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des gouvernements dans l'ère de "post-vérité".*

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Introduction

- 1 Fake news is not a new phenomenon. As Burkhardt (2017) pointed out : “the origins of fake news date back to before the printing press. Rumour and false stories have probably been around as long as humans have lived in groups where power matters.” The terms “fake news” and “post-truth” caught people’s attention by frequently appearing in the headlines in the Brexit and 2016 U.S. election campaign. The media search engine Factiva found 40 hits in the global media for “post-truth” throughout the year of 2015, but this figure amounted to 2535 hits in the year of 2016 and around 2400 during the first quarter of 2017 alone (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). The Oxford Dictionaries nominated “post-truth” Word of the Year 2016, defining it as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (Dictionary, 2016). According to

the Oxford Dictionaries, the phrase was first used in a 1992 article in *The Nation* magazine by the late playwright Steve Tesich. In the article, Tesich lamented that “we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world” (Dictionary, 2016). Tesich sought to explain what he called “the Watergate syndrome”, whereby “all the unpleasant facts revealed by the presidency of Richard Nixon rendered Americans disdainful of uncomfortable truths” (Kreitner, 2016). “Post-truth” is regarded detrimental to democracy, the Western order and free public debate, raising tensions among nations (Carson, 2019).

- 2 According to the 2020 report of China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), by June 2020, the number of netizens in China had reached 940 million, and China had 932 mobile Internet users. That means 99.2 % of China’s netizens accessed the Internet via mobile phones ; 77.1 % of netizens used mobile applications for news and information (CNNIC, 2020). The trend was momentous considering China’s large population base. With more people turning to digital media as the source of news, fake news can potentially be widely shared and spread on social media. That has undoubtedly exacerbated the social impact of fake news. A study shows that the Chinese public is often exposed to fake news, and it is widely believed that fake news is a serious social problem. Most participants of the study think fake news has “largely” or “somewhat” caused confusions on the basic facts of current issues and events (Willnat et al., 2018). That same study also suggested that around half of the participants believe that media outlets, the government and government officials have “great responsibility” for fake news. “Who to trust” becomes an urgent question, and trust is an asset in this media ecology.
- 3 In January, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 as a global public health emergency and later characterized it as a pandemic in March. The misleading media portrayals of COVID-19 as “Chinese Virus” or “Wuhan Virus” were suspected of triggering anti-Asian sentiments and racist stereotypes (Wulfsohn, 2020). Against this backdrop, discussions of government roles in handling the impacts of misinformation and fake news are both relevant and meaningful. This study is also important in the sense that the size of rural Internet users in China had reached 285 million, nearly one third of the total netizen population in this country (CNNIC, 2020). The rural areas are more vulnerable to the impact of fake news than urban citizens (Elgan, 2019). Through review of literatures, case studies and expert consultation on the government actions dealing with the impact of fake news, this study endeavors to answer the following questions : what roles can governments play in creating a news ecosystem and culture that values and promotes truth ?

Fake news and “post-truth”

- 4 Fake news and “post-truth” are interrelated but different concepts. Clarifying the relationships between them is conducive to further investigations on this topic.
- 5 Fake news is fabricated information that mimics the content of news media in form but without organizational check process (Lazer et al., 2017 ; 2018). In other words, fake news looks like the product of news organizations with the presumed editorial check, but is actually fabricated and misleading information.
- 6 Various ways of categorizing fake news are also presented in a huge bulk of researches. Edson et al. (2018) examined 34 academic articles in which “fake news” was employed

as the key term during the fourteen years from 2003 to 2017, and summarized six ways that fake news was operationalized in previous research, namely “satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, propaganda, and advertising”. These categories are further examined from two levels : the salience of fact-based and intent of deception. Another study also broke the concept of fake news into six types : “alleged foreign interference in domestic elections, ad-driven invention for financial gain, parody and satire, bad journalism, news that is ideologically opposed, news that challenges orthodox authority” (Tambini, 2017, p. 1-5). Such research attempts to unpack the concept are meaningful for policy-making, as each of these types of fake news requires different forms of responses and countermeasures (Vasu et al., 2018).

- 7 How is the concept of fake news and “post-truth” interrelated ? “Post-truth” refers to a kind of “circumstances” in which people have less care about truth and facts, and facts are not as influential and appealing as instigating people’s emotion and personal belief (Dictionary, 2016 ; McIntyre, 2018). The prefix “post” implied the assumption that the era before this is one of “truth”, denoting there was an epochal shift from an era of truth to “post-truth”. “Fake news”, however, is a type of “false media product” (Corner, 2017, p. 1100). Fake news is about how much truth is accessed, while post-truth is about peoples’ attitudes of the truth (Chambers, 2021).

Demographic features of “perfect victims”

- 8 Even if individuals prefer to share high-quality information, they are not able to discriminate between facts and low-quality information all the time due to limited individual cognitive capacity and information overload on social networks, allowing low-quality information to spread virally (Qiu et al., 2017). This helps explain some groups of peoples’ higher exposure to false information online. The people with certain features such as older and individuals with more extreme political views are more apt to share fake news (Lazer et al., 2017). A study has found that the likelihood of Facebook users over the age of 65 to share fake news is way higher than that of younger users (Elgan, 2019).
- 9 In Chinese context specifically, media literacy enhancement is an urgent issue in rural areas. The statistics from China’s immensely popular messaging app WeChat show that rural citizens are more apt to share fake news than city residents (Elgan, 2019). The rural areas are vulnerable to political manipulation, fake advertising, low quality messages and poor taste entertainment. It is also the areas where the government could step in and implement educational measures.

Countermeasures

- 10 Prior literature suggested that the countermeasures to fake news applied in Western countries mainly take on three forms : 1) verification of the information source 2) fact-checking 3) stipulation of laws and regulations (Luo, 2018, pp. 126-134). Based on a review of anti-fake news measures in over forty countries and regions (including both western and non-western countries), the measures could roughly be divided into three major categories : sanction measures by introducing and enforcing laws and regulations, monitoring measures by fact-checking, and awareness measures by enhancing education (Funke & Flamini, 2021). Among the selected countries and

regions, Germany, Singapore and China passed national laws with concrete terms which give penalties to spreading fake news online, more specifically, fines or jail sentences. Other countries that got law passed include France, Belarus, Kenya, Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia. In the U.S., several states have passed media literacy laws which oblige media literacy education in public schools, and a federal law is yet to be passed .

- 11 The legal framework is informative in terms of understanding in which ways the government intends to moderate online communications, and therefore, it is important to understand what these laws and regulations are to further discuss how the government devises its actions (Wang, 2021). Take China for example, the national cyber security law passed in 2016 stipulates that creating or spreading rumors online is a crime (CAC, 2016). A State Council regulation in 2017 mandates social media platforms to solely link to and republish news articles from registered news media sources (CAC, 2017). The State Council started from 2018 to require microblogging sites to highlight and refute rumors on their platforms (Xinhua, 2018). Furthermore, an app launched by Chinese authorities providing common people the channel to report potential false information. The app collaborated with platforms like Weibo and WeChat by setting up accounts on them (Reuters, 2018). Based on the analysis, it is fair to say that China has some of the strictest laws and regulations against fake news (Funke & Flamini, 2021).
- 12 Research on the roles and behaviors of government is growing but still limited. The current research tends to frame the Chinese government's role as controller, regulator or manager (Hassid, 2008 ; Rosen, 2010). Few research went beyond the issue of government censorship to authorities' engagement in online discussions and debates, and response to public concerns raised in the online sphere (Wang, 2021). When studying the role of government in combatting fake news, this research argues that public sphere theory offers a helpful lens.

Public Sphere Theory

- 13 The public sphere is seen as a space of social life where public opinion can be formed and public debate can be conducted (Habermas, 1991). The public sphere "as a functional element in the political realm was given the normative status of an organ for the self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs" (Habermas, 1989, p. 74). It is the domain where the formation of public opinions and legitimisation of state and democracy interact with each other. Though Harbermas's works of the public sphere derived from his historical reviews of European societies in the 17th and 18th centuries, the theory is still regarded and being applied by academics as analytic lenses of contemporary issues (Noesselt, 2014 ; Stockmann & Luo, 2017 ; Sullivan, 2012). Its functions are not constrained by historical context (Wang, 2021). Three dimensions of public spheres were generally emphasized: openness of discussion, longevity of debate and participation of diverse actors (Ferree et al., 2002, Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2015). The three criteria of public sphere are ideal but have not been realized in social reality. Actually, they are fulfilled to different extent in different regions or countries (Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2015).
- 14 In the context of China, perhaps the case of Weibo (Microblogging) is the closest approximation to online public spheres (Stockmann & Luo, 2017) due to its capability to reach massive users and the degree of freedom of online expression. However, the

existence or possibilities of public spheres are a controversial field of scholarly discussion. Some research was skeptical and argued that the increasing presence of government on social media platforms and government's quick adaption into online ecology hindered Weibo's potential to truly engage inclusive debates (Sullivan, 2012 ; 2013). Some other research was more liberal and stressed that some degree of online discussion is allowed by the Chinese government, rendering social media an instrument for the public to supervise the government authorities (Jiang, 2010 ; Noesselt, 2014). It would be improper to entirely deny the existence of online public sphere in China (Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2015). The previous research demonstrated a common theme that the role of the government impacts the nurturing of an ecosystem and environment that values and promotes public engagement, inclusive debates and finally truth.

- 15 People's increasing reliance on social media to get information and news facilitates the digital expansion of the public sphere online, however, the spread of fake news contaminates public judgments and opinions, which is detrimental to the truth-tracking nature of the public sphere democracy (Chambers, 2020). The integrity of the public sphere relates to more than one actors. This study focuses on the regulatory response, engagement and epistemic role of governments in current media ecology.

Method

Expert consultation

- 16 Two rounds of law expert consultations were organized in Beijing in late May of 2019 to discuss the levels of legislation, and the weight of each measure in legal terms.

Case analysis

- 17 The "Jiang Ge Case"¹ was selected to be analyzed due to its massive impact on the online debates and relevance to this study. Media reports and research articles on the case from November of 2016 to 2018 were collected from Chinese newspaper The Beijing News, social media WeChat and Chinese research article database China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). A longitudinal development of the case was presented.

Findings

Ambivalent media credibility

- 18 In the example of "Jiang Ge Case", when lots of false information was already generated on network space, some mainstream media failed their responsibility by adding fuel to netizens' emotions and thus contributed to the viral moral trial online. Table 1 outlines the development of media representations of the case.
- 19 Table 1 : Development of Media Representations of the "Jiang Ge Case"

Stage 1 (from November 3, 2016 to May, 2017)	Jiang Ge, a Chinese student studying in Japan was killed by her roommate's ex-boyfriend Chen on November 3, 2016. Several mainstream news outlets covered the development of the case. The public responses were basically objective and reasonable during this stage
Stage 2 (from May, 2017 to December, 2017)	During this period, the “moral witch hunt” on Jiang's roommate Liu was increasingly rampant, both in mainstream media as well as on social media . On November 9, 2017, the Beijing News released an interview video with Liu and Jiang Ge's mother. On November 12, the WeChat official account “Mi Meng” published an article “Liu Xin & Jiang Ge Case : The law can only sanction the murderer, but who will sanction human nature ?”, which pushed the public opinion trial of Liu to a climax. The focus of this controversy is mostly on the moral trial of Liu, while the case itself and the criminal suspect Chen was very little concerned (Cao & Dong, 2018).
Stage 3 (after the court hearing on December 15, 2017)	During this period, the “Jiang Ge Case” entered the court trial state. The major media outlets closely followed up on the development in real time. However, the moral trial of Liu is still the focus of media reports and public opinions. With some mainstream media calling for rationality , the one-sided public opinion ecology was reversed to some extent (Jiang & Yao, 2018).

- 20 About social media, a research collected 347 articles related to “Jiang Ge Case” and demonstrated that the top ten articles with the most “likes” from the readers basically showed strong emotions against Liu, the victim's roommate. Emotional comments and fake news are rampant on social media Weibo and WeChat, and even some mainstream media add fuel to public emotions (Cao, & Dong, 2018). Those articles tried to catch people's eyeball by agitating them in order to attain financial gains. By doing so, social trust and morality was undermined, ethics of journalism significantly disintegrated, and public sphere corrupted. Journalists and the media should take partial responsibility for the spread of false news and the decline of media credibility (Willnat et al., 2018).

Discussion

- 21 Based on a review of anti-fake news measures, case analysis, and expert consultations, this study summarized an action framework on dealing with the impact of fake news, and examined the issue of ambivalent media credibility. A global trust report revealed that the trust in the U.S. has experienced the record drop among the general public throughout the survey's history (Edelman, 2018). Among the four types of institutions covered by the report, namely government, businesses, media and NGOs, 59 % of people surveyed in the U.S. think government was most broken. In contrast, within China, the institutions see significant growth in trust on government. Sixty-eight percent of respondents in China think the government is most promising to lead to a better future. Four other countries namely India, Indonesia, UAE and Singapore join China at the top of the Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2018). Despite the cultural and ideological differences among different societies, is there a denominator for defining the government's role in combatting fake news ? Based on the findings, this study attempts to elaborate on the government's role from the following three dimensions.

Public sphere guarantor

- 22 Though the concept of public sphere was formed in the Western history, it still has implications in contemporary Chinese society. Due to the unprecedented development of communication technologies, the emergence of social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and various news apps is playing a complicated role in shaping public opinions. Beside the Jiang Ge case, another example would also illustrate the complicity of the online sphere. Examinations on the case of the high-speed rail accident which happened in Wenzhou in 2011 suggested that the platform Weibo played a notable role in tapping the potential of social media in creating a public sphere as the platform, incubated a new genre of discourse as well as the formation of new social identities ; However, the study also indicated the large amount of irrational and emotional discussions on Weibo on this case. Sometimes, expression of emotion was more influential than rational discussions about the causes of the derailment accident and potential solutions (Zhou & Lu, 2017). The role of social media in creating a public sphere could face the risk of becoming venting of extreme emotions with rare rational discussion (Leibold, 2012). This point is in line with the previous observations that the bottom line is set out for online communication by the government regarding what is not appropriate and acceptable (Harwit and Clark, 2001 ; Wang, 2021). The government came onto the field as “the rule maker in the communications industry, arbiter of disputes and provider of public services” (Chen, & Zhang, 2012, p. 80).
- 23 To build an inclusive and normative public sphere, it is necessary for the government to construct an authoritative discourse based on consensus, while maintaining a humble and open mentality, so as to cope with “post-truth” challenges and to counter its negative impact (Pang, 2018). If we look back at the origins of government politics, it could be found that politics was born with the public nature of defending the public order that transcends any “individual” and “private domain”. It is true that in the long history of the progress of human political civilization, the boundaries between “public” and “private”, “public sphere” and “private domain” are constantly changing. However, as a flow of human civilization, its public nature of safeguarding and defending human public order is never changed (Jing, 2019).

Constrained moderation provider

- 24 Generally speaking, the communication effect is positively associated with the credibility of the communicator. Individuals are more likely to trust the information from established or familiar sources and from sources that resonate their preexisting values (Lazer et al., 2017). Individuals resort to both existing knowledge and judgment of the source to authenticate the news. When both mechanism are not working, individuals passively or actively resort to external resources including interpersonal relations and institutions for news authentication (Edson et al., 2018). The past research sheds lights on the importance of institution credibility and availability of authoritative channels to help authenticate the media content and to combat the influence of fake news.
- 25 The lessons from Jiang Ge case call for stronger regulation of ethics within media industry itself. While owning substantial resources of the society, the mainstream

media undertakes major social responsibilities for correcting public opinions when the latter goes astray. The government cannot and should not be omnipotent. The media issue should be handled by the media itself first, and receive the social supervision from the public, and then the space left for government moderation to provide assistance. (Chen, & Zhang, 2012). The government can also provide sources to help the media practitioners improve the code of conduct, and work with the self-regulatory mechanism to cope with fake news (Lei & Liu, 2011).

- 26 The social media companies use statistical models and algorithms to predict and increase people’s engagement with the content as much as possible (Bakshy et al., 2015). Those models could be adjusted to better filter false information and improve information quality. Either self-regulation by the platforms or government intervention can be effective in terms of policies regulating the social media platforms (Lazer et al. , 2018). In practice, technological companies have rolled out a mix of algorithmic-based and user-based initiatives. WeChat collaborated with more than seven hundred third-party organizations to fact-check the information and links on the platform. The technical efficiency of the platform monitoring is usually good, but the effectiveness of self-regulation initiatives is seen as limited given that the spread of fake news has not significantly slowed down (Vasu et al., 2018). Government-platform collaboration and moderation has a potential here. However, it is important to find the balancing point between self-regulation by the platforms and the government moderation. Too much government intervention poses the risk of over censorship, which is also undesirable for the sound development of the public domain.

Knowledge production facilitator

- 27 From the early knowledge produced in the “Axis Age”, a term coined by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, to the era of “knowledge interpretation”, and then to today, whether it is for the sake of meeting the requirements of the international situation or driven by China’s internal impetus for growth, production of new knowledge is in urgent need (Jiang, 2019).
- 28 In the “post-truth” predicament, the crisis of expression of traditional media has triggered the crisis of trust in the audience (Jiang, 2006). The original truth became an “illusion” to the audience. When they could not find alternative institutions they can trust, the audience could only seek for the truth by themselves. The news production organizations are decentralized, and each audience becomes a certain type of media to produce “information”. The “information” that was originally produced by the mass media meant to eliminate uncertainty has now become scattered “messages” produced by the masses. Every message reflects a part of truth, and the whole truth becomes fragmented. In this sense, “post-truth” is also post-modern or post-deconstruction stage of news production
- 29 This study argues that knowledge is often produced in relation to a specific time, space, subject and discursive rhetoric. They play a significant role in the ordering and understanding the social life (Negus & Román-Velázquez, 2000). Meanwhile, this study also adopts an across time-space perspective, as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). Tackling of fake news need to be considered in a global context. The interplay among time, space,

subject and discourse is dynamic and often assigned meaning through complicated processes (Negus & Román-Velázquez, 2000). Starting from the knowledge production, this section endeavours to review the "post-truth" predicament from four angles, namely the subject, discourse, time and space, and to position the government's actions and roles within the framework. However, this account is by no means exhaustive, but has highlighted some of the key points considered by this study to be important for the deeper conversation and interactions.

Subject

- 30 Beside people's dramatic drop of trust in mass media institutions, another impact is the one brought by the "post-truth" on political communication, as the media discourse itself acts as the main battlefield of political discourses. Traditionally the mass media was the main channel for the communication of power institutions (such as the government) and interest groups. The media played the role of bunker for political communication. Media and politics work with each other, but they just don't state this matter in an explicit way. Originally the government's credit and the media's credit support each other. Now with the media credit fragmented, drifted and shifted, the government's credit comes unglued. Then what is happening in the field of online communication ? The government starts to undertake the subject role by creating its own channel such as its website and other self-owned media. The government began to communicate itself and express itself even before the beginning of the "post-truth" era. Against that background, crises began to emerge within political communication both in terms of the channel and the content. The subjects of knowledge production have to confront challenges today, be it a person, mechanism or way of expression.

Discourse

- 31 Truth (in the philosophical sense) is abstract and is an uncountable noun while fact is concrete and a countable noun. Facts are fragmented and the truth is patchworked by and abstracted from multiple facts. It can't be said that a news story always reports truth, but it is fair to say that it is supposed to report facts. For example, descriptions of the scene on the spot are facts, which do exist, but that is not truth. Therefore, the process from facts to truth is a figure of speech, a rhetorical movement (Ling, 1998). New knowledge is produced in the process.
- 32 In this rhetorical movement, the media acts as the head and subject. However, in the "post-truth" period, the head of the rhetoric is divided. What is the underlining purpose by stitching multiple facts together ? Is the rhetoric head—the media moving towards the ultimate truth or hidden truth ? Or the part of truth it wants people to know ? What kind of rhetorical motivation is underlining this discourse ? By reporting facts, do the media only want the audience to know the incident happened, or also present the audience with a larger picture, such as the social connections behind that incident and lead to the ultimate truth based on the facts ? Do the news media reflect the people's will, or are they partisan ? Usually they end up with being partisan. Therefore, from facts to truth is a rhetorical movement and a unique system of language. In the "post-truth" situation, the ecology of the system has been changed and subverted, including the subject and the discourse executing this rhetorical movement.

Time

- 33 Time often reminds people of history, while history was connected through time and formed memories. The memory is a collective expression of the continuous or intermittent pieces of experience at a certain moment (Cassirer, 1955). The news constructs people's current memory, and the current memory will become history in the passage of time. As is often said, today's news is tomorrow's history.
- 34 In the “post-truth” predicament, the foundation on which people build their trust and walk to the future is destabilized. The credit of the country and the media accumulated in the history is compromised. The past was not solid enough to support the future. Originally, today's news is tomorrow's history from the perspective of media content, reputation and credit, and we equate news with history and truth. However, in the “post-truth” context, it is impossible to believe today's news is the real account of history, so in this sense today cannot provide support for tomorrow anymore. Then people turn from the law of causation to the law of relations when judging the value of the information content. For the law of causation, there is a logical inference from the cause to the result. When this cause is not solid, the result has nothing to rely on. In the past ideally, we regard today's news as the tomorrow's history, but today the news is denied as being the truth as the “post-truth” implies half-truth or no truth at all. Therefore, the cause is lost and so is the result. From such a perspective, the technology such as big data begins to shift from its excessive dependence on the content itself to the relations of the content. Originally the focus was laid on what kind of thoughts people hold were influenced by what they consumed, and what ideas were formed. Now the attention is shifted to what kind of news people are concerned with, and what kind of changes are incurred during the switching of attentions. Therefore, the law of causation has turned to the law of relations in the “post-truth” context.

Space

- 35 The concept of space can be understood from three dimensions. The first dimension is physical, like the boundary between the states and the regions ; the second dimension is cultural, such as visible customs, habits, and beliefs conventionalized over history. The third dimension is cognitive, the cognitive boundary behind the visible culture. The cognitive space is imaginary, abstract, and heterogeneous. In the “post-truth” predicament, the expression crisis of the media impacts the space in multiple senses.
- 36 In terms of the physical space, the communication space is reorganized and that reorganization is visible. For example, if the U.S. media don't tend to report the facts, then other countries must stand out and do so, and vice versa. The global communication space will be reorganized and reshaped, though this gets heavily influenced by national priorities and propaganda. The replacement of the subject creates room and opportunities for emerging players in the communication space.
- 37 From the perspective of the cognitive space, because people's trust in traditional media is compromised in the “post-truth” context, the size of the new cognitive space for trust is extended. But what will fill or guide this new space for trust now and in the future ? That question requires the impetus and mechanism of new knowledge production to fill the new space. Then who is the main body of new knowledge production ? And who can facilitate the production mechanism ? New information technologies such as VR, AR, AI provide the possibility for pan-media in the future. For

example, the driverless cars can automatically transmit signals within 300 meters through software and chips. The intelligent and global circulation of information is also possible if every building and road are equipped with such chips. Everything is recordable and traceable. People need only to check the video recording in the street corner to restore the facts of a violent incident. In reality for example, the initial stage of pan-media has been realized in north China's city Yinchuan through the government microblog, where people can report problems and get responses (Cao, 2017). This case demonstrated that the government could actually play an active part in the space of new knowledge production. The pan-media age means the decentralization of the subject. With the aid of artificial intelligence coupled with the distributed preservation of block chains, the panorama of a city can be rendered seamlessly, and the technology ensures the authenticity of the recording that on one can tamper with. In this way the facts are being approached infinitely. The augmented fact from a multidimensional perspective contributed to the extension of the cognitive space in the “post-truth” context.

Conclusion

- 38 In the mass communication age, the traditional mass media established its reputation based on the professional norms such as doing “authentic, objective, and timely” reporting, which was regarded by audience as facts about the world due to the credit of the media accumulated over the history. However, the successive misreports by mainstream media, such as CNN's distorting report on the Tibetan issue and cropping out photo images (The Observers, 2008), have debunked the media myth to some extent. The reputation and credit conscientiously established throughout the U.S. mass communication history by education, technology, and communication have been compromised. It can be said that the U.S. is facing a “post-truth” predicament featured by the crisis of expression caused by the expression of crisis (Jiang, 2006). The public can no longer continue to trust that the news media is the channel to deliver the facts, and then trust is partially transferred to social media. The latter is functioning as both the platform as well as content provider.
- 39 This study elaborates on the response, engagement and epistemic role of authoritative agent in current media ecology. Based on review of literatures, case analysis, and expert consultation, this study elaborated on the government's roles from three dimensions, as public sphere guarantor, constrained moderation provider and knowledge production facilitator in its efforts to create a news ecosystem and culture that values and promotes truth.
- 40 First, this research enriches the understanding of public sphere theory in current media ecology. The criterion of public spheres such as open discussion, longevity of debate and participation of diverse actors (Ferree et al., 2002, Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2015) still sheds light but needs to take on a new touch. The relatively unconstrained nature of social media and the ambivalent mass media credibility have made the online spheres increasingly complicated. The quick spread of fake news is one of the thorny issues. It is a common enemy of all governments and peoples, and it needs to be tackled with rational judgement, proper intervention and human wisdom.
- 41 Second, the role of governments in combatting fake news has been a myth without sufficient answers. This study goes beyond the issue of government censorship or

authoritarian system, and explores when and where the authorities could play a proper role in light of public sphere theory. Meanwhile, this study expands the discussions in terms of time, space, subject and discourse, and attempts to contribute to the current literature by offering discussions about government roles in the “post-truth” predicament.

- 42 For the moment, the large body of discussion in this study is more qualitative in nature. For future research, hopefully a more meticulous quantitative scale could be formulated for the measure of the government performance in coping with fake news. The mutually complementing research efforts are worthwhile because in the “post-truth” context, people still seek for facts and aspire for truth.

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NOTES

1. For more details of the “Jiang Ge Case”, please refer to the following websites: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-11/13/content_34484851.htm
<https://medium.com/sixth-tone/how-a-chinese-students-murder-turned-into-a-moral-witch-hunt-b4ec61861573>

ABSTRACTS

With the advancement of communication technology and increasing number of people turning to their mobile devices for news and information, social media is functioning as both the platform as well as content provider. However, fake news could also travel faster and wider, while the traditional gatekeeping process of media diminishes. In the context of the Brexit referendum and the U.S. presidential campaign in 2016, the spike of “post-truth” in the headlines spurred heated discussions of the tension between “appeals to emotion” and “objective facts”. Based on a review of anti-fake news measures, case analysis, and expert consultations, this study examined the government’s roles from three dimensions, as public sphere guarantor, constrained moderation provider and knowledge production facilitator in the efforts to create a news ecosystem that values and promotes truth.

Avec le progrès des technologies de la communication et le nombre croissant de personnes qui se tournent vers leurs appareils mobiles pour obtenir des actualités et des informations, les médias sociaux servent à la fois de plateforme et de fournisseur de contenu. Cependant, les intox (ou fakes news) peuvent aussi circuler plus rapidement et plus largement, tandis que le processus traditionnel de contrôle des médias diminue. Dans le contexte du référendum sur le Brexit et de la campagne présidentielle américaine de 2016, le pic de "post-vérité" dans les gros titres a suscité des discussions animées sur la tension entre les "appels à l'émotion" et les "faits objectifs". Sur la base d'un examen des mesures anti-fake news, d'une analyse de cas et de consultations d'experts, cette étude a examiné les rôles du gouvernement sous trois dimensions,

en tant que garant de la sphère publique, fournisseur de modération sous contrainte et facilitateur de la production de connaissances dans les efforts visant à créer un écosystème de nouvelles qui valorise et promeut la vérité.

Con l'avanzamento della tecnologia della comunicazione e il crescente numero di persone che si rivolgono ai loro dispositivi mobili per notizie e informazioni, i social media stanno funzionando sia come piattaforma che come fornitore di contenuti. Tuttavia, le fake news potrebbero anche viaggiare più velocemente e più ampiamente, mentre il tradizionale processo di gatekeeping dei media diminuisce. Nel contesto del referendum sulla Brexit e della campagna presidenziale statunitense nel 2016, il picco di "post-verità" nei titoli dei giornali ha stimolato accese discussioni sulla tensione tra "appelli alle emozioni" e "fatti oggettivi". Sulla base di una revisione delle misure anti-fake news, dell'analisi dei casi e delle consultazioni di esperti, questo studio ha esaminato i ruoli del governo da tre dimensioni, come garante della sfera pubblica, fornitore di moderazione vincolata e facilitatore della produzione di conoscenza negli sforzi per creare un ecosistema di notizie che valorizza e promuove la verità.

INDEX

Keywords: "Post-truth", fake news, government role, public sphere, knowledge production

Mots-clés: "Post-vérité", fake news, rôle du gouvernement, sphère publique, production de connaissances.

Parole chiave: "Post-verità", fake news, ruolo del governo, sfera pubblica, produzione di conoscenza

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