

# A “Need for Chaos” and the Sharing of Hostile Political Rumors in Advanced Democracies | PsyArXiv Preprints

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A new preprint research paper explores the psychological motivations to share hostile political rumors.

**Abstract:** The circulation of hostile political rumors (including but not limited to false news and conspiracy theories) has gained prominence in public debates across advanced democracies. Here, we provide the first comprehensive assessment of the psychological syndrome that elicits motivations to share hostile political rumors among citizens of democratic societies. Against the notion that sharing occurs to help one mainstream political actor in the increasingly polarized electoral competition against other mainstream actors, we demonstrate that sharing motivations are associated with ‘chaotic’ motivations to “burn down” the entire established democratic ‘cosmos’. We show that this extreme discontent is associated with motivations to share hostile political rumors, not because such rumors are viewed to be true but because they are believed to mobilize the audience against disliked elites. We introduce an individual difference measure, the “Need for Chaos”, to measure these motivations and illuminate their social causes, linked to frustrated status-seeking. Finally, we show that chaotic motivations are surprisingly widespread within advanced democracies, having some hold in up to 40 percent of the American national population.

Source: [A “Need for Chaos” and the Sharing of Hostile Political Rumors in Advanced Democracies | PsyArXiv Preprints](#)