On May 17 it was announced The Atlantic Council will partner with Facebook to "independently monitor disinformation and other vulnerabilities" in elections round the world.

The initiative is being run out of the Council's '<u>Digital Forensic</u>
Research Lab', a division which claims to have "operationalized" the study of disinformation by "exposing falsehoods and fake news, documenting human rights abuses, and building digital resilience worldwide."

Commenting, Katie Harbath, Facebook's Global Politics and Government Director, said in a statement the social media giant v "investing heavily" to prevent the platform being abused during elections.

"That includes more actively working with outside experts, governments and other companies because we know we can't so these challenges on our own. This partnership will help our secur policy and product teams get real-time insights and updates on emerging threats and disinformation campaigns from around world. It will also increase the number of 'eyes and ears' we have working to spot potential abuse on our service," she added.

Fake news

Fake news

Elaborating further on the initiative in a high-minded <u>blog post</u>, the Lab stated battling disinformation was not a new challenge, and individuals had been propagating false narratives to achieve "ideological aims" since before Gutenberg invented the printing propagating in the printing propagating in the printing propagating in the printing propagating in the printing propagating invented in the printing propagating propag

6

"Democracy depends on debate, but productive debate depon facts. Too often in recent years, we have witnessed...the delib spreading of false information, hostile state actors promoting discontent, and attacks on fact-based reporting and evidence-k research. Disinformation isn't a new challenge, but today, technologies information to leapfrog a traditional marketplace of i Disinformation can spread on industrial levels and evolve with tools enabling it," the Digital Forensic Research Lab wrote.

Peerless Hypocrisy

While laudable aims, The Atlantic Council may not be the best organization for Facebook to partner with in this initiative, given i own record of spreading false information, promoting divisive content, and attacks on fact-based reporting and evidence-based research. For instance, independent researchers has revealed the controversial #PropOrNot website was established by the Atlantic Council.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg holds a news conferer during a North Atlantic Council (NAC) defence ministers meeting Brussels, Belgium November 9, 2017

© REUTERS / ERIC

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg holds a news conference during a Nor Atlantic Council (NAC) defence ministers meeting in Brussels, Belgium Novemb 9, 2017

Established shortly after Donald Trump won the November 2016 presidential race, the minimalist site marketed itself as a "resourc for people who want to understand Russian influence operations, and "distinguish between propaganda and commercial "clickbait" push back." It offered a database of over 200 sites — running the ideological gamut from popular right-wing news aggregator Druc Report to investigative left-wing resource Truthdig — it claimed to Russian propaganda outlets, which it believed should be investigative.

unlisted from Google and Facebook news feeds and prevented from disseminating false information.

Critics were quick to suggest that rather than flagging 'Russian propaganda', it merely sought to delegitimise and discredit alternative, non-mainstream news sources. Moreover, while the identity of #PropOrNot's authors, owners and funders were not disclosed, digging by independent journalists found it was covertly created as a subsidiary of 'The Interpreter' website, an ar Russian disinformation project, which from January 2016 — Febru 2017 was an in-house "special project" of US government broadca Radio Free Europe.

#PropOrNot's database of websites it doesn't like © PropOrNot #PropOrNot's database of websites it doesn't like © PropOrNot 2017

Similarly, in July 2016 the Council published a 'report' entitled 'Arr for Deterrence', which led Paul Craig Roberts of the The Institute for Political Economy to dub the organization the "marketing arm of the US "military/security complex".

Arming for Deterrence Document © The Atlantic Council 2016

Arming for Deterrence Document © The Atlantic Council 2016

The 25-page PDF was little more than a promotional brochure for major US defense firms' assorted wares, aimed at the governr of Poland, and predicated on the notion Russia would attack or in the country unless Warsaw invested heavily in expensive US weak systems.

Moreover, the document went so far as to encourage Poland to ta actively aggressive military steps against Russia, on the basis the Kremlin "respects shows of force". To strike deep within Russian

territory, Poland is said to need American long-range JASSM airlaunched cruise missiles, Navy Strike missile coastal missiles, and Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems.

"Poland should say it reserves the right to attack Russian targets conventionally, including in Kaliningrad. Poland should aim to joir tactical nuclear capability scheme within NATO, so enabling its F-1 to be carriers of tactical nuclear ordnance. Poland should move forward expeditiously with procurements" the report said.

A Polish Air Force pilot looks at a model of a JASSM missile prior contract signing ceremony of 40 Lockheed Martin's joint air-to-sustandoff missiles (JASSM), as well as F-16 fighter plane operational flight plan upgrades, associated equipment, parts, training and logistical support, between Poland and U.S., at a Polish Air Force I in Poznan, Poland, Thursday, Dec. 11, 2014

© AP PHOTO / ALIK KE

A Polish Air Force pilot looks at a model of a JASSM missile prior to a contract signing ceremony of 40 Lockheed Martin's joint air-to-surface standoff missiles (JASSM), as well as F-16 fighter plane operational flight plan upgrades, associate equipment, parts, training and logistical support, between Poland and U.S., at a Polish Air Force base in Poznan, Poland, Thursday, Dec. 11, 2014

The encouraged 'procurements', apparently the only way of stavious off non-existent 'Russian aggression', would total "some US\$26 billion", on top of planned expenditures of US\$34 billion, meaning windfall receipts for the US' biggest arms manufacturers.

Nonetheless, such activities may be unsurprising, given The Atlan Council's primary <u>financial backers</u> include Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, the Ukrainian World Congress and the US State Department — all entities which profit financially and politically from perpetuating claims of a "Russian threat".