



ADMM Cybersecurity and  
Information Centre of Excellence

# Monthly Digest

Issue 04/24 (April)

*A monthly round-up of significant news around the world*

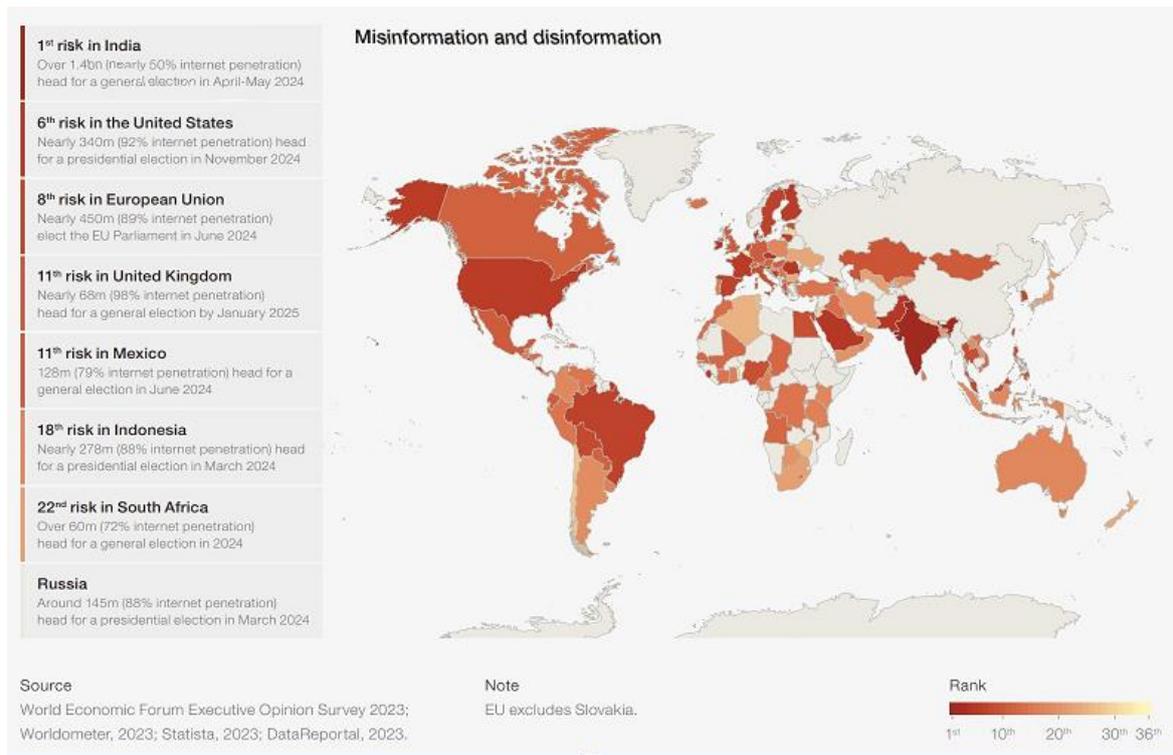
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## Information

### Emerging Technologies Transforming Election Landscapes

1. 2024 has been touted by *Time Magazine* as the year of elections. Voters in at least 64 countries, or about 49% of the world's population, will head to the polls. Elections are politically sensitive periods, where tensions can run high and polarising narratives can flood the information spaces. Emerging technologies such as Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) have the potential to transform election landscapes by providing the political parties new ways of connecting with their constituents. This notwithstanding, these emerging technologies also create more opportunities for disinformation to spread during election periods; this is a significant cause of concern for many nations according to the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s *Global Risk Report in 2024*. This section explores how these emerging technologies may revolutionise large-scale political campaigning.

2. Emerging technologies transforming elections. Emerging technologies such as Gen AI have been observed to infiltrate the information spaces during election periods. Political parties can use Gen AI tools to influence public opinion, and citizens can also utilise these tools to sway support towards their preferred parties. The Canadian-based independent think tank, Centre for International Governance Innovation, reported that while Gen AI is often seen to facilitate the spread of disinformation, such emerging technologies can also be used to evoke positive energies in new ways of achieving a democratic process.



*National Risk Perceptions in the context of Upcoming Elections  
(Source: World Economic Forum, 10 January 2024)*

3. Gen AI generated videos with personalised electoral messages. In the past, political candidates could only reach out to mass audiences through rallies and television appearances. With Gen AI, political candidates can now create personalised electoral messages to connect with the electorate. For example, in preparation for the general elections in India, the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) used Gen AI to connect with their voters with personalised greeting messages by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. *The New York Times* reported that an Indian startup, The Indian Deepfaker, created these personalised messages for the BJP and its supporters. By analysing face structures and vocal patterns of Modi, coupled with large language models, The Indian Deepfaker was able to create convincing videos showing Modi reaching out directly to the voters. While Gen AI can be used to connect with the electorate and raise popularity votes, this approach could also potentially mislead the public into believing that the political parties had personally filmed these videos when they were artificially created media materials by technology players.



*Scanning of Facial Features – The Indian Deepfaker  
(Source: The New York Times, 18 April 2024)*

4. Gen AI created audio content. Gen AI can also create audio content to influence the electorate’s voting decisions. *Reuters* reported that a “robocall” had circulated in New Hampshire in January 2024 when the state was about to hold its primary vote. The call urged voters to stay at home and not cast their ballots. It also encouraged people to “save their votes for November” (the US Presidential elections), or risk enabling “the Republicans in their quest to elect Donald Trump again”. Along with this “robocall”, there was a Gen AI created audio which impersonated President Joe Biden’s famous phrase “What a bunch of malarkey.” In so doing, the public was led to believe that President Biden had put forth a certain message to sway the public’s votes. The White House subsequently confirmed that the call was not recorded by Biden, and said that the incident “highlights the challenges emerging technologies present”.

5. Gen AI created relatable avatars. Gen AI has also been used to create avatars to relate to the electorate, particularly the younger voters. In the recent elections in Indonesia in February 2024, Gen AI created avatars of President-elect Prabowo Subianto and Vice-President elect Gibran Rakabuming Raka presented the duo in an attractive and endearing way to the Indonesian public. *The Business Times* reported that young voters chose to vote for Prabowo, the “once-feared former special forces commander”, because he is “gemoy”, an Indonesian slang for cute and cuddly. These avatars were an effective way for the duo to achieve omnipresence with the electorate across the provinces in a large country like Indonesia.



*Gen AI created Prabowo-Gibran avatars used during Indonesian elections in February 2024  
(Source: The Times, 10 February 2024)*

6. With emerging technologies providing new opportunities to shape how elections are run, tech-savvy politicians or those well-resourced with strong social media teams can leverage Gen AI to up their elections game, and gain an edge over their political rivals. As the world approaches the many elections in the months ahead in 2024, it remains to be seen how these emerging technologies will be used. Information practitioners in the government sectors, big tech players and social media platforms will play crucial roles in enabling creativity and freedom of speech, while preserving information integrity during elections.

# Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

## Shaking the Truth: Debunking Disinformation during Crises

1. During crises such as natural disasters, there is high public interest in crisis-related information about the latest happenings. According to the Paris School of Advanced Business Studies (HEC Paris), people interact over social media to get timely updates during crises like earthquakes and tsunamis. The US-based *National Library of Medicine* also published research findings in 2021 that in times of crises, individuals tend to be more limited in their mental capacity to discern truths from fake news. As such, individuals are inclined to believe information that corroborates with their current beliefs, and may easily fall into the traps of disinformation that may be spreading virally online. This section explores some best practices in government communications during crises.

2. In a recent example of earthquake disinformation, significant volumes of disinformation were propagated following the earthquake in Hualien, Taiwan in March 2024. According to *Focus Taiwan*, Taiwan's central news agency, the 7.2 magnitude earthquake was the largest earthquake in Taiwan in 25 years, resulting in 10 deaths, more than 1000 injuries and 660 people stranded due to road damage. Fake news on the earthquake flooded social media platforms, with many users attaching inaccurate references to other earthquakes. On TikTok, a video by a private user depicting the devastation in the aftermath of the Hualien earthquake was proven inaccurate after Agence France-Presse (AFP) fact-checked and revealed that the video was taken of the 2011 tsunami in Japan. In another example, K5 News FM Roxas, a regional news broadcast station under an independent network in the Philippines, shared a post of a tilted building apparently from the recent Hualien earthquake. However, AFP verified that the picture was actually taken from an earlier Hualien earthquake in February 2018.



Screenshot comparison of the photo used in the false posts (left) and the CNA photo of the 2018 quake (right)  
(Source: Agence France-Presse Fact Check)

3. Governments will need to manage crisis communications during natural disasters, given that these disasters occur without warning, and ground developments are fluid and fast-paced. The United Kingdom's Government Communication Service said that government communications are a powerful lever during crises to protect the people and restore stability in the society. Some best practices in crisis communications during disasters include:

a. Empathetic messaging. Understanding public expectations are useful in crafting crisis communications. The European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC), a public earthquake information and dissemination centre, has fought mis/dis-information during past earthquakes and found that it is important to understand the public's attitudes to anticipate what they might misunderstand about earthquakes, so as to effectively pre-empt and inoculate the public from earthquake mis/dis-information. In addition, it can be useful for crisis communications to draw best practices from other fields, such as medical protocols, to convey empathetic messages to address the emotional needs of the people, according to a research by Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University published in *Public Relations Review* in 2019.

b. Factual and transparent messaging. During crises, there is a need for timely and accurate information to alleviate the public's anxieties. A 2022 *Frontiers* research paper by the University of Cambridge, ETH Zurich, and researchers in disaster management centres from different countries found that public communication can be improved through providing precise information about the crisis situation, and being transparent about uncertainties. For instance, in the aftermath of an earthquake, this can be done through (a) informing about the magnitude and nature of the earthquakes; (b) distinguishing between evidenced predictions or possible forecasts; and (c) being proactive with updates even when there are knowledge gaps.

c. Structured and robust communication. In 2022, researchers at ETH Zurich created a communication timeline that policymakers can reference for crisis communication during earthquakes. According to the stages of an earthquake cycle, policymakers can strategise and tailor their communications to the public to address their different informational needs, as public expectations evolve throughout the earthquake cycle.



Communication timeline and strategies, based on an example of misinformation spread during an earthquake. (Source: ETH Zurich: How to fight misinformation about earthquakes? A Communication Guide)

4. Governments may work with social media platforms like Facebook and X to debunk fake news during crises. For instance, the Anti-Fake News Center in Vietnam was set up to counter fake news during times of peace and crisis. In addition, by tapping onto independent fact-checking organisations, countries can instill accountability in social media platforms to uphold information accuracy during crises. By adopting some of these best practices, governments can be better prepared for crisis communication when natural disasters hit, and more rapidly restore peace and stability within the nation in disaster recovery efforts.

# Terrorism

## ISIS Spokesperson Released Latest Audio Statement

1. On 28 March 2024, official ISIS media unit, *Al-Furqan Media Foundation*, released an audio statement titled “By Allah, This Matter Will Be Completed” by the current ISIS spokesperson, Abu Hudhayfa al-Ansari. This is Abu Hudhayfa’s third statement since he assumed the appointment in August 2023.
2. The statement commemorated a decade since ISIS was formally established, and celebrated its achievements. Abu Hudhayfa addressed ISIS affiliates around the world, including four mentions of ISIS-East Asia (ISIS-EA). Notably, he encouraged ISIS-EA elements to “unite ranks and move the work to the heart of the cities”, and called for migration to ISIS affiliates.
3. Abu Hudhayfa also incited lone-wolf attacks against the West and Israel during Ramadan, and highlighted that “The best form of worship this month is *jihad*”. Other significant mentions in his statement included his acknowledgement of the 22 March 2024 Moscow attack.



Banner Photo of the Audio Statement

## ISIS Claimed 22 March 2024 Moscow Attack

4. On 22 March 2024, four ISIS gunmen stormed the Crocus City Hall in Moscow, Russia, killing at least 137 and injuring 107 others in Russia’s worst terror attack since the 2004 Beslan school hostage crisis which killed more than 330 people. After shooting indiscriminately at the concert goers, the gunmen set fire to the building. The perpetrators were reportedly detained 14 hours after the attack and are currently on trial.
5. Subsequently, ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and released information on it, including photos and a video of the attack.

6. Pro-ISIS media groups launched a coordinated propaganda poster campaign between 22 to 26 March 2024 celebrating the attack, inciting similar lone-wolf attacks and framing the attack as retribution for Russia's military activities against ISIS in Syria.



Examples of posters referencing the 22 Mar 2024 Moscow attack

### Latest Attacks Claimed by ISIS-East Asia

7. On 21 March 2024, ISIS-East Asia (ISIS-EA) claimed one attack in Lanao del Norte, Philippines via *Al-Naba* 435. The attack killed four AFP soldiers in Ampatuan, Maguindanao del Sur.

8. ISIS-EA last claimed three attacks in February 2024. This is its fifth attack in 2024, and also the first attack in Maguindanao del Sur in 2024.



ISIS-EA attack claim published in Al-Naba 435

## CONTACT DETAILS

All reports can be retrieved from our website at [www.acice-asean.org/resource/](http://www.acice-asean.org/resource/).

For any queries and/or clarifications, please contact ACICE at  
ACICE@defence.gov.sg.

Prepared by:

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