



CESIF
Centre for Social Inclusion
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GEOPOLITICS AND INFORMATION DISORDER IN NEPAL



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Geopolitics and Information Disorder in Nepal

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Vijay Kant Karna
Executive Chairperson
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Preface

Information disorder in Nepali media is not a new phenomenon. However, the intensification of fake and manipulated news in the later period has raised national security concerns and affected geopolitical relations. While social networking sites and mushrooming online news portals are often regarded as the prime sources of misinformation, disinformation and fabricated news, the mainstream media are also not aloof from such endeavours. Fabricated and inaccurate media content is increasingly responsible for misleading public opinion on issues of national importance. This report attempts to analyze the prevalence of information disorder in the Nepali media landscape, particularly regarding news coverage about different geopolitical actors and the tendency to mislead the public to drive opinions towards opposition or in support of different countries.

Misleading or fabricated media content on recent issues of geopolitical imports, foreign relations and diplomacy has led to the polarization of the public in several instances, inducing geopolitical and geostrategic implications. This was particularly evident in the media coverage of fabricated contents surrounding the ratification of the United States' Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact from the parliament, Nepal's prospect of joining the State Partnership Program (SPP) and subsequent misleading and false information on vaccine diplomacy during Covid-19 pandemic.

This report explores the prevalence of information disorder in Nepal about geopolitics and examines the role of mainstream media in intensifying the phenomenon. The study defines the analytical parameters of the study appropriate for the Nepali context based on the available standard indicators of information disorder. The study tracked ten thousand mainstream media stories published from February to June 2023 in Nepali print and online media platforms to conduct sentiment analysis within the domain of Natural Language Processing through the specific tool- Da-Vinci model by OpenAI to identify and classify instances of news coverage within pre-defined indicators. The study also conducted a correlation analysis among the predetermined indicators and foreign state actors to understand the dynamics at play. The analysis has been further substantiated by qualitative data from diverse stakeholders obtained through interviews and focus group discussions. We believe this report will be a landmark study to explore the information disorder landscape in Nepal regarding international relations, foreign policy, geopolitics and diplomacy.

Executive Summary

Addressing misinformation in Nepal is an extremely challenging and complex undertaking, made even harder by the lack of a clear understanding of what information disorder looks like in the Nepali context.

News stories have a major impact on how we perceive and understand world events. Careful research like this study allows us to better spot, grasp, and reduce the biases and misinformation that influence this important process.

Looking closely at misinformation in Nepali media raises key insights. This study highlighted the subtleties, intricacies and impacts of distorted news. It emphasizes the need for collaborative efforts to bring balance and thoughtful discussion.

We looked at various indicators of information disorder that could be applicable in Nepal. However, the relevance of some indicators depends on the type of journalism we are considering. As a result, we narrowed down the list and focused on the most relevant indicators for this investigation.

The indicators used in this research are measured on a scale from 0 to 3. A score of 0 means the indicator was not present at all. A score of 3 means the indicator was extremely prevalent.

The study found that misinformation takes different forms for different countries, rather than being uniform. In most cases, more misinformation correlated with more negative portrayals of a country, hurting its reputation globally. However, for China the trend was reversed - more misinformation aligned with more positive coverage.

While the study provides useful insights, it shows the need for more research on media distortions about various nations. Further examination could verify patterns and explore questions raised, like why China shows an anomaly, and how observed correlations occur.

Overall, this study reveals both the nuanced nature and detrimental impacts of geopolitical misinformation. It underscores the importance of continuing to deepen our understanding of this issue through expanded research.

News Coverage of India

Evidence/Source Bias:

- The sources used when discussing India have some impact on the narrative. This shows the need for high-quality, unbiased sources.

Insufficient Evidence:

- Stories about India frequently lack enough evidence to back up claims. This underscores the need for thorough fact-checking.

Information Omission:

- Important details are often excluded from narratives about India. This points to the need for more complete reporting.

Statistical Distortion:

- Incorrect use of data seems to impact how India is portrayed. This emphasizes the need to accurately represent statistics.

Misleading Headlines:

- Misleading headlines can distort the narrative about India. This shows the importance of precise, representative headlines.

News Coverage of China

Insufficient Evidence:

- Stories about China often lack thorough information needed to make informed analysis. This shows the need for more rigorous fact-checking.

Information Omission:

- More positive stories about China tend to be more complete, but all narratives should include comprehensive information.

Misleading Headlines:

- Sensationalist headlines are less common in positive stories about China. But headlines should be accurate and balanced for all news topics.

Information Distortion:

- There may be an underlying bias in information about China. This could come from purposeful or accidental distortion of data.

Contextual Distortion:

- Context around positive China stories might be engineered to influence how the information is interpreted. This indicates the need to include unbiased context.

News Coverage of the USA

Evidence/Source Bias:

- News about the USA may show some evidence or source bias. Improving objectivity and source diversity is needed.

Logical Fallacies:

- News about the USA may use flawed arguments. Readers need to evaluate critically.

Misleading Headlines:

- Sensational headlines can misrepresent USA news. News outlets should craft headlines that are accurate and less sensational.

News stories have a big impact on how we see the world. Research like this can help us spot biases and misinformation in the media. It allows us to grasp how these distortions warp our perspectives. This knowledge empowers us to take steps to reduce bias and spread accurate information.

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A. Information Disorder: A Context

A.1 Background

The information era was supposed to bring forth an unparalleled hyperconnectivity between individuals, communities, and information. While this idealized version of the information era might have been present for a brief moment of time during the 2000s, it has quickly been replaced by a version where our information ecosystem is dangerously out-of-balance and serves ulterior motives designed to mislead and divide individuals rather than serve them.

Until recently, classification of false information was relatively straightforward. The term ‘Fake News’, a neologism for false or misleading information presented as news, has historically been used to identify imprecise information. The term began to gain importance in the electoral contexts of Northern America and Western Europe. In these regions, where media plurality and perceived freedom of the media from institutional powers exists, people have a high-level of trust in the media.

Media plurality, though a hallmark of the independent press,¹ has led to another issue in the information era. Because of the variety of independent press outlets, competition for engagement is high. In an effort to increase engagement with content, the independent press has attempted to push for greater velocity and volume of news. Unfortunately, this often comes at the expense of veracity.

In 2004, 60 Minutes ran a story that questioned President Bush’s national guard service record. The documents that served as the basis of this story were later dismissed as fake, and CBS news offered a formal policy on the matter.² A major criticism for CBS at the time was that they were too slow to respond. By the time CBS offered their corrections, the information had already been widely disseminated.

1 UNESCO (2018). World trends in freedom of expression and media development: global report 2017/2018, UNESCO.

2 AP (2004) CBS News admits Bush documents can’t be verified.

The Bush Administration was also guilty of publishing fake news in the same year. TV reports of Bush receiving standing ovations from potential voters were widely shown in 2004. It was however later revealed that the US Government paid actors to pose as journalists and staged the videos.³

The two instances of ‘Fake News’ provided here widely differ in intent and scope. Although the intent is to mislead the public for ulterior motives, the methods and targets are different. Encompassing the wide breadth of media disinformation under the term ‘Fake News’ was already a difficult task, so policy-makers who wished to pass legislation to regulate ‘Fake News’ needed more concrete and stringent definitions for disinformation.

A particular turning point in the etymology of ‘Fake News’ was during the 2016 US Presidential Elections. US Presidential Candidate Donald J. Trump co-opted the term to question the credibility and truthfulness of press-coverage about him. With tweets⁴ such as the following commonplace during his campaign:

“The Fake News is working overtime. Just reported that, despite the tremendous success we are having with the economy & all things else, 91% of the Network News about me is negative (Fake). Why do we work so hard in working with the media when it is corrupt? Take away credentials?”⁵

Between 10/12/2016 and 09/07/2017 (A period of 211 days), Donald J. Trump made 66 tweets referring to what he called ‘Fake News’.⁶ Furthermore, this term was also used in order to attack the credibility of press coverage regardless of veracity. Ultimately these claims led to the development of a lying press complex within the United States. These tactics, however, are not unique to Donald Trump, and neither is this complex to the United States.

3 Tryhorn, C. (2004) US government faked Bush news reports.

4 Trump, D. J. (2018). The Fake News is working overtime. Just reported that, despite the tremendous success we are having with the economy & all things else, 91% of the Network News about me is negative (Fake). Why do we work so hard in working with the media when it is corrupt? Take away credentials?, Twitter.

5 <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/994179864436596736>

6 Britzky, H. (2017) Everything Trump has called “FAKE NEWS”.

In 2022, the Nepal Police Cyber Bureau was forced to issue a statement,⁷ promising action against anyone responsible for propagating false or misleading information, as per Section 47 of the Electronic Transactions Act, 2008. The targets of this statement however were not press institutions, but rather individuals on social media.

Enough evidence and information exist to suggest that there is rampant disinformation in Nepali media. A report published in 2021 by Media Action Nepal concluded that at least 3.90% of news stories in mainstream online and print media in Nepal could fall under the category of 'Fake News'.⁸

A particular high-profile case was in 2021, when Ujyaalo Network (a Nepali media house), published an article claiming incumbent Prime Minister K.P. Oli had signed an agreement with Indian Intelligence.⁹ The reports were later proven to be false. What sets this case apart is that members of the Ujyaalo Network were arrested over this. Under Nepali law, the police are not allowed to make laws for offenses related to journalism, and all proceedings must be arbitrated by the Press Council of Nepal.

A cursory study of reactions to these events and reports brings to light a similar two-pronged problem in Nepal. Media disinformation is rampant and prevalent, and there exists a great deal of support for the identification and quashing of media disinformation as well. Special care also needs to be taken to avoid the development of a lying press complex. It is of no surprise to political commentators that unprecedented arrests were made for disinformation related to the incumbent Prime Minister.

Furthermore, during recent events in early 2023, prospective political candidate Rabi Lamichhane held a press conference in which he criticized and challenged the online and print media of Nepal, accusing them of engaging in disinformation against him.¹⁰ This can be seen as another step along the way of the development of a lying press complex.

7 Request from Nepal Police Cyber Bureau (2078-11-20).

8 Panta, L. D., et al. (2021). A Study of Newspapers and Online News Portals of Nepal. Misleading News in Media. L. D. Panta.

9 OnlineKhabar (2021) Defying court order, Kathmandu police arrest 2 journalists for publishing fake news.

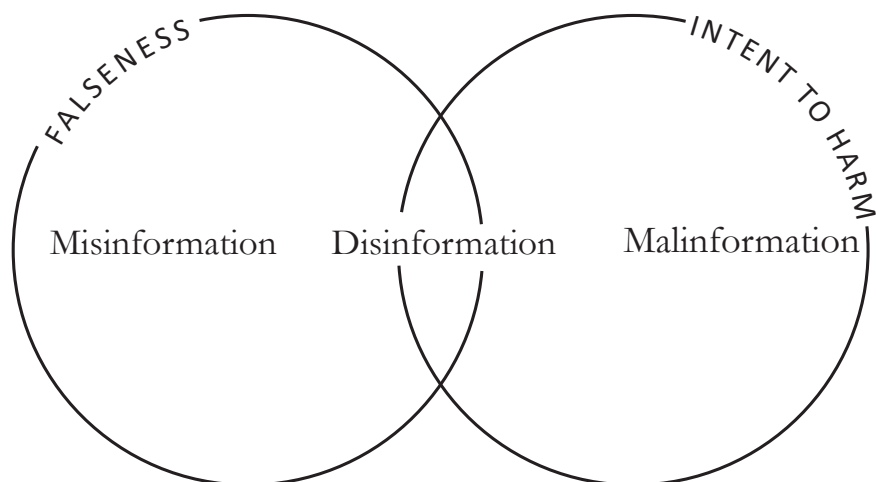
10 Republica (2023) RSP quits government, ministers resign en masse.

With the wide range of disinformation that is prevalent today, it stands to reason that the ability of the term ‘Fake News’ to encompass media disinformation worldwide is rather limited. Additionally, the increasing need and desire for action to be taken against disinformation further highlights the need for a formal and definitive framework that allows for the analysis of media disinformation.

A.2 Framework for Information Disorder

A.2.1 Three Categories

Contemporary scholarship tends to highlight three major categories of information disorder: Misinformation, Malinformation and Disinformation. The following graphic is often used to visualize the relation between these categories:¹¹



In general terms, Misinformation can be understood as information that is false. Malinformation can be understood as information that intends to harm. Disinformation can then be seen as information that is both false and intends to cause harm.

While the themes and features of these categories tend to vary between scholars, there are some unifying strands that we can use to move towards concrete definitions for these terms. In a journal article by Karlova and Fisher in 2013,¹² they derived a scheme comprised of several different indices on the basis of which these three categories were differentiated.

¹¹ Wardle, C. (2020) Understanding Information disorder.

¹² Karlova, N. and K. E. Fisher (2013). “A social diffusion model of misinformation and disinformation for understanding human information behaviour.” *Inf. Res.*18.

Using this scheme Santos-d'Amorim, K. and M. Fernandes de Oliveira Miranda in 2021 were able to derive a universal definition for misinformation, malinformation, and disinformation:¹³

Misinformation: imprecise information that does not possess any intent. It neither seeks to inform or deceive but has the potential to do either.¹⁴

Disinformation: information that is deliberately imprecise and deceptive, regardless of intent.¹⁵

Malinformation: precise information that is used with intent to serve a strategic purpose.¹⁶

These working definitions on their own, however, are still not enough to precisely classify 'Fake News'. Just as there are many types of fake news (to the extent where it's difficult to encapsulate all of it under one term), there are many different types of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.

Within these categories exist multiple different arrangements of 'Fake News'. These arrangements are significantly more helpful in classifying information disorder as their features are more precise. There exist two major frameworks for arrangements of information disorder under these categories.

However, it's important to note that not all arrangements are relevant and useful in all contexts. As such it is important to identify and select arrangements from the models that are applicable to the context they are going to be used in.

13 Santos-d'Amorim, K. and M. Fernandes de Oliveira Miranda (2021). "Informação incorreta, desinformação e má informação: Esclarecendo definições e exemplos em tempos de desinfodemia." *Encontros Bibli: revista eletrônica de biblioteconomia e ciência da informação* 26:01-23.

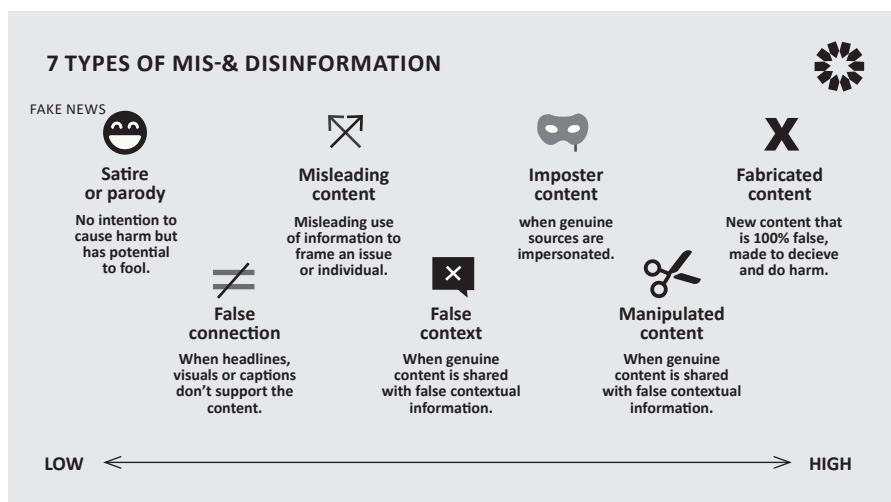
14 Fox, C. J. (1983). *Information and Misinformation: An Investigation of the Notions of Information, Misinformation, Informing, and Misinforming*, Greenwood Publishing Group.

15 Karlova, N. and K. E. Fisher (2013). "A social diffusion model of misinformation and disinformation for understanding human information behaviour." *Inf. Res.*18.

16 Posetti, J., et al. (2018). *Journalism, 'Fake News' & Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism Education and Training*. France, UNESCO.

A.2.2 The Linear Model

The graphic used above to visualize the relation between the three major categories of information disorder can be thought of as a linear spectrum. The very same report the image was sourced from uses the following graphic to visualize arrangements of information disorder on a spectrum with misinformation on one end, and disinformation on the other end.



Malinformation can be thought of as an extension of this model that extends further from disinformation. As such a derivative of this model to include malinformation can be thought of as another spectrum with misinformation on one end as previously, but with malinformation on the other end instead, with disinformation in between.

Satire or Parody

No intention to cause harm but has potential to fool.

Satire or parody can be used to spread rumors and conspiracies under the veneer of their mode. Satire or parody is only considered mis/dis-information when it starts functioning outside of its original or humorous purpose.

False Connections

When headlines, visuals, or captions don't support the content.

There are two distinct considerations that need to be made when it comes to false connections. The first one is supported by works cited thus far:

When media pushes captions, visuals, or headlines that are designed to draw engagement or raise talking points, without addressing them in their content or without them being grounded in reality, it can be considered misinformation.

Alternatively false connections can lean more heavily towards malinformation, as they are written with intent. While intent might not always be to harm, misleading and false information is intentionally pushed regardless. As such it might be worth adding an additional category of false connections. One for seemingly benign clickbait and engagement, and one for more malign malintent.

Misleading Content

Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual.

Misleading content is probably one of the easier classifications to make, but spotting it can be rather difficult. Anytime there is a selective interpretation of presentation of facts, it can fall under misleading content. Cropped pictures, selectively presented statistics, incomplete quotes, would all fall under this category.

False Context

When genuine content is shared with false contextual information.

This is a rather simple one to identify, but takes knowledge of the original context and information to spot. While the degree of malintent might vary, any time information is shared in the wrong context, it would fall under this category.

Sharing pictures of other natural disasters claiming it's a more recent one, or using someone's quote in the wrong context would fit under this classification.

Imposter Content

When genuine sources are impersonated.

This form of disinformation aims to appeal to the authority of the name of a source to add credibility to information that does not come from it. One example would be if a paper published an article claiming it was from AFP, but it actually wasn't.

The intent to deceive is always present when this is done. And can harm the credibility of the source impersonated.

Manipulated Content

When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive.

This seems difficult to delineate from false context. Most examples used by organizations and policy makers of this classification could easily fall under false context. As such, it is important to consider that information **needs** to have been manipulated for it to be considered manipulated content.

Fabricated Content

News content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.

Possibly the most straightforward classification to make. If the content is 100% false, and explicitly designed to deceive and do harm, and takes itself seriously, it is fabricated content.

A.2.3 A Two-Dimensional Model

Considering arrangements of information disorder along a spectrum is helpful for several reasons, most notably it:

- Establishes that intersections between categories and arrangements can exist.
- Establishes the relation of arrangements within the context of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.
- Helps visualize the severity of the arrangements in relation to one another

However, at the same time several pitfalls for this representation also exist, most notably:

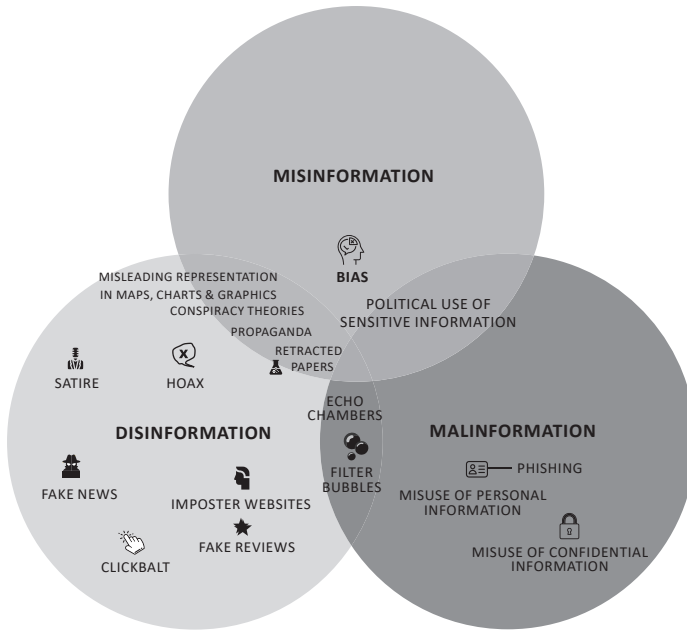
- Considering arrangements to be along a linear model make it difficult to realize intersections between misinformation and malinformation that exclude disinformation.
- A spectrum while an apt analogy is counter-productive for policy making, as legislation requires concrete definitions and boundaries.

In light of these factors, a two-dimensional model has been described to aid the understanding of information disorder.¹⁷

Here misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation are seen as their own domains, and have intersections with each other. This model is helpful because it maintains the arrangements of information disorder within the context of the three categories, whilst delineating and demarcating arrangements and realizing arrangements that were not possible with the linear model.

17 Santos-d'Amorim, K. and M. Fernandes de Oliveira Miranda (2021). "Informação incorreta, desinformação e má informação: Esclarecendo definições e exemplos em tempos de desinfodemia." *Encontros Bibli: revista eletrônica de biblioteconomia e ciência da informação* 26: 01-23.

a. Misinformation Arrangements



Bias

In the context of information disorder, bias can exist in two forms. Cognitive bias, and conflict of interest.

A cognitive bias can occur when the subjective social reality of a disseminator leads to perceptual distortion, leading to the propagation of imprecise information.

A conflict-of-interest bias occurs when intersecting interests of a disseminator (personal or otherwise) interfere with their ability to be impartial and precise when sharing subjective opinions.

b. Disinformation Arrangements

Hoax

A hoax is a deliberate fabrication or falsification of media in an attempt to mislead and deceive. Examples of hoaxes would include unsubstantiated rumors, fabricated statistics, and false captions/images.

Imposture

While imposture usually refers to the impersonation of a website or organization, imposture in this context could also entail the imposture of credible sources of

information. For example, claiming that news was sourced from AFP (when it was not) in order to use the credibility of AFP to push misleading information, would fall under this category.

Fake Reviews

When false and misleading information is used to influence the purchasing of products and services it would fall under this category. Whether it be an author claiming a particular electronic device is really good (when they haven't used it themselves), or it be an organization praising a construction firm (with an ulterior motive such as bribery), this would fall under Fake Reviews.

Clickbait

Clickbait is when sensationalist and often imprecise engagement elements of information are used to drive user traffic. A consequence of this approach is that the imprecise elements of the information are usually what stand out and are consequently propagated.

Fake News

Fake news is information that is completely and deliberately fabricated with the intent of advancing the agenda of the disseminators. Fake news is fabricated from the ground up, by contrast, most accepted definitions of hoaxes limit the scope of a hoax.

A hoax might be a false statistic, or a false quote attributed to a news article. If the article itself were completely fabricated and not just components of it, then it would be fake news.

Satire

Satire's inclusion under disinformation is a contentious point. Satire does not intend to deceive; it is meant to serve an original and humorous purpose. However, the definition of disinformation is agnostic of intent.

If satire exists outside of its intended context and is subsequently used inadvertently to push disinformation, it would fall under a category of information disorder. For example, if a satirical cartoon featuring a presidential candidate were commissioned and received as original and humorous, its effects would be benign. If, however, the image then started circulating social and mainstream channels without the context of parody it was founded in, and taken at face value, it would devolve into disinformation.

Satire itself is not inherently disinformation, but if it is received without the knowledge of its purpose and consequently taken at face value by a consumer, it then becomes disinformation.

c. Malinformation Arrangements

Misuse of Personal Information

When personal and identifying information is used without consent to advance an agenda, it would fall under this category. If private information regarding the medical history of a politician were for example published in an article, with the intent of claiming the politician is unfit for office, it would be a misuse of personal information.

Misuse of Confidential Information

While similar to the malinformation arrangement above, this category is misuse of confidential information that is not personal in nature. If government servers were hacked and information obtained used to serve a strategic purpose (rather than the interest of transparency), then it would be a misuse of confidential information.

Whether or not confidential information has been misused comes down to ideological differences, as long as there is a motive that exists outside of making information transparent, it should be considered misuse.

d. Hybrid Arrangements

Hybrid arrangements exist in overlapping domains and can encompass features from different types of concepts of information disorder.

d.1 Dis-Mis-Information

Misleading Representation

Incorrect use of statistics, visuals, and attributions (among many others) would fall under this category. Misleading statistical and visual representations can arise from incorrect use of statistics to advance particular issues. Sampling biases, truncated axes, disproportionate scales, and any attempt to present data in an imprecise and misleading manner would fall under this category.

Misleading attributions can arise when statements and viewpoints are given in truncated/incomplete format or in a different/absent context. An exaggerated example that illustrates this issue would be if a politician stated he wanted to cut the number of homeless people in half, but a news article stated he wanted to “cut homeless people in half” implying violent tendencies.

Conspiracy Theories

There's two dimensions to this particular arrangement. The first is when a conspiracy theory is peddled as a real theory. The second is when a real theory is dismissed as a conspiracy theory.

Whenever an incomplete inoperable scheme of events is presented as a complete working scheme of events it can fall under the veneer of a conspiracy theory.

Whenever a complete working scheme of events is dismissed as an incomplete inoperable scheme of events, it can fall under the veneer of an unfair dismissal as a conspiracy theory.

Propaganda

Propaganda occurs when there is a deliberate attempt to manipulate people socially and emotionally into accepting and embracing particular political viewpoints. It is important to differentiate propaganda from bias. Bias is when subjective personal beliefs skew veracity, propaganda is a deliberate attempt to psychologically manipulate individuals into buying a particular viewpoint.

Retracted Papers

Retracted papers refer to the act of retracting or attempting to retract information from the public domain. And comes under two broad forms.

The first, is when information is retracted with the intent to hide it from the public. A government agency burying a document detailing consequences of their policies could fall under this arrangement.

The second, is when information is retracted in an attempt to correct previously disseminated incorrect content. The impact this has is two-fold: First, it means that false information has been disseminated and is likely to continue to propagate; Second, it harms the credibility of the disseminator, and might impact the reception of precise information from them in the future.

This can also be used as an attack on an information source. If a news source erroneously publishes wrong information, its competitors (who may engage in disinformation) can continue to call out this retraction to weaken credibility.

d.2 Mis-Mal-Information

Political Use of Sensitive Information

When sensitive information that has the potential to impact and upend many lives is used with the aim of serving a strategic purpose, it would fall under

this arrangement. Political use of sensitive information was seen extensively during the Covid-19 pandemic. Governments would use information about the pandemic to serve interests other than public health.

Inaccurate and false presentation of epidemiology and false attribution to deflect from policy failings during the pandemic would be considered under this arrangement. One particular example is when Brazil changed epidemiology methodology to change how the statistics related to the pandemic were perceived.

d.3 Dis-Mal-Information

Arrangements under this category usually operate at a community level but can also present themselves within media publications and within articles. Cases of these have been explained under the arrangements themselves.

Echo Chambers

Individuals have a tendency to favor information that reinforces existing views, rather than to favor information that challenges them. At a community level, what this means is that individuals tend to associate with information sources and individuals that reflect their viewpoints.

It is however also possible for an echo chamber effect to manifest in information. When non-conforming information is presented as antagonistic to the status-quo, it is usually a deliberate attempt at manipulating readers into rejecting the new information as in addition to not-conforming with existing views, it's now also intentionally antagonistic, further mitigating the chance of it being received.

Filter Bubbles

A filter bubble is similar to an echo chamber, in that it refers to a bubble (aka a community) in which only information that conforms to pre-existing viewpoints is presented. The difference between an echo chamber and filter bubble, is that an echo chamber is defined by the explicit act of individuals rejecting information that does not conform to their views. In a filter bubble, individuals do not have the opportunity to reject information, because only information that conforms to their views is presented in the first place.

This can manifest in the media in two ways. The first way is by the use of algorithms that only push certain types of viewpoints. The second, is when only information that conforms to a viewpoint is presented. If an article on Chinese investment in the developing world only presents viewpoints from Chinese officials, it could be considered a filter bubble.

B. A Framework for Information Disorder in a Nepali Context

As stated earlier, it's important to note that not all arrangements are relevant and useful in all contexts. As such it is important to identify and select arrangements from the models that are applicable to the context they are going to be used in.

Understanding what arrangements of information disorder are relevant and useful in a Nepali context will require an understanding of the state of information disorder within the nation first. In order to do this, there are two key investigations that must be concluded:

- An investigation into legal and regulatory mechanisms and bodies that exist in Nepal.
- An investigation into trends and key instances of information disorder in Nepal.

This investigation will allow us to identify key arrangements of information disorder that exist in Nepal, and allow us to use them to underline the impact and ramifications of information disorder in Nepal, and the challenges that need to be faced in order to curb the extent of it.

B.1 Legal and Regulatory Mechanisms in Nepal

While journalistic mechanisms are still considered as 'developing' within Nepal, there exist several legal and regulatory mechanisms that oversee journalism within the country and enforce credibility.

Journalistic Code of Conduct

The Journalistic Code of Conduct¹⁸ is part of the Press Council Act of Nepal, which establishes a regulatory body known as the Press Council of Nepal (covered in the following section) oversees. The Journalistic Code of Conduct is the premier legal mechanism that governs journalism within Nepal.

The Journalistic Code of Conduct outlines several salient points that are designed to curb and check information disorder:

4.3.1: Journalists and mass media should engage in objective, fair, decent and trustworthy journalism.

18 (2016). Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016.

4.6.1: Remaining firm to the principles of objectivity, journalists and mass media should disseminate factual news and balanced opinion. While doing so, proper space should be given to the opinion of the concerned party.

4.6.2: The news, views, information and notices that the journalists and media disseminate through social networks should be true, factual, balanced and decent.

4.6.3: Journalists and media, while reproducing the information and opinion/comments posted by other social network users by sharing or re-tweeting, must check the true facts and disseminate only after considering the fairness.

4.8.1: Source should be quoted for the reliability of the news. However, while quoting the source, the name and identity of such source should be kept confidential so as to avoid any serious damage to the source.

4.9: Respect for Right to Privacy: Journalists and mass media should respect individual's right to privacy. But, the dissemination of any such information or materials in public interest should not be considered against this right.

5.2.1: Journalists and mass media should not produce, publish, broadcast and distribute news material that discriminates or creates hatred to anyone on grounds of racial, gender, religious, regional, linguistic, political beliefs, tribal or physical, mental and health state.

5.5.1: In publishing- broadcasting news relating to any incident, journalists and mass media should not present any material by attaching the name of a relative or someone close but is not related with the incident, in such a way as to undermine the dignity or assassinate the character of that person.

5.7.1: Journalists and mass media should not publish or broadcast news materials with the distortion of photos, video-scenes, sound or facts without any comment or clarity in such a way to change the impression or give wrong impression or convey wrong message.

We can see that the Journalistic Code of Conduct makes attempts to target several arrangements of information disorder. In particular the Code of Conduct targets the following arrangements: Bias, False Contexts, Misleading Representations, Fabricated Content, and Misuse of Confidential and Private information.

Press Council of Nepal

The Press Council of Nepal (PCN) was designed as a media accountability mechanism to aid the development of journalism in Nepal. Press councils tend to serve two very important roles: 1) they regulate the media by promoting quality content and enforcing accountability, and 2) they defend media freedom by guarding against external mechanisms.¹⁹

Established in 1992, the PCN is designed to serve these very purposes. It has been vested with the power to interrogate and investigate media institutions, and has been appointed as the mediator for all disputes between the media and other institutions. However it is important to note that the PCN does not have any power to enforce any actions it recommends. A major problem within Nepal, is that institutions do not always follow through on recommendations provided by the PCN.²⁰

Furthermore, despite its status as an autonomous body, 100% of the funding for the PCN comes from the Ministry of Communication, as such the PCN is wholly dependent on the governmental body.

A major problem with this regulatory mechanism, is that in recent times it has become increasingly more beholden to the government of Nepal, and as such tends to exist in a role more akin to a government hound versus a media watchdog.

The new prospective Media Council Bill for example, tends to further heighten this analogy. Within it are harsh provisions designed to curb media and press freedom. Massive fines and compensations for code breaches, and the full integration of the PCN into the government of Nepal await should this bill be implemented.²¹

The PCN in its current iteration also suffers from the following issues:

- It lacks autonomy in practice, as its close nature with the Ministry of Communication, further exacerbated by the PCN's financial dependance on it, means it often toes government lines and is unable to impartially serve its designated purpose.

19 Acharya, B. B. and S. Sharma (2022). Global Perspectives on Journalism in Nepal.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

- Most of the appointees onto the board of the PCN are political, as such the direction of the PCN is highly polarized and tends to fluctuate based on the whims of its political appointees rather than its designated purpose.

As such the PCN, while theoretically a regulatory mechanism for information disorder in Nepal, only effectively regulates information disorder when it is politically suitable and turns a blind eye to politically advantageous information disorder. Furthermore, it also engages in information disorder on its own by suppressing precise information that is politically disadvantageous.²²

Accountability to the Public and Stakeholders

While not a formally designated mechanism to monitor media performance, inherent accountability from media institutions towards their shareholders and the general public is also able to serve in this capacity. Naturally, this form of regulation is highly dependent on the whims of the stakeholders and the general public, and as such cannot be considered a reliable or sustainable method for regulation. That being said, none of this takes away from the fact that this phenomenon exists as a regulatory mechanism.

A recent example of how this works in action, is when Rabi Lamichhane held a press conference to challenge the press of Nepal²³. Regardless of whether or not his comments were substantiated, major media institutions within the country lost sizable followings on social media. Kantipur Media Group in particular suffered heavy losses on its Twitter account.

Regardless of whether or not this regulation was in line with public interests, the pressure Kantipur Media Group faced forced them to reconsider their course of action when it came to Rabi Lamichhane. Ironically, we see similar accountability in action with the PCN. The PCN being accountable to the government of Nepal is forced to bend its knee to their whims. In similar fashion, media organizations are forced to bend their knees to the whims of their own stakeholders, who take their own goals and public optics into account.

22 Acharya, P. (2013). *The Making and Implementation of Media Policies in Nepal: Experiences of an Emerging Democracy*. Alliance for Social Dialog, Alliance for Social Dialog.

23 <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2023/02/06/lamichhane-throws-a-tantrum-on-losing-stable-home>

The Polarized Pluralist Model

The model of the press in Nepal can be considered a polarized pluralist model²⁴. The polarized pluralist model has innate features of regulation within it, as a consequence of the features and processes that define it.

The major characteristic of this model is the integration of media into party politics, with weaker historical development of commercial media and a strong role of the state. Other relevant characteristics are: high political parallelism, commentary oriented-journalism, and strong government intervention.

Mass media in Nepal debuted through state initiation²⁵, and its close relation with the PCN, renders the former a target of strong government intervention through the mechanisms of the latter. Here are how the characteristics of the polarized pluralist model of press manifest in Nepali media:

Newspaper Industry	Politically oriented, with low newspaper circulation. Only 607 out of 3665 newspapers circulate regularly.
Political Parallelism	High political parallelism. 13050 journalists are affiliated with the non-partisan Federation of Nepalese Journalists, while 24000 are affiliated with partisan media organization groups.
Professionalization	Weaker professionalization, as big established media houses are comparatively more developed and stronger compared to smaller independent media houses, giving more control of information flow to the former.
State Intervention	Owing to the PCN there is strong government intervention in the media in Nepal.
Political History	A late democratization and mixed politics (features that exist in Nepal's political history), are often correlated with polarized pluralism.

If we reason that a polarized pluralist model exists within Nepal, then consequently the inherent and innate regulatory mechanisms that exist within such a system would exist within Nepal as well. This would mean that because of the strong relationship between media and political organizations within Nepal,

24 K.C., B. (2019). "Polarized Pluralistic Model: Characteristics of Nepalese Press."
Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal.

25 Ibid.

the media finds itself beholden to the aims and objectives of their political allies instead of an idealistic version of journalism.

This is readily apparent in Nepal, where significant distrust in the media is generated from perceived political affiliations.²⁶

State Law

In 1990, Nepal underwent a political transformation from an autocracy to a democracy, moving away from the panchayat to the multi-party system. Since then, there has been a focus from policy to govern and regulate the media during Nepal's transition to a fully democratic state.

There are three major policies (among others), that govern and regulate the media of Nepal (with a fourth controversial policy being debated):

- National Communication Policy 1992
- Long-term Policy of Communication and Information Sector 2002
- Draft National Media Policy 2013

Across the three policies, the following key features have remained consistent, and are enforced by the government in an effort to regulate the media of Nepal:

- Private sector investment into all forms of media is readily encouraged.
- State support to the media is provisioned, especially through advertisement.
- Foreign investment in Nepali media is restricted and capped in an effort to promote editorial independence.
- Laws are in effect to prevent the monopolization of the media, and consequently information flow.

Despite these three being the major state laws passed in relation to the media in Nepal, evaluative and monitoring mechanisms are not prescribed, as such majority of this responsibility falls on the PCN instead.

The state policy of Nepal in regard to the media only serves to reaffirm the influence of the factors stated above when it comes to the regulations of journalism in the country.

26 Acharya, P. (2013). The Making and Implementation of Media Policies in Nepal: Experiences of an Emerging Democracy. Alliance for Social Dialogue, Alliance for Social Dialogue.

As for the fourth law, the Media Council Act serves primarily to increase the influence the government has over the media.²⁷ Regulation under this act would entail further alignment of political and media organizations in Nepal.

Cyber Law

The Nepal Police Cyber-Bureau has extended its jurisdiction from electronic fraud and crime to online disinformation as well. As highlighted earlier in the introduction the Cyber Bureau has committed to combating online disinformation citing Section 47 of the Electronic Transactions Act, 2008.

B.2 Trends of Information Disorder in Nepal

Over the past few years, the extent of information disorder in Nepal has become significantly more prevalent.²⁸ It's not a new theme, neither is it an old theme that's only recently become relevant. Information disorder in Nepal has existed as long as information has. However, there have been several recent events that have been extremely polarizing and presented opportunities for manipulation of the public by political institutions.²⁹ As such there seems to be a stronger and more concerted attempt at permeating information disorder in Nepal.

For the purpose of providing an overview into the trend of information disorder in Nepal, the following headers will be examined:

- The Media Action Nepal Report on Misleading News in the Media
- The United States State Sponsorship Program
- The Millennium Challenge Corporation's Nepal Compact
- COVID-19 Related Information Disorder

Media Action Nepal Report

In 2021, Media Action Nepal published a report detailing their findings about misleading news in mainstream online and print media in Nepal.³⁰

During the study they examined news related to COVID-19 for three months following the announcement of a lockdown by the Nepali government. Their findings, referred to in the introduction, were rather dire, and demonstrated

27 Acharya, B. B. and S. Sharma (2022). Global Perspectives on Journalism in Nepal.

28 Kandel, N. (2020). "Information Disorder Syndrome and Its Management." JNMA J Nepal Med Assoc 58 (224): 280-285.

29 Acharya, B. B. and S. Sharma (2022). Global Perspectives on Journalism in Nepal.

30 Panta, L. D., et al. (2021). A Study of Newspapers and Online News Portals of Nepal. Misleading News in Media. L. D. Panta.

that a significant amount of media disinformation exists in the current climate. While their research was limited to news related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not unreasonable to suggest that similar trends may exist in similarly divisive topics.

Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact

Nepal was the first south-Asian country to qualify for the MCC compact, and the agreement between the MCC and the government of Nepal was signed in 2017. The compact was only ratified in the February of 2022 however, and was a polarizing and controversial topic.

A vital part of the United State's Indo-Pacific Strategy,³¹ the document has specifications in it where parts of the agreement will supersede Nepali law in case of a conflict. Because of this, it was necessary for the agreement to be ratified by the parliament. However, owing to a split in consensus, the agreement was only brought into voting significantly later in 2021.

The ratification of the MCC involved a process during which political parties were required to assuage concerns and dispel misconceptions regarding the MCC compact, and its impact on Nepal. Despite consensus from the majority of political leaders, fringe elements voiced opposition and incited violent protest against the MCC compact.

A significant amount of opposition to the MCC arose from instances of information disorder, where fabricated information and false contexts were presented to raise public sentiment against the compact.

State Partnership Program

The State Partnership Program, also known as the SPP, is an exchange program between the US National Guard and a partner foreign country, or in this context – Nepal.

Initially impressed by the potential for disaster management in the SPP, the Nepali government at the time rejected the SPP on the basis that it represented a military agreement that could potentially antagonize India and China.³²

31 (2021) MCC ball in Nepal's court.

32 Balachandran, P. K. (2022) Nepal Backs Away From US State Partnership Program: Suspicious about the military content and wary of antagonizing China, Nepal rejects a U.S. disaster mitigation program.

The United States Embassy in Nepal has attempted to make the case clear stating that: “The State Partnership Program is not and has not ever been a security or military alliance. The United States is not seeking a military alliance with Nepal.”

Both accounts are at odds with each other, so either one or both parties involved are obfuscating information or attempting to mislead. Considering that both the SPP and MCC represent facets of diplomacy, we can already see that information disorder has potential consequences in a geopolitical and geostrategic sphere.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Possibly the one event that really showed us all how deeply ingrained information disorder is in our information was the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns.

The amount of imprecise information that was passed on, either advertently or inadvertently, was truly staggering. The problem with the information related to the COVID-19 pandemic, was that a vast amount of official and intended-to-be-precise information was actually false or misleading. This is because as more new and new information came in, a lot of previous information was revealed as false.³³

A pandemic of this proportion is unprecedented in modern times, so there was no pre-existent knowledge of how to handle a pandemic to rely on. It also highlights the susceptibility of individuals during times of crisis to information that comes from authorities or provides hope.

B.3. Information Disorder Arrangements in a Nepali Context

Now that we have discussed arrangements of information disorder that exist in a general context, and an insight into the trends and instances of information disorder that exist in Nepal, we can bridge the gap between the two to identify arrangements of information disorder that are relevant in the context of Nepal.

33 Kandel, N. (2020). “Information Disorder Syndrome and Its Management.” INMAJ Nepal Med Assoc 58(224): 280-285.

The Problem with Misinformation

The issue with Misinformation is that judgment of intent is virtually impossible to make outside of a psychological profile of the disseminator. Considering the difficulty of judging intent, it's safer and more effective to classify types of information disorder based on veracity instead of intent. Intent does not factor into the impact information disorder has on someone. Whether or not the journalist intended to mislead or not has no bearing on how the receiver of the information reacts to it. Furthermore, by agreeing to publish and share a viewpoint, journalists implicitly verify the veracity of their information and deliberately decide to push it.

If a type of information disorder contains imprecise information, we will consider it disinformation. If a type of information contains precise information, we will consider it malinformation.

In addition to this binary classification, we can also classify the type of information disorder under one of the many arrangements we investigated. After our investigations into mechanisms and trends, we have decided that the following arrangements are relevant and feasible for study:

- Bias
- False Connections
- False Contexts
- Misleading Representations
- Imposture
- Manipulated Content
- Fabricated Content
- Political Use of Sensitive Information

While the other arrangements of information disorder may have mutually exclusive elements even within a Nepali context to the arrangements we have chosen above, we have decided to focus on the above elements for the time being.

This is because we consider the above arrangements more prudent in our investigations and have methodological concerns regarding the implementation of the other arrangements in our study. In this section we will go over each discarded arrangement in turn and go over the disqualifying features within them:

- Satire: As stated earlier, the inclusion of satire as an arrangement of information disorder is an extremely contentious point in academia and policy. Furthermore, delineating where satire crosses the line from humor/commentary into

information disorder is difficult to quantify. Extreme cases where fabricated content is passed off as satire would fall under the former arrangement.

- Clickbait: In our study, we plan on surveying mainstream online and print media, where engagement tactics such as clickbait are not as prevalent. If the discord between the headline and content is heavy, then we can still consider that to fall under alternative arrangements such as false connections or misleading representations.
- Conspiracy Theories: conspiracy theories are not a prevalent feature in mainstream media, and are more expected in fringe media or niche media that caters to alternative political identities, neither of which exist within the scope of this project. Significant breaches under this category in this scope of our survey can be covered by other arrangements depending on the nature of the breach.
- Propaganda: while demagogue rhetoric and heavy bias are prevalent in the mainstream media of Nepal, delineating propaganda from the other arrangements is a difficult task owing to subjectivity. Furthermore, in a Nepali context propaganda is used more often through official channels compared to the media. Owing to Nepal's political volatility, it is unlikely mainstream media organizations will risk credibility to act as a front for propaganda and would rather engage in covert manipulation via bias.
- Retracted Papers: We do not consider the incidence of this arrangement in the context of Nepal to be high enough to warrant inclusion in the study. If any breaches are discovered during our survey, we may reconsider this position.
- Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles: While it is possible to interpret this arrangement in disseminated information, they are more classically understood and expected to operate at a community level, which falls outside the scope of this study.
- Misuse of Personal/Confidential Information: For the purposes of this study we will consider these arrangements to fall under the political use of sensitive information.
- Fake Reviews: While fake reviews are prominent in the media in Nepal, we do not believe they have a measurable direct political impact, as they are often used to promote affiliated products or businesses, not push political or ideological narratives that this study is concerned with.

B.4 Impact of Information Disorder in a Nepali Context

While investigating trends and recent instances of widespread information disorder within Nepal, we went over three different cases: the MCC, SPP, and COVID-19. While we alluded to the impact information disorder in those segments had on diplomacy and geo-politics, we will go over those impacts more specifically in this section to provide an overview of the impact information disorder can have.

B.4.1 Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact

The MCC Compact for Nepal was severely hampered by information disorder. Common talking points with regards to the MCC Compact were that it compromised the sovereignty of Nepal by superseding laws and turned Nepal into a geo-political pawn.

Political analysts do not believe the MCC to be part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, and considering even China welcomed foreign economic aid to Nepal (the MCC included), the opposition towards it makes little sense in context.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that information disorder played a key role in driving opposition against the MCC. There were several violent protests in Nepal under the urging of political leaders who opposed the bill. Considering that most of the opposition were on the grounds of political ideology, there is a strong case for this argument.

B.4.2 State Partnership Program

The US SPP with Nepal fell through, with information disorder being a factor during the proceedings. Major talking points in the lead up to the SPP falling through, were how it forced Nepal into a military alliance with the United States as part of their Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Despite constant reassurances and statements that the SPP does not entail a military alliance, and the massive amount of disaster mitigation it could have provided to a disaster-prone nation, there is much to ponder regarding the dismissal of the SPP. And if information disorder were to have played a significant role in it, we can attribute a great deal of devastation from future disasters to it.

B.4.3 COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic showcased the extent of rampant information disorder in the country, and hampered international relations by politicizing the issue of humanitarian aid.

Vaccine diplomacy was a hallmark of geo-politics during the pandemic. While the proliferation of vaccines is a humanitarian issue, there is a lot of geo-political stake to be gained by donating vaccines to other nations. After India donated over 1 million vaccines to Nepal, and China announced plans to donate a similar amount, one could begin to see sentiment arise against vaccines based on source.

One particular information campaign against the Indian vaccines questioned their safety on grounds of how they were stored and handled. Were this sentiment to take complete hold and the Indian sourced vaccines to be rejected, it would have consequences on a geo-political scale with India becoming more hesitant to aid Nepal during future times of need.

B.5 Challenges Posed by Information Disorder

Governments and politicians are ultimately beholden to the whims of the masses in a democracy. Internet literacy in Nepal is at relatively low levels. As such it is easy for false and misleading information to gain a stranglehold on many citizens of the country. When issues of geo-political import, foreign relations, and diplomacy are rife with information disorder, citizens are unable to make informed and impartial opinions about them, and may champion causes they have been misled about.

Yet no matter the circumstances, a democratic state must heed the voice of the majority. We've already seen the SPP fall through, and the MCC compact was nearly rejected as well. Should another matter where the interests of many different parties are at stake arise, it is possible that information disorder may be used as a tool to mislead voters into supporting stances that are against their own interests.

We went over several legal and regulatory mechanisms for journalism that existed within Nepal. What we found was that while these legal and regulatory mechanisms exist, they operate in a manner which is fundamentally opposed to the ethos of legal and regulatory mechanisms. They don't exist to serve the ideal of journalism and truth, but instead to serve the people who hold the power and purses over them, instead.

The challenges faced by journalists and policy makers in the fight against information disorder in Nepal is that a major step along the way is decoupling the press from existing political structures. This on it's own is a mammoth task because 1) the policy-makers are the ones who benefit from it, 2) there is too much power concentrated in those with the ability to make the change, and 3)

citizens are unaware of this issue and are happy to support their candidates as they do not truly grasp the nature or extent of the problem.

In essence, it's an incredibly difficult, long, and arduous task to address information disorder in Nepal, and it's compounded by the fact that a concrete understanding of information disorder in Nepal simply does not exist.

B.6 Addressing the Issue

We believe that this context highlights the need for a comprehensive study and analysis of information disorder within Nepal.

Misleading information in Nepali media is not an entirely new phenomenon. However, the intensification of fake news in the later period has induced urgent national security concerns along with geopolitical ramifications. While social networking sites and mushrooming online news portals are often regarded as the prime sources of misinformation, disinformation and fabricated news, evidence suggests that mainstream media are also not aloof from such endeavors. Fabricated and inaccurate media contents are increasingly responsible to mislead public opinion on the issues of national importance. In the meantime, there are rising concerns on the capacity of journalists to understand the changing dynamics of geopolitics and intersecting interest of foreign actors in Nepal; as well as vested interests of domestic political actors in the pursuit of international relations and diplomacy.

In this backdrop, it is necessary to analyze the contents of mainstream media to identify the prevalence, trends and patterns of misleading content and identify ways to prevent them. Furthermore, it is necessary to enhance the capacity of journalists to identify and curb the circulation of misinformation and enhance wider civic engagement to promote awareness and public discourse on the topic.

The current report studies the contents of the mainstream Nepali media in both English and Nepali languages regarding international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy and geopolitics.

In particular, the study focuses on two key questions:

- What kind of information disorder exists in Nepal in relation to geopolitics? (To what extent is the mainstream media subject to information disorder about issues related to geopolitics?)
- What kinds of examples can we find of information disorder? What do the examples tell us?

C. Methodology

C.1 Metrics

In the course of our investigation, we meticulously examined a range of metrics pertinent to the phenomenon of Information Disorder within the Nepali media landscape. However, it is crucial to note that the applicability of these metrics varies substantially depending on the journalistic milieu in which they are evaluated. For the scope of this study, we confined our analysis to material disseminated by media organizations of acknowledged repute. Such organizations are typically governed by more stringent journalistic ethics, which consequently led us to exclude certain indices associated with ethical misconduct. Specifically, metrics involving:

- Impersonation
- Manipulated Content
- Fabricated Material
- The Politicized Deployment of Sensitive Information

were deemed less relevant for our analysis. While a modicum of indicators for these excluded categories could be discerned in a select assortment of articles, they were not sufficiently compelling to warrant inclusion in our research. Consequently, we concluded that our investigative resources would be more fruitfully allocated to a scrutinization of more pervasive and relevant metrics in mainstream media. The focal indices selected for further analysis were:

- Systematic Bias
- Fallacious Associations
- Decontextualized Information
- Misleading Representations

To ensure a methodologically robust data collection, it was incumbent upon us to precisely define the analytical parameters of our study. Accordingly, we formulated an exhaustive compendium of indicators aimed at facilitating the identification of the above-mentioned focal indices within the media sources under review.

Indicators were quantified utilizing a numerical encoding schema that ranged from 0 to 3, where 0 denoted an absence of the specific indicator, and 3 signified an extreme manifestation thereof. These encodings served as the foundational substratum upon which our dataset was constructed. Each article within the corpus was categorized according to these indicators, which were nested under our overarching indices of Information Disorder. Subsequent analyses were rigorously performed based on these quantified encodings.

The indicators we used are outlined below:

a. Bias Indicators

Evidence/Source Bias (BIAS-1):

Evidence/Source Bias delineates the systematic alteration or manipulation of evidence or primary sources deployed within academic investigations, research endeavors, or rhetorical arguments, culminating in a departure from empirical impartiality or objectivity. This form of bias manifests when the selection, interpretation, or presentation of evidence or primary sources is pervasively influenced by preexisting cognitive biases, subjective preferences, or vested institutional interests, thereby engendering a distorted or skewed portrayal of empirical reality.

Language Bias (BIAS-2):

Language Bias identifies the existence of linguistic inclinations, prejudices, or constraints that introduce a systematic distortion or inequity into communicative exchanges, most notably in written or oral discourse. This entails the employment of prejudiced lexicon, manipulative framing via leading questions, or the strategic use of rhetorical devices, all of which can insidiously influence the perception, comprehension, or hermeneutic evaluation of conveyed information, thus jeopardizing the overall fairness and objectivity of the communication.

b. Fallacious Content (FC) Indicators

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1):

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1) characterizes a situation wherein the empirical evidence or data presented is not sufficiently robust to corroborate a specific assertion, deduction, or inference. This insufficiency can emanate from restricted sample sizes, deficient data acquisition methodologies, or incomplete research protocols, among other limiting factors, consequently undermining the capacity to arrive at substantiated or reliable analytical judgments.

Logical Fallacies (FC-2):

Logical Fallacies (FC-2) describe flawed paradigms of reasoning or argumentative constructs that, though possibly beguiling at first glance, are intrinsically fallacious in their logical constitution. Such fallacies can encompass ad hominem attacks, spurious analogies, tautological reasoning, hasty generalizations, straw man disputations, and various other defective rational tactics that compromise the epistemological integrity and reliability of the overall discursive enterprise.

c. Faulty Context (FCX) Indicators

Information Omission (FCX-1):

Information Omission (FCX-1) connotes the willful or inadvertent exclusion of germane or pivotal information from a communicative or research-oriented narrative. This exclusionary tactic can adversely affect the holistic understanding, interpretation, or evaluative scrutiny of a particular topic, argument, or propositional claim, potentially resulting in skewed or biased representational frameworks.

Information Distortion (FCX-2):

Information Distortion (FCX-2) signifies the deliberate or accidental alteration, manipulation, or misrepresentation of factual content, data, or empirical observations. This entails the introduction of inaccuracies, biases, or exaggerations that deviate substantially from an objective or unadulterated rendition of the facts at hand. Such distortion can manifest through various mechanisms such as selective reporting, data cherry-picking, source misquotation, or the deployment of misleading statistical paradigms, consequently leading to erroneous perceptions, misconceptions, or interpretive distortions.

Misleading Headlines (FCX-3):

Misleading Headlines (FCX-3) refer to the strategically composed titles or captions of articles, news features, or other forms of multimedia content that deliberately obfuscate or misrepresent the substantive information enclosed therein. These headlines often seek to captivate attention, incite click-throughs, or engender sensationalism, albeit at the expense of factual veracity, objective representation, or comprehensive disclosure. Such misleading headlines can critically influence initial reader perceptions, thereby engendering potential misunderstandings or the propagation of misinformation.

d. Manipulative Representation (MR) Indicators

Contextual Distortion (MR-1):

Contextual Distortion (MR-1) outlines the manipulation or misrepresentation of the circumstantial framework within which data, declarations, or arguments are situated. This involves the selective amplification or elision of contextual variables that can markedly affect the interpretive, conceptual, or evaluative reception of the presented information. Such distortions can fundamentally alter the intended or inherent meaning of the original discourse, thus facilitating biased or inaccurate epistemological assessments.

Statistical Distortion (MR-2):

Statistical Distortion (MR-2) describes the willful or unintentional misappropriation, misinterpretation, or distortion of quantitative data or statistical analyses. This encompasses practices such as data cherry-picking, misrepresentation of statistical significance, aberrant utilization of statistical techniques or methodologies, or the deceptive presentation of numerical findings. Such distortions can result in epistemologically flawed or biased conclusions, thereby misguiding the interpretative or evaluative understanding of statistical outputs.

C.2 Data Collection

This section on methodology furnishes an exhaustive explanation of the research paradigms and strategies employed to scrutinize, evaluate, and synthesize content from mainstream print and digital media platforms that focus on topics encompassing international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and geopolitics. This portion delineates the sequential facets of the research process, encompassing data collection techniques, coding protocols, sample size determinations and temporal framework, data storage and management procedures, as well as measures instituted for quality assurance.

A scrupulous curation process was deployed to assemble a comprehensive array of mainstream print and digital media outlets for the data collection phase. The selection rubric privileged sources that not only enjoy substantial credibility but also boast extensive readership and widespread influence.

a. Media Outlets

The media outlets chosen for this study were meticulously curated to ensure a representative sample from Nepali journalism. The outlets encompassed a blend of print and digital media platforms and ranged from those with national to international reach. The following 15 media outlets were included in the study:

- The Kathmandu Post
- Republica
- Annapurna Express
- Kantipur Daily
- Nagarik Daily
- Naya Patrika Daily
- Annapurna Post Daily
- The Himalayan Times
- Gorkhapatra Daily

- Jana Astha
- Onlinekhabar
- Setopati
- Ratopati
- Shilapatra
- Ukeraa

b. Sample Size

The sample size for this study was meticulously designed to yield robust statistical power while also being feasible for comprehensive analysis. The total sample comprised 10,000 articles. Of these, 2,000 were manually collated, and the remaining 8,000 were amassed using automated data collection techniques that included sentiment analysis and web crawling. The bifurcation between manually collated and automatically gathered samples was carefully calibrated to maintain a balance between the depth of analysis and the volume of data. This composite approach allowed for a nuanced yet expansive exploration of the media landscape under study.

c. Temporal Scope and Data Collection Protocol

The data collection endeavor was executed over a concentrated and intensive five-month span, stretching from February 2023 to June 2023. Throughout this period, the media outlets delineated earlier were subjected to manual, continuous, systematic monitoring and assessment. This assiduous approach guaranteed the thorough extraction of articles and associated content germane to the realms of international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and geopolitics in the Nepali context.

d. Representation and Diversity

Special care was exercised to ensure a heterogeneous assemblage of media outlets in the data set. Diverse selection criteria took into account a myriad of dimensions, including geographical distribution, the scope of influence, and ideological orientation. The aim was to capture an ecumenical and multi-faceted portrait of the informational ecosystem concerning Nepal's international affairs.

Data Access and Ethical Considerations

Data retrieval was facilitated through an amalgamation of online archives, paid subscriptions, and other digital platforms provided by the selected media organizations. Rigorous protocols were put in place to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of individuals and journalistic sources involved. Personal

identification information, when encountered, was duly anonymized, in alignment with extant ethical guidelines and best practices.

e. Data Codification and Indicator Classification

The scrupulously compiled corpus of articles served as the bedrock for all ensuing analytical endeavors, guiding the inquiry into manifestations of information disorder. This meticulously calibrated methodological design was consonant with the grander research objectives delineated within the parameters of this study.

For the coding phase, an exhaustive roster of indicators was formulated, each targeting specific aspects of information disorder vis-a-vis international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and geopolitics. To explicate, the indicators employed were as follows:

Bias

- Evidence/Source Bias (BIAS-1)
- Language Bias (BIAS-2)

Fallacious Content

- Insufficient Evidence (FC-1)
- Logical Fallacies (FC-2)

Faulty Context

- Information Omission (FCX-1)
- Information Distortion (FCX-2)
- Misleading Headlines (FCX-3)

Manipulative Representation

- Contextual Distortion (MR-1)
- Statistical Distortion (MR-2)

Each indicator was meticulously defined and operationalized to buttress the fidelity and uniformity of the coding scheme.

f. Analytical Rigor and Reliability

To augment the reliability and exactitude of the codification process, cross-referential methodologies were integrated, including sentiment analysis. This multi-layered approach aimed to enhance the dimensional robustness and

interpretive cogency of the gathered data, thus substantiating the overall reliability and scientific integrity of the research.

g. Sentiment Analysis Methodology and Utility

Sentiment Analysis is a computational technique within the domain of Natural Language Processing (NLP) that employs machine learning algorithms to classify and interpret subjective information in textual data. In essence, it involves the automated assessment of the tone, polarity, or emotional content present in the language, thereby facilitating a nuanced understanding of the underlying sentiments or perspectives.

The incorporation of Sentiment Analysis into the research methodology served multiple instrumental purposes:

1. **Objective Coding:** The algorithmic nature of Sentiment Analysis offers a degree of objectivity that can be challenging to maintain in a manual coding process, thus minimizing the introduction of human bias.
2. **Reproducibility:** The use of a computational approach ensures that the results can be replicated in future studies, a cornerstone of scientific rigor.
3. **Statistical Power:** The ability to process a larger volume of data through automated means augments the statistical power of the study, allowing for more robust and reliable findings.

How Was Sentiment Analysis Conducted?

The specific tool employed for this purpose was the Da-Vinci model by OpenAI, which underwent proprietary training and fine-tuning to adapt to the peculiarities of the data set and the contextual nuances relevant to Nepali media landscape. This advanced NLP model was programmed to identify and classify instances of the pre-defined indicators, such as Evidence/Source Bias, Language Bias, Insufficient Evidence, among others.

Additional Considerations

1. **Speed and Efficiency:** The utilization of the Da-Vinci model exponentially accelerated the coding process, enabling the analysis of a considerable amount of data within a constrained time frame.

2. Multi-Dimensional Analysis: Coupling Sentiment Analysis with manual coding facilitated a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional analytical approach. This symbiotic relationship between human expertise and computational power yielded a more thorough examination of the intricate facets of information disorder.
3. Adaptability: The fine-tuning process allowed the Da-Vinci model to adapt to idiomatic expressions, cultural implications, and journalistic styles specific to the Nepali media, thereby enhancing the accuracy and relevance of the analysis.

In summary, the integration of Sentiment Analysis not only fortified the objectivity and reproducibility of the study but also enriched its analytical depth, making it a pivotal component in the methodological framework.

Sentiment Analysis as a Benchmark and Coding Integrity *Cross-Referencing with Sentiment Analysis*

The sentiment analysis served as an objective referential metric to cross-verify the results generated through manual coding. Whenever incongruities were observed between sentiment analysis and manual coding, a deferential approach was adopted towards the sentiment analysis, given its role as a neutral arbiter. Discrepancies were meticulously scrutinized, and manual reevaluation was initiated to reconcile conflicting interpretations. These adjudicatory proceedings were underpinned by rigorous dialogues and evaluations among the coding team members to arrive at an empirically-validated consensus.

Maintaining Coding Consistency

The coding regimen strictly adhered to pre-established protocols and guidelines to ensure uniformity and mitigate subjectivity. Inter-coder reliability metrics were employed to ascertain the concordance among different coders involved in the project. Instances of disagreement or ambiguity were resolved through exhaustive discussions and appeal to the guiding principles outlined in the coding manual.

Timeframe and Sampling Methodology

Data collection unfolded over an explicitly defined temporal span of five months, from February 2023 to June 2023. Proportional random sampling strategies were implemented to balance representation across the diverse media landscape, thus contributing to a more impartial view of information dissemination by the selected outlets.

Objective and Scope

The demarcated sample size and temporal window were strategically chosen to permit an exhaustive and focalized exploration of the data. This design facilitated the identification of recurring patterns, temporal shifts, and variances in the manifestation of information disorder indicators across diverse media platforms and temporal vectors.

h. Data Storage and Ethical Considerations

Storage Protocols

The amassed data was securely warehoused using Google's cloud-based storage solutions, ensuring its accessibility, integrity, and confidentiality throughout the investigative process. Versioning features were employed to maintain a transparent audit trail, thereby promoting collaborative synergies among the research constituents.

Ethical Safeguards

Stringent measures were adopted to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of individuals and institutional entities implicated in the study. Data anonymization procedures were stringently applied in compliance with extant ethical norms, thereby limiting the propensity for source-based bias.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Reliability Checks and Validation

Quality assurance was achieved through a multi-pronged approach involving both internal and external validation. Random samples, proportionally selected based on the publishers' data size, were meticulously reviewed to identify any coding inconsistencies. Inter-coder reliability analyses served as quantitative measures to evaluate the congruence among different coding individuals.

Reconciling Discrepancies

The internal coding procedures were counter-verified using sentiment analysis as an external yardstick. This redundancy served to neutralize potential biases, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Ethical Compliance

The research architecture was carefully designed to adhere to prevailing data protection regulations and ethical imperatives, cementing the study's ethical integrity.

The meticulous quality assurance framework, coupled with rigorous coding standards and advanced computational techniques, fortified the robustness and reliability of the study's findings. By employing a comprehensive set of measures aimed at minimizing biases and enhancing objectivity, the study aspires to contribute substantially to the understanding of information disorder within the geopolitical and international relations landscape of Nepal.

I. Identifying Indices in Practice

Elaborative Examination of Indices for Information Disorder Identification

Evidence/Source Bias (BIAS-1)

Evidence/Source Bias, also referred to as confirmation bias or selective bias, constitutes a systematic deformation or manipulation of empirical evidence or scholarly sources in the contextual framework of research, academic investigation, or argumentative discourse. This form of bias instigates a derogation from foundational principles of objectivity and impartiality. Specifically, it manifests when the selection, interpretation, or articulation of evidence or source material is contingently determined by antecedent convictions, subjective predilections, or vested institutional interests. The upshot of such a bias is the potential for a distorted, unrepresentative portrayal of empirical reality.

Methodological Approaches for Identification

To facilitate the reliable identification of Evidence/Source Bias, several methodological frameworks are recommended:

1. **Critical Source Appraisal:** Execute an exhaustive critique of the source material furnishing the empirical evidence. Subject the veracity, academic standing, and expertise of the content creators or organizations to rigorous scrutiny. Investigate possible affiliations, revenue streams, or undisclosed conflicts of interest that could compromise the informational integrity.
2. **Comparative Analysis through Cross-Referencing:** Engage in methodological pluralism by scrutinizing multiple, unaffiliated sources of information. The juxtaposition of divergent perspectives and data points from reputable outlets fosters a more nuanced, multifaceted comprehension of the topic under investigation.
3. **Empirical Verification and Fact-Checking:** Employ the services of credible fact-checking organizations or tools equipped with methodological rigor for claim validation. These organizations adhere to meticulous protocols to

scrutinize assertions, corroborate evidence, and discern any concealed biases or factual inaccuracies.

4. **Framing and Linguistic Awareness:** Maintain a heightened cognizance towards the discursive framing and linguistic constructs employed in the delivery of evidence or source material. Instances of biased information may often resort to emotionally-laden or manipulative rhetoric, selective amplification of certain facts over contradictory evidence, or the unilateral endorsement of a singular viewpoint.

By meticulously applying these methodological strategies, one can robustly detect and categorize occurrences of Evidence/Source Bias, thereby enhancing the interpretative validity and empirical rigor of studies focused on information disorder within the domain of Nepali media's portrayal of international relations and geopolitics.

Language Bias (BIAS-2)

Language Bias is a pervasive phenomenon that infuses systematic distortions or inequities into communicative platforms, predominantly in written or spoken modalities. It is realized through the deployment of biased lexical choices, including, but not limited to, emotionally-laden terminologies, leading interrogatives, and rhetorical stratagems. Such selective language utilization has the propensity to shape perceptions, modulate comprehension, or skew interpretations of conveyed information or argumentative positions, thus undermining the overarching principles of communicative fairness and objectivity.

Methodological Framework for Identification

To efficiently identify and analyze instances of Language Bias, an array of methodological procedures are advised:

1. **Terminological Scrutiny:** Rigorously examine the lexicon employed within the communicative context. Give heed to the presence of emotionally charged lexemes or phrases that inherently carry connotative or denotative biases. Understand the psychological and cognitive ramifications such specific terminological choices can engender in shaping audience perceptions.
2. **Questioning Technique Assessment:** Critically assess the interrogative structures utilized, particularly within formats that rely on direct audience engagement, such as interviews or surveys. Identify instances of leading

questions—queries designed to subtly direct respondents towards specific answers. Scrutinize the interrogative framing for any latent presuppositions or implications that could compromise respondent impartiality.

3. **Rhetorical Device Evaluation:** Investigate the use of rhetorical constructs, including emotional appeals or fallacious arguments, embedded within the communicative discourse. Such tactics function to manipulate cognitive and emotional faculties, frequently sidelining logical and empirical evidence in favor of emotive manipulation.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity and Contextual Awareness:** Adopt a holistic understanding of cultural paradigms and implicit biases that may inform lexical choices. Language constructs that perpetuate cultural insensitivity or reinforce harmful stereotypes have the potential to introduce nuanced biases into the discourse. Strive for an inclusive lexicon that respects sociocultural diversity and complexity.
5. **Collaborative Analytical Engagement:** Facilitate discursive dialogue and collaborative scrutiny amongst a diversified cohort of stakeholders or experts. Varied perspectives can illuminate latent biases within language choices, as individual sensitivities and cultural experiences may uniquely influence interpretative frameworks regarding language.

By implementing these multi-faceted methodological approaches, researchers can achieve a more nuanced understanding and categorization of Language Bias instances. This is crucial for studies concerned with information disorder in the context of Nepal's international relations and geopolitical discourse, thereby strengthening the empirical and ethical rigor of such investigations.

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1)

Insufficient Evidence, categorized as FC-1, refers to a situation in which extant evidence or empirical data inadequately substantiates a particular claim, conclusion, or inference. This represents an evidentiary lacuna, thereby compromising the validity or reliability of judgments or assessments. Factors precipitating such insufficiency may range from constrained sample sizes, incomplete or flawed data acquisition techniques, methodological frailties, to extraneous limitations that compromise epistemic confidence.

Methodological Framework for Identification

To rigorously identify instances of Insufficient Evidence, the following evaluative techniques are indispensable:

1. **Sample Size Evaluation:** Rigorously interrogate the magnitude of the sample or dataset invoked for inferential generalization. A numerically inadequate sample can jeopardize representational accuracy, demanding scrutiny for its statistical significance and potential for reliable generalization.
2. **Data Collection Methodology Assessment:** Critically appraise the data collection protocols deployed. Insufficient evidence may emanate from flawed or incomplete data acquisition strategies that neglect to encapsulate requisite informational facets. Verify the reliability and comprehensiveness of data collection techniques against established academic benchmarks.
3. **Research Design Audit:** Examine the overarching research design and methodological framework. Methodological limitations, such as biased sampling protocols, the presence of confounding variables, or inadequate control measures, can cultivate conditions conducive to insufficient evidence. Ensure that the research design incorporates strategies to mitigate these biases and uphold methodological integrity.
4. **Data Analysis Consideration:** Assess the analytic methods applied to the data corpus. Inadequate or inappropriate statistical methodologies can obfuscate insights, demanding an assessment of their statistical robustness and evidentiary validity.
5. **Contextual Factor Awareness:** Incorporate an awareness of societal, ethical, or logistical factors that may circumscribe data availability. Acknowledge these contextual limitations in interpreting the evidentiary matrix, thereby incorporating an additional layer of epistemic caution.

Logical Fallacies (FC-2)

Logical Fallacies, identified as FC-2, constitute erroneous reasoning patterns or argumentative structures that, notwithstanding their superficially persuasive façade, inherently subvert logical coherence. They manifest in various guises including but not limited to ad hominem attacks, false analogies, circular reasoning, hasty generalizations, and straw man formulations. Such fallacies erode the epistemic foundations of reasoned discourse, engendering conclusions that lack both validity and reliability.

Identification of Logical Fallacies demands an intellectually rigorous approach, encapsulating the following methodologies:

1. **Fallacy Type Familiarization:** Develop a comprehensive understanding of prevalent logical fallacies through diligent study and case examination. Such preparedness enables a more adept identification of fallacy instances in real-time discourse.
2. **Argumentative Structure Evaluation:** Subject the argumentative constructs to rigorous critical appraisal, focusing on their logical architecture and content. Identify incongruities, irrelevant inclusions, or unsupported suppositions that mar the argument's coherence or validity.
3. **Assumption and Premise Analysis:** Investigate the foundational assumptions and premises upon which the argument is constructed. Recognize and challenge any unsubstantiated assumptions or overgeneralizations that could undermine the argument's logical framework.
4. **Empirical Verification:** Employ fact-checking protocols to validate the accuracy of evidentiary claims made within the argument. Fallacious reasoning may often exploit false or misleading data as a fulcrum for its deceptive persuasiveness.
5. **Counterargument and Perspective Diversification:** Actively seek and engage with counter arguments or alternative viewpoints. Such intellectual diversity can expose latent fallacies and fortify the reasoning process, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of the subject matter under scrutiny.

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1)

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1) refers to scenarios where extant evidence is inadequate in substantiating specific assertions, judgments, or inferences. Such evidentiary inadequacy can emanate from an array of factors, including limited sample sizes, incomplete data acquisition, or flawed research protocols. Rigorous assessment methodologies for detecting insufficient evidence are as follows:

Evaluation of Sample Size

Examine the statistical adequacy of the sample size involved in the research. A meager sample size may fail to be representative of the larger population or the phenomenon under scrutiny. Confirm the sample size's statistical significance and its capacity for facilitating dependable generalizations.

Scrutiny of Data Collection Techniques

Appraise the protocols utilized for gathering data. Insufficiencies in the data can often be attributed to flawed or incomplete data collection mechanisms. Ensure that these techniques align with well-established research norms and are comprehensive in scope.

Assessment of Research Design Integrity

Investigate the architectural integrity of the research methodology. A suboptimal research design, marked by biased sampling techniques or insufficient controls, may introduce evidentiary insufficiencies. Confirm that the methodology includes robust mechanisms to mitigate potential biases.

Evaluation of Data Analytical Procedures

Review the statistical methods applied to the data. Deficient or inappropriate analytical techniques may lead to inconclusive or misleading outcomes. Ascertain that the statistical methods employed yield robust, statistically significant findings underpinned by a substantial evidence base.

Awareness of Contextual Limitations

Account for external constraints that may limit the availability or quality of evidence. Societal, logistical, or ethical considerations can adversely impact data acquisition, thereby contributing to evidentiary insufficiency. Acknowledge these constraints in the evaluation of the evidence at hand.

Logical Fallacies (FC-2)

Logical Fallacies (FC-2) are instances of flawed reasoning that compromise the logical integrity of an argument. These fallacies manifest in various forms, from ad hominem attacks to false equivalences, thereby undermining rational discourse. Methodologies for identifying logical fallacies include:

Familiarity with Fallacy Archetypes

Familiarize oneself with prevalent logical fallacies by studying illustrative examples and comprehending the inherent reasoning flaws. Recognition of these patterns enables more effective identification of fallacious arguments.

Rigorous Argument Evaluation

Engage in a meticulous analysis of the argument's structural and substantive elements. Identify instances where the argument diverges from logical sequencing, incorporates irrelevant data, or relies on unsupported premises.

Examination of Underlying Assumptions

Scrutinize the foundational premises and assumptions upon which the argument is built. Detect unwarranted generalizations or assumptions that might erode the argument's logical scaffolding.

Fact-Verification Protocols

Undertake rigorous fact-checking to validate the evidentiary elements of the argument. Fallacies may also originate from the inclusion of inaccurate or deceptive information.

Exploration of Counterarguments and Diverse Viewpoints

Encourage dialogic engagement with alternative viewpoints to unearth potential fallacies and bolster the argument's logical robustness. This fosters a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

Information Distortion (FCX-2)

Information Distortion (FCX-2) encompasses intentional or inadvertent modifications, manipulations, or misrepresentations of facts, data, or information. This phenomenon can manifest through selective reporting, data cherry-picking, or misquoting sources. To identify instances of information distortion, consider the following methodologies:

Cross-Referencing and Fact-Checking

Corroborate the presented information through cross-referencing with multiple reputable sources. Fact-check the information using authoritative platforms or organizations to confirm its veracity.

Critical Appraisal of Source Credibility

Evaluate the reliability and credibility of the sources disseminating the information. Investigate any potential biases or conflicts of interest that might contribute to information distortion.

Scrutiny of Methodological Rigor

Critically examine the methodological approaches employed in any cited research. Assess the alignment of these methodologies with established research norms and the sufficiency of the employed data collection techniques.

Review of Statistical Representations

Analyze the portrayal and interpretation of statistical data. Be alert to misrepresented or misleading statistical information, and confirm that the statistical methods employed adhere to research standards.

Detection of Biases and Framing Techniques

Be vigilant of framing techniques and biases that might distort the information. Assess the tone, language, and context in which the information is presented and identify any emotionally charged or manipulative language.

Misleading Headlines (FCX-3)

Misleading headlines (FCX-3) involve the crafting of article titles that misrepresent or distort the actual content within. These headlines aim to capture attention, generate clicks, or induce sensationalism, frequently at the cost of factual integrity. Methodologies for identifying misleading headlines include:

Comprehensive Content Review

Delve into the full content of the article to evaluate the degree of alignment with its headline. This mitigates the risk of headline-based distortions by facilitating a thorough understanding of the content.

Assessment of Linguistic Tone

Examine the tone and linguistic choices employed in the headline. Sensationalistic or emotionally loaded language may signal an intent to mislead or distort.

Comparative Analysis with Reliable Sources

Engage in a comparative analysis by cross-referencing the information with multiple reputable sources. This offers a more rounded perspective and helps detect any headline-based inconsistencies.

Fact-Verification Protocols

Invoke fact-checking practices to authenticate the information signaled by the headline. Utilize fact-checking resources to ensure the veracity of headline claims.

Contextual Source Evaluation

Consider the broader context of the publication, including its historical record for journalistic integrity. Assess other elements such as the date of publication, accompanying imagery, or related articles for a more holistic understanding.

Contextual Distortion (MR-1)

Contextual Distortion (MR-1) involves the manipulation or misrepresentation of the contextual framework within which information or arguments are presented. This type of distortion can significantly influence the interpretation or understanding of the information in question. Methodologies for identifying contextual distortions include:

Evaluation of Selective Emphasis

Investigate whether specific contextual details have been disproportionately highlighted or downplayed. Such selective emphasis can distort the narrative or interpretation.

Detection of Contextual Omissions

Identify instances where relevant contextual details may have been deliberately or inadvertently omitted. Such omissions can skew the interpretation or understanding of the information.

Appraisal of Chronological Sequencing

Examine the temporal context within which information is presented. Assess if any manipulation of chronological sequencing exists that could alter the viewer's or reader's perception.

Consideration of Cultural Context

Examine the cultural framework and norms within which the information is disseminated. Cultural biases or assumptions can significantly distort the presentation or reception of information.

Comparative Analysis with Alternate Perspectives

Engage in comparative analyses with other interpretations or perspectives to detect potential contextual distortions. This offers a more holistic view and mitigates the risk of singular narrative bias.

Information Manipulation (MR-2)

Information Manipulation (MR-2) refers to the deliberate alteration, falsification, or distortion of information for specific purposes. Such manipulations can occur through digital editing, fabrications, or selective reporting. Methodologies for identifying information manipulation include:

Advanced Digital Forensics

Employ advanced digital forensic techniques to detect potential alterations or manipulations in digital media such as images, videos, or texts.

Authentication Protocols

Establish rigorous authentication protocols for validating the origins and authenticity of information. This includes verifying the credibility of sources and the methods used for information gathering.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Utilize critical discourse analysis techniques to assess the language, tone, and framing employed in disseminating the information. This allows for a deeper understanding of any manipulative tactics involved.

Comparative Content Analysis

Conduct comparative content analysis with other sources to detect inconsistencies or discrepancies that may signal information manipulation.

Social Network Analysis

Examine the dissemination patterns and network affiliations involved in spreading the information. This could offer insights into orchestrated campaigns or manipulative tactics.

J. Sentiment bias

Sentiment bias in news coverage was systematically evaluated through a blend of both manual and automated techniques. This evaluation sought to quantify negative portrayal (Negative Bias) and positive portrayal (Positive Bias) of subjects, events, or phenomena. Negative portrayal typically involved the assignment of pejorative attributes, framing the subject in a disfavorable light, or emphasizing negative events or outcomes. Conversely, positive portrayal was characterized by the assignment of laudatory attributes, framing the subject favorably, or emphasizing positive events or outcomes.

Each news article was retrospectively scored on a scale of -3 to +3, a spectrum designed to quantify the varying degrees of sentiment bias. This numerical spectrum served as an operational measure, translating the inherently subjective concept of sentiment bias into quantifiable data.

Indicator Identification

Utilizing our prior framework, coders identified specific indicators within each article that signaled the presence of either positive or negative portrayal.

Assessment of Indicator Strength

Upon the identification of these indicators, their respective strengths were assessed. Each coder employed a graduated scale, reflective of the pre-established sentiment analysis metric, to assign a numerical value that signified the level of positive or negative portrayal.

Code Assignment

Manual coding was carried out to assign these numerical values, thereby quantifying the levels of sentiment bias.

Automated Coding Procedures

Natural Language Processing (NLP): NLP algorithms were utilized to automatically sift through text and identify indicators of sentiment bias.

Machine Learning Algorithms: These algorithms were trained, either through supervised or unsupervised learning models, to recognize historical patterns that indicated various degrees of positive or negative portrayal.

Automated Code Assignment: After pattern recognition, automated systems retrospectively assigned numerical values to these indicators, effectively quantifying the sentiment bias within each article based on the -3 to +3 scale.

A triangulation process was employed to validate the results. This involved comparing the outcomes derived from both the manual and automated coding systems.

Validation Methods Used

Inter-Coder Reliability: To validate the consistency of manual coding, historical inter-coder reliability tests were carried out among multiple coders.

Algorithmic Validation: The robustness and accuracy of the automated coding algorithms were retrospectively verified through iterative testing and refinement cycles.

Through this intricate methodology, both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of sentiment bias in news coverage were rigorously evaluated. This dual approach afforded a comprehensive, retrospective understanding of how such biases could have potentially shaped public discourse.

C.3 Analysis

For the initial phase of our analysis, we have elected to categorize the dataset based on State Actors, thereby affording us a nuanced perspective on the informational ecology surrounding these key entities. Subsequent to the disclosure of summary statistics, a correlation matrix will be furnished, with a focus on elucidating statistically significant correlations for further inquiry.

Statistical Overview Across Indices

The ensuing segments delineate the quantitative metrics corresponding to multiple indices: BIAS-1, BIAS-2, FC-1, FC-2, FCX-1, FCX-2, FCX-3, MR-1, and MR-2. These indices serve as instrumental constructs to holistically scrutinize the variegated dimensions of information disorder prevalent in news coverage related to State Actors. The metrics articulated are predicated on a rigorous quantitative scrutiny conducted on an exhaustive corpus of pertinent news articles and primary sources.

Index-specific Mean Scores as Objective Metrics

Each index is accompanied by its respective mean score, rounded to two decimal places, which serves as an objective indicator of prevailing sentiments or attributes in the coverage. Mean scores below zero signify a predominantly negative portrayal of State Actors, whereas mean scores above zero denote a more positive portrayal.

Implications and Limitations of Coverage Characteristics

These statistics will be elaborated upon in a format that facilitates a more incisive comprehension of both the ramifications and potential lacunae in the existing media coverage of State Actors.

By segmenting and quantifying our analysis in this manner, we aim to provide a robust foundation for more exhaustive research endeavors, enabling a thorough understanding of the multiple facets that contribute to information disorder in relation to State Actors.

Methodological Framework for Index Value Determination

To arrive at the values of the aforementioned indices, a hybrid approach was employed that melded manual and computational sentiment analysis methodologies. The resulting values can be considered as statistically representative indicators that encapsulate the inherent characteristics of the data set.

Dual Coding Strategy: Manual and Automated Sentiment Analysis

Specifically, the dataset underwent two primary stages of coding: 20% of the coding was executed manually by expert coders who rigorously applied the devised framework to categorize and evaluate the articles, while the remaining 80% was automated through a sophisticated sentiment analysis algorithm.

Manual Coding

In the manual coding phase, trained coders scrutinized a selection of news articles, employing the framework to identify and quantify both positive and negative portrayals of State Actors. This process encompassed the identification of explicit and implicit cues within the text, such as biased language, selective reporting, or contextual distortions, which were then coded according to the variables established in the analytical framework.

Automated Sentiment Analysis

For the automated sentiment analysis, our proprietary algorithm was calibrated to reflect the criteria delineated in the established framework. The algorithm conducted a granular textual examination to identify salient elements like tonality, lexical choices, and context. This computational methodology enabled us to automate the vast majority of the coding process, ensuring a consistent and scalable approach.

Statistical Representativeness

The index values were derived through the aggregation of these manual and automated coding results, with each contributing proportionately to the final value. The values are statistically robust, offering a high level of confidence in their representational fidelity to the underlying dataset. These values are further validated through their convergence with established theories and literature on information disorder, ensuring their applicability and interpretive value.

In summary, the computed index values are not merely arbitrary figures but are statistically and methodologically substantiated metrics that enable a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon of information disorder in news coverage pertaining to State Actors.

D. Analysis and Key Findings

D.1 Analysis of News Coverage Related to India Across Various Indices

BIAS-1: Source/Evidence Bias

The mean BIAS-1 score for news coverage concerning India registers at -0.29, when rounded to two significant figures. This negative numerical value implies a prevailing negative depiction of India in the news media, particularly due to the existence of source or evidence bias. Such a bias can compromise the overall objectivity and fairness of the narrative, thereby potentially distorting the public's perception of reality.

BIAS-2: Language Bias

The BIAS-2 index recorded a mean score of -0.14 for news items related to India. This adverse score suggests that linguistic elements in the media, on balance, contribute to a negative portrayal of India. Language bias can unduly influence how information is received and processed, thereby shaping a narrative that leans negative.

FC-1: Insufficiency of Evidence

With a mean score of -0.42, the FC-1 index indicates a preponderance of news coverage that appears to lack sufficient evidential grounding when discussing India. The negative value implies a deficiency in the presentation of robust and reliable evidence, which in turn may undermine the news coverage's credibility and thoroughness.

FC-2: Presence of Logical Fallacies

The FC-2 index yielded a mean score of -0.14, revealing that news reports related to India frequently incorporate logical fallacies. Such erroneous patterns of reasoning could critically compromise the overall integrity and validity of the news content, thereby potentially misleading the audience.

FCX-1: Omission of Crucial Information

The mean FCX-1 score stands at -0.46, signifying that pertinent information is often conspicuously absent in the media coverage about India. Such omissions could result in a skewed or incomplete understanding of the subject matter, which may undermine the comprehensiveness of the reporting.

FCX-2: Statistical Distortions

A mean score of -0.31 on the FCX-2 index points to the prevalence of statistical inaccuracies or distortions in news coverage regarding India. Such statistical malfeasance can result in erroneous or biased conclusions, which could further erode the overall reliability and accuracy of the news reporting.

FCX-3: Misleading Headlines

With a mean score of -0.16, the FCX-3 index suggests that headlines in the media coverage about India are occasionally misleading. The intentional crafting of such headlines can introduce confusion or misinterpretation among consumers of the news, thus affecting the overall interpretive clarity.

MR-1: Contextual Distortions

The mean MR-1 score of -0.03 highlights the presence of some contextual misrepresentation in news items about India. Such manipulations could influence the audience's comprehension and interpretation of the news, thereby contributing to a distorted understanding of events.

MR-2: Statistical Misinterpretations

An MR-2 mean score of -0.28 indicates the prevalence of additional statistical distortions in the news coverage about India. These can further compound the negative portrayal, compromising the reliability and accuracy of the coverage.

Conclusions and Considerations for Further Analysis

These aggregated scores collectively underscore a predominantly negative portrayal of India in the media across multiple dimensions of information disorder. However, a comprehensive and nuanced examination of individual articles, sources, and specific instances is essential for a more complete understanding of these findings and their implications on public perception.

It should be emphasized that while these scores offer a quantitative encapsulation of various biases, fallacies, and distortions, a more holistic analysis should also address the unique nature and degree of these elements, in addition to the influence of other contextual factors.

D.2 Quantitative Analysis of News Coverage Pertaining to China Across Multiple Indices

BIAS-1: Source and Evidence Bias

The BIAS-1 index exhibits a mean score of -0.09 for news coverage about China, suggesting a systematic predilection towards distortion or manipulation of evidence and sources. This negative mean score signals a potential compromise of objectivity, thereby skewing the overall representation of factual reality.

BIAS-2: Linguistic Bias

With a mean score of -0.09, the BIAS-2 index highlights the presence of linguistic bias in news narratives concerning China. This negative valuation indicates a tendency to employ loaded terms or formulate leading questions, thus influencing both perception and interpretation of events or circumstances.

FC-1: Inadequacy of Evidential Support

The FC-1 index records a negative mean score of -0.17, pointing to an overall deficiency in the robustness of evidential support in the news related to China. The negative score intimates that the available data are insufficient for substantiating reliable judgments or evaluations.

FC-2: Logical Fallacies

A negative mean score of -0.10 on the FC-2 index suggests that news reports about China frequently manifest flawed patterns of reasoning. Such logical inconsistencies or fallacies can undermine the validity and reliability of the conclusions drawn from the coverage.

FCX-1: Information Omission

The FCX-1 index yields a mean score of -0.39, indicating that news articles related to China often lack inclusion of critical or relevant information. Whether deliberate or accidental, such omissions can lead to a distorted public perception and evaluation of the subject matter.

FCX-2: Statistical Distortion

With a mean score of -0.10, the FCX-2 index signals the occurrence of statistical inaccuracies in the news concerning China. Such misuses or misinterpretations of statistical data can engender erroneous or biased conclusions, thereby affecting the integrity of the coverage.

FCX-3: Misleading Headlines

Recording a negative mean score of -0.18, the FCX-3 index suggests that news headlines about China are frequently misleading. Intentionally crafted headlines of this nature can distort or misrepresent the factual content, potentially confusing or misguiding the readership.

MR-1: Contextual Distortion

A positive mean score of 0.22 on the MR-1 index paradoxically indicates a degree of contextual manipulation or misrepresentation. The positive score raises questions about the contexts within which information, statements, or arguments are presented in news coverage related to China.

MR-2: Statistical Misrepresentation

The MR-2 index registers a negative mean score of -0.12, echoing similar concerns raised by the FCX-2 index about statistical integrity. The negative value suggests that the news coverage engages in the misuse or misinterpretation of statistical data, thereby potentially leading to biased or incorrect conclusions.

Conclusive Observations and Future Considerations

Collectively, the negative mean scores across various indices underscore biases, fallacies, omissions, and distortions pervading the news coverage about China. While the positive mean score in MR-1 poses an anomaly that may imply contextual distortions, the preponderance of negative scores raises questions about the objectivity and accuracy of the coverage.

It is imperative to conduct further, more detailed analyses of individual articles and reports for a nuanced understanding of these specific biases and distortions. The statistics elucidated herein should serve as preliminary markers for a more critical evaluation and reflection on China's portrayal in the media landscape.

D.3 Quantitative Assessment of News Coverage Concerning the United States Across Multiple Metrics

BIAS-1: Source and Evidence Bias

The BIAS-1 index reports a mean score of -0.10 for news coverage regarding the United States, signaling a proclivity for the distortion or manipulation of evidence and sources. This negative mean score illuminates a systemic tendency towards an imbalanced representation of factual events, potentially compromising the integrity of news portrayal.

BIAS-2: Linguistic Bias

With a mean score of -0.08 on the BIAS-2 index, linguistic bias is evident in the media narratives concerning the United States. This negative score indicates the utilization of slanted language, inclusive of loaded terms or leading queries, which could potentially sway public perception and interpretation of covered events.

FC-1: Evidential Inadequacy

The FC-1 index manifests a pronounced negative mean score of -0.31, signifying an insufficient evidential basis in the news coverage about the United States. Such a score insinuates that extant information is inadequate for establishing sound judgments or evaluations.

FC-2: Logical Fallacy Index

A negative mean score of -0.18 on the FC-2 index implies that news coverage of the United States frequently incorporates fallacious reasoning. These logical lapses can culminate in unreliable or invalid conclusions, thereby undermining the credibility of the media.

FCX-1: Information Omission

The FCX-1 index records a negative mean score of -0.24, indicating a notable absence of pertinent information in the media coverage concerning the United States. Whether inadvertent or calculated, these omissions have the potential to skew public comprehension and assessment of the issues at hand.

FCX-2: Statistical Distortion

Recording a mean score of -0.19, the FCX-2 index highlights problematic issues of statistical fidelity in news coverage about the United States. Such misuse, misinterpretation, or misrepresentation of statistical data can subsequently result in biased or inaccurate conclusions.

FCX-3: Misleading Headlines

The FCX-3 index yields a negative mean score of -0.16, alluding to the prevalence of deceptive headlines in news articles about the United States. Such intentionally concocted headlines may misconstrue or distort the primary content, thereby misleading the audience.

MR-1: Contextual Manipulation

An anomalous positive mean score of 0.21 on the MR-1 index signifies the potential for contextual distortions in news coverage about the United States. This positive score raises concerns about the veracity and reliability of the settings in which news is presented.

MR-2: Statistical Distortions

Echoing concerns raised by the FCX-2 index, a mean score of -0.13 on the MR-2 index indicates that statistical distortion persists as a considerable issue in the media coverage related to the United States.

Summary and Recommendations for Future Research

These numerical indicators collectively portray a landscape rife with biases, fallacies, omissions, and distortions in the media's representation of the United States. While the positive score in the MR-1 index implies a degree of contextual distortion, the predominantly negative scores flag a pressing need for increased scrutiny and objectivity in news reporting.

For a nuanced comprehension of the identified imbalances and inaccuracies, additional examinations of individual news reports and articles are warranted. These aggregate statistical insights should act as foundational benchmarks for critical reflection and appraisal of the portrayal of the United States in the media landscape.

D.4 Overview of Summary Statistics: Unpacking the Negativity Bias in Media Coverage of State Actors

The meta-analysis of media coverage related to various state actors consistently reveals negative mean scores across multiple evaluative indices—BIAS-1, BIAS-2, FC-1, FC-2, FCX-1, FCX-2, FCX-3, MR-1, and MR-2. This persistent negative skew raises an exigent inquiry into the causative factors underlying such predominantly negative portrayals, irrespective of the specific state actor scrutinized. This section endeavors to elucidate several plausible contributing variables and dynamics that shape this media representation.

Psychological Biases and Human Cognition

A cardinal explanation for the surfeit of negative scores may reside in psychological biases that govern human information processing. Research

elucidates the phenomenon known as negativity bias, where individuals allocate disproportionate attention and emotional investment to adverse information over positive stimuli. Consequently, media entities may capitalize on this psychological propensity, accentuating negative facets of news associated with state actors to capture and sustain audience engagement.

Media Agendas and Editorial Policies

Media organizations operate under varied agendas and editorial policies, influencing their curatorial discretion and focus. Factors such as sensationalism, audience predilections, and commercial imperatives could engender an enhanced emphasis on negatively skewed narratives. The pursuit of elevated ratings, augmented readership, or amplified viewer engagement might incentivize media outlets to spotlight negative dimensions or controversies pertaining to state actors, thereby marginalizing positive developments or nuanced interpretations.

Socio-Political Context

The media's portrayal of state actors is not extricable from the prevailing socio-political milieu. Factors like political polarization, ideological bifurcations, and the tenor of public sentiment exert substantial influence. Situations characterized by intense policy disputes, ideological fissures, or global tensions may precipitate heightened scrutiny and critique, reinforcing a proclivity for negative narrative framing.

Journalistic Framing and Ethical Considerations

Another element is the journalistic framing, which informs the presentation and contextualization of news events, thereby modulating audience interpretation and evaluation. Journalists may adopt a more adversarial or skeptical posture, framing stories in a manner that accentuates difficulties, conflicts, or deficits. Such a framing strategy could significantly contribute to the ubiquity of negative scores across the evaluated indices.

Audience Expectations and Information Overload

In an information-saturated epoch, the audience may manifest an elevated predilection for critical and investigative journalism. Media platforms may, therefore, tailor their reporting to align with these extant audience expectations, gravitating towards narratives that scrutinize and critique state actors, thereby skewing the coverage negatively.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

The consistent negativity observed across multiple evaluative metrics implicates a complex tapestry of influencing factors—ranging from inherent psychological biases and media agendas to socio-political conditions and audience preferences. These intertwined dynamics necessitate cautious interpretation, underlining the imperative for further in-depth analysis of individual articles, primary sources, and contextual factors.

Future inquiries, adopting an interdisciplinary framework, are indispensable for unpacking the complex interrelations between media dynamics, audience cognition, and news portrayal of state actors. Such nuanced understanding could significantly contribute to fostering a more balanced, informed, and nuanced public discourse concerning state actors.

D.5 Correlation Analysis

The RAW correlation data alongside our immediate thoughts and suggestions from the data are presented in this section, please refer to the summary for an overview of the information.

The absence of correlation does not render the values of the indices meaningless, but it does have implications for the interpretation of these values. Specifically, a lack of correlation could indicate that the relationship between the variables being measured is either non-linear or influenced by a host of other factors that have not been captured by the indices. This means that while the indices may provide a snapshot of certain aspects of media portrayal—such as bias, logical fallacies, and distortions—they may not necessarily reflect a deterministic or causal relationship without the presence of correlation.

Correlation coefficients, typically calculated using Pearson's method, measure the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables. A high correlation would suggest a strong relationship, meaning that variations in one variable could likely explain variations in the other. The absence of correlation, however, cautions us that the data may not possess strong statistical significance in establishing a direct relationship between the variables being examined. This limitation necessitates further qualitative analysis to discern underlying patterns or trends not captured by quantitative measures alone.

The correlations were computed on a per-country basis. This allows for a nuanced analysis that accounts for idiosyncrasies related to each country's portrayal in the media. It provides a targeted view that could be critical for understanding

the influence of specific local, cultural, or political factors affecting media coverage for that particular country. Aggregating indices across all countries for correlation analysis could dilute these specific influences, leading to generalized or homogenized conclusions that may not be applicable on a per-country basis.

In summary, correlation analyses serve as valuable statistical tools for understanding relationships between variables but are not standalone arbiters of truth or meaning. In instances where correlation is lacking, it prompts us to engage in a more comprehensive analysis that incorporates qualitative methods and country-specific evaluations to arrive at a robust understanding of the dynamics at play.

D.5.1 USA

Correlation Between USA and Evidence/Source Bias (BIAS-1)

The Pearson correlation coefficient for evidence/source bias in relation to mentions of the USA is $(r = -0.0601)$. This coefficient indicates a weak correlation between the two variables. The negative sign of the coefficient suggests that an augmentation in negative portrayals of the USA is concomitant with a minor increase in evidence/source bias, and conversely. Moreover, the p-value of 0.00665, falling below the threshold of 0.05, confirms that the observed correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. Despite its statistical significance, the strength of this relationship remains weak, warranting caution in ascribing a pervasive evidence/source bias in news related to the USA based on this dataset alone.

Correlation Between USA and Language Bias (BIAS-2)

The Pearson correlation coefficient for language bias in relation to mentions of the USA stands at $(r = 0.0396)$. This value signifies a very weak correlation. The positive sign of the coefficient indicates a slight, positive correlation between affirmative portrayals of the USA and the prevalence of language bias. However, with a p-value of 0.07375, which is greater than the 0.05 threshold, the correlation lacks statistical significance, rendering it inappropriate to infer a causal relationship between language bias and portrayals of the USA.

Correlation Between USA and Insufficient Evidence (FC-1)

The coefficient for the correlation between insufficient evidence and mentions of the USA is $(r = -0.0363)$, denoting an exceedingly weak relationship. The negative sign suggests that increased negative portrayals of the USA are minutely associated with elevated levels of insufficient evidence. Nevertheless, the p-value

of 0.1012 exceeds the 0.05 significance level, indicating that this correlation is not statistically significant, and thus, no definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Correlation Between USA and Logical Fallacies (FC-2)

With a Pearson correlation coefficient of $(r = -0.1500)$, there is a moderate correlation between the prevalence of logical fallacies and mentions of the USA. The negative sign implies that an increase in negative portrayals correlates with a moderate uptick in logical fallacies. The p-value of (9.69×10^{-12}) is considerably less than 0.05, verifying that the correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, substantiating a moderately strong, statistically significant relationship between these variables.

Correlation Between USA and Information Omission (FCX-1)

The correlation coefficient for information omission vis-à-vis mentions of the USA is $(r = 0.0644)$, indicating a weak relationship. The positive sign suggests that enhanced positive portrayals of the USA are linked with a marginal increase in information omission. The p-value of 0.00362, being less than 0.05, verifies that this correlation is statistically significant, albeit weakly so.

Correlation Between USA and Information Distortion (FCX-2)

With a Pearson coefficient of $(r = 0.0198)$, the relationship between information distortion and mentions of the USA is extremely weak. The p-value of 0.3721 exceeds the threshold of 0.05, indicating a lack of statistical significance and cautioning against drawing conclusive inferences about this relationship based on the dataset.

Correlation Between USA and Misleading Headlines (FCX-3)

The Pearson coefficient for this correlation is $(r = -0.1374)$, implying a moderate relationship between the incidence of misleading headlines and mentions of the USA. The negative sign denotes that a rise in negative portrayals of the USA corresponds with a moderate increase in misleading headlines. A p-value of (4.577×10^{-10}) confirms this correlation as statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Correlation Between USA and Contextual Distortion (MR-1)

The coefficient for the correlation between contextual distortion and mentions of the USA is $(r = 0.121)$, signifying a weak relationship. The positive sign of the coefficient suggests a slight increase in the level of contextual distortion with positive portrayals of the USA. With a p-value of (4.217×10^{-8}) , the correlation is statistically significant, albeit weak.

Correlation Between USA and Statistical Distortion (MR-2)

The Pearson coefficient for this correlation stands at $(r = 0.0058)$, an extremely weak and almost negligible value. The p-value of 0.7934 substantially exceeds the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the observed correlation is statistically non-significant. Consequently, no definitive conclusions can be extrapolated regarding the relationship between statistical distortion and mentions of the USA.

D.5.2 China

Evidence/Source Bias (Bias-1)

The observed correlation coefficient for evidence/source bias and the portrayal of China is weakly negative, registered at -0.03031188. The corresponding p-value of 0.171 significantly exceeds the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance at a 95% confidence level. Hence, it is untenable to assert a substantive relationship between the incidence of evidence or source bias and the media depiction of China.

Linguistic Bias (Bias-2)

For linguistic bias, the correlation is marginally positive at 0.01111084. Nevertheless, the p-value stands at 0.6159, considerably exceeding the 0.05 cut-off point for statistical significance. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical basis to claim a causal relationship between linguistic bias and the portrayal of China.

Overall, these statistical observations suggest that biases related to sourcing and language have minimal direct impact on the media's portrayal of China. Further research employing larger sample sizes or alternative methodologies is warranted for more conclusive findings.

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1)

The correlation for insufficient evidence is slightly positive, measured at 0.10406. With a p-value of 2.464×10^{-6} , which is well below the 0.05 threshold, this relationship is statistically significant. This outcome indicates that discussions about China may frequently lack sufficient empirical substantiation, thereby compromising the reliability of associated narratives.

Logical Fallacies (FC-2)

The correlation is weakly positive at 0.01343109, and the corresponding p-value of 0.5442 surpasses the 0.05 benchmark. As such, a definitive relationship between logical fallacies and media portrayals of China cannot be corroborated.

In summation, while insufficient evidence might modestly influence China's portrayal, logical fallacies do not markedly affect it. Additional studies are suggested for a more nuanced comprehension of these relationships.

Information Omission (FCX-1)

A negative correlation of -0.09126547 , with a statistically significant p-value of $3.64e-05$, substantiates a meaningful relationship between the portrayal of China and the omission of relevant information. This suggests that positive portrayals of China are accompanied by more comprehensive data presentation.

Information Distortion (FCX-2)

A positive correlation of 0.1100944 , confirmed by a p-value of $6.167e-07$, indicates an ascending trend of information distortion as China's media portrayal becomes more favorable. This suggests potential systematic biases possibly emanating from data manipulation or misrepresentation.

Misleading Headlines (FCX-3)

A strongly negative correlation of -0.1735978 , verified by a p-value of $2.836e-15$, indicates that favorable portrayals of China are less likely to employ misleading headlines.

While positive portrayals of China are associated with decreased tendencies for information omission and misleading headlines, they are correlated with increased information distortion. Nevertheless, it is crucial to reiterate that correlation does not necessarily imply causation, warranting further investigation.

Contextual Distortion (MR-1)

The correlation coefficient stands at 0.1127893 with a p-value of $3.243e-07$, establishing a statistically significant relationship. This implies that favorable portrayals of China might involve selective manipulation of context.

Statistical Distortion (MR-2)

The correlation is 0.02058818 and the corresponding p-value of 0.3526 is not statistically significant. This suggests that portrayals of China do not substantively affect the integrity of statistical representation within such narratives.

In conclusion, while contextual distortions may be prevalent in favorable portrayals of China, the statistics within these narratives are less likely to be manipulated. It remains imperative to scrutinize these correlations for underlying causative factors through further empirical analysis.

D.5.3 INDIA

Evidence/Source Bias (BIAS-1)

Utilizing Pearson's correlation coefficient as a metric, the relationship between depictions of India and Evidence/Source Bias (BIAS-1) yields a coefficient of -0.3525818. This constitutes a moderate negative correlation, which intimates that an elevation in instances of Evidence/Source Bias is concomitant with a concomitant deterioration in the portrayal of India within the media. The p-value of less than $2.2e-16$ offers robust statistical confirmation, making it highly improbable that this observed correlation has emerged by mere stochastic variance.

Language Bias (BIAS-2)

Regarding Language Bias (BIAS-2), the Pearson's correlation coefficient registers at -0.06731593, signifying a weak negative correlation. This implies that augmented occurrences of Language Bias marginally associate with less auspicious portrayals of India. Although the relationship is not particularly potent, the p-value of 0.002344 offers statistical validity to the correlation, albeit at a lesser degree compared to BIAS-1.

Insufficient Evidence (FC-1)

The Pearson's correlation coefficient for the association between the portrayal of India and instances of Insufficient Evidence (FC-1) is -0.1189404. This signifies a weak negative correlation, insinuating that an escalation in the frequency of Insufficient Evidence correlates with a progressively unfavorable depiction of India. The p-value of $7.074e-08$ falls well below the threshold of 0.05, providing strong statistical substantiation, notwithstanding the relatively weak correlation strength.

Logical Fallacies (FC-2)

The Pearson's correlation coefficient pertaining to Logical Fallacies (FC-2) and India's portrayal is -0.05776433, indicative of an exceedingly weak negative correlation. This suggests that the proliferation of Logical Fallacies has a tenuous association with slightly deleterious media portrayals of India. With a p-value of 0.009048, which is less than 0.05, the correlation attains statistical significance, albeit to a diminished extent compared to FC-1.

Information Omission (FCX-1)

The correlation coefficient for the interplay between portrayals of India and Information Omission (FCX-1) stands at -0.1277709, thereby establishing a weak negative correlation. This implies that increased incidences of information

omission are correlated with less favorable representations of India. The p-value of $6.931e-09$, substantially beneath the 0.05 threshold, furnishes strong statistical evidence for the correlation. Nevertheless, the weakness of the correlation suggests a less than robust relationship.

Information Distortion (FCX-2)

The Pearson's correlation coefficient for the relationship between India's portrayal and instances of Information Distortion (FCX-2) is -0.08368 . This manifests as a weak negative correlation, which suggests that a rise in information distortion incidents correspond with slightly less favorable portrayals of India. With a p-value of 0.0001539 , the correlation achieves statistical significance, albeit remaining weak in magnitude.

Misleading Headlines (FCX-3)

The Pearson's correlation coefficient concerning Misleading Headlines (FCX-3) and portrayals of India is -0.1009893 , signifying a weak negative correlation. This indicates that higher frequencies of misleading headlines tend to associate with less favorable portrayals of India. With a p-value of $4.846e-06$, substantially below the 0.05 threshold, the correlation gains strong statistical significance, although the correlation strength itself remains weak.

Contextual Distortion (MR-1)

For the association between portrayals of India and instances of Contextual Distortion (MR-1), the Pearson's correlation coefficient is -0.06817357 , denoting a weak negative correlation. This suggests that elevated occurrences of contextual distortion are slightly associated with less positive media portrayals of India. A p-value of 0.002059 , falling below 0.05, affirms the statistical validity of this correlation, albeit with a relatively modest effect size.

Statistical Distortion (MR-2)

The Pearson's correlation coefficient for the relationship between portrayals of India and instances of Statistical Distortion (MR-2) is -0.1451726 . This represents a moderate negative correlation, indicating that an increment in statistical distortion aligns with less favorable media portrayals of India. An exceedingly low p-value of $4.415e-11$ substantiates the statistical significance of this correlation. While the correlation coefficient is more robust than in MR-1, the effect size is still moderate, tempering the practical impact of this statistical relationship.

D.6 Analysis

The findings are delineated based on their association with specific state actors to facilitate a nuanced analysis.

D.6.1 INDIA

Evidentiary and Source Bias

The caliber of source material employed in the discourse surrounding India exhibits a moderate impact on shaping the narrative. This underscores the imperative for the utilization of empirical, verifiable sources to maintain informational integrity.

Insufficiency of Empirical Backing

Discourse concerning India recurrently manifests a dearth of sufficient empirical evidence to substantiate the posited claims, accentuating the urgency for intensified fact-verification processes.

Omission of Pertinent Information

The propensity to neglect the inclusion of germane information in narratives focused on India is discernible, necessitating a more exhaustive and holistic approach to journalistic reporting.

Statistical Misrepresentation

The maladaptive utilization or erroneous interpretation of statistical data plays a contributory role in influencing India's public portrayal, thereby warranting vigilance for accurate and honest data presentation.

Falsifying Headline Construction

The tendency to employ misleading headlines holds the potential to distort the India-centric narrative, amplifying the need for headlines that are both precise and reflective of the content.

D.6.2 CHINA

Deficiency in Empirical Substantiation

Stories that pertain to China frequently lack the robust, multi-faceted data required for making an informed judgment or analysis, signifying the requisite for more rigorous fact-verification protocols.

Selective Information Inclusion

While narratives with a positive angle on China are often more exhaustive, this standard needs to be universally applied across all narrative typologies.

Sensationalism in Headline Formulation

The frequency of sensationalist or attention-grabbing headlines appears attenuated in narratives favoring China, underscoring the need for balanced and meticulously constructed headlines across all journalistic themes.

Systematic Information Distortion

A discernible, possibly systematic, bias may be present in information pertaining to China, which could be ascribed to either intentional or inadvertent data manipulation, distortion, or misrepresentation.

Contextual Manipulation

The surrounding context in positively-slanted stories about China may be purposefully engineered to alter interpretive frameworks, underscoring the necessity for the inclusion of comprehensive and unbiased context.

D.6.3 USA

Source and Evidence Bias

Implication: Narratives surrounding the USA manifest varying degrees of source and evidentiary bias, necessitating proactive measures to enhance objectivity and diversify source portfolios.

Logical Inconsistencies

The deployment of flawed argumentative structures is discernible in news coverage related to the USA, mandating a discerning evaluation by the consumer of such narratives.

Sensationalistic Headline Composition

The use of exaggerated or sensationalistic headlines can potentially mischaracterize the representation of USA-centric news, thereby issuing a cautionary note for media producers to engender more accurate and less hyperbolic headline constructions.

D.7 Focus Group Discussion

As we transition from our quantitative findings to a more qualitative paradigm, it becomes essential to explore the nuanced complexities that numbers alone cannot convey. To this end, we conducted an in-depth Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving journalists from mainstream media outlets who specialize in foreign affairs coverage. The aim of this discursive platform was to delve into the lived experiences, perceptions, and viewpoints of these journalistic

professionals, thereby generating a richer, more multifaceted understanding of information disorder within the media landscape.

The focus group served as an interactive crucible for journalistic perspectives, enabling the discussion of salient issues around media reporting on state actors, the influence of institutional protocols on information quality, and the day-to-day challenges faced in the realms of foreign affairs journalism. Through this dialogic exchange, we sought to expand upon and contextualize our quantitative findings, enriching our research with qualitative insights directly gleaned from seasoned practitioners in the field.

The ensuing sections will articulate and analyze the critical points raised during the focus group discussion, providing an added layer of interpretative depth to our overarching study on information disorder in media narratives.

Escalation of Clickbait Journalism in the Digital Era

The advent and proliferation of digital media have precipitated a marked uptick in clickbait journalism. As traditional revenue models for news organizations wane, the digital metrics of clicks, shares, and engagements have grown exponentially in importance, often to the detriment of journalistic integrity. The click-centric economy fuels sensationalism and shallow reporting, as headlines and content are increasingly engineered for maximum engagement rather than informative value.

Language Barriers and Journalistic Competency

A recurrent issue highlighted was the loss of nuance and meaning during the translation of news content from English to Nepali. Despite the burgeoning media landscape in Nepal, there exists a significant dearth of qualified journalists proficient in both languages. This deficiency leads to inaccuracies and potentially skewed narratives. Interestingly, some participants noted that this distortion is not always inadvertent; in certain instances, it is intentionally orchestrated to align with particular agendas.

Subtle and Overt Influences: The Pro-China Bias

A notable observation was the pervasive pro-China bias within the Nepali media landscape. Journalists reported varying degrees of influence—ranging from subtle inducements to more overt forms of coercion—that shape

their reporting. The allure of privileges or kickbacks, as well as the fear of repercussions, contribute to this bias. One journalist, who had visited China 17 times and was preparing for an 18th visit, encapsulated the extent of this influence.

State-Owned News Agencies: A Cautionary Note

Journalists expressed reservations concerning the credibility and impartiality of news agencies owned by governmental bodies. These state-controlled entities often serve as conduits for national narratives, thereby necessitating extra scrutiny and caution when sourcing news from such platforms. The consensus was that relying solely on these state-sponsored agencies could distort the objectivity of reporting.

Ambiguities in Media Ideology and Ownership Structures

Participants flagged the obfuscation surrounding media outlets' ideological orientation and ownership structures as a point of concern. The ideological predispositions of online media platforms, in particular, were described as varying widely based on individual journalists and were further influenced by the complexities of ownership and relational dynamics. This obscurity hampers a clear understanding of potential biases and influences, warranting deeper investigative scrutiny.

Societal Influence Extends Beyond Media

The impact of foreign influence—specifically that of China—is not confined to media narratives but extends to broader societal perceptions as well. For instance, in news concerning infrastructure projects financed by Indian aid, the framing sometimes suggested that India was culpable for delays or issues like land reimbursement. Such reporting reflects and reinforces societal biases, implicating a larger ecosystem of influence that transcends the media sector.

The MCC Controversy as a Misinformation Case Study

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact in Nepal serves as an illustrative case study for examining the dissemination of misinformation. The reporting around the MCC agreement has been replete with ambiguities, half-truths, and overtly skewed narratives. This exemplifies the urgency for accurate, impartial journalism in topics laden with geopolitical significance, thereby shedding light on the broader landscape of information disorder.

The Social Media Metric Obsession

The relentless pursuit of likes, retweets, and other social media metrics has further exacerbated the issue of information disorder. Media organizations are increasingly succumbing to the lure of virality at the expense of veracity, intensifying the problem of media illiteracy among consumers.

Beyond Journalists: Political Leaders and Talking Heads

The ecosystem of news generation and discourse formation extends beyond journalistic circles to include political leaders and TV pundits. Their influence often shapes public opinion, yet they are not always held to the same ethical and factual standards as professional journalists, further complicating the media landscape.

The Media's Role in News Reporting vs. Generation

An important distinction was made that media outlets primarily report on news rather than generating it. This underscores the media's function as an interpretative lens, which adds yet another layer of complexity in the battle against information disorder.

Geopolitical Imperatives and Domestic Political Consumption

The intertwining of geopolitics with domestic political needs has been identified as a major catalyst for information disorder. Media narratives are frequently manipulated to serve domestic political agendas, thereby distorting the information disseminated for public consumption.

Newsroom Perspectives and Political Affiliations

The ideological disposition of newsrooms often correlates with their political affiliations. Such partisan leanings can, to a significant extent, predetermine the narrative slant on news topics, raising questions about the objectivity and impartiality of media outlets.

The Ideological Underpinnings of Supranationalism and Ideology

Nepal's supranationalism is often manifest in the widespread diffusion of the United States as an ideological imperial power. Similarly, the prevalence of communist ideology among the populace significantly impacts the portrayal of geopolitical news, adding another layer of bias and complexity to media narratives.

Entrenched Nationalism and Traditional Perspectives

The prevalence of nationalism and traditional perspectives within society further clouds the media landscape. These deeply entrenched viewpoints influence not just journalists but also the general populace, complicating efforts to disseminate balanced information.

Editor's Ideological Inclination: A Case in PM Prachanda's India Visit

One crucial but often overlooked aspect of media representation lies in the ideological leanings and interests of (chief) editors. This was particularly evident during former Prime Minister Prachanda's visit to India, where editorial perspectives significantly shaped the framing and interpretation of the event.

The Paramount Role of Editors

Editors wield a disproportionately large influence in shaping news content. Their decision-making processes and relationships with media owners and financiers are often more critical in determining a news story's angle than the professionalism or capabilities of individual reporters.

The Challenge of Finding Neutral Experts for Quotation

Quoting experts for insights or opinions has its own set of challenges. Journalists often gravitate towards experts who align with their own ideological leanings, thereby perpetuating an echo chamber effect. This reinforces pre-existing biases and compromises the objectivity of reporting.

Political Parties as Ideological Diffusers

Political parties serve as significant vectors for the diffusion of ideas within society. The extent of polarization within domestic politics inevitably spills over into geopolitical narratives, adding another layer of complexity to media representations.

China's Perceived Threat and the Impact on Reporting

A reason cited for positive news about China stems from its perceived threat. Journalists, such as one present for the focus group discussions, have been subjected to intimidation, fostering a climate of fear. This has implications on the quality and orientation of reporting, as journalists are wary of crossing invisible red lines and offending China.

Access to Information About China: An Opaque Landscape

Both Nepal's government and China have been cited for their lack of transparency, making it challenging for journalists to access reliable information. This absence of transparent information flow impacts the quality of journalism, especially when reporters do not engage in critical questioning.

Need for Journalistic Orientation in Geopolitical Literacy

Participants emphasized the imperative for journalists to undergo orientation programs focused on geopolitical literacy. A discerning understanding of international politics, they contend, is indispensable for nuanced, balanced reporting, especially when national interests intersect with global dynamics.

Need for Training and Awareness

There is a dire need for comprehensive training that enhances awareness and understanding among journalists, specifically regarding question formulation and critical inquiry. Without this, societal polarization risks becoming further entrenched.

Proactivity in Information Sourcing

Information sources should adopt a proactive stance, offering timely information and clarifications. The absence of this has led to many news stories being based on hearsay, which further fuels misinformation and reduces the credibility of news outlets.

The compendium of these factors adds nuanced layers to the already complex ecosystem of information disorder in Nepali media. These factors underscore the necessity for multi-pronged approaches that address not only the symptoms but also the underlying causes of information disorder.

E. Conclusion

Heterogeneity in Information Disorder Across State Actors

The landscape of information disorder as it relates to different state actors shows a diverse range of manifestations. This heterogeneity highlights that media distortions are not uniform; rather, they vary based on the specific geopolitical actor being examined.

Predominance of Negative Correlations

The vast majority of correlations between information disorder and the portrayal of state actors exhibit a negative trend. This suggests that increasing levels of information disorder generally correlate with a more unfavorable representation of the respective country, thereby negatively impacting its global standing.

Detrimental Ramifications of Information Disorder

The predominant negative correlations illustrate that information disorder mainly results in unfavorable portrayals of state actors. This highlights the harmful potential of information disorder to damage a nation's international reputation, necessitating remedial action.

Anomalies in China's Narrative

In contrast to the overall trend, China shows a unique tendency for positive correlations. This anomaly indicates that increases in information disorder oddly align with a more favorable narrative, diverging from other observed state actors. This aberrant pattern necessitates an in-depth exploration to uncover its causes.

Imperative for Augmented Research

While the present study provides important insights into the nature and implications of information disorder, it also highlights the need for additional research. This could involve methodological expansions to examine other geopolitical entities and varying media formats, in order to validate and refine current observations.

Provocative Avenues for Inquiry

The emerging data raises several insightful questions, such as the causal mechanisms behind the observed correlations and the potential for independent

verification. Addressing these questions would greatly enrich our knowledge framework regarding media distortions and their geopolitical impacts.

Epilogue: The Cruciality of Media Narratives

In summary, media narratives play an instrumental role in shaping collective perceptions and understanding of global events. Through rigorous scholarly studies like the present one, there is an opportunity to more effectively identify, understand, and mitigate the biases and distortions that influence this crucial cognitive process.

Reflecting on the intricacies of information disorder in Nepal's media landscape, several poignant insights and imperatives emerge. This study has illuminated the nuances, complexities and consequences of distorted narratives, underscoring the need for collective action to restore balance and promote judicious discourse.

Nepal finds itself at the intersection of competing geopolitical interests, making it vulnerable to external interference in the information sphere. This necessitates building societal resilience through media literacy initiatives that inoculate citizens against misinformation. Concurrently, there is an urgent need to reinforce journalistic integrity by promoting adherence to ethical codes, fact-checking mechanisms, and transparency in ownership.

While legal and regulatory frameworks exist, their efficacy is constrained by deep-rooted institutional limitations. Thus, along with policy reform, a change in organizational culture is critical, promoting proactive self-regulation and recommitment to journalistic ideals. The media community must also enhance professional capabilities in geopolitical literacy, investigative rigor, statistical proficiency, and linguistic precision.

However, forces shaping public discourse extend beyond media outlets, encompassing political elites, pundits and foreign state actors. Thus, a sole focus on media personnel is insufficient; engagement must include diverse stakeholders who collectively construct perceptual frameworks. Furthermore, chauvinistic nationalism, communist ideological leanings, and Sinophilia in society shape receptivity to media narratives, requiring broader attitudinal shifts.

The study highlighting information disorder provides but a glimpse of deeper sociocultural undercurrents. Comprehensively decoding their origins necessitates richer interdisciplinary exploration, potentially unraveling complex interactions between media portrayals and entrenched worldviews, exposing

symbiotic relationships engendering distortions. Such understanding is vital to conceive systemic, sustainable solutions.

While digital media accelerates misinformation, it also provides unprecedented access to counter-narratives and fact-checking. Hence, promoting digital literacy and harnessing connectivity are pivotal. This requires moving beyond passive media consumption by cultivating critical inquiry and leveraging interactive platforms for discourse.

Fundamentally, restoring balance in media narratives must arise internally rather than externally imposed. Coercive strictures risk further polarization. Instead, the media community could champion a voluntary movement guided by moral conviction over legal duress. Its success would depend on collective awareness, open dialogues, and willingness for introspective change.

Charting a path forward, Nepal requires balanced partnerships with geopolitical actors to advance developmental priorities within a framework of astute non-alignment, avoiding partisan leanings. Meanwhile, intensified South-South cooperation could increase negotiating leverage while furthering regional stability. Domestically, reconciling fractured political interests is critical to institute coherent foreign policies aligned with Nepal's strategic interests.

While information disorder's detrimental impacts are evident, its complexity cautions against facile diagnoses or hasty interventions. Sustainable solutions require nuanced understanding, patience and collective goodwill from diverse stakeholders. As Nepal navigates the global order, upholding public discourse integrity and balance will be vital in securing an equitable destiny.

This uncertain moment brims with possibility to reconstruct media narratives guided by truth, balance and enlightened self-interest. With prudent action driven by sincerity, Nepal could transition towards a media landscape that informs rather than misleads, unites rather than divides, and bridges common humanity. This profound transformation's promise merits tireless exertion.

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