



Weaponized Satire: Online Political Narratives and Digital Manipulation in Sri Lanka

Narrative Analysis: Use of Satire in Online Political Discourse

About the Project

The Strengthening Resilience against Disinformation in Sri Lanka project is co-funded by the European Union and implemented by Democracy Reporting International and Factum. The project aims to reinforce Sri Lanka's democratic and electoral frameworks and protect human rights by prioritizing inclusivity and responsible political discourse on social media through monitoring and debunking online harmful content. Leveraging collaborative efforts of civil society organizations in Sri Lanka, this initiative capacitates fact-checkers and media outlets, creates counter-narratives, and strengthens the technical expertise of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka (ECSL).

Introduction

Satire has become an increasingly influential feature of Sri Lanka's online political discourse. Across social media platforms, political actors, supporters, influencers, and anonymous networks use humor, memes, parody, edited visuals, and sarcastic commentary to shape public perception and influence political conversations.

While satire can serve legitimate democratic functions by criticizing authority, exposing contradictions, and encouraging public debate, it can also become a tool for manipulation, humiliation, disinformation, and polarization. In digital environments where content spreads rapidly and context is often lost, satirical narratives may reinforce misleading claims, normalize hostility, or contribute to reputational harm against political actors and communities.



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