

Is it possible that Facebook didn't destroy American democracy? | The Atlantic

By Kaitlyn Tiffany

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"DEMOCRACY INTERCEPTED," reads the headline of a new special [package](#) in the journal *Science*. "Did platform feeds sow the seeds of deep divisions during the 2020 US presidential election?" Big question. (Scary question!) The surprising answer, according to a group of studies out today in *Science* and *Nature*, two of the world's most prestigious research journals, turns out to be something like: "Probably not, or not in any short-term way, but one can never really know for sure."

There's no question that the American political landscape is polarized, and that it has become [much more so](#) in the past few decades. It seems both logical and obvious that the internet has played some role in this—conspiracy theories and bad information spread far more easily today than they did before social media, and we're not yet three years out from an insurrection that was [partly planned](#) using Facebook-created tools. The anecdotal evidence speaks volumes. But the best science that we have right now conveys a somewhat different message.

[...]

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