

Valerie A. Wirtschafter

Current position

Fellow, Foreign Policy and the Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technology Initiative,
The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC

Areas of specialization

New Media • Disinformation • U.S.-Latin America Relations • AI and Emerging Tech •
Public Opinion • Quantitative Methods

Education

2021 Ph.D. in Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles
2018 M.A. in Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles
2012 B.A. in History and Latin American Studies, Bowdoin College, *cum laude, with honors*

Select press

Research covered in the *New York Times*, PBS Newshour, *Wall Street Journal*, NPR, *Washington Post*, Reuters, AP, AFP, and Al Jazeera, among others.

Policy research

Wirtschafter, Valerie. "[Tracing the rise of Russian state media on TikTok](#)," Brookings Institution, May 2, 2024.

Wirtschafter, Valerie. "[The impact of generative AI in a global election year](#)," Brookings Institution, January 30, 2024.

Wirtschafter, Valerie and Sharanya Majumder. "[Future challenges for online, crowd-sourced content moderation: Evidence from Twitter's Community Notes](#)," *Journal of Online Trust and Safety*, September 2023.

Brandt, Jessica, Bret Schafer, **Valerie Wirtschafter**, and Peter Benzoni. "[Echoes across the airwaves: How Kremlin narratives about Ukraine spread \(or don't\) on US political podcasts](#)," Brookings Institution, September 2023.

Wirtschafter, Valerie. "[Audible Reckoning: How top political podcasters spread unsubstantiated and false claims](#)," Brookings Institution, February 2023.

Brandt, Jessica and **Valerie Wirtschafter.** "[Working the Western Hemisphere: How Russia spreads propaganda about Ukraine in Latin America and the impact of platform responses](#)," Brookings Institution, December 2022.

Brandt, Jessica, Bret Schafer, Elen Aghekyan, **Valerie Wirtschafter**, and Adya Danaditya. "[Winning the Web: How Beijing exploits search results to shape views of Xinjiang and COVID-19](#)," Brookings Institution, May 2022.

SELECT COMMENTARY

Wirtschafter, Valerie (January 24, 2024), "[The internationalization of organized crime in Brazil.](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (January 16, 2024), "[The implications of the AI boom for nonstate armed actors.](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Meraw, Shannon and **Valerie Wirtschafter** (December 12, 2023), "[Putting research into practice: Brookings' approach to the responsible use of generative AI.](#)"

Wirtschafter, Valerie (November 22, 2023), "[Argentina dives into the unknown with lessons for future elections.](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (October 26, 2023), "[The online information ecosystem during the Israel-Gaza crisis.](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie and Arturo Sarukhan (March 16, 2023), "[Mexico takes another step toward its authoritarian past.](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie and Ted Piccone (January 12, 2023), "[Anti-democratic sentiment boils over in Brazil.](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (November 9, 2022), "[After a victory for democracy, what is Brazil's road ahead?](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (October 7, 2022), "[Will Brazil's elections be a victory for democracy?](#)" *Brookings' Order from Chaos Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (September 7, 2022), "[A new data set for better monitoring of the political podcast ecosystem.](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie and Chris Meserole (April 18, 2022), "[Policy recommendations for addressing content moderation in podcasts.](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Brandt, Jessica and Valerie Wirtschafter (March 1, 2022), "[The surprising performance of Kremlin propaganda on Google News.](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie and Chris Meserole (January 4, 2022), "[Prominent political podcasters played key role in spreading the 'Big Lie.'](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (August 25, 2021), "[The challenge of detecting misinformation in podcasting.](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (July 23, 2021), "[What role did the internet play in fomenting Cuban protests?](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (June 17, 2021), "[How George Floyd changed the online conversation around BLM.](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Wirtschafter, Valerie (April 29, 2021), "[Tracking the impact of the J&J pause across social media.](#)" *Brookings' TechStream Blog*.

Academic research

PUBLISHED

Wirtschafter, Valerie, Natalia Bueno, Frederico Batista, Felipe Nunes, João Pedro Oliveira, and Nara Pavão, “[Detecting misinformation in the Global South: The spread of false news by political leaders](#),” *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media*, Vol. 4 (2024).

Blair, Graeme, Darin Christensen, and **Valerie Wirtschafter**. “[How does armed conflict shape investment? Evidence from the mining sector](#).” *The Journal of Politics* 84, no. 1 (2022): 116-133.

WORKING PAPERS AND ONGOING PROJECTS

Batista, Frederico, Natalia Bueno, Felipe Nunes, Nara Pavão, and **Valerie Wirtschafter**, “Political elites and the appeal of fake news in Brazil.”

Batista, Frederico, Natalia Bueno, Felipe Nunes, Nara Pavão, and **Valerie Wirtschafter**, “Sincere or opportunistic? Understanding the nature of election fraud beliefs in Brazil.”

Batista, Frederico, Natalia Bueno, Simon Chauchard, Fernando Mello, Felipe Nunes, Nara Pavão, and **Valerie Wirtschafter**, “Harmonizing Political Discussions: Strategies to Mitigate Incivility in Brazilian WhatsApp Groups.”

“[The people formerly known as the audience: The political effects of crowdsourcing news about violence](#),” *dissertation*.

Professional & consulting experience

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| Spring 2021-present | Brookings Data Network chair , designed and led data science trainings for Brookings Institution staff and assisted with data science and methods issues on dozens of different Brookings research products; co-chair of the Emerging Technology Advisory Group, which advises senior leadership on Institution-wide policies related to AI at Brookings. |
| Summer 2021 | Instructor of Record, Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles , designed and taught an upper division course on international politics in the digital age. |
| 2017-2018 | Researcher, Evidence in Governance and Politics , supported the implementation of a six-country wide “Metaketa” experiment in community policing. |
| 2015-2016 | Consultant on market entry strategy for U.S. companies looking to enter the Cuban market in light of regulatory changes, including Starwood Hotels and Resorts, which opened the first U.S. hotel in Havana since 1959. |
| 2014-2015 | Research Associate, Council on Foreign Relations , research support for projects related to Latin America and the role of women in foreign policy. |
| 2012-2014 | Senior Associate, Global Health Strategies , Consultant on various Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation projects, including for the “Grand Challenges in Global Health” initiative with USAID and Grand Challenges Canada. |

Select talks and panels

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| 2024 | <i>Shifting geopolitics in the age of AI: A conversation with Sam Altman</i> , Brookings Institution; <i>Assessing the impact of generative AI and other online threats in a historic election year</i> , Brookings Institution; <i>AI and Elections in the Global South</i> , Stanford HAI; <i>AI and Elections</i> , Foreign Service Institute/SAIS |
| 2023 | <i>Disinformation in Spanish in the AI era: Challenges and the way ahead</i> , Georgetown University; |

Future challenges of crowdsourced content moderation: Evidence from Twitter's Community Notes, Stanford Law School Trust and Safety Research Conference; *U.S. Brazil Workshop – Democracy and Human Rights Panel*, Brookings Institution; *Working the Western Hemisphere: How Russia spreads propaganda about Ukraine in Latin America and the impact of platform responses*, U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center; *Working the Western Hemisphere: How Russia spreads propaganda about Ukraine in Latin America and the impact of platform responses*, U.S. Agency for Global Media

2022

The information space as an asymmetric competition: Evidence from China and Russia, George Washington University, Foreign Area Officer Program; *Data analysis for policy research*, Georgetown University; *The challenge of content moderation in podcasting*, UCLA Political Science Advisory Board Meeting; *The challenge of content moderation in podcasting*, George Washington University

Skills

Data Science and Programming Skills: L^AT_EX, R, Adobe Design Suite, HTML, Stata, Python

Languages: Spanish, Portuguese

Other Technical Training: Claremont Graduate University's Empirical Methods for the Quantitative Social Sciences Workshop, June 2019 • Summer Institute in Computational Social Science at UCLA, June 2020 • Workshop on Modern Data Wrangling, Paul J. McGovern Foundation, Winter 2022/23 • Workshop on Collaborative Data Science, Paul J. McGovern Foundation, Winter 2022/23