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China's Narrative Reframing Efforts Using Disinformation Campaigns During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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IMPORTANT TERMS

-Disinformation campaigns: used to indicate the compilement of disinformation narratives or actions that are produced within a certain area/subject to achieve a common goal.

-Narrative Reframing: Reframing is a way of viewing events, concepts, ideas, and reactions to find more useful alternatives. Narrative reframing is the repetition of a narrative through public consciousness by being present and repetition, until people begin to acknowledge the new narrative.

BACKGROUND

With the introduction of the novel coronavirus, or better known as COVID-19, Chinese disinformation campaigns have sparked all over the world, which has had major effects on politics and the lives of many. New campaigns began to pop up, spreading disinformation about different aspects of the pandemic ranging from the origin of the virus, to the spread, treatment and prevention of COVID-19.

METHODS

Using Freelon and Well's idea of a content study, it is easy to view all of the information as a whole and piece together the narrative that China was reframing at the time of the Pandemic. With close inspection, one has the possibility to determine the extent of harm that occurred and examine the evidence that could prove possible intent.

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CHINA'S NARRATIVE REFRAMING EFFORTS USING DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE

Campaign:

China is spreading disinformation through the method of narrative reframing

Old Narrative: China is a "victim of the virus" and is struggling to prevent the spread as a result (Caniglia 2020)

New Narrative: China is a "strong and responsible leader, able to protect its people, and help other countries react to the crisis" (Caniglia 2020)

DISINFORMATION STUDIES

Intent: Many disinformation campaigns about COVID-19 were state-sponsored, often from Official Chinese diplomatic networks

Connection: The COVID-19 pandemic could provide the perfect excuse to accelerate the shift and power and influence from West to East

Supplementation: Alters the focus of disinformation studies to the global level, as disinformation seemed to not be prevalent globally before the COVID-19 pandemic

Information campaigns sponsored by the Chinese state reframed the narrative of the pandemic around the world in such a way as to cause harm that some evidence indicates may have been intentional.

EXAMPLES OF DISINFORMATION DURING COVID-19

While China was attempting to maintain and reinforce their new narrative, they offered help all over the world in the form of supplies. Most of the supplies sent did not meet health and safety standards or were defective and could not be used.

For example:

- The Netherlands had to recall 600,000 face masks bought from China (Campbell 2020)
- Spain had to stop using 50,000 testing kits sent to them because they only had a 30% accuracy rate (Campbell 2020)

China was so focused on trying to maintain their new image and fast before other countries were able to step in, that they risked the lives of millions by sending defective and rushed supplies.

EXAMPLES OF DISINFORMATION IN EUROPE

In 2020, the EU released an official report on the "disinformation around the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic" that, in an earlier version, referenced a "continued and coordinated push by official Chinese sources to deflect any blame," for the coronavirus pandemic" When the final version was published, after receiving pressure from Beijing, there was no mention of a Chinese campaign of "global disinformation" and the sentence before reworded to "continued and coordinated push by some actors, including Chinese sources, to deflect any blame." (Payne 2020)

REFERENCES

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- Caniglia, Costanza Sciubba
- Freelon, Deen
- Payne, Adam
- Wells, Christopher



For full citations —>