

# Staying Sane in an Era of Information Overload: How Heuristics Can Be Used to Fight the Expert Problem

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## ABSTRACT

*Experts issue forecasts and advice to the public on matters such as education, child-rearing, personal finance, mental health, politics and economics. Since the layman lacks the idiosyncratic knowledge needed to assess the theories, methodologies or analyses upon which this expertise is based, he risks becoming overly reliant on the expert in making sense of the world. In a draft paper circulated in early 2018, the writer Nassim Nicholas Taleb proposed ten principles for politics under complexity, four of which are examined here as means of protecting the layman against the 'tyranny' of the expert. The analysis shows how dominant discourses on immigration policy and social media regulation in the Western media violate these heuristics, and therefore are exposed as ideological activism masquerading as expertise.*

**Keywords:** The expert problem, Heuristics, Sociopolitical discourse, Nicholas Nassim Taleb, Paul Krugman

## INTRODUCTION

*If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe. They all require to have their strong wind diluted by a very large admixture of commonsense. (Lord Salisbury, letter to Lord Lytton, 15 June 1877).*