Narratives that Build Nations: Storytelling As a Strategic Tool Against Disinformation in the United States

Mohammed Hafiz Nabila[1] and Nunana Klenam Djokoto[2],

[1] *East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, USA*
[2] *Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana*

Abstract: Disinformation poses an increasingly serious threat to democratic resilience in the United States, weakening public confidence, exacerbating polarization, and exposing identity-based weaknesses. While fact-checking and correction information are still important, evidence shows that falsehoods persist not because of factual assertions, but because of narrative force. Stories shape how people and society interpret events, bringing emotional resonance, coherence, and identity validation. This research combines scholarship from communication, psychology, and security studies to argue that fighting disinformation necessitates narrative-based techniques as well as factual rebuttals. The Strategic Narratives Framework and the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) demonstrate how stories influence public opinion and policy results at the systemic, institutional, and cognitive levels, respectively. Empirical studies show that disinformation spreads via emotionally charged, identity-driven narratives reinforced by digital platforms and artificial intelligence, resulting in self-sustaining "narrative worlds." Counterstrategies like as prebunking, accuracy nudges, civic literacy, and open intelligence disclosure show promise for increasing resilience. Furthermore, insights from health communication and foreign influence campaigns highlight the importance of proactive, inclusive, and identity-affirming storytelling. The emergence of artificial intelligence presents both obstacles (scalable, emotionally captivating synthetic narratives) and opportunities (detection, authentication, and defensive storytelling). This review indicates that disinformation is more than just "bad facts," but also "bad stories." The United States must implement a multilayered narrative approach that includes psychology, institutional capability, technology, and civic culture. Policymakers and practitioners can promote democratic discourse and foster resilience against manipulation by incorporating facts within compelling, trustworthy, and democratic stories.

Keywords: Strategic storytelling, Disinformation, Democratic resilience, Narrative policy framework, Artificial intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

The United States is seeing an increasing epidemic of deception. False or misleading assertions are no longer minor distractions; they are instead a daily threat to national security, public health, and the operation of democracy itself. The scope of the issue has been well documented: coordinated campaigns reinforce polarizing narratives, digital platforms speed their transmission, and political actors use these dynamics to undermine trust in elections, institutions, and expertise (Freelon & Wells, 2020; Lewandowsky *et al.*, 2023). Disinformation corrodes democratic discourse by weakening common truths, inciting hostility, and making compromise appear impossible.

What gives disinformation its long-lasting influence, however, is not just the technical machinery that spreads it, but also the human stories that accompany it. People rarely process information as plain data; instead, they create sense of it using story. Stories turn isolated facts into cohesive descriptions of "what happened" and "what it means," allowing people to place themselves in a larger context (O'Loughlin *et al.*, 2013; Jones & McBeth, 2010). Effective narratives communicate identity, emotional resonance, and significance. Disinformation succeeds not just by spreading falsehoods, but also by incorporating them into narratives that are consistent with people's current values and identities.

Stories impact how people view reality; therefore, facts alone are insufficient to overcome deception. Corrective information, while vital, is frequently supplied too late or fails to reach audiences in the emotional register where lies thrive. If disinformation spreads through tales, so must resilience, truthful, inclusive narratives capable of preserving shared democratic norms. Instead of discarding facts, this technique incorporates them into appealing narratives. In this perspective, storytelling is not a "soft" cultural instrument, but a vital necessity for democratic defense.

The United States is not beginning from scratch. From prebunking and inoculation tactics to civic literacy campaigns and real-time intelligence disclosure, researchers and practitioners have created interventions that limit the dissemination and impact of false information (Pennycook, 2022; Roozenbeek *et al.*, 2022; Bateman & Jackson, 2024). At the policy level, interventions like the 2021 advise on health misinformation from the U.S. Surgeon General have presented disinformation as a structural problem that needs institutional remedies. The situation is made more complex by emerging technology. Artificial intelligence has the ability to produce convincing false narratives on a large scale, but it also provides new tools for identifying and stopping

*Corresponding Author: Mohammed Hafiz Nabila

manipulation (Swenson & Fernando, 2023; Finlayson & Islam, 2020).

This article synthesizes the expanding literature, focusing on narrative as the central thread. It investigates how disinformation uses story logic, identifies evidence-based psychological techniques, and evaluates institutional solutions to increase democratic resilience. It promotes a proactive US "narratives for democracy" strategy that combines preventive techniques such as prebunking with long-term investments in civic literacy, open intelligence sharing, and identity-affirming storytelling.

The review is organized into eight parts. It begins by examining why stories are important and how disinformation exploits them, before moving on to psychological methods, institutional and governmental responses, and the role of artificial intelligence. It broadens the analysis with diplomatic and security lessons, evidence from health communication, and design principles for a US narrative strategy.

When viewed together, this synthesis contends that disinformation is a problem of bad stories as much as "bad facts," and that the best defense is to tell better stories, stories that are based in reality, able to promote trust, and resilient enough to uphold democracy in a time of digital manipulation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS (STRATEGIC NARRATIVES FRAMEWORK AND NARRATIVE POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPF))

Understanding the dynamics of disinformation and democratic resilience necessitates investigating how narratives influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Two notable frameworks, the Strategic Narratives Framework and the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), provide complementary perspectives on the power of narrative at various levels of political and social life. Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle develop a theoretical framework in Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order (2013) that positions strategic narratives as deliberate communicative tools used by political actors to shape perceptions and influence behavior in international relations, with significant implications for US nation-building and counter-disinformation efforts. Strategic narratives are structured stories that use shared meanings about the past, present, and future to legitimate policies and mobilize support. They go beyond traditional

soft power by stressing dynamic influence through story projection and reception. The framework distinguishes three levels of narratives: system narratives, which describe the international order (e.g., US democratic leadership); identity narratives, which define national values and character (e.g., American resilience); and issue narratives, which address specific challenges such as disinformation (e.g., election integrity). These levels collaborate to build a shared vision, fighting deception by encouraging national unity and trust. The theory focuses on four themes: order, actors, uncertainty, and contestation, stressing how narratives navigate complexity and strive for legitimacy in a digital media context. The authors emphasize the importance of story coherence and audience resonance, particularly on digital platforms where disinformation abounds, and provide analytical techniques such as narrative analysis to investigate construction and reception. For the United States, the concept proposes creating narratives that strengthen democratic norms to combat divisive disinformation, as seen historically in Cold War containment, a U.S. strategy from the 1940s to 1980s that used economic, diplomatic, and ideological tools, including pro-democracy media campaigns, to combat the spread of Soviet communism and propaganda. Drawing on this precedent, the theory proposes strategic storytelling to strengthen the United States' national identity and resilience to misinformation threats. The challenges include audience rejection due to divisiveness and ethical concerns about manipulative tales. Overall, the theory offers an important lens for using strategic storytelling to build the United States' national identity and adaptability to misinformation threats.

To compliment this, Jones and McBeth (2010) developed the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), a theoretical model that views narratives as structured stories with settings, characters (heroes, villains, victims), plots, and morals, and as critical to understanding and affecting public policy processes. The authors contend that narratives are important mechanisms by which individuals, communities, and societies perceive complicated policy challenges, strategically design convincing messages, and affect results. Built on three core assumptions, namely that humans are narrative beings (homo narrans), that policy actors use narratives strategically, and that narratives can be empirically tested. The NPF offers a systematic approach to determining how stories influence policy processes.

The framework operates on three levels of analysis: the micro-level, which examines individual cognitive responses to narratives; the meso-level, which focuses on how groups or coalitions use narratives in policy debates; and the macro-level, which investigates how societal narratives shape long-term policy agendas. Jones and McBeth (2010) provide testable hypotheses, such as narratives with unambiguous heroes and villains being more compelling, narratives aligned with audience beliefs impacting choices, and unified coalition narratives driving policy success. Methodologically, the NPF emphasizes empirical rigor through mixed methods. These include qualitative content analysis to code narrative elements in policy documents or media and quantitative surveys or experiments to test narrative effects. An environmental policy example demonstrates how the framework can be applied to climate change debates.

One of the NPF's most significant achievements is its ability to bridge two policy research traditions. It leans on interpretive approaches by recognizing stories as important ways for people to understand policy, but it also takes a positivist approach by establishing empirically testable predictions. Furthermore, it provides a dynamic multi-level framework and practical insights for policymakers to create effective messaging. However, the authors admit limitations, such as the difficulty of assessing narrative impacts across varied contexts, the risk of oversimplifying complicated storytelling, and the need for more extensive applications beyond their brief environmental example. Jones and McBeth's (2010) work, published in the Policy Studies Journal, has established a foundational contribution. It has sparked research in fields such as environmental and health policy, while also establishing the NPF as a reliable, interdisciplinary instrument for evaluating narrative-driven policy dynamics with long-term theoretical and practical ramifications

These concepts demonstrate how narrative power operates at different scales, from international institutions and national identity to individual cognition. Disinformation works not because individuals are easily duped by random falsehoods, but because well-crafted stories match pre-existing cognitive, cultural, and political trends. The Strategic Narratives framework illustrates how narratives create views and legitimate goals at the macro level, whereas the NPF shows how these stories influence individual and group behavior at the micro level. They constitute a complete theoretical foundation for studying narrative-driven impact, polarization, and strategic information manipulation.

Practical/Empirical Perspectives in the United States

Strategic Narratives Framework and the Narrative Policy Framework are theoretical frameworks for understanding how narratives shape perception and behavior, but their application in the United States reveals the specific mechanisms by which disinformation operates in a highly polarized and digitally mediated environment. Freelon and Wells (2020) see misinformation as a form of political communication rather than just incorrect material. They contend that disinformation is purposefully created to deceive the public, delegitimize opponents, promote distrust in institutions, and exploit social divisions, with social media amplifying emotionally charged messages in a "post-truth" environment in which facts are less influential than affective appeals. Identity-driven deception is especially effective, as Reddi, Kuo, and Kreiss (2021) demonstrate with their idea of "identity propaganda," which strategically targets and manipulates social hierarchies to preserve hegemonic power structures. Their examination of campaigns against Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2020 US presidential election demonstrates how othering, essentializing, and authenticating narratives can erode political legitimacy and affect notions of identity along racial and gender lines. Emerging technological components worsen the dynamics. Ajayi (2025) argues that AI-driven deception, such as deepfakes, algorithmic amplification, and sentiment manipulation, enables large-scale narrative warfare that disrupts political processes, undermines trust in democratic institutions, and exacerbates polarization.

Together, these studies show that combating disinformation in the United States necessitates strategies that go beyond fact-checking, focusing instead on developing alternative narratives that resonate with shared democratic values, addressing identity-based vulnerabilities, and mitigating technological amplification of false or manipulative stories. This applied approach demonstrates how story form, social identity, and rising digital technologies influence modern American political discourse.

How Narrative Is Exploited by Disinformation

According to Suau Martínez and Juarez Miro (2024), disinformation is spread through emotionally compelling narratives rather than

single false claims. Exposure to these narratives, even when inaccurate, can influence public attitudes and perceptions of credibility in current media ecosystems. Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler (2020) demonstrated that during the 2016 election, just a minority of people received fake news, but its impact was disproportionately concentrated among political subgroups. This indicates that disinformation does not need to reach everyone; it simply needs to persuade motivated groups to change their intentions. Much of this information serves as identity propaganda. Reddi, Kuo, and Kreiss (2021) show how racial and partisan narratives portray minorities or opponents as existential threats, relying less on factual truth and more on emotional belonging. Foreign state media uses similar techniques: Bradshaw *et al.*, (2024) discovered that Russian outlets included themes of corruption, decadence, and hypocrisy into Ukraine War reportage, which were later adopted for United States audiences. The hybrid media system in the United States exacerbates this issue. Suau Martínez and Juarez Miro (2024) found that disinformation spreads through hybrid media systems such as journalism, platforms, and digital forums. Repeated exposure leads to increased belief in these narratives, highlighting the persuasive power of narrative structure. According to Barber (2020), fake news blurs the line between manipulation and accurate reporting by using storytelling tactics from traditional broadcast media.

Technology amplifies these processes. Ajayi (2025) cautions that AI enables automated, individualized "narrative worlds" that appear real and self-sustaining across platforms. The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory (2021) emphasized the stakes: Health disinformation gained influence not from numbers, but from emotionally appealing frameworks such as parental love, independence, and skepticism in authority.

To put it simply, misinformation thrives because it uses storytelling logic. In other words, emotionally engaging stories that strengthen identity, distrust outsiders, and simplify reality. These are not accidental distortions, but carefully constructed appeals intended to catch attention and undermine democratic faith.

Psychological Factors and Their Effects
Research continually reveals that people can be guided toward discernment without being censored. Pennycook (2022) discovered that light-touch accuracy cues (reminders to consider

truthfulness) considerably reduced the spread of erroneous headlines. These work by focusing attention on precision in fast-paced digital surroundings. Psychological inoculation (prebunking) is a proactive approach. Roozenbeek *et al.*, (2022) found that exposing people to "weakened doses" of deceptive techniques creates resistance in the same way that a vaccine does. Traberg *et al.*, (2023) demonstrate how prebunking may be included into literacy programs, social media, and interactive games, while Roozenbeek *et al.*, (2025) establish its efficacy in sensitive sectors such as vaccine disinformation.

Fact-checking remains crucial. According to Li and Chang (2022), corrections circulate widely when they are well defined and connected to reputable sources, but they frequently trail behind falsehoods, emphasizing the necessity for proactive methods. Civic literacy is the foundation for long-term defense. Lilja, Eklund, and Tottie (2024) discovered that cultures with greater civic competencies such as critical thinking, trust calibration, and responsible discourse, are less susceptible to disinformation. According to Broda and Strömbäck's (2024) review, multi-component tactics, which include prebunking, nudges, fact-checking, and civic education, are consistently more effective than any single tool.

Evidence demonstrates that disinformation can be addressed through psychological levers that redirect attention, develop resistance, and improve civic capacity. While no single solution is sufficient, layered approaches provide a scalable road to democratic stability.

Institutional and Policy Reactions
In recent years, US policy has emphasized disinformation as a threat to public health, political legitimacy, and national security. The United States Surgeon General's Advisory (2021) was a watershed moment, asking for a whole-of-society response that balances intervention and trust-building, backed up by the HHS (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) community toolkit for local leaders. At the strategic level, Bateman and Jackson (2024), argues that effective policies to combat disinformation should prioritize early preventative initiatives such as prebunking, adapt quickly to the rapid pace of false information, and encourage collaboration among governments, tech corporations, and community groups. They warn that overly harsh measures may be used by opponents to claim government overreach, increasing distrust. Instead, they advocate for

transparent, trust-building tactics that boost public adaptability rather than imposing top-down control.

This reasoning is extended to the organizational level by Eze and Zacky-Eze (2025), who demonstrate through case studies that proactive monitoring, open communication, prompt clarification, social media participation, cooperation with fact-checkers, and grassroots outreach are all necessary for resilience. While political organizations benefited from local engagement, corporations that used real-time monitoring were able to minimize the spread of misinformation by as much as 40%. Their six-pronged design emphasizes that trust-driven, proactive communication is the foundation of resilience, which is not only reactive but can be scaled nationally by United States institutions.

Institutional responses to foreign influence operations have also expanded in depth. Until its closure in December 2024, the State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) acted as a coordinating point for detecting and reporting foreign disinformation activities. Since then, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has increased its targeting of covert foreign assets and cyber influence networks. These measures have been especially important given the continuation of Russian, Iranian, and Chinese disinformation campaigns targeting American voters. For instance, West (2024) demonstrates how Russian-backed narratives in the 2024 election increasingly depended on AI-generated content, while ODNI (Office of the Director of National Intelligence) reports indicate multimillion-dollar operations to undermine electoral legitimacy. Such findings show that counter-disinformation is more than just content regulation; it is also about democratic security.

Based on lessons from recent U.S. policy experiments, Nabila and Thompson (2025a) argue that institutionalizing strategic communications across agencies produces more effective results. When this approach is combined with sustained investments in public diplomacy and media literacy, a framework that respects rights is built. This framework can better counter foreign influence and survive changes in political leadership.

Scholars also emphasize sector-specific approaches: King and Gallagher (2021) suggest that health, elections, and national security

necessitate separate infrastructures, whereas Rao (2024) highlights a transition from reactive fact-checking to narrative-centered institutional practice. Overall, United States responses are shifting from fragmented, reactive efforts to layered, proactive adaptability.

AI AND THE WEAPONIZATION OF STORYTELLING

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly increased the speed, scope, and precision with which disinformation narratives may be developed and circulated. Unlike past waves of disinformation that relied on manual production and transmission, AI-powered tools allow adversarial actors to generate large amounts of text, photos, audio, and video content targeted at specific audiences. (Bontcheva *et al.*, 2024). Swenson and Fernando (2023) observe that the fading of social media guardrails, combined with the rapid mainstreaming of AI-generated deepfakes, has created an environment in which fabricated but highly convincing narratives can circulate unchecked, particularly during high-stakes political events such as elections. The US intelligence community has established that Russian disinformation actors used AI-generated content to impact popular impressions of the 2024 US presidential election, creating synthetic newsrooms and identity-targeted frames on a large scale (Reuters, 2024).

Nabila and Thompson (2025b) also point out that generative AI makes it much easier and cheaper for adversaries to create personalized, emotionally-compelling false narratives. This technology shift means the United States needs better long-term strategies. There is the need to invest in systems that can quickly identify disinformation sources, create early warning networks across sectors, and build large scale resilience rather than relying on quick technical fixes.

This tendency mirrors what Ajayi (2025) refers to as "AI-powered narrative warfare," in which generative models lower the cost of disinformation campaigns while greatly broadening their linguistic and cultural scope. Narratives that were previously limited to a single language or platform may now be rapidly changed across various cultural contexts, providing authoritarian governments and malevolent actors tremendous flexibility in their influence operations. Ajayi (2025) emphasizes that AI not only scales content production but also improves story quality: synthetic stories can be emotionally engaging,

logically ordered, and contextually adaptive, frequently feeling "truer than truth" in comparison to clumsier, manually generated propaganda.

At the same time, AI is not solely a weapon for disinformation operators; it also gives defenders new capabilities. Finlayson and Islam (2025) highlight how researchers are creating story-structure analytics and stylometric detection tools to discover suspicious narrative trends in massive datasets. These AI-assisted tools can recognize when a group of seemingly unrelated social media postings share a secretly coordinated story arc or rhetorical framing, allowing platforms and investigators to more effectively identify hidden campaigns. Similarly, platforms and civil society actors are testing provenance technologies like watermarking and content authentication methods to reestablish traceability in a synthetic-content environment (West, 2024). While not infallible, such projects constitute a new "AI vs. AI" dynamic in which generative systems are used to both create and police disinformation.

According to Sadler (2025), AI increases the qualitative challenge of disinformation since narrative deception is powered not by factual errors but by the ability to generate stories that resonate with cultural identities, anxieties, and desires. When combined with AI, this form of storytelling becomes far more difficult to counter. AI-generated narratives may mimic the tone, emotions, and linguistic patterns of genuine community voices, instilling a strong sense of familiarity and trustworthiness. As a result, traditional fact-checking methods frequently appear inadequate or unpersuasive when compared to emotionally charged, identity-affirming information generated by AI.

Strategic communication scholars, such as O'Loughlin, Miskimmon, and Roselle (2013), have long emphasized the importance of strategic narratives in shaping international order. Current applications in disinformation research expand this approach into the AI era. Padalko (2024) describes how Russian AI-driven analysis of US election rhetoric facilitated the quick production of counter-narratives aimed at targeting political divides, racial identities, and institutional distrust. Similarly, Retzmann (2025) observes that in US-China relations, competing AI-assisted narratives about technology and global leadership highlight the geopolitical implications of narrative warfare.

In response, academics contend that, fact-based rebuttals alone are insufficient for countermeasures. Defenders must create counter-narratives that are not only truthful but also emotionally compelling, open about where they get their information from, and confirm the identities of their target audiences, as noted by Ajayi (2025) and Sadler (2025). Therefore, creating "truth" in isolation is less of a challenge than integrating truth into stories that may coexist in the same narrative ecosystem.

To sum it up, in this age of deception, AI speeds up the threats and opportunities associated with storytelling. It allows for extensive narrative manipulation, lowers the entry hurdles for hostile actors, and creates content that sometimes feels like lived experience. However, it also gives defenders the ability to detect narratives, verify provenance, and even tell counter-stories. The contest's winner will probably not be determined by the technology itself, but rather by how well platforms, governments, and civil society incorporate AI into more comprehensive plans for democratic endurance.

FOREIGN AND SECURITY INSIGHTS FOR US STORYTELLING

Adversaries, like Russia, illustrate how narratives serve as strategic weapons. Bradshaw *et al.* (2024) demonstrate how Russian state-linked information operations framed the Ukraine War around victimhood, Western hypocrisy, and cultural identity, connecting these themes to US discussions. Padalko (2024) identifies similar strategies in US elections, when disinformation became linked to themes like racism, voter suppression, and distrust in institutions, allowing negative reports to "launder" into mainstream discourse. These findings back up Freelon and Wells' (2020) claim that disinformation is a type of political communication focused on social divisions rather than random noise. Counter-strategies must consequently address the internal grievances that make these narratives attractive, rather than just attempting to discredit them.

A second lesson comes from the tactical use of public intelligence. Marleku (2025) shows how Western governments disrupted Russian disinformation during the Ukraine War by disclosing information about planned attacks before they occurred. This technique of attribution and transparency established credibility and destroyed opposing propaganda before it could take root, demonstrating how coherent, evidence-

based narrative can be used as a strategic influence tool. A third lesson emerges from the US-China competition, which emphasizes the struggle for global legitimacy through conflicting visions of the future. Retzmann, (2025) contends that this battle is not only about technological capabilities but also about whose governance models, values, and narratives of order gain international appeal. In this conflict, disinformation is both disruptive and beneficial, creating alternative views of modernity and legitimacy. Bánkuty-Balogh (2021) also discovers that authoritarian narratives thrive when they resonate more strongly with local audiences than liberal ones, emphasizing the relevance of cultural and contextual fit in storytelling power.

These lessons highlight three imperatives for the United States: countering external narratives that exploit domestic divisions, using transparent intelligence to preempt enemies, and investing in credible narratives that correspond with both domestic and global goals.

SECTORAL EVIDENCE: HEALTH COMMUNICATION AS A TESTBED.

Public health exemplifies both the dangers of disinformation and the value of narrative counterstrategies. The Surgeon General's Advisory (2021) identified COVID-19 and vaccination misinformation as a systemic public health issue, advocating community-based messaging through trusted messengers (teachers, church leaders, and clinicians), as well as platform redesigns to limit viral transmission. Storytelling has been extremely effective. Shelby and Ernst (2013) discovered that when vaccine information was presented in the form of a story rather than abstract data, parents responded more positively, finding human-centered stories more appealing than numbers.

Recent initiatives support this. Pennycook (2022) demonstrated that accuracy cues limit the distribution of erroneous content. Roozenbeek, *et al*., (2025) demonstrated how prebunking promotes resilience to vaccination disinformation by teaching manipulation methods. Li and Chang (2022) discovered that fact-checking works best when it is clear, authoritative, and spread via trusted networks, emphasizing the importance of local messengers.

Thus, health communication serves as a testing ground for broader strategies: story framing reduces complexity to familiar terms, nudges and inoculation create resistance, and trust in credible

messengers determines if corrections are effective. These ideas apply to elections, climate change, and national security, where disinformation also exploits uncertainty and identity.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR A STRATEGIC U.S. NARRATIVE

An effective US narrative strategy should combine psychological knowledge with institutional procedures. First, it must use prebunking to reveal stories earlier rather than later. Research indicates that exposing people to weaker types of manipulation, such as scapegoating or conspiracy framing, cultivates resistance before deception develops (Roozenbeek, *et al*., 2022; Traberg, *et al*., 2023). Prebunks are most effective when they are concise, shareable, and wrapped in relevant anecdotes. Second, initiatives should encourage citizens to disclose accurate information, as many do so impulsively. Light-touch accuracy prompts have been shown to reduce disinformation while allowing for free expression, and they can be integrated into apps and public campaigns (Pennycook, 2022).

The third principle is to seize the narrative initiative by making public intelligence revelations. Real-time dissemination of credible evidence, such as during the Ukraine War, stopped enemies from molding events and underlined the importance of openness and attribution in building confidence (Marleku, 2025). Fourth, counter-narratives should affirm democratic identity and belonging. According to research, disinformation frequently uses exclusionary or racialized narratives (Reddi, *et al*., 2021), hence pro-democracy stories must be inclusive and identity-affirming (O'Loughlin, *et al*., 2013).

Fifth, civic literacy must be treated as a democratic infrastructure. Education that enhances critical thinking, source evaluation, and trust calibration helps society combat disinformation (Lilja, *et al*., 2024; Surgeon General, 2021). Sixth, institutions must be strengthened by evidence-based policy. This includes structural reforms such as prebunking at platform entrance points, rapid feedback systems, and cross-sector collaboration, all while balancing resilience and free expression (Bateman & Jackson, 2024). Finally, advanced technologies should be harnessed by employing AI for defense. AI techniques can detect coordinated narrative manipulation, authenticate material, and aid in transparent adjustments, but human monitoring is still necessary for credibility (Finlayson & Islam, 2025; Ajayi, 2025).

These principles, when combined, create a multifaceted strategy that includes: AI-enabled defenses, transparent intelligence to control frames, identity-affirming stories to restore cohesion, civic literacy as long-term infrastructure, nudging to reduce impulsive sharing, prebunking to set cognitive guardrails, and institutional resilience through policy. Together, they strengthen democratic resilience in the digital age and incorporate facts into gripping stories.

CONCLUSION

Disinformation thrives not only on falsehoods, but also on enticing narratives that tap into identity, emotion, and belonging. This research reveals that the most successful responses must also be narrative, weaving facts into stories that promote democratic principles and foster communal trust. Psychological methods like prebunking and accuracy nudges, when combined with civic literacy, institutional resilience, and transparent intelligence, provide scalable ways to strengthen democratic discourse. The rise of artificial intelligence highlights both the perils of synthetic, hyper-personalized deception and the possibility of technical defenses for detection and authentication. Lessons from health communication, foreign propaganda, and security studies highlight the importance of proactive and inclusive narrative design. Finally, resilience is dependent on the United States' ability to communicate better stories. That is stories that not only clarify misinformation, but also inspire trust, create togetherness, and maintain democratic legitimacy in an age of digital manipulation.

REFERENCES

1. Ajayi, O. "AI-Powered Disinformation and Narrative Warfare: A Global Security Threat." *Available at SSRN 5184687* (2025).
2. Bánkuty-Balogh, L. S. "Novel technologies and geopolitical strategies: disinformation narratives in the countries of the Visegrád group." *Politics in central Europe* 17.2 (2021): 165-195.
3. Bontcheva, K., Papadopoulous, S., Tsalakanidou, F., Gallotti, R., Dutkiewicz, L., Krack, N., ... & Verdoliva, L. "Generative AI and disinformation: recent advances, challenges, and opportunities." (2024).
4. Barber, J. F. "Fake News or Engaging Storytelling." *Radio's Second Century: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives* 96 (2020).
5. Bateman, J., & Jackson, D. "Countering disinformation effectively: An evidence-based policy guide." (2024).
6. Bateman, J., & Jackson, D. "Countering disinformation effectively: An evidence-based policy guide." (2024).
7. Broda, E., & Strömbäck, J. "Misinformation, disinformation, and fake news: lessons from an interdisciplinary, systematic literature review." *Annals of the International Communication Association* 48.2 (2024): 139-166.
8. Eze, U. Z., & Zacky-Eze, C. J. "Combatting Disinformation: Analyzing Effective Communication Strategies and Tactics for Organizational Resilience." *Tripodos* 57 (2025): 01-01.
9. Finlayson, M., & Islam, A. A. "Weaponized storytelling: How AI is helping researchers sniff out disinformation campaigns." *Florida International University*. (2025).
10. Freelon, D., & Wells, C. "Disinformation as political communication." *Political communication* 37.2 (2020): 145-156.
11. Guess, A. M., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. "Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 US election." *Nature human behaviour* 4.5 (2020): 472-480.
12. Jones, M. D., & McBeth, M. K. "A narrative policy framework: Clear enough to be wrong?." *Policy studies journal* 38.2 (2010): 329-353.
13. King, A., & Gallagher, R. M. "COUNTERING DISINFORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES." (2021).
14. Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K., Cook, J., Van Der Linden, S., Roozenbeek, J., & Oreskes, N. "Misinformation and the epistemic integrity of democracy." *Current opinion in psychology* 54 (2023): 101711.
15. Li, J., & Chang, X. "Combating misinformation by sharing the truth: a study on the spread of fact-checks on social media." *Information systems frontiers* 25.4 (2023): 1479-1493.
16. Lilja, J., Eklund, N., & Tottie, E. "Civic literacy and disinformation in democracies." *Social Sciences* 13.8 (2024): 405.
17. Marleku, A. "Public intelligence as a strategic tool: The role of real-time intelligence disclosure in the Ukraine War." *Security and Defence Quarterly* 50.2 (2025): 50-65.
18. Nabila, M. H., & Thompson, M. "Countering foreign influence: The role of strategic

communications in national security policy making in the United States." *Sarcouncil Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4.9 (2025a): 22–30.

19. Nabila, M. H., & Thompson, M. "The impact of disinformation on national security policymaking: A review." *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 11.6, (2025b): 1891–1899.

20. Office of the Surgeon General. "Confronting health misinformation: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on building a healthy information environment. U.S." Department of Health and Human Services. PMID: 34283416 (2021).

21. Miskimmon, A., O'loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. "Strategic narratives: Communication power and the new world order." *Routledge*, (2014)

22. Padalko, H. "Russian Disinformation about the US Election: AI Analysis of Narratives." *Center for Internation Governance Innovation* (2025).

23. Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. "Accuracy prompts are a replicable and generalizable approach for reducing the spread of misinformation." *Nature communications* 13.1 (2022): 2333.

24. King, A., & Gallagher, R. M. "COUNTERING DISINFORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES." (2021).

25. Retzmann, N. "Narratives of Competition, Competition of Narratives? United States–China Relations, Technology, and the Role of Storytelling." *Global Studies Quarterly* 5.2 (2025): ksaf036.

26. Roozenbeek, J., Van Der Linden, S., Goldberg, B., Rathje, S., & Lewandowsky, S. "Psychological inoculation improves resilience against misinformation on social media." *Science advances* 8.34 (2022): eabo6254.

27. Appel, R. E., Roozenbeek, J., Rayburn-Reeves, R., Basol, M., Corbin, J., Compton, J., & van der Linden, S. "Psychological inoculation improves resilience to and reduces willingness to share vaccine misinformation." *Scientific Reports* 15.1 (2025): 29830.

28. Sadler, N. "Suspicious stories: taking narrative seriously in disinformation research." *Communication Theory* (2025): qtaf013.

29. Shelby, A., & Ernst, K. "Story and science: how providers and parents can utilize storytelling to combat anti-vaccine misinformation." *Human vaccines & immunotherapeutics* 9.8 (2013): 1795-1801.

30. Suau Martínez, J., & Juarez Miro, C. "Understanding disinformation as narratives in the hybrid media ecosystem: Evidence from the US." *Journalism* (2024): 14648849241303249.

31. Swenson, A., & Fernando, C. "As social media guardrails fade and AI deepfakes go mainstream, experts warn of impact on elections." (2023),

32. Traberg, C. S., Harjani, T., Basol, M., Biddlestone, M., Maertens, R., Roozenbeek, J., & van der Linden, S. "Prebunking against misinformation in the modern digital age." *Managing Infodemics in the 21st Century: Addressing New Public Health Challenges in the Information Ecosystem* (2023): 99-111.

33. van der Linden, S. "Countering misinformation through psychological inoculation." *Advances in experimental social psychology* 69 (2024): 1-58.

34. West, D. M. "How disinformation defined the 2024 election narrative." *Brookings. URL: https://www. brookings. edu/articles/how-disinformation-defined-the-2024-election-narrative/[accessed 2025-01-31]* (2024).

Cite this article as:
Nabila, M. H. & Djokoto, N. K. "Narratives that Build Nations: Storytelling as a Strategic Tool Against Disinformation in the United States." *Sarcouncil Journal of Education and Sociology* 4.10 (2025): pp 29-37.