

very foundation as a Jewish state. We have been and remain stalwart supporters of Israel, and believe that good-faith criticism should work to strengthen it over the long term by helping it stay true to its democratic values. But anti-Zionism can clearly serve as a cover for anti-Semitism — and some criticism of Israel, as the cartoon demonstrated, is couched openly in anti-Semitic terms.

The responsibility for acts of hatred rests on the shoulders of the proponents and perpetrators. But history teaches that the rise of extremism requires the acquiescence of broader society.

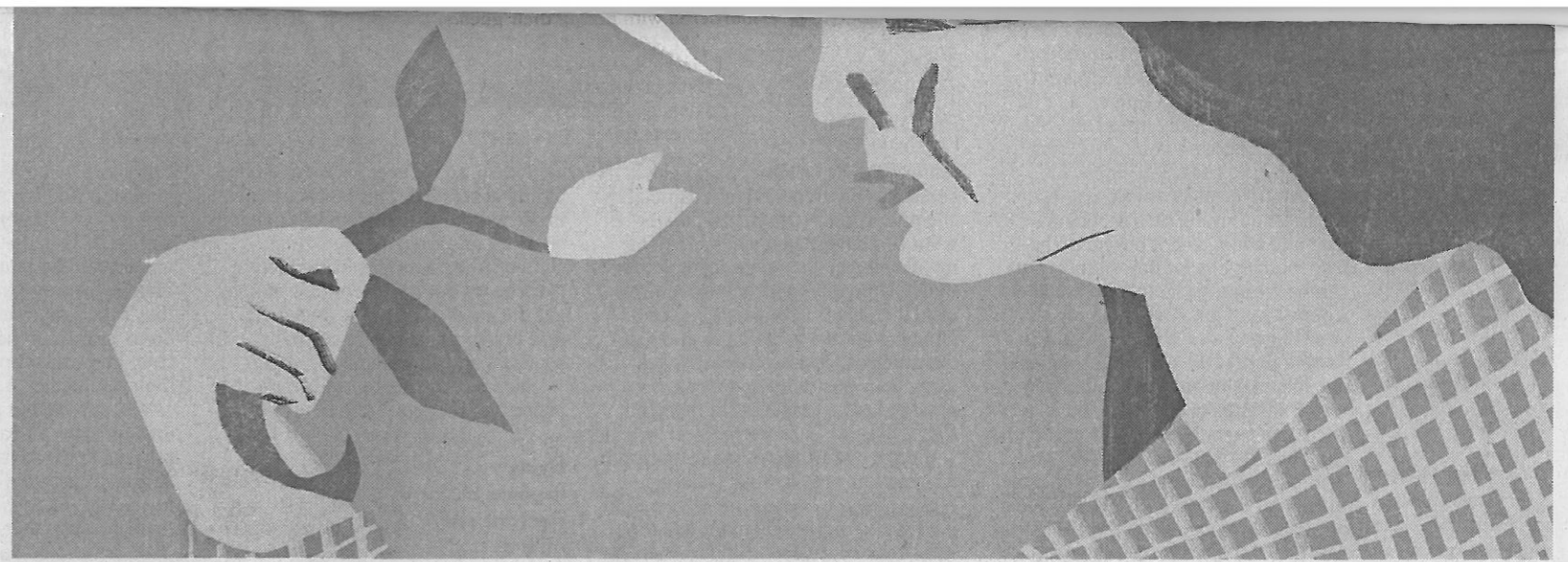
As anti-Semitism has surged from the internet into the streets, President Trump has done too little to rouse the national conscience against it. Though he condemned the cartoon in *The Times*, he has failed to speak out against anti-Semitic groups like the white nationalists who marched in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017 chanting, “Jews will not replace us.” He has practiced a politics of intolerance for diversity, and attacks on some minority groups threaten the safety of every minority group. The gunman who attacked the synagogue in San Diego claimed responsibility for setting a fire at a nearby mosque, and wrote that he was inspired by the deadly attack on mosques in New Zealand last month.

A particularly frightening, and also historically resonant, aspect of the rise of anti-Semitism in recent years is that it has come from both the right and left sides of the political spectrum. Both right-wing and left-wing politicians have traded in incendiary tropes, like the ideas that Jews secretly control the financial system or politicians.

The recent attacks on Jews in the United States have been carried out by men who identify as white supremacists, including the killing of 11 people in a Pittsburgh synagogue last year. But the A.D.L. reports that most anti-Semitic assaults, and incidents of harassment and the vandalism of Jewish community buildings and cemeteries, are not carried out by the members of extremist groups. Instead, the perpetrators are hate-filled individuals.

In the 1930s and the 1940s, *The Times* was largely silent as anti-Semitism rose up and bathed the world in blood. That failure still haunts this newspaper. Now, rightly, *The Times* has declared itself “deeply sorry” for the cartoon and called it “unacceptable.” Apologies are important, but the deeper obligation of *The Times* is to focus on leading through unblinking journalism and the clear editorial expression of its values. Society in recent years has shown healthy signs of increased sensitivity to other forms of bigotry, yet somehow anti-Semitism can often still be dismissed as a disease gnawing only at the fringes of society. That is a dangerous mistake. As recent events have shown, it is a very mainstream problem.

As the world once again contends with this age-old enemy, it is not enough to refrain from empowering it. It is necessary to stand in opposition.



LILLI CARRE

Fighting India's fake-news epidemic

Samir Patil

MUMBAI, INDIA In the continuing Indian elections, as 900 million people are voting to elect representatives to the lower house of the Parliament, disinformation and hate speech are drowning out truth on social media networks in the country and creating a public health crisis like the pandemics of the past century.

This contagion of a staggering amount of morphed images, doctored videos and text messages is spreading largely through messaging services and influencing what India's voters watch and read on their smartphones. A recent study by Microsoft found that over 64 percent of Indians encountered fake news online, the highest reported among the 22 countries surveyed.

India has the most social media users, with 300 million users on Facebook, 200 million on WhatsApp and 250 million using YouTube. TikTok, the video messaging service owned by a Chinese company, has more than 88 million users in India. And there are Indian messaging applications such as ShareChat, which claims to have 40 million users and allows them to communicate in 14 Indian languages.

These platforms are filled with fake news and disinformation aimed at influencing political choices during the Indian elections. Some of the egregious instances are a made-up BBC survey

predicting victory for the governing Bharatiya Janata Party and a fake video of the opposition Congress Party president, Rahul Gandhi, saying a machine can convert potatoes into gold.

Fake stories are spread by legions of online trolls and unsuspecting users, with dangerous impact. A rumor spread through social media about child kidnappers arriving in various parts of India has led to 33 deaths in 69 incidents of mob violence since 2017, according to IndiaSpend, a data journalism website.

Six months before the 2014 general elections in India, 62 people were killed



ADNAN ABIDI/REUTERS

A supporter wearing a mask of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India at a campaign event in March.

in sectarian violence and 50,000 were displaced from their homes in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Investigations by the police found that a fake video was shared on WhatsApp to whip up sectarian passions.

In the lead-up to the elections, the Indian government summoned the top executives of Facebook and Twitter to discuss the crisis of coordinated misinformation, fake news and political bias on their platforms. In March, Joel Kaplan, Facebook's global vice president for public policy, was called to appear before a committee of 31 members of the Indian Parliament — who were mostly from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party — to discuss “safeguarding citizens' rights on social/online news media platforms.”

The hearing was an exercise in absurdist theater because the governing B.J.P. has been the chief beneficiary of divisive content that reaches millions because of the way social media algorithms, especially Facebook, amplify “engaging” articles.

As elsewhere in the world, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are ambivalent about tackling the problem head-on for the fear of making decisions that invoke the wrath of national political forces. The tightrope walk was evident when in April, Facebook announced a ban on about 1,000 fake news pages targeting India. They included pages directly associated with political parties.

Facebook announced that a majority of the pages were associated with the

opposition Indian National Congress party, but it merely named the technology company associated with the governing B.J.P. pages. Many news reports later pointed out that the pages related to the B.J.P. that were removed were far more consequential and reached millions.

Asking the social media platforms to fix the crisis is a deeply flawed ap-

Disinformation can be defeated by treating the crisis as we responded to infectious diseases in the past.

proach because most of the disinformation is shared in a decentralized manner through messaging. Seeking to monitor those messages is a step toward accepting mass surveillance. The Indian government loves the idea and has proposed laws that, among other things,

would break end-to-end encryption and obtain user data without a court order.

The idea of more effective fact-checking has come up often in the debates around India's disinformation contagion. But it comes with many conceptual difficulties: A large proportion of messages shared on social networks in India have little to do with verifiable facts and peddle prejudiced opinions. Facebook India has a small 11- to 22-member fact-checking team for content related to Indian elections.

Fake news is not a technological or scientific problem with a quick fix. It

PATIL, PAGE 15