



University of
Sheffield | Disinformation Research Cluster

Countering Digital Disinformation: Global Perspectives

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Diplomatic School of Armenia, Yerevan



Nexus – An overview of the connection between digital disinformation and public diplomacy



Strategies – Best practices (and not so good practices) in countering digital disinformation



Nexus


- Digital tools have been added to the toolbox of governments to communicate with foreign publics.
- At the same time, the same tools digital public diplomacy tools have been used to conduct disinformation campaigns across the world.

Overt and covert State-sponsored disinformation

Lijian Zhao 赵立坚 @zlj517
China government official

2/2 CDC was caught on the spot. When did patient zero begin in US? How many people are infected? What are the names of the hospitals? It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!

[Tradueix el tuit](#)



1:03 3,9M visualitzacions

De: **Global Times**

June 30

Le principal déstabilisateur en Centrafrique ce sont les mercenaires russes ! C'est eux les vrais voleurs !!!

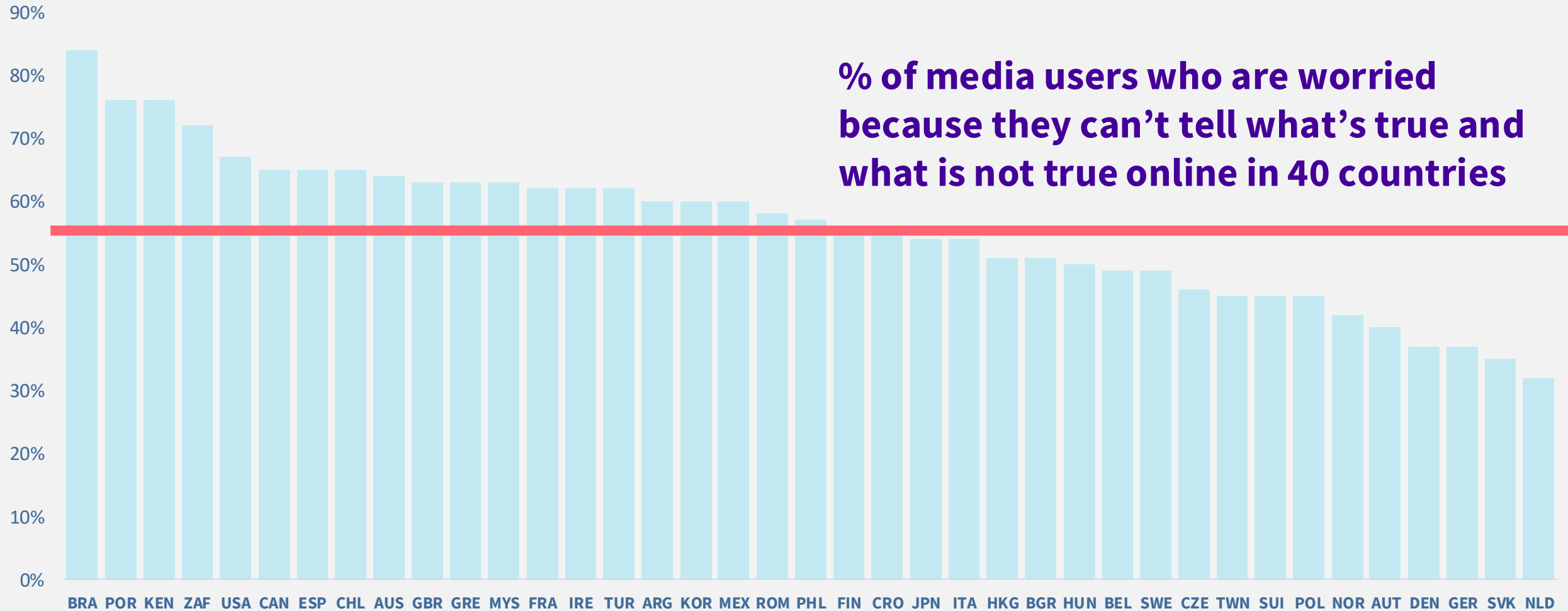
The main destabilizer in Central African Republic is Russian mercenaries! They are the real thieves!!!

[Hide original](#) · [Rate this translation](#)



Source: <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:nj914nx9540/unheard-voice-tt.pdf>

Digital media as a force for good, but also...



Source: <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2020/overview-key-findings-2020/>

Digital media as a force for good, but also...

Risk categories

- Economic
- Environmental
- Geopolitical
- Societal
- Technological

2 years



10 years



Source

World Economic Forum Global Risks Perception Survey 2023-2024.

Source: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf

Three types of disinformation campaigns

Identity grievance

1. activates polarized social identities
2. exploits real or perceived wrongs
3. leverages low institutional trust
4. amplifies concurrent global political, social trends

EMOTION



Source: <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/12/removing-coordinated-inauthentic-behavior-france-russia/>

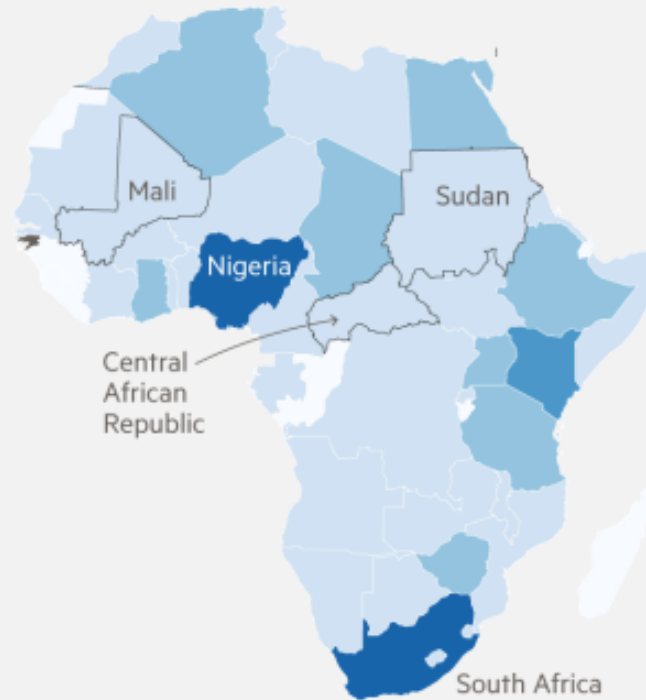
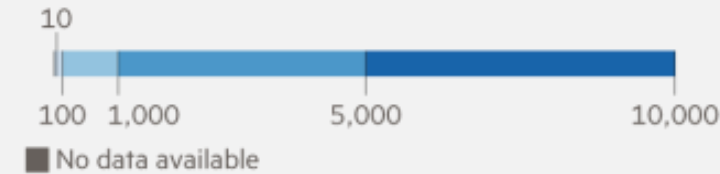
Three types of disinformation campaigns

Information gaslighting

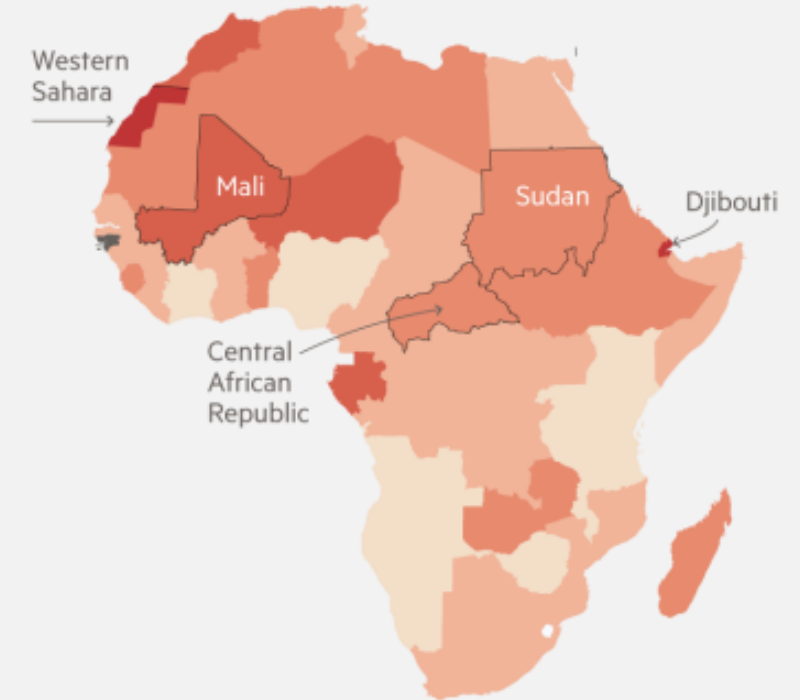
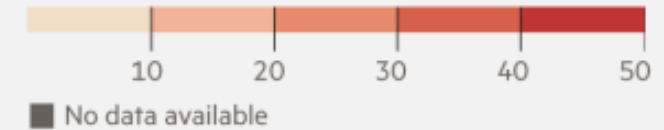
1. floods the information space as a form of 'strategic distraction'
2. seeks to sow uncertainty about issues
3. may lead to feelings of helplessness

FATIGUE

Number of Twitter users posting pro-Russian content (2021)



Relative frequency of bots per country (2021, %)



Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/d427c855-c665-4732-9dd1-3ae314464d12>

Three types of disinformation campaigns

Incidental exposure

1. uses range of channels, including fringe media, to increase incidental exposure
2. exploits declining trust in mainstream media
3. seeks to develop familiarity to narratives

BIAS

A historia de Stepan Bandera, o ideólogo do neonazismo ucraniano

24 de setembro de 2023 | notícias



Marcha em favor de Stepan Bandera

Stepan Bandera homem pintado como herói pela direita ucraniana e seu pensamento possui profunda influência na política do país e nos **grupos paramilitares neonazistas** como o Batalhão Azov.

Stepan Bandera nasceu 1909 na aldeia de Saryi Uhryniv, no distrito de Kalush, Galícia (Óblast de Stanyslaviv), então parte do Império Austro-Húngaro. O seu pai, Andriy Bandera, era o sacerdote greco-católico em Uhryniv Saryi. A sua mãe, Myroslava Bandera, também pertencia à família do clero, era filha de um padre greco-católico de Saryi Uhryniv.

Historia de Stepan Bandera, el ideólogo del neonazismo ucraniano

24 de setembro de 2023 | Noticias y artículos



Marcha en homenaje a Stepan Bandera, Ucrania

Stepan Bandera es un hombre descrito como un héroe por la derecha ucraniana y sus pensamientos tienen una profunda influencia en la política del país y en los grupos paramilitares neonazis como el Batallón Azov.

Stepan Bandera nació en 1909 en el pueblo de Saryi Uhryniv, en el distrito de Kalush, Galicia (Óblast de Stanyslaviv), entonces parte del Imperio Austro-Húngaro. Su padre, Andriy Bandera, era sacerdote greco-católico en Uhryniv Saryi. Su madre, Myroslava Bandera, también pertenecía a la familia del clero y era hija de un sacerdote greco-católico de Saryi Uhryniv.

Source: <https://dfrlab.org/2024/02/21/pro-russia-network-spreads-propaganda-and-disinfo-in-latin-america/>



Solutions

- Belief in false or misleading information is primarily driven by individual emotional and cognitive responses (plus social, political and cultural trends)
- Too much attention goes into the and organizational dynamics of disinformation campaigns (bots, algorithms...)

Approaches to Counter Disinformation (in general)

**Educational
responses**

**Regulatory
responses**

**Journalistic
responses**

**Technological
responses**

Approaches to Counter Disinformation (in general)

Educational responses

- Raising awareness
- Disinformation literacy
- Pre-bunking campaigns

Regulatory responses

- Punitive actions
- Banning users/platforms

Journalistic responses

- Promoting free press
- Independent fact-checking

Tech responses

- Monitoring & removal
- Demonetising
- Deplatforming

What to counter?

	Action	Target groups	Tools
Short-term reactive	The disinformation requires an immediate response. Use rapid communications to rebut, correct or counter disinformation in accordance with the established facts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Traditional media (journalists/editors)- Stakeholders and influencers- Social media platforms- Key audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Press statement- Minister statement- Brief journalists- Q&A- Paid advertisement- Search engine optimisation (SEO)- Expose actors via friendly influencers

Source: <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RESIST-Counter-Disinformation-Toolkit.pdf>

What to counter?

	Action	Target groups	Tools
Medium-term proactive	The disinformation requires a considered response. Use a combination of communications to assert own values/brands. Tie together proactive measures with your normal everyday communications and work with stakeholders/influencers to create consensus around your position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Traditional media (journalists/editors)- Stakeholders and influencers- Social media platforms- Wide audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Campaign, narrative and brand development- Community outreach, dialogue and engagement- Facilitate network, stakeholders and influencers- Workshops/training

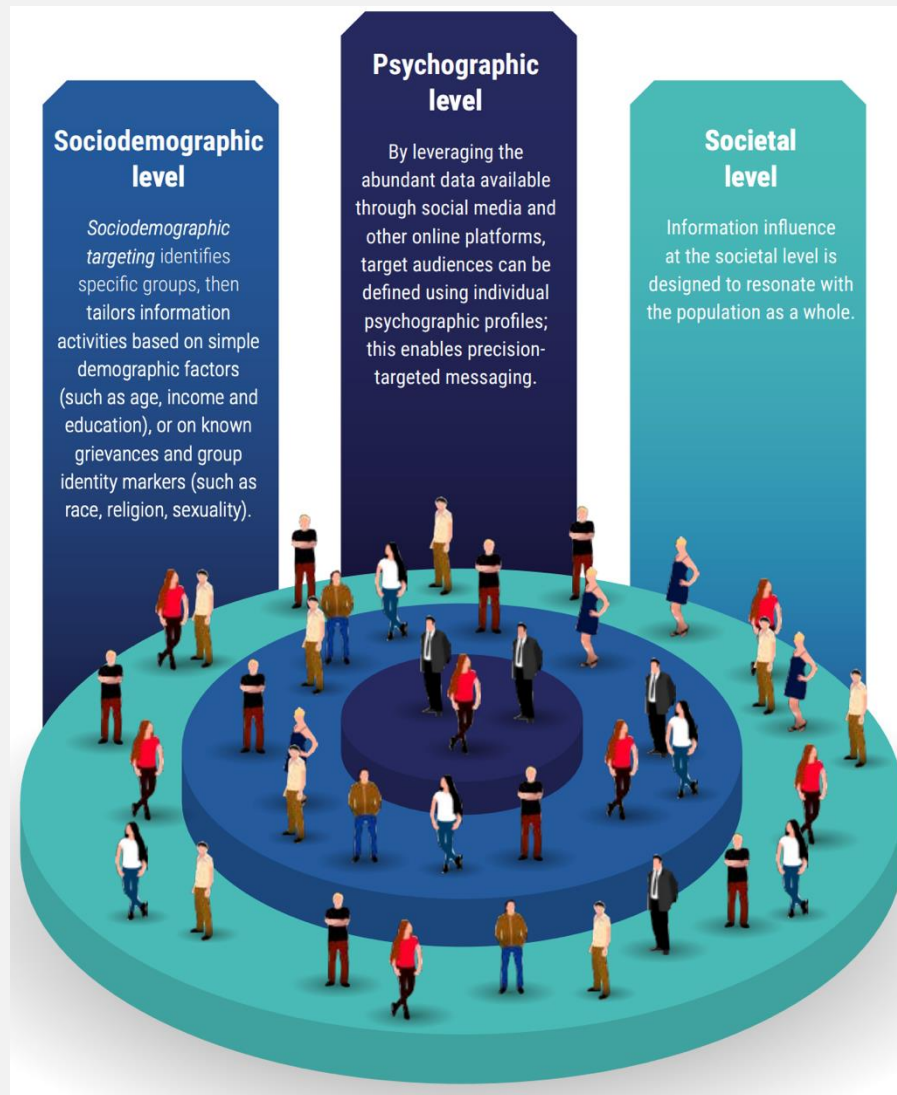
Source: <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RESIST-Counter-Disinformation-Toolkit.pdf>

What to counter?

	Action	Target groups	Tools
Long-term strategic	The disinformation requires a coherent, sustained response to create long-term change. Develop and assert strategic narratives in relation to an issue by shaping the information space to promote your own position and deter others (raising the threshold).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Traditional media (journalists/editors)- Young up-and-comers- Stakeholders and influencers- Social media platforms- Wide audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Campaign, narrative and brand engagement- Programme funding e.g. for participatory content- Talent spotting and influencer support/creation- Facilitate network, stakeholders and influencers- Workshops/training- Contingency planning

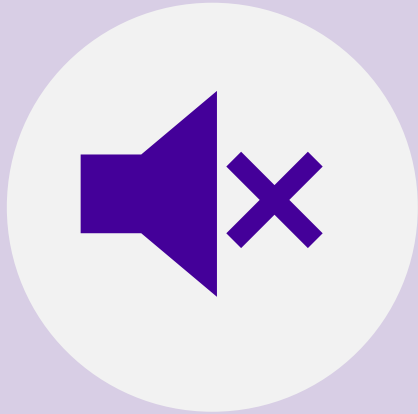
Source: <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RESIST-Counter-Disinformation-Toolkit.pdf>

Who to focus on?



Source: https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/small_size_nato_report_-_role_of_communications.pdf

Specific Strategies | Communicative Approaches



Not reacting

Chinese Embassy in Kenya @ChineseEmbKenya

The so-called Xinjiang issue was nothing but a U.S. strategic plot to destabilize and contain China from within
en.people.cn/n3/2021/0331/c...
Tradueix la publicació



Source: <https://twitter.com/ChineseEmbKenya/status/1377953452375035907>

Chinese Embassy in South Africa @ChineseEmbSA

The US Senate passing the #HongKong Human Rights and Democracy Act is blatantly interfering China's internal affairs. Obviously, it has hidden political agenda.
fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_6...
Tradueix la publicació

6:43 p. m. · 21 de nov. de 2019

Source: <https://twitter.com/ChineseEmbSA/status/1197525934632509441>

US Embassy SA @USEmbassySA

U.S. Consulate Durban thanks the activists and community leaders who joined our Consul General Anne Linnee and our staff for a small, social distanced event to commemorate #PrideMonth 🏳️‍🌈.

Tradueix la publicació



5:17 p. m. · 3 de juny de 2021

Source: <https://twitter.com/USEmbassySA/status/1400441461620019208>

Specific Strategies | Communicative Approaches



**Corrective
messaging**

UKinRussia @ukinrussia

!! Сообщения о смерти Короля Великобритании Карла III – фейк!

0:05

5:20 p. m. · 18 de març de 2024 des de Москва, Россия · 10,7m Visualitzacions

Source: <https://twitter.com/ukinrussia/status/1769715533690085544>

UK in Ukraine @UKinUkraine

We would like to inform you that the news about the death of King Charles III is fake.

Tradueix la publicació

Посольство
Великої Британії
в Україні

Новина про смерть Короля Чарльза III є фейком

News about King Charles III death is fake

5:28 p. m. · 18 de març de 2024 · 556,9m Visualitzacions

Source: <https://twitter.com/UKinUkraine/status/1769717522666750397>

Specific Strategies | Communicative Approaches



Projecting
blame

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hong-kong-myth-busting-article.zh>

GOV.UK

Home > International

世界新闻故事 English | 中文

香港（关于香港问题的辟谣说明）

回应媒体关于英国和香港问题的报道。

从: [英国驻华大使馆](#)
已发布 23 June 2020



近几周，香港成为热门话题，一些媒体报道存在错误和不准确的信息。我们在下面的文章中就这些误解进行了回应。

观点
[英国支持港独 - 澎湃新闻6月6日报道](#)

回应
这不是真的，英国明确承认在一国两制的框架下香港是中国的一部分。

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office @FCDOGovUK

The nerve agent came from Sweden, Ukraine did it to frame Russia, It was contamination from the UK's own research facility...

Instead of providing an explanation for the Salisbury incident, Russia has launched a campaign of disinformation

Tradueix la publicació



Despite their **disinformation** and **denials...**

1:02

Russian disinformation following Salisbury incident

Source: <https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/976023331873935360>

Specific Strategies | Communicative Approaches



Repeated exposure

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office @FCDOGovUK

Russia holding elections in Ukraine is a further violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

#StandWithUkraine

UK Government

Source: <https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1768563285862072389>

1:02 p. m. · 15 de març de 2024 · 92,5m Visualitzacions

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office @FCDOGovUK

Russia has no legitimate basis to hold elections on the sovereign Ukrainian territory of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea.

These areas are a part of Ukraine.

#StandWithUkraine

UK Government

Source: <https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1768941528062259388>

2:05 p. m. · 16 de març de 2024 · 100,8m Visualitzacions

Risk management - RESIST



Source: <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/RESIST-Counter-Disinformation-Toolkit.pdf>



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