**Latest Revelations on India**

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A fifteen yearlong disinformation operation conducted by India against Pakistan and China was reported by the EU Disinfo lab in 2019, with fake media outlets spreading incorrect news and reports, dispersed widely across the world through digital platforms. Followed by the last report in 2020, the latest investigation by the EU Disinfo lab in 2023 has once again exposed the never-ending Indian obsession which promotes anti-Pakistan/China narratives. Carrying the older trajectory, the “non-existent” sources and ghost “experts” are further evidence of the toxic disinformation campaigns launched by the world’s largest democracy.

Journalism plays an important role in people’s lives. It helps to create awareness on current events around the world. The dissemination of news in the modern era, however, lacks boundaries due to digitalization. Every state promotes its propaganda through different channels, whether it is electronic media, print media or other mediums. Whatever the medium, the message communicated to the public plays an important role in influencing the public mind and opinions. Yet, the truth is that facts play a major role to establish credibility as credibility is linked with authenticity instead of yellow journalism.

There are different actors in the field. Previous White House Director of Communications, Anthony Scaramucci for example aptly stated that bad actors exist, which produce bad sources. The Indian news agency (Asia News International) which is at the core of this disinformation campaign, used a number of non-existent journalists, organizations and experts to draw public attention towards fabricated information. This unwarranted campaign was then carried by a number of Indian news channels which further promoted such narratives.

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The EU Disinfo stated: “Sadly, the overwhelming majority of these reports are being reproduced across Indian media, reaching hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of readers.”

The report says that the ANI ( Asia News International) has been repeatedly quoting a think tank, named International Forum for Rights and Security (IFFRAS) that was dissolved in 2014 (was located In Toronto, Canada) and hence, no longer exists. This resurrected think tank uses Canadian university experts and generates fake statements on their behalf as part of conferences that never actually happened. For instance, IFFRAS claims that a discussion took place on the Muslim Brotherhood in January 2020 for which four Montreal University professors had attended. Yet, two of the mentioned speakers informed EU Disinfo that such an event had never existed.

In 2021, ANI quoted the Center of Political and Foreign Affairs (CPFA), which is a think tank that does not exist. A thorough investigation discovered that some of the reports do not belong to real individuals. For instance, a report titled ‘Deception Games: Pakistan’s Eyewash Action against Terror Groups’, authored by ‘Ronald Duchemin’ was cited by ANI, but there was no evidence to support Duchemin’s existence or expertise on Pakistan. Similarly, ANI referred to a CPFA persona named ‘Mario de Gasperi’ who produced reports on pro-Indian narratives, but no evidence of his existence was found. Moreover, in July 2021, ANI published another news article ‘European Parliament to withdraw Pakistan’s GSP+ status over abuse of blasphemy laws’ based on its agenda of spreading disinformation campaigns regarding Pakistan. No traces of such a withdrawal were found either.

The main question is why the disinformation agenda that the Indian media is peddling even after it has been exposed by the EU Disinfo lab several times, has not been held accountable. Does this disinformation campaign impact the stability nexus between India and Pakistan or China? The more India is engaging itself in disinformation warfare, the more chaos will be in public thus, stability will be at stake. As a result, not only will stability be affected but the credibility of Indian news agencies will also nosedive. In the longer run, the people of India would no longer trust its news media and on the national and international stage, the image of Indian news will be exposed and distorted.

On the other hand, it is the responsibility of states to resolve matters in question with each other including border tensions, hybrid tactics or disinformation campaigns. States need to recheck the trajectory they follow to achieve goals. For this to happen states need to opt for rational approaches aligning with the idea of stability and truth. On the contrary, using such tactics that aim at destroying the image of a state through fabricated news, resurrected organizations and experts, as followed by India is a question mark on journalism in India as well as the reputation and authenticity of its institutions.

To settle it down, major international actors should play a role to eradicate such campaigns. Also, at the national level, policies must be developed based on ethical grounds to promote state interests. Moreover, research analysts should promote the pledge of tackling information warfare so that it must be highlighted and discouraged both nationally and internationally.

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