Cybersecurity and democratic processes: Technology's influence on the Year of Elections

In association with

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SCCS — Surrey Centre for Cyber Security

Digital technology profoundly impacts our democratic system, affecting public discourse and government elections. While politics can seem distant from daily life, governance impacts liberty and prosperity. Innovations like social media and AI influence democratic processes, presenting both opportunities and challenges. The way we access information has been transformed, shaping political debate but also amplifying misinformation and creating echo chambers. Adversaries have been quick to exploit these opportunities.

Political influence operations, enabled by the digital revolution, have broad implications. Deep fakes distort elections and aid scams, while social manipulation extends to the personal level. These threats to democracy endanger organisations and individuals alike. Our speakers will explore the intricate relationship between cybersecurity and democracy, highlighting its societal impact and the need for effective digital strategies to safeguard our way of life.

All SASIG events operate under Chatham House Rule, and there is no charge to attend.

Wednesday 26 June 2024

3.30pm to 6.30pm

University of Surrey, Guildford

Chair

Professor Steve Schneider Head of Computer Science Research Centre,
University of Surrey

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3.30pm   **Registration and networking**
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4pm   **Welcome and introductions**
               Professor Steve Schneider Head of Computer Science Research Centre, University of Surrey
               Danny King Managing Director, The SASIG

4.10pm   **AI and the UK General Election: How worried should we be?**
               Professor Rachel Gibson Professor of Politics, University of Manchester

               In this session we'll look at the key opportunities and threats posed by AI to democratic elections. Given we are facing a 'bumper' year of voters going to the polls globally, fears are rising about the potentially disruptive impact of new technologies on election outcomes and citizen trust in the system. Based on recent examples of AI interventions in politics and past technological 'revolutions' Rachel will assess how credible the threat of AI is and how worried UK politicians and the public should be about the potential it presents for subversion and interference in the forthcoming General Election.

4.25pm   **Unveiling online political advertising: Global insights**
               Dr Charles Kriel Senior Fellow - AI & Technology, Sympodium Institute of Strategic Communications

               Charles will explore the evolution, impact, and challenges of online political advertising, including a summary of his report on the subject to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. He will delve into the rise of misinformation, privacy concerns, and algorithmic biases and provide insights on enhancing transparency, promoting digital literacy and how we can shape a future where democracy thrives in the digital age.

4.40pm   **General elections over the internet: What could possibly go wrong?**
               Dr Sasa Radomirovic Senior Lecturer in Secure Systems, University of Surrey

               From its inception, democracy has been under threat, first from election fraud and later from foreign interference, which has become a significant concern. Moreover, voter turnout has been declining in the UK and worldwide.

               Online voting is seen as a way to include a wider demographic in the democratic process and increase voter turnout. But can we control the security risks? Yes, we – think so. Over the last 20 years, we learned from trials and operational online voting systems and are working on their formal verification and socio-technical issues, such as dispute resolution.

4.55pm   **The growing impact of AI on journalism**
Dr Bahareh Heravi Reader in AI and Media, Institute for People-Centred AI,
University of Surrey

Journalism relies heavily on trust, credibility, and accountability. While AI offers
enhanced capabilities and efficiency, there's a risk it may amplify biases and
disinformation. For national broadcasters such as the BBC in a diverse country like
the UK, committing to the highest standards of responsible AI is critical.

With her research primarily focused on data and computational journalism, data
storytelling, responsible and inclusive AI, information design, and the use of AI in
journalism and media, Bahareh will share tips on the practical and responsible use
of AI in newsrooms.

5.10pm   **Q&A session**

A closing Q&A session, where you'll have the chance to share your thoughts, ask
questions, and get answers from our speakers regarding their sessions.

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5.30pm   **End of meeting and networking**
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About

sasig **The Security Awareness Special Interest Group (SASIG)**

SASIG is a subscription-free networking forum, membership now represents thousands of organisations of all sizes from across the world and from all sectors, public and private. Its 10,000+ membership is drawn from CIOs, CISOs and their staff with responsibility for cybersecurity within their organisations. Professionals from other disciplines (risk, HR, legal, supply, etc.) and representatives from government, law enforcement and academia are also being increasingly welcomed at events. The Chatham House Rule is strictly enforced and universally respected at all meetings, and vendors and the Press are routinely excluded. Thus, the level of debate is extraordinarily revealing and rewarding.

SASIG has a members' website at www.thesasig.com. Please register here for membership.

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