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DECENTRALIZED PROPAGANDA IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL MEDIA: THE MASSIVE PRESENCE OF THE CHINESE STATE ON DOUYIN

The rise of social media in the digital era poses unprecedented challenges to authoritarian regimes that aim to influence public attitudes and behaviors. In this paper, we argue that authoritarian regimes have adopted a decentralized approach to producing and disseminating propaganda on social media. In this model, tens of thousands of government workers and insiders, primarily non-media professionals, are mobilized to produce and disseminate propaganda, and content flows in a multi-directional, rather than a top-down manner. We empirically demonstrate the existence of this new model in China by creating a novel dataset of over five million videos from over 18,000 regime-affiliated accounts on Douyin, the Chinese branding for TikTok. This paper supplements prevailing understandings of propaganda by showing theoretically and empirically how digital technologies are changing not only the content of propaganda but also the way in which propaganda materials are produced and disseminated.

TIME

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12:10PM-1:30PM**

LOCATION

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