

Synthesis Technology, Artificial Intelligence and “Deep-Fake” Videos: “I Don’t Think the Public Is Aware of What’s Coming”

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Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Intelligence](#)

Global Research, June 19, 2019

[Zero Hedge](#) 16 June 2019

“I don’t think we’re well prepared at all. And I don’t think the public is aware of what’s coming,” said the Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. He was discussing the rapid advance of synthesis technology. This new artificial intelligence capability allows competent programmers to create audio and video of anyone, saying absolutely anything.

The creations are called “deepfakes” and however outrageous they may be, they’re virtually indistinguishable from the real thing.

No sooner had we adjusted to a world where our reality seemed fake, then things that are fake became our reality.

“We’re outgunned,” said a UC Berkeley digital-forensics expert, “The number of people now working on video-synthesis outnumber those working on detecting deepfakes by 100-1.”

Twitter suspended 4,779 accounts it believed are associated with Iran’s theocratic leaders. It republished every tweet sent by these accounts to help researchers analyze and spot behavioral patterns. Already two-thirds of Americans say altered images and videos have become a major problem for understanding the basic facts of current events.

Misinformation researchers warn of growing “reality apathy” whereby it takes so much effort to distinguish between what’s real and fake that we simply give up and rely on our base instincts, tribal biases, impulses. Immersed in our leader’s deceptions, we come to believe in nothing. Two oil tankers burst into flames, billowing smoke.

On cue, a suspicious Iranian Revolutionary Guard boat appeared on grainy video. Viral images flooded earth’s nine billion screens. Each side told a different story. No one quite knew who to trust. Conspiracy theories filled the void, as we each clung to what we most want to believe. And as truth slowly slipped away, we turned to market prices as our proxy for reality; oil prices fell, stocks rallied, volatility declined.

But of course, it is precisely because market prices still retain some reflection of reality that our policy makers and politicians work so desperately to manipulate them.

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