors. Lack of analytical thinking is propounded as a cogent explanation for the phenomenon. This serves as a cornerstone

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1For a precise, scientific definition and analysis of religious fundamentalism see Riesebrodt 1993; Almond, Appleby, and Sivan 2003; Antoun 2008
of this paper’s analysis.

The paper’s research scope departs from previous analyses in various aspects. Firstly, it examines the ideological confirmation and dogmatism effects on news accuracy evaluation in an interactive manner and not in separation, as other studies have previously done. Secondly, the research focuses on a “local” measure of ideological consistency per news title rather than the direct elicitation of party support from respondents, which has been a common practice in similar studies, so far (e.g. Pennycook, Bear, et al. 2020; Pennycook and Rand 2019). This measure allows for a broader respondent inclusion; even sympathizers of ideologies that are by definition inconsistent with parliamentary participation and by extension, party formation e.g. most forms of anarchism (Gaus and D’Agostino 2012). To the best of knowledge, this approach of analysis is novel compared to previous studies.

The following hypothesis will be tested:

- $H_1$: “Political ideology renders individuals more gullible to ideologically confirming fake news, compared to ideologically opposing ones”

- $H_2$: “More dogmatic individuals, compared to less dogmatic ones, exhibit the effect in a more pronounce manner”

Henceforth, the first and second hypotheses will be referred to as the “confirming deception” and the “dogmatism” hypothesis, respectively.

3 Methodology

The analysis is based on a survey, specially designed for the purposes of the research. It primary aim is to (i) determine respondents’ level of dogmatism, (ii) measure their news accuracy assessment and (iii) elicit their political beliefs.

The survey consisted of 4 phases. Phase 1 aims in assessing each participant’s level of dogmatism through a DOG (Dogmatism) Scale test (R. A. Altemeyer and B. Altemeyer 1996). In phase 2, participants were asked to evaluate the accuracy of 40 news titles/short stories. In phase 3, they were asked to declare their level of (dis)agreement with 10 political statements. Lastly, phase 4 consisted of standard demographic questions.

The order with which the survey phases were positioned was constructed on the following premises. First, respondents were called to fill in the DOG Scale test which is contains mainly general questions. News evaluation part was placed right after followed by the political statements section. In case these sections were placed in reverse order, there would be serious risk that respondents would feel “obliged” to keep their news evaluation consistent with their declared political beliefs. To avoid this, participants were first asked to perform the news evaluation procedure. Demographic questions were placed last so they do not interfere with participants engagement in filling out the survey core items.

3.1 Procedure

Phase 1 of the survey aimed to quantify respondent’s dogmatism and thus they were asked to complete a full DOG Scale test. The items were presented in random order. Subjects were called to declare their (dis)agreement with each statement in a 9-grade scale (1=Absolutely Disagree, 2=Strongly Disagree, 3=Disagree,
The primary goal of Phase 2 was to elicit participants’ news accuracy assessment. This was achieved by having them evaluate each item of the news titles and short stories set. Subjects were presented with the full sample of 40 of news titles in random order. The news were presented in a plain manner; absent of images and source of origin, to avoid uncontrolled priming effects. For every story, respondents were asked to assess its plausibility in a 6-grade scale (1=Definitely False, 2=Probably False, 3=Possibly False, 4=Possibly True, 5=Probably True, 6=Definitely True). Since news titles validity categorization was binary, (either “Real” or “Fake”), a neutral option would not provide useful information, thus it was purposefully omitted. To avoid deception, respondents were explicitly warned about the possibility of certain news titles reproducing fake content, before proceeding with phase 2.

Phase 3 aimed primarily in quantifying participants’ ideology in a “Progressive-Conservative” spectrum, based on their (dis)agreement with political statements. Subjects were presented with a custom set of 10 statements, directly or indirectly related with politics, in a random order. For each political statement, respondents were asked to declare their (dis)agreement in a 9-grade scale (1=Absolutely Disagree, 2=Strongly Disagree, 3=Disagree, 4=Somewhat Disagree, 5=Neither Agree or Disagree, 6=Somewhat Agree, 7=Agree, 8=Strongly Agree, 9=Absolutely Agree).

Standard demographic questions were left for last. Namely, the respondents were requested to provided information about their age, level of education, country of origin and gender.

3.2 Materials

3.2.1 DOG Scale Items

R. A. Altemeyer and B. Altemeyer 1996 DOG Scale test consists of twenty core items and two optional ones, which were omitted in the survey. Two indicative examples of the DOG Scale statements are exhibited below:

“\text{I am absolutely certain that my ideas about the fundamental issues in life are correct.}” (D)

“\text{It is best to be open to all possibilities and ready to reevaluate all your beliefs.}”

Half of the statements are formed to affirmatively support dogmatism (see the first paradigm) and the rest are formed to affirmatively support open-mindedness i.e. challenge dogmatism (see the second paradigm). For the complete set of DOG Scale items see Appendix A. The “dogmatic items” are denoted with (D), both in the paradigm above and in Appendix A.

3.2.2 Political Statements

A custom set of 10 statements, directly or indirectly related with politics was created. Half of the statements affirmatively supported conservative ideas and half of them affirmatively supported progressive ones. This segregation served (i) avoiding biasing respondents towards one particular ideology and (ii) comparability purposes. The
topics of the political statements, were chosen so there is as much disparity between conservative and progressive opinions as possible, for instance abortions. Before being incorporated into the survey, the statements were presented independently to two political scientists, who were asked to evaluate them either as “Conservative” or “Progressive”. The results were accordant with expectations, with a Cohen’s Kappa coefficient of 0.80. For more detailed results and calculations on the political statements rating, see Appendix B.

It must be acknowledged that ideological single dimensionality (e.g. “conservative-progressive”, “left-right”, “libertarian-authoritarian” etc.) is heavily criticized from contemporary political analysts (e.g. Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). Modern approaches attempt to map political ideologies in a plane rather than in a single axis (e.g. Maddox and Lilie 1984). In that sense, a categorization of either “conservative” or “progressive” is possibly too dichotomizing. However, this simplification was made on the premises that ideological mutli-dimensionality would counter-productively perplex the analysis.

Two statement examples -one conservative and one progressive- are listed below:

“Marijuana use, except for medical reasons, should be illegal and enforcement agencies should be strict” (C)

“Climate change is a serious issue and should be dealt with in a governmental level” (P)

The conservative statements are denoted with a (C) and the progressive ones with a (P), both in the example above and Appendix C.

3.2.3 News Titles/Short Stories Set

PolitiFact and Snopes, two political fact-checking websites, were used to generate a pool of news titles/short stories of verified validity or falsity. Each news story did not necessarily appear in a social media setting; some of them were initial claims made by politicians or other public figures in speeches, press conferences and other instances. In most occasions, the news titles were US related, since the websites usually operate within the US political terrain. Each one of the Phase 2, political statements was linked to 4 news, each one of the following type:

- One real and statement-confirming
- One fake and statement-confirming
- One real and statement-opposing
- One fake and statement-opposing

The news were clarified as “Statement Confirming” (“Statement Opposing”) in the sense that they are consistent (inconsistent) with the political statements. Table 1 presents the “Climate Change” statement paradigm along with its four corresponding news titles. This procedure generated a set of 40 news stories (=10 statements x 4 news titles per statement); half real and half fake, half statement confirming and half statement opposing. The full set of political statements along with their corresponding news stories can be found in Appendix C.
Table 1: Political Statement and News Titles Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>Confirming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Only 3 percent of voters 18 to 34 (in the US) don’t believe that climate change is really happening.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Every bit of plastic that has ever been created still exists.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Climate Change is a serious issue and should be dealt with in a governmental level”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is no war on coal. There are more coal jobs and more coal produced in Ohio than there were five years ago [...]”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Green New Deal would put a $600,000 tax burden on every (US) household.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Example of political statement along with its 4 corresponding news titles/stories. Each news title/story is denoted about its accuracy and statement consistency status.

3.3 Measures

DOG Score

Following the original scoring system of R. A. Altemeyer and B. Altemeyer 1996, the values for dogmatism consistent items were transformed to a scale ranging from -4 to 4 (-4=complete disagreement, 0=neutrality, 4=complete agreement). For open-mindedness consistent items, the procedure was inverted. The values were transformed to a scale from 4 to -4 (4=complete disagreement, 0=neutrality, -4=complete agreement). The overall DOG Score measure was computed as a weightless, arithmetic mean of all answers’ values. By design, DOG Score ranges from -4 (absolutely open-minded) to 4 (absolutely dogmatic), with more dogmatic individuals generating a higher DOG Score.

In mathematical terms:

\[ \text{DOG Score}_i = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{n_D} D_{k,i}}{n_D} \]  

Where \( \text{DOG Score}_i \) represents the DOG score of participant \( i \); \( D_{k,i} \), the corresponding value of the response in the \( k^{th} \) DOG Scale item, given by participant \( i \); and \( n_D \), the number of items in the DOG Scale test, which is equal to 10.

PeNA

The answers for all news titles/stories accuracy assessment were coded to a scale ranging from 1 to 6 (1=definite falsity, 6=definite truthiness and omitted neutral option). Without any further value transformation, the variable Perceived News Accuracy (PeNA) was created. PeNA ranges from 1 to 6 and its purpose is to quantify each participant’s subjective assessment of accuracy for each news title/short story.

Ideology

The values for all political statements evaluation were transformed to a scale ranging
from -4 to 4 (-4=definite disagreement, 0=neutrality, 4=definite agreement). The measure indicating a subject's political ideology in the “Conservative-Progressive” spectrum is based on the following formula:

\[
Ideology_i = \frac{\sum_{l=\{1,3,5,7,9\}} P_{l,i}}{n_P} - \frac{\sum_{l=\{2,4,6,8,10\}} P_{l,i}}{n_P}
\]  

(2)

Where \(Ideology_i\) represents the constructed, political ideology proxy for respondent \(i\); \(P_{l,i}\) represents the corresponding value of the answer in the \(l^{th}\) political statement, given by respondent \(i\); and \(n_P\) represents the total number of political statements, which is equal to 10. Practically, the measure is a subtraction of means between the corresponding values of conservative and progressive statements, respectively. By design, \(Ideology\) will range from -4 to 4. A positive \(Ideology\) indicates conservative, while a negative \(Ideology\) indicates progressive ideological tendency. The decision for conservative tendency to occupy the positive side of the axis, while progressive occupy the negative one is purely arbitrary.

**Consistent**

A variable indicating each news title/story’s ideological consistency with each respondent, is constructed. The measure is a binary variable called \(Consistent\) intaking the value 1 when a news title/story was “Statement Confirming” and the respondents declared at least “Somewhat Agree” in the news corresponding political statement or if the news title/story was “Statement Opposing” and the respondent declared at least “Somewhat Disagree” in the the news corresponding political statement. In any other case the variable is intaking the value 0.

In mathematical terms, the variable \(Consistent\) is defined as follows:

\[
Consistent_{m,i} = \begin{cases} 
1, & \text{if } P_{l,i} \geq 1 \text{ and } Statement\ Confirming_m = 1 \\
1, & \text{if } P_{l,i} \leq -1 \text{ and } Statement\ Confirming_m = 0 \\
0, & \text{if } P_{l,i} \geq 0 \text{ and } Statement\ Confirming_m = 0 \\
0, & \text{if } P_{l,i} \leq 0 \text{ and } Statement\ Confirming_m = 1 
\end{cases}
\]  

(3)

Where, \(Consistent_{m,i}\) indicates if there is alignment between the \(m^{th}\) news title/story and the response of subject \(i\) in the \(l^{th}\) political statement; \(P_{l,i}\) represents the corresponding value of the answer in the \(l^{th}\) political statement, given by respondent \(i\); \(Statement\ Confirming_m\) indicates if a news title/story is “Statement Confirming” (by intaking the value 1) or “Statement Opposing” (by intaking the value 0).

To make the \(Consistent\) variable coding more comprehensible, an example is provided. If a respondent declared “Somewhat Agree” (or greater level of agreement) in the “Climate Change” paradigm of Table 1, then for the news titles “Only 3 percent...” and “Every bit of plastic...” (which are “Statement Confirming”), the variable \(Consistent\) will intake the value 1, while for the news titles “There is no war...” and “The Green New Deal...” (which are “Statement Opposing”), \(Consistent\) will intake the value 0.
4 Data

4.1 Recruitment

The survey was designed and shared digitally and participants were conveniently sampled (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim 2016). SurveyTandem—a website for survey sharing—and personal network invitations served as the two, main data generators. Due to information sensitivity, complete anonymity and data privacy were disclosed and respected. Respondents completed the survey only after declaring meeting the age requirements (over 18 years old) and willing participation consent. The participants were also presented with a message providing information about the conductor and the general purpose of the survey; namely the investigation of fake news. Additionally, it was disclosed that participation was voluntary and there was no compensation scheme in place. The estimated duration of the survey completion was disclosed to be roughly 15 to 20 minutes.

4.2 Sample

The survey was launched online on the 8th of May 2020 and remained active until the 27th of May 2020, for a total number of 20 days. During the period which the survey remained active, 89 respondents participated in the survey. Out of these 89 responses, 20 had to be discarded since they exhibited a non-responsiveness rate, higher than 50%. Therefore, the valid data-set consists of 69 responses of full responsiveness (100%). Out of the total 69 responses, 52 (75.36%) came from personal network and 17 (24.64%) came from SurveyTandem as shown in Panel B of Table 2.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

In terms of gender, the data-set was relatively balanced. In particular, 37 (53.62%) respondents were male and 32 (46.38%) were female, as shown in Panel B of Table 2. The mean and median age was 30 and 26 years (St.d. = 10.84 years), respectively, while the youngest participant was 20 and the oldest 60 years old. Every respondent except one (98.55%) had obtained at least a College/BSc degree while almost half of them (47.83%) had obtained a MSc degree. A little more than half of the respondents (55.07%) originated from Greece. A relatively small number of 61 out of 690 (8.84%) observations in political statements items were neutral (“Neither Agree nor Disagree”).

Overall, participants exhibited a “progressive” ideological tendency and “open-minded” opinions. As shown in Table 2, median Ideology is negative (-1.7) and significantly different from 0 (z = -42.549, Pr < 0.001), based on a one-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test (Wilcoxon, Katti, and Wilcox 1970). Similarly, median DOG Score is again negative (-1.45) and significantly different from 0 (z = -44.755, Pr < 0.001). These inferences are consistent with the relatively high level of education, which the grand majority of respondents recorded (Center 2016)

Each respondent generated 40 observations of PeNA for a total of 2,760 (=69 respondents x 40 news titles accuracy evaluation) observations. Mean PeNA, conditional of real and false news titles, was 3.720 and 3.255, respectively. The difference between the means, as tested by a two-tailed ttest, appears significant within a 1%
level ($Pr(T > t) < 0.001, CI_{95\%} = [0.371, 0.559]$). This suggests that real news were, on average, perceived as more accurate than fake ones.

As described previously, the binary variable Consistent was constructed to indicate each news title/story ideological alignment with participants. In particular, the variable took the value 1 if the news title was “Statement Confirming” (“Statement Opposing”) and the respondent declared at least “Somewhat Agree” (“Somewhat Disagree”) in the news’ corresponding political statement. The variable took the value 0 otherwise, including the cases where participants recorded neutral responses (“Neither Agree nor Disagree”) in the political statements evaluation.
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Panel A: Continuous Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Obs.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St.d.</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Var.</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PeNA</td>
<td>2670</td>
<td>3.487</td>
<td>1.380</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.904</td>
<td>-0.161</td>
<td>2.163</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>2670</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>0.498</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.248</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>1.031</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOG Score</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-1.488</td>
<td>0.841</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td>0.187</td>
<td>3.354</td>
<td>-3.25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-1.439</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>1.048</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>2.665</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>30.159</td>
<td>10.848</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>117.68</td>
<td>1.728</td>
<td>4.755</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel B: Categorical Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-School Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree/BSc</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>34.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-MSc</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>46.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>94.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>98.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post PhD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53.62</td>
<td>53.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46.38</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Network</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>75.36</td>
<td>75.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SurveyTandem</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24.64</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Panel A summarizes the number of observations, mean, standard deviation, median, variance, skewness, kurtosis, minimum and maximum value of continuous variables. Panel B summarizes the absolute and cumulative frequencies and percentages of categorical variables.
5 Analysis

For purposes of analysis, three OLS models are estimated. *PeNA* serves as the dependent variable in all three models. Each participant generated 40 observations of *PeNA*. The explanatory variables include *Consistent*, a binary variable intaking the value 1 if a news title/story was “Statement Confirming” (“Statement Opposing”) when the participant declared at least “Somewhat Agree” (“Somewhat Disagree”) in the corresponding political statement and 0 otherwise (40 observations per participant); *Fake*, a binary variable intaking the value 1 if a news title/story was denoted “Fake” by the fact-checkers; *DOG Score*, a continuous variable ranging from -4 to 4, calculated through equation (1) and measuring the level of dogmatism for each participant (1 observation per participant); *Ideology*, a continuous variable ranging from -4 to 4, calculated through equation (2) and measuring the ideological tendency of each participant in a “Progressive” to “Conservative” spectrum (1 observation per participant). Demographic controls for age and gender are also included.

Model (1) examines the linear relation between *PeNA* and the four main regressors along with basic demographic controls over age and gender. The aim of the first model is to provide a sense of the relation, in terms of sign, magnitude and statistical significance, between the dependent variable and each of the core explanators, before introducing any interaction terms. Expectations dictate that *Consistent* should be positively and *Fake* should be negatively associated with *PeNa*. The effect’s sign of *Ideology* and *DOG Score* on *PeNA* cannot be conjectured ex-ante.

Model (2) introduces an interaction between the *Fake* and *Consistent* variables. The interaction allows for testing the “confirming deception” hypothesis; viz individuals who come across fake news titles/stories that are consistent with their political ideologies, tend to perceive them as more accurate than ideologically inconsistent ones. The model allows us to quantify the difference in *PeNA* when a fake news title/story is consistent with participant’s political ideology and when a fake news title/story is not. If the difference is statistically and magnitudally significant, then there would be evidence in support of the “confirming deception” hypothesis.

Model (3) includes the four core explanators, as in model (1) but adds an interaction term between the *DOG Score*, *Fake* and *Consistent* variables. This term is introduced in order to test the “dogmatism” hypothesis. More specifically, it allows to determine whether more dogmatic individuals exhibit increased subjective assessment of fake news, when the news are consistent with their political ideology. Given that a news title/story is both fake and consistent with a respondent’s ideology, one can quantify the impact of dogmatism level on the effect.

Double-clustered, standard errors in individuals and news titles are used in all three models. The intuition here is that there are sound reasons to suspect that unobserved elements in outcomes for both participants and news titles/stories within clusters might be correlated (Cameron and Miller 2015), thus using double-clustered standard errors accounts for it.

6 Results

The estimations of the three OLS, regression models are summarized in the respective columns (1), (2) and (3) of Table 3. As shown in column (1) of Table 3, there is a positive and statistically significant ($p-value < 0.001$, $CI_{95\%}=[0.227,0.705]$)
relation between ideological consistency and PeNA, when all other factors are kept fixed. This suggests that participants perceive ideologically confirming news as more accurate than ideologically inconsistent ones, however regardless of the news actual accuracy. In particular, when a news title/story is consistent with one’s ideology there is a 0.46 scale point increase in PeNA. The effect appears to be persistently significant across all three models (columns (1) to (3)), even when interactions are introduced; this enhances result’s robustness.

Participants exhibit decreased belief in news titles accuracy when the news were established as “Fake” by the third-party fact-checkers. The beta coefficient of Fake in model (1) is -0.465 and significant within a 1% level ($p-value =0.006, CI_{95\%}=[-0.798,-0.131]$). Similar results extend to models (2) and (3), so their respective coefficients are not reported separately. These results suggest that participants exhibited overall well-directed judgement in assessing false information. Furthermore, DOG Score does not appear to have a significant effect on PeNA, in any of the three estimated models. Conservative ideological inclinations are positively and significantly associated with PeNA, regardless of the news actual accuracy. The relevant coefficient in model (1) is 0.156 -significant within a 5% level ($p-value = 0.022, CI_{95\%}=[0.022,0.288]$)- and remains relatively constant across models (2) and (3). The coefficients suggests that if an individual exhibited a 1 scale point increase towards conservatism in his/her Ideology scale, then there would be an average 0.156 scale points increase in his/her subjective news accuracy assessment, with all other factors fixed. Demographic controls for age ($\beta_{Age}=-0.002$) and gender ($\beta_{Male}=0.126$) do not appear to provide any significant explanatory power over the dependent variable in any of the three models. This means that there was not significant variation in news evaluating between males and females and across participants’ age range, on average.

In order to address the “confirming deception” hypothesis, an interaction between Fake and Consistent variables is introduced in model (2). If a fake news title/story is coded as consistent with participant’s political ideology, there is an average 0.555 (=0.378+0.177) scale points increase in participant’s PeNA, when all other factors are kept fixed, as shown in column (2) of Table 3. The effect’s is rather significant in terms of magnitude, considering the 6-grade scale that PeNA ranges across. The result is in accordance with expectations over the “confirming deception” hypothesis. Regarding the effect’s statistical significance, the F-test is employed to determine the joint significance of the coefficients of Consistent and Fake*Consistent. The results indicate that the effect is jointly significant ($F_{(2,2752)} = 7.76, Pr < 0.001$) within a 1% significance level.

Testing the “dogmatism” hypothesis relies on the interpretations of model (3) results. The three-way interaction between DOG Score, Fake and Consistent is not significant neither in terms of magnitude nor statistically. Based on the empirical analysis conducted, there do not emerge evidence in support of the “dogmatism” hypothesis, viz more dogmatic opinions cannot be considered as an effect amplifier for confirming news, biased accuracy perception.

Considering the two principal inferences in conjunction, participants exhibited increased belief in fake news titles/stories accuracy when the news was consistent with their political ideology. However, more dogmatic individuals do not appear to exhibit more profound confirmation effects, as originally hypothesized.
Table 3: OLS of Perceived News Accuracy (PeNA) against Explanators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: PeNA</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>0.467***</td>
<td>0.378***</td>
<td>0.268**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake</td>
<td>-0.465***</td>
<td>-0.546***</td>
<td>-0.362*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.170)</td>
<td>(0.212)</td>
<td>(0.214)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOG Score</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>(0.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>0.156**</td>
<td>0.156**</td>
<td>0.155**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fake*Consistent</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.238)</td>
<td>(0.276)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOG Score*Consistent</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.085)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOG Score*Fake</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOG Score<em>Fake</em>Consistent</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.137)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.083)</td>
<td>(0.083)</td>
<td>(0.083)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.806***</td>
<td>3.846***</td>
<td>3.832***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.196)</td>
<td>(0.200)</td>
<td>(0.205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2760</td>
<td>2760</td>
<td>2760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Linear regression predicting Perceived News Accuracy (PeNA) in a 1 to 6 scale, increasing from “Definitely False” to “Definitely True”. Consistent is a binary variable intaking the value 1 if the participant declared at least “Somewhat Agree” (“Somewhat Disagree”) in a political statement and the corresponding news title was “Statement Confirming (“Statement Opposing”) and 0 otherwise. Fake is a binary variable intaking the 1 if a news title was validated as real by the fact-checking websites and 0 otherwise. DOG Score is the overall score, ranging from -4 (absolutely open-minded) to 4 (absolutely dogmatic) that each participant recorded on the dogmatism part of the questionnaire. Ideology is a continuous variable ranging from -4 to 4, measuring each respondents political ideology inclination in a “Progressive-Conservative” spectrum. Age is each participant’s age in levels. Male is a binary variable intaking the value 1 if a respondent was male and the value 0 if the respondent was female. Standard, double clustered errors in participant and news item are included in parenthesis. *, **, *** denote two-tailed significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels, respectively.
7 Discussion

The results emerging from the paper’s empirical analysis over the “confirming deception” hypothesis, are overall complementing of existing literature’s findings. More specifically, indications that suggest strong preference for news that are consistent with one’s political ideology (e.g. Hart et al. 2009; Iyengar and Hahn 2009; Iyengar, Hahn, et al. 2008) are confirmed and even expanded upon established fake news. Similar results have emerged from relevant studies, which indirectly examine fake news association with ideological tendencies (e.g. Pennycook, Bear, et al. 2020).

The inferences arising from the “dogmatism” hypothesis investigation do not explicitly contradict nor enhance previous findings on fake news and dogmatism relation. Bronstein et al. 2019 explored the relation between the two aforementioned factors in isolation from other parameters. Despite the fact that their study served as an initiating point for the present paper’s research, their investigative approach lies outside of the paper’s scope, so their respective results are not one to one comparable.

A caveat that must be acknowledged comes from the fact that most participants in the survey were highly educated. Higher levels of education have been associated with progressive political opinions and more open-minded views, in general (Barthel, Mitchell, and Holcomb 2016). Taking this under consideration, one might argue that the data-set suffers from selection bias effects. Although such claims may have certain merit, the replication of the survey procedures in a broader and more diversified sample is welcome to share more light into potential issues of external validity. This however is left for future studies.

8 Conclusions

The fake news phenomenon has spread immensely within modern political terrain and thus poses severe threats for democratic societies. To describe this novel environment, certain academics and journalists use the term “post-truth” or “truth decay” politics. Facts, which used to be the founding pillar of a political argument, can now be partly or entirely fabricated, twisted and altered to fit one’s narrative and without significant challenge. Emotional appeal and sentimentalism appear more frequently as means of persuasion. Opinions and facts are all the more muddled, trust in traditional media is on the decline and individuals appear more cynical (Rich et al. 2018).

Increased complexity in globalized socio-economy may be a plausible explanation as to why has “truth-apathy” in political discourse grown now. As a result, the public may more easily stand behind “easy solutions”, usually brought forth by demagogues as a form of reactionism, rather than develop a critic attitude.

In such an environment, one’s political ideologies might decisively shape what he or she perceives as “reality”. This “reality” can be moulded by news consumption, which can be heavily biased towards existing ideological tendencies. The present research aimed to investigate if consistent ideological attitude, renders individuals more gullible to fake news which confirm their beliefs. Expanding the explored association between fake news and dogmatism (e.g. Bronstein et al. 2019), dogmatism was investigated in the empirical research as a potential augmenting factor of the “confirmation bias” effects.

The results concerning the “confirming deception” hypothesis were in accordance...
Political Ideology, Dogmatism and Fake News

with expectations. Meaning that individuals did perceive fake news, which were consistent with their political ideologies as more accurate than inconsistent ones. This highlights the severe implications of selective news consumption, particularly online. Lastly, dogmatism does not appear as a significant effect augmenter.

9 Further Discussion: How to Battle Fake News?

The fake news in political discourse has begun to dangerously resemble a *Catch-22* paradox. In the sense that the only way to battle fake news is by re-inserting truthism in politics; but how can it be possible to insert truthism in political discourse before disposing of fake news? Coming up with inventive ways of exiting this self-sustained loop is of the essence.

Analysts segregate potential interventions into two major categories: (i) those aiming for individual fake news detection empowerment and (ii) systemic improvements directed into preventing overall fake news exposure. Next, certain solutions and their potential effectiveness will be discussed.

9.1 Self-Empowerment

A study conducted by the Pew Research Center suggests that a substantial portion of American population believes itself to be competent fake news identifier (Barthel, Mitchell, and Holcomb 2016). More specifically, an approximate 40-45% stated they are confident in their detection skills. However, evidence suggests otherwise Wineburg et al.; by conducting an extensive survey with American students, the authors describe the results as “bleak” (Wineburg et al. 2016). Apparently, participants had a hard time distinguishing advertisements from articles, did not verify news source and were not able to detect biased information when presented in activism-related context. Addressing the fact that our false content perception skills might not be as sharpened as presupposing is a pivotal first step into realizing self-empowering solutions.

Laura McClure, a prestige author and journalist, proposes a simple, 5-steps, process, each individual can follow, aiming to strengthen fake news detection abilities (McClure 2017). First, one should check the article authors and assess their credibility; secondly examine the claims made along with the supporting facts; thirdly, pay extra attention when the articles are referring to breaking news, since there is narrower time-frame for verification; fourthly, take under consideration what agency or party published the article; and lastly, appraise the emotional induction the news aims to invoke. Such methods can be effective but obviously require tremendous amount of self-discipline for everyday application.

9.2 Systemic Filters

The fake news phenomenon is already so wide-spread that counting on individual empowerment alone, will probably not be a enough. More general interventions must also be explored.

The role of automated machines in news spreading has been explored previously, but it might so happen that machines can be an effective weapon in the arsenal of false information polemicists, too. Certain analysts propose machine-learning based
approaches for identifying fake news (e.g. Ma et al. 2015; Wang 2017). A number of them suggests that by analyzing certain “linguistic cues”, such as contradictions, omissions or difference in style, automated algorithms can be a powerful, detecting tool of fake content (Markowitz and Hancock 2014; Conroy, Rubin, and Chen 2015). Additionally, Conroy, Rubin, and Chen suggest that these algorithms should incorporate data from various sources to perform fact cross-checking and social network behaviour inspection. Others favour a hybrid approach based on both algorithmic checking and human supervision (Gupta et al. 2014).

Even if more accurate, fake news detecting mechanisms are developed -with or without algorithms-, would just warning readers be adequately effective? Both sides of the debate are argued. Researchers argue that fake-alert messages can have some but quite limited positive effect in false content detection (Blank and Launay 2014; Pennycook, Cannon, and Rand 2017; Qin, Ogle, and Goodman 2008; Murphy et al. 2019; Ecker, Lewandowsky, and Tang 2010).

In 2016, after receiving heavy criticism for the US election case, Facebook decided to introduce a flagging system, which would warn users for fake content, based on third-parties fact-checking (Jamieson and Solon 2016). Facebook’s founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, commented through his personal page: “[...] we have a new kind of responsibility to enable people to have the most meaningful conversations, and to build a space where people can be informed.”. Following the new policy enactment, Levin kept track of the Winthrop story\(^2\), which despite being marked as fake, was shared and posted in viral rates. Unfortunately, the Winthrop instance is not an isolated case, since plenty more fake stories still follow the same pattern. One plausible explanation is that maybe the fake-content-warning initiative sparked a “the system is corrupt and trying to conceal the truth form us” sentiment. (Levin 2017). Another is that the spreading phase of fake news is so swift that by the time fact-checkers complete their assessment, the damage is already done.In any case, the precise effectiveness of the initiative is still impossible to measure, since Facebook refuses to disclose post-sharing data.

Studies have examined the possibility of undoing fake news effects by restoring the truth ex-post, after extensive fact-checking can be performed. Results are not encouraging since corrections seem to have small rectifying effect (e.g. Sides and Citrin 2007) or even worse, they can empower one’s misperception even further (Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Additionally, corrections come in plain contrast with the “illusory truth effect” literature which suggests that repeated exposure can increase individuals’ perceived plausibility of a story.

Google has taken a different approach in the fake news warfare. Since the end of 2016, Google has forbidden to identified, fake content producers to use its AdSense services (Dillet 2016). AdSense allows content creators to generate income by advertising goods and services in their websites. This measure aims to restrict the monetary incentives for false information production. Facebook soon followed by enforcing the same type of policy on its own advertising platform; Facebook Audience Network.

Margaret Sullivan, a columnist for The Washington Post, in a recent piece she brought forth the question of whether or not should journalists report White House announcements if they provably contain misleading information. Occasioned by the multiple instances of inaccurate, governmental announcements regarding the

\(^2\)The narrative focused on the slave trade of Irish people by the hundreds thousands in the US
COVID-19 pandemic, Sullivan comments that “These White House sessions — ostensibly meant to give the public critical and truthful information about this frightening crisis — are in fact working against that end” (Sullivan 2020). CNN and MSNBC decided to refuse to broadcast the White House sessions before inspecting the announcements for false information (Wemple 2020). This approach can be extended to any case of suspected fallaciousness. In other words, maybe it is time for reporters to weigh the accuracy of the information more heavily than the status of its source, especially considering that even “false content” warnings cannot fully undo the damage.

Of course, any form of censorship scheme -even one regarding fake news blocking- must be carefully thought through beforehand and meticulously be put in practise afterwards. In any other case, there lurk grave dangers against freedom of speech, one of the founding pillars of modern democracy. Striking the balance between providing informative content and blocking falsities, will be one of the biggest challenges for our society in the 21st century.

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3Sullivan uses as examples of forefront lies and exaggerations, the statements of the US president, Donald Trump, that: “there are plenty of tests available”; “Google is “very quickly” rolling out a nationwide website to help manage coronavirus treatment”; “the drug chloroquine, approved to treat malaria, is a promising cure for the virus” etc. (Sullivan 2020)
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Appendix

A  DOG Scale Items

Table 4: DOG Scale Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>(D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anyone who is honestly and truly seeking the truth will end up believing what I believe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There are so many things we have not discovered yet, nobody should be absolutely certain that his/her beliefs are right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The things I believe in are so completely true, I could never doubt them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have never found a system of beliefs that explains everything to my satisfaction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My opinions and beliefs fit together perfectly to make a crystal-clear “picture” of things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Flexibility is a real virtue in thinking, since you may well be wrong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My opinions are right and will stand the test of time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is best to be open to all possibilities and ready to reevaluate all your beliefs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. There are no discoveries or facts that could possibly make me change my mind about the things that matter the most in life.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am a long way from reaching final conclusions about the central issues in life.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am so sure I am right about the important things in life, there is no evidence that could convince me otherwise.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The people who disagree with me may well turn out to be right.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I am absolutely certain that my ideas about the fundamental issues in life are correct.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The person who is absolutely certain he/she knows the truth, will probably never find it.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. If you are “open-minded” about the most important things in life, you will probably reach the wrong conclusions.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Twenty years from now, some of my opinions about the important things in life will probably have changed.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. “Flexibility in thinking” is another name for being “wishy-washy”.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. No one knows all the essential truths about the central issues in life.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. People who disagree with me are just plain wrong and often evil as well.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Someday I will probably realize my present ideas about BIG issues are wrong.</td>
<td>(D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Items denoted with (D) are formed to be dogmatism-consistent. Contrarily, items where the (D) is absent, are open-mindedness consistent (oppose dogmatism). The corresponding values for each answer in the 9-grade scale alternate depending on whether a statement is dogmatism-supporting or dogmatism-opposing.
B Political Statements Rating

The 10 political statements created for the purposes of the present research were presented to two raters, specialized in political sciences. Ilias Katsampalos (BSc in Political Sciences and Public Administration in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) served as the first rater (Rater A) and Konstantinos Varelas (BSc in Law in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, BSc in Political Sciences and Public Administration in National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) served as the second rater (Rater B).

Both raters were asked independently to categorize each of the 10 political statements as either “Conservative” or “Progressive”. Their responses are summarized in Table 7 along with the rating expectations set by the author.

The calculation was based on the following mathematical formulas:

\[ \kappa = \frac{p_0 - p_e}{1 - p_e} \]  \hspace{1cm} (4)

\[ p_0 = \frac{n_A + n_D}{N} \]  \hspace{1cm} (5)

\[ p_e = \frac{(n_A + n_B)(n_A + n_C) + (n_C + n_D)(n_B + n_D)}{(n_A + n_B + n_C + n_D)^2} \]  \hspace{1cm} (6)

Where, \( \kappa \) is the Cohen’s Kappa coefficient; \( p_0 \) is the relative observed agreement among raters; \( p_e \) is the hypothetical probability of chance agreement; \( n_A \) is the number of instances where both raters categorized a statement as “Conservative”; \( n_B \) is the number of instances where Rater A categorized a statement as “Conservative” but Rater B denoted it as “Progressive”; \( n_C \) is the number of instances where Rater A categorized a statement as “Progressive” but Rater B it as “Conservative”; \( n_D \) is the number of instances where both raters categorized a statement as ”Progressive”; \( N \) is the total number of statements, which is equal to 10.

Based on the numbers of agreements and disagreements between the two raters, which are summarized in Table 5, \( p_0 \) and \( p_e \) are calculated at 0.90 and 0.50, respectively. Consequently, Kohen’s Kappa coefficient (Cohen 1960) is calculated at 0.80.

Table 5: Cumulative Number of (Dis)Agreements between Rater A and B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rater B</th>
<th>Rater A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>( n_B = 0 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. The table summarizes the number of instances where both Rater A and B categorized a statement as “Conservative” \( (n_B) \), the number of instances where Rater A categorized a statement as “Conservative” but Rater B categorized it as “Progressive” \( (n_B) \), the number of instances where Rater A categorized a statement as “Progressive” but Rater B categorized it as “Conservative” \( (n_C) \) and the number of instances where both Rater A and B categorized a statement as “Progressive” \( (n_D) \).
Table 6: Kappa Coefficient Interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kappa Statistic</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 0</td>
<td>Less than Chance Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.01 − 0.20</td>
<td>Slight Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.21 − 0.40</td>
<td>Fair Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.41 − 0.60</td>
<td>Moderate Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.61 − 0.80</td>
<td>Substantial Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.81 − 0.99</td>
<td>Almost Perfect Agreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* The table summarizes various clashes of Cohen’s Kappa coefficient’s values, along with their respective interpretations. The table is taken from Viera, Garrett, et al. 2005.

As shown in Table 6, the results suggest a “Substantial Agreement” level between Rater A and Rater B. Additionally, their answers are close to the expected ratings. Taken together, these results suggest that the statements accurately reflect the political ideology, which they were constructed to capture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Statement</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Rater A</th>
<th>Rater B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Climate Change is a serious issue and should be dealt with, in a governmental level”</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Marijuana use, except for medical reasons, should be illegal and enforcement agencies should be strict”</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “Gun-related violence is a major issue that should override the individual’s right of fire-arms carrying”</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Immigrants unless having a good reason for mitigating (e.g. war), should stay in their country”</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “Governments should take drastic measures to tackle the corona-virus pandemic”</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Top income individuals and corporations pay their fair share of taxes”</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “Police arrests and imprisonment should be reserved for major and not petty offences, such as small drug possession”</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. “Abortions, unless the health of the mother is in danger, should be illegal”</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. “Members of the LGBTQ community should have equal rights with everyone else including marriage and adoption rights”</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. “In certain cases, foreign interventions in sovereign states are justified e.g. when there is a undemocratic leader in power or there are indications for terrorism activity”</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes.** The table summarizes in the far-left column, the 10 political statements used in the research survey. The second to left column lists the expecting rating about the political inclination of each statement. The second to the right column and the far-right column present the results provided by Ilias Katsampilos (Rater A) and Konsantinos Varelas (Rater B), respectively, the two political scientists asked to independently evaluate each statement as either “Conservative” or “Progressive”.

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## C Political Statements and News Titles/Stories

Table 8: Set of Political Statements & News Titles/Stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Real</th>
<th>Statement Confirming</th>
<th>Stated</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„Climate Change is a serious issue and should be dealt with, in a governmental level“ (P)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Chris Murphy on January 15, 2014 in remarks at a news conference</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. “Only 3 percent of voters 18 to 34 (in the US) don’t believe that climate change is really happening.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Jeff Bridges on March 28, 2018 in a Facebook video</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Every bit of plastic that has ever been created still exists.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Sherrod Brown on October 16, 2012 in a debate</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “There is no war on coal. There are more coal jobs and more coal produced in Ohio than there were five years ago”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Republican Party of Florida on September 20, 2019 in a tweet</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “The “Green New Deal” (a legislative programme and economic package designed to tackle global warming) would put a $600,000 tax burden on every (US) household.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Real</td>
<td>Statement Confirming</td>
<td>Stated</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Marijuana use, except for medical reasons, should be illegal and enforcement agencies should be strict” (C)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Susan Shapiro on January 15, 2015</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “The 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that up to half of daily marijuana smokers become addicted – an estimated 2.7 million people in the U.S.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Edith Ajello on February 6, 2013</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Lots of studies seem to indicate that minors find it very easy to get marijuana, easier than to get alcohol (in the US).”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Gary Johnson on August 5, 2016</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. “Most Americans support the legalization of marijuana.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by John G. Edwards on June 5, 2012</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. “Decriminalizing marijuana will save the (US) state anywhere from $4 (million) to $11 (million) dollars.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>in a debate on the House floor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Real</td>
<td>Statement Confirming</td>
<td>Stated</td>
<td>Website</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. “Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gunfire within the country than American servicemen and women who were killed in all our wars.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Virginia Center for Public Safety on January 18, 2016 in a rally flier</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. “Every day on average 500 people die from gun violence (in the US).”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Ilhan Omar on June 5, 2019 in a tweet</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. “Over the past twenty years, the number of homicides committed with a firearm in the US has decreased by nearly 40 percent. The number of other crimes involving the use of a firearm has also plummeted, declining by nearly 70 percent.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Doug Whitsett on August 16, 2013 in a guest column</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. “After Australia passed a new law that forced gun owners to give up over 640,000 firearms, the country saw a dramatic increase in homicides, assaults and robberies.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by various Facebook users on September 21, 2019</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Real</td>
<td>Statement Confirming</td>
<td>Stated</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. “Immigrants unless having a good reason for mitigating (e.g. war), should stay in their country” (C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. “One out of every 30 people in the Greater Boston area is an illegal alien (immigrant).”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Jeff Sessions on July 26, 2018</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>in a speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. “United Nations caught helping and coaching caravan of illegal aliens (immigrants).”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by an anonymous blogger on November 22, 2018</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in a blog post</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. “Undocumented immigrants pay $12 billion of taxes (in the US) every single year.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Maria Teresa Kumar on October 2, 2016</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in an interview on “Meet the Press”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. “Lettuce (through the E-coli bacterium) killed more Americans in 2018 than undocumented immigrants.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by various social media users on January 10, 2019</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>in a meme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Real</td>
<td>Statement Confirming</td>
<td>Stated</td>
<td>Website</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. “No city in the state (of New York) can quarantine itself without state approval.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Andrew Cuomo on March 17, 2020 in a news conference</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. “The federal government is preparing to mobilize the national guard, dispatch them across the US with military and announce a nationwide 1 week quarantine for all citizens.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by unknown number on March 19, 2020 in a text</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “Governments should take drastic measures to tackle the corona-virus pandemic” (P)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by various Facebook users on March 13, 2020</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. “Spectrum (a private Internet provider) will provide free internet to (US) students during coronavirus school closures”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Donald Trump on March 11, 2020 in a White House speech</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Real Statement Confiming</td>
<td>Stated</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. “The top 20 percent of income earners pay nearly 70 percent of all federal taxes (in the US).”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Lamar Smith on August 1, 2012 in a speech to the Austin-Oak Hill Rotary Club</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. “The problem with raising tax rates on the wealthiest Americans is that more than half of them are small business owners.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Joe Boehner on November 9, 2012 in a news conference</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. “Top income individuals and corporations pay their fair share of taxes”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Andrew Cuomo on January 8, 2020 in a speech</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. “The US have the lowest corporate tax rate since 1968.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Tammy Baldwin on February 14, 2016 in a television interview</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. “Hedge fund managers and others in private equity pay much lower (tax) rates on their income than do truck drivers and teachers and nurses.”</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Real</td>
<td>Statement Confirming</td>
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<td>25. “Bill Cosby (a well-known, American actor, comedian and singer) sentenced to 3 to 10 years in prison in sex case”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Associated Press on September 15, 2018 in a news article</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. “Minnesota Man Jailed for 6 months for having a Windmill on his property”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by The Mind Unleashed on November 14, 2016 in a news article</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. “Saudi Arabian woman faces 2 years of prison for hugging a singer”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Associated Press on July 24, 2018 in a news article</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. “Virginia Democrats push legislation to make criticism of government officials a criminal offense”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by anonymous Facebook profile on January 22, 2020 in a Facebook post</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
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<td>Real</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. “Oklahoma lawmakers have passed a bill criminalizing abortion”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Jennifer Miller on May 15, 2016 in an open letter</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. “Studies have proved that having an abortion increases a woman’s risk of developing breast cancer.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by various pro-life activists in multiple instances</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. “Official tally shows big win for abortion rights in Ireland”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Associated Press on May 28, 2018 in a news article</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. “In late 2018 or early 2019, the Girl Scouts of the USA gave a Tucson, Arizona, member the ”Gold Award” for a project that promoted abortion.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by LifeNews on March 5, 2019 in a news article</td>
<td>Snopes</td>
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</table>

8. “Abortions, unless the health of the mother is in danger, should be illegal” (C)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Real Statement</th>
<th>Confirming</th>
<th>Stated</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“YouTube moves to restore LGBTQ videos placed in ‘restricted’ viewing mode.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snopes</td>
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<tr>
<td>by Johanna Wright April 27, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Students of Sunny Oaks Elementary School in California were forced to cross dress for LGBT week.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snopes</td>
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<tr>
<td>by The Free Patriot May 16, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Members of the LGBTQ community should have equal rights with everyone else, including marriage and adoption rights.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Mark Chambers May 30, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The group LGBTQ is adding a “P” to their name in order to represent pedosexuals.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Snopes</td>
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<tr>
<td>by Keya Hopkins December 17, 2017</td>
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<td>37. “Before the terrorist attacks in Benghazi, the State Department not only failed to honor repeated requests for additional security, but instead actually reduced security in Libya.”</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Ron Johnson on May 6, 2014 in an opinion article</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. &quot;Nobody suffered any lasting injuries from the CIA interrogation program.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>by Peter King on December 9, 2014 in a radio show appearance</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. “In certain cases, foreign interventions in sovereign states are justified e.g. when there is a undemocratic leader in power or there are indications for terrorism activity” (C)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Ted Yoho on March 28, 2017 in a House hearing</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. &quot;Afghanistan has more hectares (of opium poppies) planted today than they had before the US started the war.”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>by Mark Pocan on April 7, 2017 in a statement</td>
<td>PolitiFact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. “There is no legal basis for US missile strikes against Syrian military assets.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>