

# Election Interference: Guide to Critical Analysis

This guide is intended to help you evaluate the topics presented in EBSCO Information Services' *Points of View Reference Center*<sup>TM</sup>. Using this analysis will enhance your ability to read critically, develop your own perspective on the issue of election interference, and make an effective argument on the topic, in writing or in a debate.

## Before You Read

- In a single sentence, state what you currently think is/are the argument(s) in the election interference debate.
- On the Points of View home page, under Browse by Category, go to "Voting and Elections," and then click on "Election Interference."
- Each topic in *Points of View Reference Center*<sup>TM</sup> has three main Points of View sections. While there may be many opinions on the issue, these sections are designed to provide a base from which you may engage in further analysis. The Overview provides general background information on the issue. The Point and Counterpoint present opposing perspectives on the issue, with talking points that support those positions.

## As You Read

- **Read the Overview, Point, and Counterpoint sections.** Reading all three will enable you to better understand the controversy, providing a foundation from which you can broaden your knowledge of the topic.
- **Take notes** on the main ideas. Use the online Notes tool to make notes about the article and save them for later. To find it, see the Tools column to the right of the article on your screen. Look for the Create Note icon on the list. Or, print out the essay and highlight the main ideas. Circle key words.
- **Review the terms** in the Understanding the Discussion section of the Overview.
- **Organize your ideas.** Go to the Research Guide "Visual Ways to Organize Your Ideas." You can access it from the Research Guides link in the Reference Shelf section on the home page. Use one of the graphic organizer

templates provided to break the essay down into its main points. Bottom line: use the approach that suits you best.

## Judge Fact and Opinion

Review the Research Guide article titled "Judging Fact vs. Opinion."

## FACTS

- Facts are statements that can be proved true or false.
- Facts tell what actually happened.
- Facts tell what is happening now.
- Facts state something that can be observed or verified.

## OPINIONS

- Opinions are statements that cannot be proved true or false because they express a person's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or estimates.
- Opinions express worth or value.
- Opinions express what the author or speaker thinks should or should not be thought or done.
- Opinions are based on what seems true or probable.

## Example 1:

**Fact:** The Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that there was a concerted effort to promote Donald Trump's presidential campaign and to damage the campaign of Hillary Clinton and that this effort took place over several years and was directed by the Kremlin.

**Opinion:** Without the Russians' interference, Donald Trump would never have won.

- In this example, the opinion speculates about an alternative outcome that cannot be proved.

## Example 2:

**Fact:** Criminal defense attorney Marina Medvin argued in *Forbes* in 2019 that it is unconstitutional to prohibit political speech, even if connected to a noncitizen.

**Opinion:** You can't fight election interference without eroding protections of free speech.

- In this example, the opinion makes a generalization based on what may seem probable, without supporting evidence for the claim.

### Example 3:

**Fact:** A September 2019 report indicated that hackers could disrupt the 2020 election by using ransomware programs to lock out access to state voter registration rolls.

**Opinion:** Foreign hackers will stop us from being able to vote and destroy registration records.

- In this example, the opinion exaggerates and speculates on a future outcome.

### Example 4:

**Fact:** Congress has increased sanctions initiated under the Barack Obama administration, and the *Washington Post* reported in 2018 that seven hundred Russian people and companies had been targeted by US sanctions.

**Opinion:** The government is effectively fighting election interference.

- In this example, the opinion presents a subjective evaluation regarding the effectiveness of the federal government’s attempts to combat electoral interference and provides no examples or sources to support the argument.

Based on the criteria listed above, select:

- Three fact statements from the Overview, Point, or Counterpoint sections, or one of the bibliographic sources within the essay on election interference.
- Three opinion statements from the Overview, Point, or Counterpoint sections, or one of the bibliographic sources within the essay on election interference.

### In Depth

Use the “Search” box at the top of the page to look up articles about your topic. The Result List you get will offer many kinds of related information from various sources, such as magazines, journals, blogs, newspapers, reference books, and images.

Select one or two to explore.

- What source did you use and what is one benefit of using this type of source?
- What is one drawback?
- What new information did you learn from reading this article?

### You Decide

Based on the readings and review of the Related Items offered, consider the Point and Counterpoint commentary in light of your own set of personal values and understanding of the topic.

- Reflect on which arguments about election interference you accept, those outlined in the Point, Counterpoint, or a completely different argument. For you, what is the single most compelling argument regarding election interference, and why?

Write an 800- to 1,000-word essay response to the question above; include a thesis statement and two or three supporting arguments. See “Writing a Thesis Statement” and “Writing a Persuasive Essay” Research Guides for tips on how to write your essay.

- Use facts from other resources found in *Points of View Reference Center*<sup>TM</sup>, other than the Overview, Point, and Counterpoint information. See “Judging Fact vs. Opinion” in the Research Guide section to help determine the value of the information you find.
- Investigate some of the sources cited in the Bibliography at the end of each Point of View essay to review the kinds of sources those authors consulted.
- For website information, first review the Research Guide article titled “Evaluating a Website.” Use the information you find there to guide your decisions on which sites provide the most credible information and would add value to your essay.
- Suggest ways in which the controversy surrounding election interference could be resolved.

See these other *Points of View Reference Center*<sup>TM</sup> “how to” topics for additional help. They can be found using the Research Guides link on the home page.

- Writing a Topic Sentence
- Taking Good Notes
- From Notes to Outline
- Visual Ways to Organize Your Ideas
- Writing a Conclusion
- Citing Sources
- Creating a Bibliography
- Writing a Research Paper

### Debate It

- Debate the issue. To create an effective debate, refer to the tips offered in the Research Guides—“Debate Strategies,” “Giving an Oral Presentation,” and “Starting a Debate Club.”
- Select someone else to read an excerpt from a bibliographic source in either the Point of View essay or a related article. The excerpt should clearly support an argument for one side or the other of the discussion. As you listen, make note of the points (contentions) you would make to oppose the arguments.

- Respond to the arguments presented with opposing arguments (rebuttals), pointing out any contradictions you have heard.
- Create a video or slide presentation that illustrates the essence of the debate. Include the issue at hand, your viewpoint, and evidence to support it.