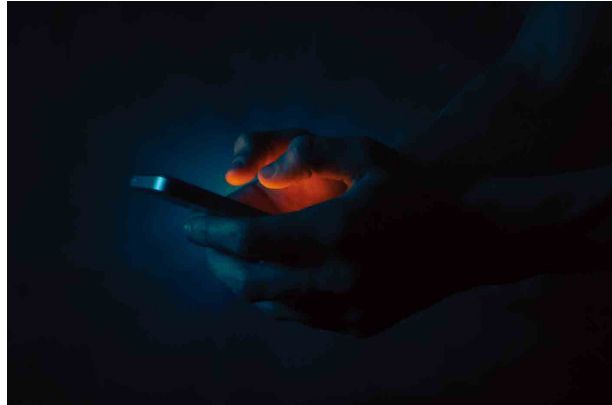


Chapter 13: Re-evaluation of Disinformation Countermeasures and Expansion of International Collaboration on Disinformation Challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region

◆ Conventional disinformation countermeasures in Western countries likely to be re-evaluated

Deep fakes such as videos and audio produced by generative artificial intelligence (AI) are increasing in quality, and disinformation challenges are expected to intensify. The following is an analysis of likely future trends.

The risks that disinformation poses to society are likely to increase partly due to dramatic improvements in AI technology. According to the identity verification platform Sumsb, the number of global deepfakes in circulation surged tenfold from 2022 to 2023, with an average increase of 1,530% in the Asia-Pacific region and 2,800% in Japan, meaning that Japan's challenges are among the most serious within the region. Recognizing in advance that even more deepfakes would spread during the year of national elections in many de-



(Photo: Jaroslav Maléř/ Pexels)

mocracies in 2024, the US private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) accelerated research and tool development efforts to detect AI-generated disinformation, and major US media outlets and others made use of these tools. The problem of AI-generated disinformation is expected to worsen in 2025 with improvements in quality, but the users of such tools (and the services offered to counter this disinformation) are also expected to grow, both within and beyond the US.

Since it is extremely difficult to combat all disinformation, it is highly likely that approaches toward “prebunking” (building preemptive resilience to disinformation) rather than “debunking” (exposing and refuting disinformation as false after disinformation has already taken place) will be given prominence, and expanded use of prebunking is anticipated.

Western countries are also likely to accelerate reviews of their countermeasures against information influence operations (IIOs), above all, re-examining their strategic communications aimed at the Global South. As the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (Riga, Latvia) has pointed out, Western countries have become increasingly concerned about Russian and Chinese IIOs in the Global South and their local impact ever since Russia's invasion of Ukraine exposed a chasm between the West and the Global South in their perceptions of events. At the same time, there will likely be a series of discussions on why the West's efforts to reach out to the Global South have not been successful, with these involving reviews by stakeholders of the Western strategic communications and IIO countermeasures.

◆ International collaboration in combating disinformation likely to be transformed and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region expanded

The new Trump administration could significantly reshape the disinformation measures that have been pursued so far under the Biden administration.

Firstly, the cooperative relations between the US government and the private sector, especially US Big Tech companies, the media, and CSOs, which have collaborated with the Biden administration in combating disinformation, will likely change, with the mainstream media prone to increasingly fact-check

statements and other information coming from the Trump administration. On the other hand, some Big Tech companies may temper their approach to disinformation out of fear of being accused of censorship by the new administration. Other private-sector actors and CSOs will probably seek sustainable and independent initiatives to counter disinformation that do not rely on support from the new administration.

Secondly, it is expected that players other than the US, such as Canada, European countries, and Taiwan, will try to promote international cooperation to combat disinformation or foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) in a manner that does not rely on the US. With China particularly in mind, moves to seek cooperation with countries and locales within the Indo-Pacific region will presumably intensify, undoubtedly accelerating discussions on the possibility of establishing an Information Security Centre of Excellence in the Indo-Pacific region. As Canada will hold the G7 presidency in 2025, it will be one of the driving forces for the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), an initiative to strengthen coordination across the G7 in responding to threats to democracy, and for further collaborations beyond this RRM in the region. In this context, Japan will face significantly higher expectations and enjoy greater opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

◆ Recommendations

- Japan should move away from its current whack-a-mole debunking approach, which represents a symptomatic treatment of disinformation challenges. Recognizing that maintaining such an approach would not be only ineffective but would also keep Japan on the defensive against disinformation challenges, the government needs to quickly move to operationalize proactive measures other than simply exposing and refuting disinformation or FIMI.
- One of these proactive approaches involves prebunking. As a disaster-prone country, Japan can analyze the content, trends, structure and dynamics of social networks, identifying patterns in the spread of mis/disinformation during past disasters. This would also be useful in preparing for potential mis/disinformation regarding elections. Proactive measures for building societal resilience, ranging from communications to education, will be more effective than debunking in the age of generative AI. The Japanese government as well as the private sector and CSOs should recognize the advantages of prebunking and start developing institutional structures to put it into practice.
- The Japanese government should strengthen its intelligence functions and strategic communications. Such functions will engender a better understanding of information ecosystems in society and enable the government to quickly and flexibly share, aggregate, and analyze information among relevant organizations, which is what the government has been doing since this concept was mentioned in the 2022 National Security Strategy. Ministries and agencies should accelerate their capacity building.
- A whole-of-society approach should be actively pursued. Governments cannot act alone in combating disinformation. Various efforts by private-sector actors and CSOs, including data-driven research, technology development, communications, education, and qualitative improvement of journalism and fact-checking, should be expanded, and multifaceted cooperation and collaboration among actors should be enhanced.
- As global interest in disinformation challenges in the Indo-Pacific region increases, it is recommended that Japan look for more active international cooperation and collaboration with various stakeholders.

Taiwan is ahead of Japan in its experience and initiatives in combatting disinformation and FIMI, and Japan could open up a wide range of possibilities by, for example, seeking to engage and collaborate with CSOs in Taiwan.

(November 11, 2024, Kyoko Kuwahara,
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