# Twitter Thread by Abraham Gutman ■



**Abraham Gutman ■**
@abgutman

## An extremely important point that seems to be completely missed in the discussion of disinformation.

## We are exclusively focused on the *supply chain*. We neglect the *demand* for this content.

## The truth is that people searched for an excuse, or opening, to be radicalized.

> Keep in mind: Hitler launched the campaign of lies and evil that brought the Holocaust in an age when the Internet was yet to be even dreamed of.
>
> — Brent Staples (@BrentNYT) January 11, 2021

I find the comparison to drugs and addiction helpful here, and it is one that I do carefully.

100 people to to the doctor and get an opioid after a procedure. About 95 will never use again.

A lot of us are exposed to extremist content. Most of us don't get radicalized.

So while the supply and exposure played a role in both addiction and radicalization, it is not magic. It doesn't just take over people. It taps into demand.

So maybe the question is less about how they got the supply and more why they find it so appealing.

That's tougher.

It is much easier to imagine an immediate policy solution to Trump's twitter account or YouTube's auto play than to the coercive impact of 401 years of America apartheid and racist myth making.

But again drugs suggest that those quick supply cuts don't work.

A century of drug busts made the problem worse. This observation led to the iron law of prohibition: the harder the enforcement, the harder the drugs.

When you cut supply, people who want drugs *will* find drugs — and often more dangerous drugs.

This is where my insight ends.

I don’t feel comfortable saying that there is a perfect parallel to the iron law or prohibition when it comes to disinformation. I don’t even know what that means because the prohibition here is on the supply chain (social media) and not the drug (the content).

What I do feel comfortable saying is that we can collectively figure this out if we stop pretending that we wouldn’t have gotten *exactly* here had Facebook not existed. It might have taken longer but no reason to believe we wouldn’t have made it here eventually.