



# Living with Big Tech, Social Media & AI

## Regulating Social Media

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Autumn 2024

# Week 4

## Examples of use of social media internationally



Ukraine & Russia

Ugandan Elections 2021

Maynmar 2016-17

China

# *The Russian invasion of Ukraine*



Daily broadcasts  
Generated massive donations  
Documenting war crimes  
Used facial recognition and SM  
to inform Russian parents of deaths

Unable to control technically  
Banned SM companies  
Harsh legal penalties

**Ukraine is making more effective use of social media**



# Case study: Uganda general election 2021



FB took down numerous fake accounts that ramped President Museveni  
FB taken down for several days shortly before the election  
President accused FB of “Western arrogance” “foreign companies do not decide who is good or bad in Uganda”



## Case study: Rohingya genocide in Myanmar 2016-17



Free Basic Facebook widely available

Social media used by Buddhists Nationalists to incite violence against Muslim minority

Few content moderators, who spoke local languages

Despite multiple warnings Facebook took no action

Example of “status threat “ violence

# Case study: China's use of social media

Range of SM applications match US

Government realised potential for use in social control

Companies must provide info to government, on request

Means of allocating Social Credits

Control of celebrity influencers



Used as an instrument of social control



# Global Internet shutdowns 2023

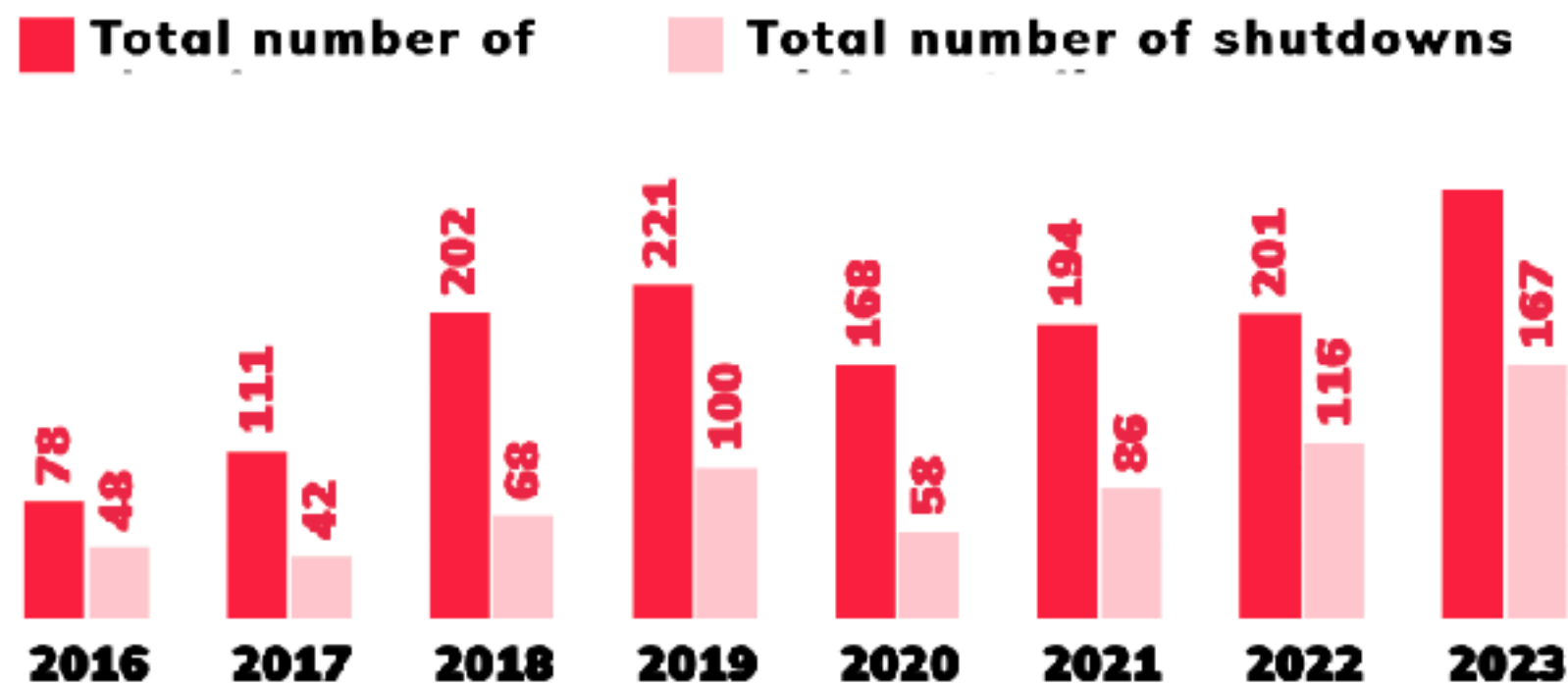
## An overview of global internet shutdowns

Read [our methodology](#) and download the [full database](#)

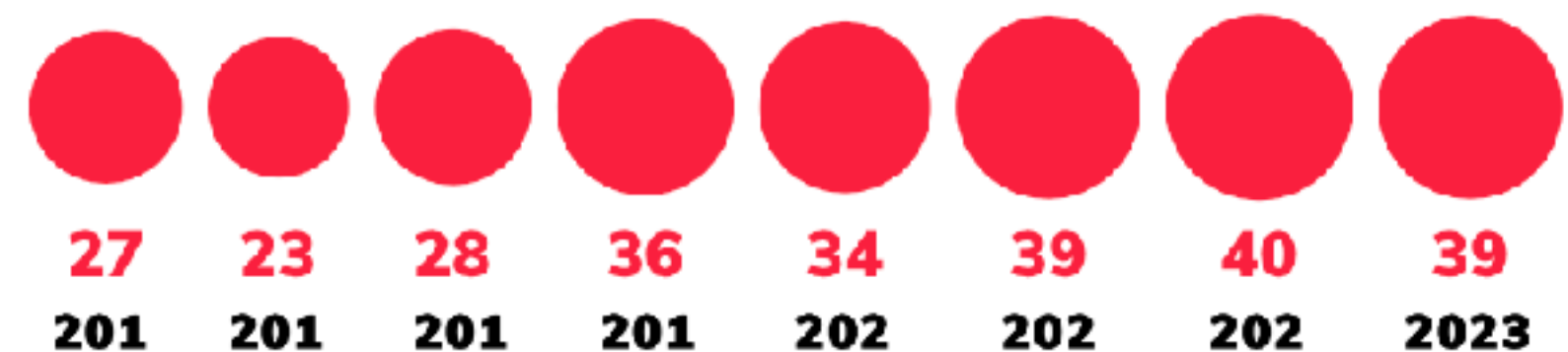


### Documented internet shutdowns by year \*

\* These numbers reflect the latest data available as of publication of this report and include updates to previously



### Number of countries where shutdowns occurred

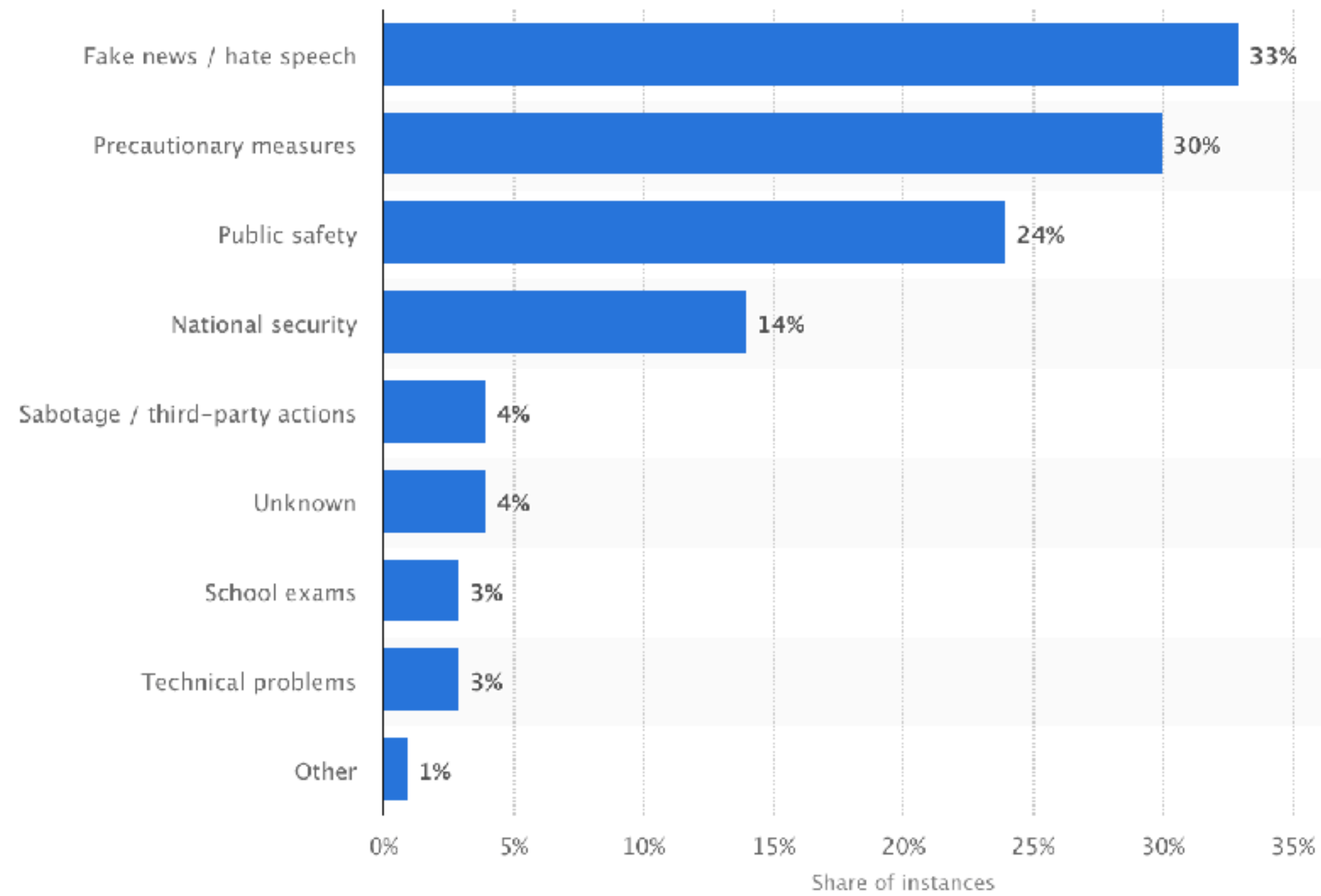


- India: 116**
- Myanmar: 37**
- Iran: 34**
- Palestine: 16\*\***
- Ukraine: 8\*\***
- Pakistan: 7**
- Iraq: 6**
- Azerbaijan: 5**
- Ethiopia: 4**
- Senegal: 4**
- Bangladesh: 3**
- Russia: 3**
- Jordan: 3**
- Libya: 3**
- China: 2**
- Guinea: 2**
- Mauritania: 2**
- Oman: 2**
- Tanzania: 2**
- Turkmenistan: 2**
- Sudan: 2**
- Syria: 2**
- Türkiye: 2**
- Algeria: 1**
- Brazil: 1**
- Cuba: 1**
- Gabon: 1**
- Indonesia: 1**
- Kenya: 1**
- Lebanon: 1**
- Mozambique: 1**
- Nepal: 1**
- Qatar: 1**
- Saudi Arabia: 1**

\*\* Shutdowns were imposed by external parties in

# Reasons for internet takedowns

## Common official justifications used by governments worldwide in 2019



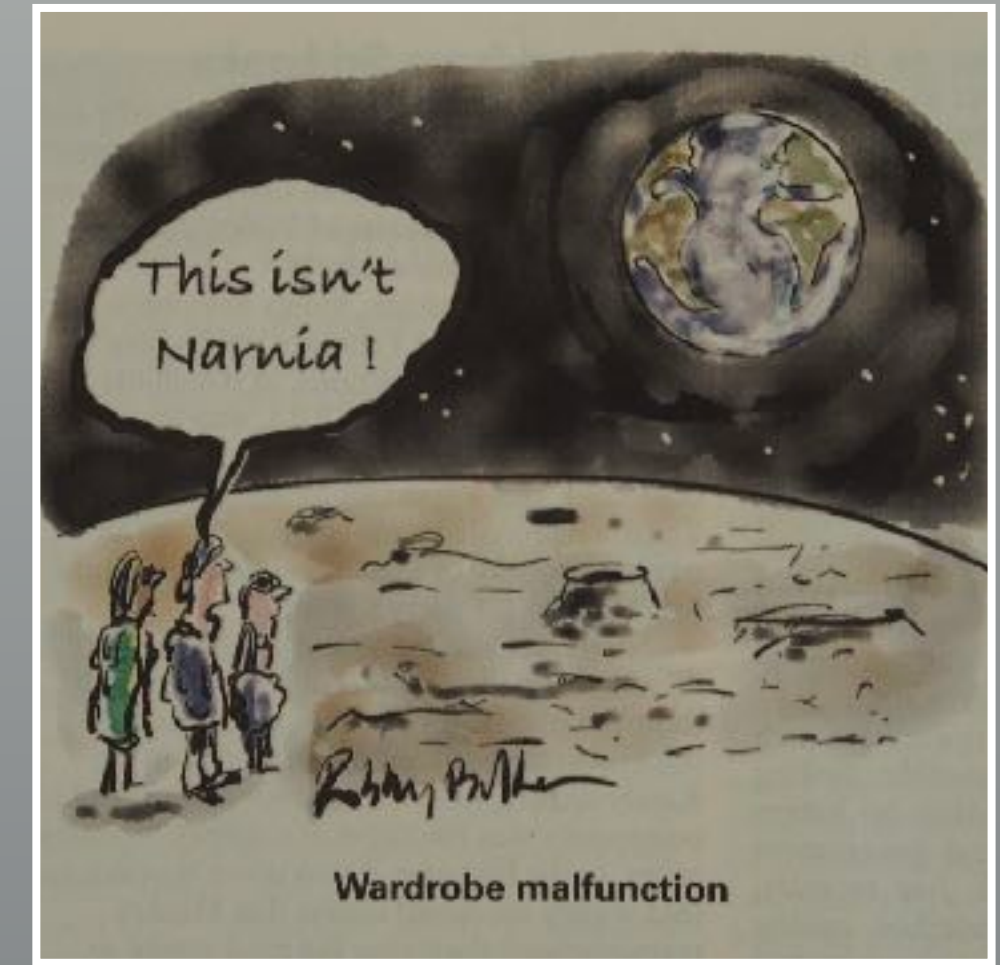


# Week 4

## Regulating Social Media

*“To know **where we’re going**,  
we have to know where we are.  
To know that, we have to know  
where we came from & how we got here”*

# Impact of social media Recap from previous week



Social media has accelerated an existing social trend

Some of the technical features of social media apps have had unexpected consequences

Mistrust of authority & lack of recognised authoritative sources fuels conspiracies

You can “find the world you seek” somewhere on social media

Weak regulation designed for the analogue age has not caught up

Nothing like the original utopian ideals



# Where we are now

Companies have no commercial incentive to dial down,  
only popular or regulatory pressure

Regulation (& regulators) designed for the analogue age

Populist politicians are unlikely to promote regulation

Social media accelerated existing political trends

But, public attitudes to social media are changing



# Growing list of concerns about effects of social media & Big Tech

Data privacy

Opague moderation rules

Dis-information & hate speech

Use in organizing eg. Jan 6th 2020 in US & Southport in UK

Social harm, especially to women & girls

Market dominance by Big Tech firms

International jurisdictions have differing views on the importance of these issues



# Two watershed moments in public perception of social media



Frances Haugen's testimony  
Congress Oct 2021

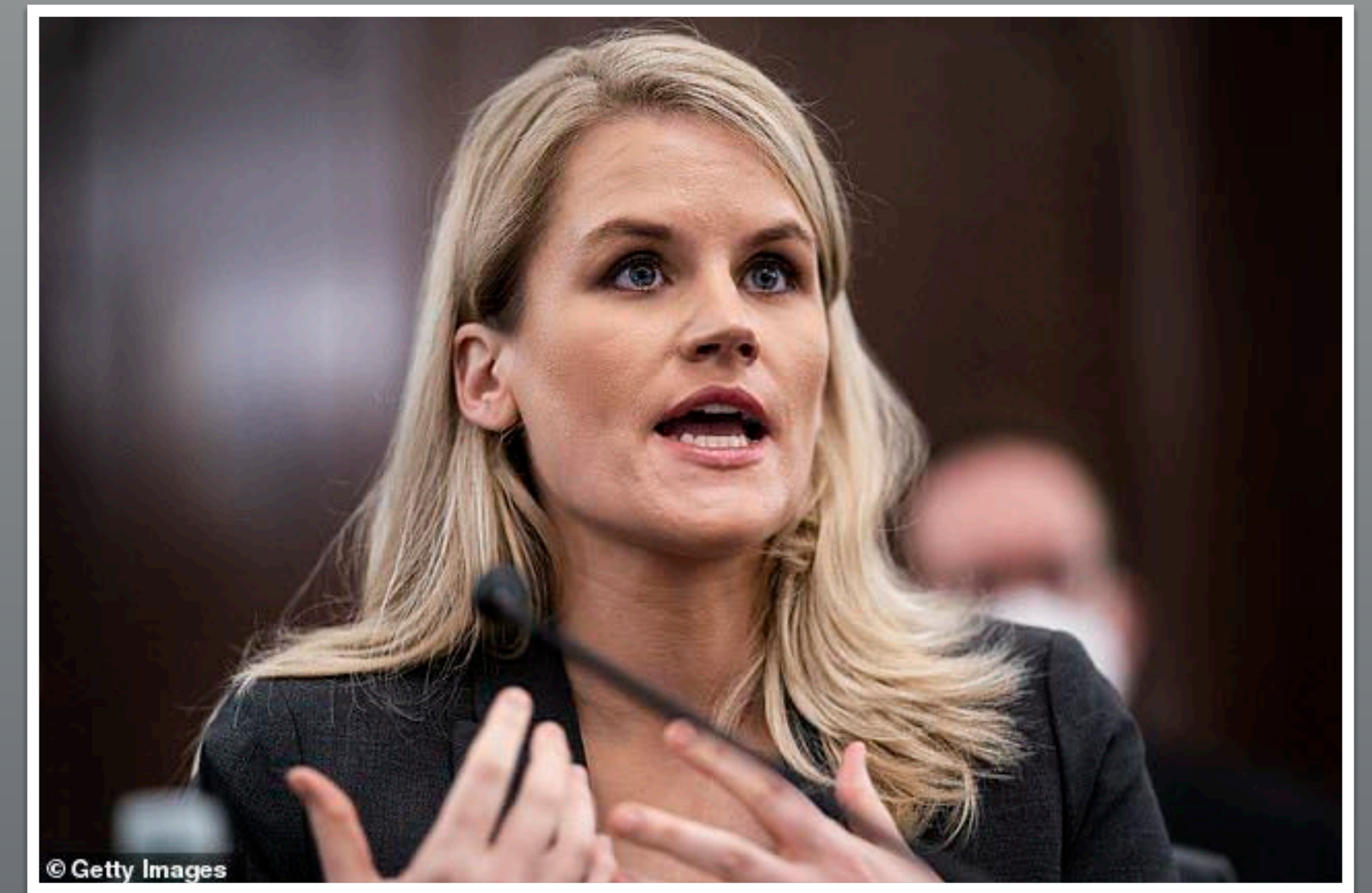


Capitol riot, 6th January 2020



# Frances Haugen Senate Committee testimony (4th October 2021)

Based on direct experience & FB research  
objective is to keep users on their site  
the more contentious the material the better  
aware of Instagram harm doing to teenage girls  
Foreign safety checks patchy  
“profits before safety”



Was this Facebook’s “big tobacco moment”?



# Meta's response to growing concerns



Mark Zuckerberg addressing angry parents

Mark Zuckerberg has testified eight times before congress

Attempts at self-regulation:

User bans following January 2021 Capitol insurrection

Expanded content moderation rules & resources

Creation of Meta Oversight Board

But, withdrew public CrowdTangle misinformation tracking tool

Growing realisation that self-regulation has been ineffective

# Current ongoing cases against Meta

Accused of misleading the public about the risks of using social media and contributing to a mental health crisis among youth.

Made a federal case after 12+ states filed similar suits

Claims:

- broke consumer protection laws by engaging in "deceptive" conduct.
- flouting its obligations under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (1998), by collecting data on children under the age of 13



# US Regulation of Social Media & Big Tech

## Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA)

Brought forward in 2022

Imposes 'duty of care' on companies

Bipartisan support, but criticized by left & right

Meta has spent \$90M over last three years on lobbying

(have 1 lobbyist for every 8 members of Congress)

Opposed to any & all regulatory controls

Doing everything possible to slow roll any legislation

Trump Administration's attitude to tech industry is ambivalent

# Other ongoing US cases

## FTC Anti-competitive behaviour

Alphabet found guilty of operating an illegal monopoly in internet search in US & Europe  
Cases pending against Amazon, Meta & Apple

## Online Safety

Dozen+ states are suing TikTok over impact on mental health among teenagers.

## National Security

TikTok required to sell US subsidiary to ByteDance or face a ban

## Free Speech (1st Amendment rights)

Extent to which government can influence social media companies  
Brought against Biden administration for attempting to limit Covid-19 mis-information  
Supreme Court supported Biden on technicality



# UK Legislation

## **Online Safety Act (2023)**

6 yrs in the making; being implemented during 2024/25

Emphasis on protecting women & girls

Defines new categories of online offences

Puts onus on companies to protect & show how they are doing so

Distinguishes between obligations of larger & smaller SM companies

Penalties based on global revenues

Responsibility on social media companies to prove they are complying

## EU Legislation

EU has lead the way in social media regulation

### **Digital Services Act (2022)**

Addresses illegal content, transparent advertising and disinformation:

- disclosing to regulators how their algorithms work,
- providing users with explanations for content moderation decisions,
- implementing stricter controls on targeted advertising.

Penalties based on global revenues

### **Digital Markets Act (2022)**

Main objective is to regulate the behaviour of "Big Tech" firms within the European Single Market.

Aims to increase competition in European digital markets by preventing large companies from abusing their market power and by allowing new players to enter the market.

Penalties based on global revenues

# Users' legal actions

“Shock jock” & conspiracy theorist, Alex Jones, ordered to pay over \$1 billion in compensation to the families after claiming the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook school killings was a hoax



Rudi Giuliani & Sidney Powell are being sued by Smartmatic over claims that ballot machines were rigged in 2020 election

Dominion Voting Systems files defamation lawsuit against Fox News



In UK, Richard Hall was sued by victims over his claims the Manchester Arena attack was a hoax





Commons Select Committee

Science, Innovation & Technology Committee

## Social media, misinformation and harmful algorithms

Current inquiry is inviting submissions includes:

- To what extent do the business models of social media companies encourage the spread of harmful content?
- How do social media companies and search engines use algorithms to rank content?
- What role do generative artificial intelligence (AI) play ?
- What role did social media algorithms play in the riots that took place in the UK in summer 2024?
- How effective is the UK's regulatory and legislative framework on tackling these issues?
- Which bodies should be held accountable for the spread of misinformation, disinformation and harmful content?

**Committee has invited Elon Musk to give evidence!**

# Where is all this regulation leading?

The next couple of years will be crucial in shaping social media:

- Amendment/repeal of S230 Communications Decency Act of 1996
- Enforcement of EU & UK legislation
- Introduction of *age gating*
- Possible break-up of big tech companies Google, Amazon & Apple
- Challenge of regulating dissemination of misinformation
- Impact of Musk/Trump “bromance” on social media unknown



AI ‘*the coming storm*’?

# Summary of the effects of social media

Social media companies set out with naive, utopia ideals

Casual attitude to data privacy from outset

Behavior altering technologies were designed to increase engagement

Advertising has been the driver of monetisation of users

Micro-targeting was intended to enhance advertising revenues

Did not foresee potential uses by politicians

Biggest ongoing risk is to young people's mental health

Did not intend to be agents of social change

Longer term generational, effects are unknown, as yet

Now primarily advertising companies?







## Next week

AI as it affects social media,

Demo of what is currently available

Interpret/guess future directions, as  
best as I can