

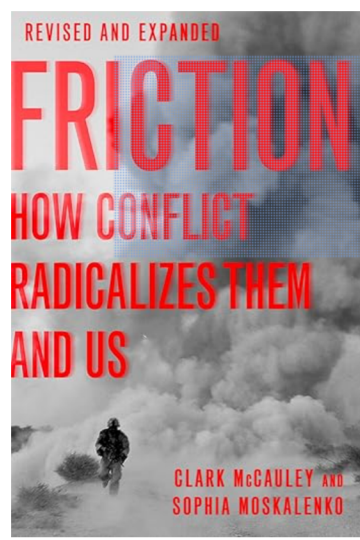
Deadly Disinformation: The Role of Ideology in Political Violence



DR. SOPHIA MOSKALENKO
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About Dr. Sophia Moskalenko
 Sophia is a social and clinical psychologist studying radicalization, political violence, self-sacrifice, and disinformation. She is a Senior Research Scientist at Design Services Group (DSG), a Research Fellow at Georgia State University, and a subject matter expert at NATO, the European Commission, and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism's Behavioral Insights Hub. Dr. Moskalenko has published over 70 peer-reviewed academic papers and several books, including the award-winning *Friction: How Conflict Radicalizes Them and Us* and *Pastels and Pedophiles: Inside the Mind of QAnon*.

Friction is a ground-breaking book that outlines twelve mechanisms of political radicalization that can move individuals, groups, and the masses to increased sympathy and support for political violence.



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Common Q&A's

Can disinformation really be “deadly?”

Yes, historically, disinformation campaigns, and specifically conspiracy theories, have resulted in violence and mass casualty events against women, Jewish people, and other minorities.

How can disinformation mobilize people for violence?

A number of factors need to align in order for a fake news story to result in real world violence. These include large-scale events that impact the community and country (such as wars, epidemics, etc.) as well as elements of the narrative content that affect individuals exposed to it (i.e. an evil person or group who are doing horrific harm to children). When these external and internal factors combine in a perfect storm, people exposed to disinformation are likely to act out in aggression against targets of disinformation.

What can be done to reduce harm from disinformation?

Effective strategies to combat disinformation include educating the public on how to recognize misleading content, enhancing transparency within government and power structures, and fostering social connectedness to reduce feelings of alienation, such as through the creation of third spaces. Additional measures involve increasing oversight of social media platforms to curb the spread of disinformation and providing broad support for mental health initiatives to build individual and community resilience against manipulative narratives.

Key Takeaways

- ☑ Disinformation campaigns can be devastatingly deadly.
- ☑ The antecedent conditions for viral disinformation campaigns include: (1) political upheaval, (2) epidemics, and (3) new informational technology.
- ☑ The radicalizing elements of deadly disinformation campaigns often rehash the same elements: (1) bad essence, (2) threat to children, and (3) emasculation threat.
- ☑ There are presently a number of disinformation campaigns with rising death tolls.

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