Fake News and Conspiracy Theories' Detection and Extremist Content in Times of COVID-19

Use case: **Fake News about Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)**
Date: June 2020
Some key benefits of SAIL LABS’ Media Mining System for pandemic outbreaks and the detection of Fake News, conspiracy theories and extremist content

- Allows continuous assessment of media coverage and public opinion in real time.
- Suitable for monitoring health promotion or electoral campaigns or any other communication campaigns.
- Empowers to uncover polarizing and extremist narratives and content.
- Sentiment Analysis of traditional and social media regarding the perceived impact of a disease, government action and the communication discourse surrounding an event.
- Allows the detection of automated bots, topics and entities.
- Offers a variety of visualization tools to obtain an accurate picture of public opinion.
- Social Media Intelligence.
- Enables to extract data from text or audiovisual sources in languages that the users do not speak thanks to Automatic Speech Recognition and machine translation covering 32 languages.
- Enables situational awareness and situational understanding.
Fake News in times of Coronavirus

Political, technological, economic and social transformation changed the way we exchange information. In times of a pandemic, misinformation campaigns are not only harmful to electoral process, fact-based journalism and potential citizens’ decisions based on inaccurate information, but now also to people’s lives (Source: UN News).

“There seems to be barely an area left untouched by disinformation in relation to the COVID-19 crisis, ranging from the origin of the coronavirus, through to unproven prevention and ‘cures’, and encompassing responses by governments, companies, celebrities and others,” said Guy Berger, the Director for Policies and Strategies regarding Communication and Information at UNESCO (Source: UN News).

Since the spread of Coronavirus, Fake News did not take long time to appear in various channels ranging from social media to misinformation on local news (Source: Politico).

What is more, not all of misinformation have bad intentions – many Fake News spreading on private messaging applications like WhatsApp, were forwarded by fearful and anxious individuals that spread misleading or inaccurate information on medical advice or lockdown rules (Source: Politico).

As a response, Facebook said that it is committed to tackle viral messages, for instance by reducing the number of people you can forward your message to, which was specifically applied to WhatsApp (Source: Politico). When it comes to the examples of Fake News circulating on WhatsApp, the one prevalent in German speaking countries was an audio recording of a woman claiming that a friend of hers, who is a doctor at the university hospital of Vienna, informed her that most of the patients with severe symptoms of COVID-19 had taken the painkiller ibuprofen before being admitted to the hospital. Moreover, this Fake News circulated in various languages. The spokesperson for the Medical University of Vienna declined such an information. In Belgium, WhatsApp users could have received a message with fake audio information from a woman who claimed that the hospital she works in had triggered the maximum pandemic plan. Similar recordings warned WhatsApp users of a “complete lockdown” of the country. (Source: Politico).

People in Poland received messages with false information that the government is cutting off transportation to its capital, Warsaw, while French users were forwarding a message consisting of an audio of a woman claiming that the whole country will soon be under full quarantine. In Portugal, a fake message suggesting that the government is underreporting the true numbers of infected people (Source: Politico) circulated.

In Italy, Statista published that in the timeframe between January and March 2020, 4.8 % of all online news and posts related to COVID-19 were false or inaccurate. Fake News reached its peak in the early stage of the pandemic, at the end of January 2020, with 7.3 % of all online news being false or inaccurate (Source: Statista).

Concerning government actions against the spread of Fake News about Coronavirus, some governments decided to punish those who deliberately share them. In Singapore, 40-year-old taxi driver has been charged over false claims he made in a Facebook group. He allegedly shared online that he received an information that supermarkets would only be opened for 2 days in a week and urged other users to stock up with resources for the next month. If convicted, he could be imprisoned for up to 3 years and face a maximum fine of 10,000 dollars (Source: The Straits Times). Another case in the UK involves a man posting a false information on Facebook. He claimed that he had tested positive for Coronavirus and that the doctors had told him that the virus is now airborne, meaning it can spread even more rapidly than from person to person. 23-year-old Facebook user who got arrested claimed he wanted to conduct a social experiment. Now he faces charges of false alarm, needed to pay bail bond of 1,000 dollars and lost his job (Source: BBC).
A battle of governments’ narratives about COVID-19

According to an unpublished study by the U.S. State Department, approximately 2 million tweets pushing conspiracy theories about COVID-19 circulated on social media over the course of 3 weeks when the outbreak began to spread outside China. Those tweets represent 7% of the all studied tweets and the report warns that some of the misinformation efforts exhibited an “evidence of inauthentic and coordinated activity.”, which could have been done by governments or other groups with a political aim in mind (Source: The Washington Post).

Another U.S. Report published by State Department’s Global Engagement Center claims that China, Iran and Russia are utilizing the Coronavirus crisis in order to launch a propaganda and disinformation campaigns against the USA. Some of these narratives include stories about COVID-19 being an American bioweapon or that the U.S. troops had spread it, or that the virus did not come from China and the response by Chinese government was effective and successful, while the American was negligent and that the USA’s sanctions are killing people in Iran (Source: Politico).

On the other hand, Donald Trump has been persistently claiming that he has seen an evidence that COVID-19 originated in a laboratory in Chinese Wuhan, which directly contradicts the public statement by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (Source: CNN).

Translation: Donald Trump continues to fuel the thesis that the Coronavirus could come from a laboratory in China. The US President threatens the country with punitive tariffs and criticizes the WHO as a PR agency for China.

Translation: Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo assure that the Coronavirus was created in a laboratory in Wuhan, China.
Extremism and Coronavirus-related Fake News and conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories and Fake News, originating from all spheres of extremism, are flourishing and mutating online at an increasing pace. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, not only aspects of daily life have been affected, but also a transformation of extremist groups can be monitored. By using Fake News, extremist organizations have managed to integrate themselves into the opinion making, eroding the people’s trust into the government and its strict pandemic countermeasures (analysis provided by LADON CORP.).

Islamic extremism and the utilization of COVID-19

Smaller jihadi groups and offshoots of IS or Al-Qaeda have considered COVID-19 a divine punishment, more sophisticated groups see it as a chance to assert their dominance.

Especially in regions where the financial resources of local governments are limited and already heavily burdened, security and healthcare cannot be provided anymore to those in need. This has created an opportunity for extremists. In West- and Sub-Saharan Africa they “bridge this gap”, providing basic services, security and rudimentary healthcare to the local population (analysis provided by LADON CORP.).

As Coronavirus has continued to rise the death toll in Europe, a provocative news story broke and went viral. The story consisted of an ISIS propaganda infographic instructing its members to avoid travels to Europe. Critics of publishing this message coming from foreign-language newsletter suggest that this is what ISIS aimed to achieve – to gain attraction and amplify its message (Source: The Intercept). Even though the group has recommended its members to not travel to western countries to launch terrorist attacks, it suggested that those who are already there should act (Source: The Guardian).

With the world’s attention directed towards fighting the pandemic, ISIS managed to launch attacks in Philippines, Maldives and Mozambique, while the latter two have never experienced ISIS attacks in the past. Moreover, the German police arrested 4 suspected ISIS members who they believe had been planning to attack American military facilities in Germany (Source: TIME).

Regardless of the current pandemic, ISIS continues to pose a threat to national governments. What is more, the weakened capacities of law enforcement or security organizations represent an opportunity for the weakened, but still active terrorist organization responsible for a high number of attacks in Europe and on other continents (Source: TIME).
The infographic warning ISIS-fighters against travelling to Europe is shown on the right. It was published in Al-Naba’ newsletter, which is a part of the terrorist group’s regularly published media output including photos, videos, texts and speeches by its leaders. The COVID-19 recommendations were published in the 19th March edition (Source: Crisis Group).

The infographic depicts a list of “Shari’i directives to deal with epidemics” (Source: Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi).

The main points can be translated as (translation by Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi):

- The obligation of faith that illnesses do not strike by themselves but by the command and decree of God
- The counsel to put trust in God and seek refuge in Him from illnesses
- The obligation of taking up the causes of protection from illnesses and avoiding them
- The counsel that the healthy should not enter the land of the epidemic and the afflicted [/infected] should not exit from it
- The counsel to cover the mouth when yawning and sneezing
- The counsel to cover the vessels and tie the waterskin
- The counsel to wash the hands before dipping them into vessels

Source: Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi

Dari larangan perjalanan dan seruan untuk jihad baru, kelompok militan ISIS melihat pandemi virus Corona sebagai "kesempatan untuk melakukan eksploitasi". https://t.co/CCIDhbKgn1

Translation: From travel bans and calls for new jihad, ISIS militant groups see the Corona virus pandemic as "an opportunity to exploit". https://t.co/CCIDhbKgn1
An ISIS statement about COVID-19 in China published in the issue 220 of al-Naba’ newsletter, weekly news section, can be seen on the right (Source and translation by Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi):

The victims of 'Corona' is [sic!] on the increase and the disbelieving Chinese government is refuted in its claims to find a treatment for it.

China announced a rise in the number of its people killed as a result of infection with the Coronavirus to 563, while the number of those infected with the illness has reached approximately 30,000 Chinese [sic!]. At the same time some of the expectations suggest that the true numbers of dead and infections with the illness are multiple times higher than what the disbelieving government of China has announced.

And the Chinese government is still imposing a quarantine on two towns in which the illness has spread with intensity, while imposing precautionary measures in other areas in fear of its spread in them as well, while the governments continue to evacuate their citizens from China and Hong Kong, and monitor the passengers coming from China in case they are infected with the deadly illness.

Meanwhile the disbelieving Chinese government has begun to claim the healing of some of those infected with the illness and their leaving its hospitals to reassure the people, and to minimize the catastrophic impacts of the illness on all aspects of life in China, and among them the economy that has lost hundreds of billions of dollars as losses during the past days. The 'WHO' has denied that there is an effective drug for the illness, in refuting the Chinese claims in this regard.

Source: Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi

The Word Cloud below features 40 most used hashtags on social media when referring to ISIS and Coronavirus since the 1st of February.
CORONA JIHAD Islamic groups say this is a golden opportunity to unleash waves of lethal terror. They never miss an opportunity for murder and mayhem. whatever the circumstance https://t.co/KQekBeU45i
https://t.co/6AEejB4DzS.

The Pie Graph below depicts the 10 most mentioned countries in traditional and social media in the context of ISIS and Coronavirus since the 1st of February.

ISIS Women at Al-Hawl Refugee Camp Coronavirus Does Not Infect Muslims Only Infidels and Oppressors Die of the Virus https://t.co/Fq9wInS9wH.

Corona-Jihad NY Muslim Brotherhood Activist Vows to Infect Others With Coronavirus Surprised it took so long. And the Islamic State (ISIS) is actively recruiting its jihadis who are sick with corona to infect infidels https://t.co/OnOVfgV2NM
https://t.co/VTU4i98xI5.

and if you can’t, just wait for them and sneeze on their cars when they pass by.

* Provided by Media Mining
** Provided by external data source
Far-right groups and COVID-19 Fake News and conspiracy theories

Much like jihadi-groups, far-right movements continue to indoctrinate their audiences, spreading hate and conspiracy theories. They encourage disobedience, violent action against governmental institutions, and to take advantage of the shrinking support some governments face due to the strict COVID-19 regulations. Especially associated “Fake News” continue to erode existing orders and have become considerable “mainstream”. They are mutating and spreading outside extremist networks (analysis provided by LADON CORP.).

As Coronavirus introduced governmental lockdowns and strict measures to restrict the spread of the virus, those inevitably affected human rights of citizens. The times of uncertainty and lack of scientific explanations, as COVID-19 is a new phenomenon that is being studied, represent a fruitful ground for various far-right groups to push their political agenda, attract new members and further polarize and disrupt the established political systems.

Far-right invests into gathering and disseminating information, as is apparent from its numerous publications and media outlets, while labelling these as “alternative” news that supposedly fight the “propaganda” of mainstream media. This is even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic – denying the existence of the virus itself, blaming it onto minorities, globalists, Bill Gates, George Soros, or in case of accelerationists (an ideology inspiring white supremacist believing that the path to achieving power is by bringing down the governments and calls for violence often aimed towards minorities), even seeing it as a fulfilling of their prophecies (Source: Open Democracy; FPRI).

The benefits of social media, such as the communication in real time, the number of daily online users, the accessibility of the platforms, no journalistic gatekeepers and the anonymity makes social media so popular in connecting like-minded individuals, which is also often used by far-right groups. Specifically, extremist messages have found suitable ground on platforms like 4Chan, Telegram, etc. and from there to mainstream sites like Facebook, Twitter or YouTube (Source: Politico).

The influence of various conspiracy theories can lead to serious disruptions in the society, an example of which is the impact of the conspiracy theory that 5G wireless technology is responsible for Coronavirus leading to a series of arson attacks on 5G towers in Europe in the UK, Netherlands, Ireland, Belgium, Italy, Sweden and Finland (Source: Politico).

Even though the conspiracy theory that 5G wireless technology causes health problems was around for years, now the environment changed due to COVID-19 and as everyone is scared, people have become an easy target (Source: Politico).

Another example of an online circulating conspiracy theory affecting real life is the conspiracy theory that the virus simply does not exist. It uses various online initiatives, such as #filmyourhospital, which prompts people to film their hospital to prove that the hospitals are empty and not overwhelmed by the patients (Source: Open Democracy).

The belief that the virus is a made-up excuse to limit citizens’ rights could also further online-fuel and radicalize parts of the population deprived by the economic and psychological consequences of the lockdowns. An example of this could be the protests against governmental lockdowns that were organized online and occurred in the USA and Germany, while protesters were even armed during the protest in Michigan (Source: The Detroit News; DW).
The Word Cloud on the right depicts the hashtags most often occurring together with #filmyourhospital. One can notice that many of these hashtags call for ending the government lockdowns, refer to 5G, claim that hospitals are empty and that the vaccine could kill the children. This micro social media environment that is susceptible for the infiltration of extremist content illustrates how various conspiracy theories mix together with calls for action.

When investigating the flow of the hashtag #filmyourhospital in time, it is possible to identify that the hashtag first appeared in our Media Mining System on March 29, 2020.

Both mainstream social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook, similarly as an online video-sharing platform YouTube that is owned by Google, are flooded with Fake News and conspiracy theories. The companies have taken steps to combat misinformation about the Coronavirus pandemic by pointing the users looking for Coronavirus-related information to credible sources, such as WHO or the local governments’ information (Source: Aljazeera). Although, these companies have chosen different approaches which can be illustrated by the case of 2 videos of California doctors calling for easing the lockdown, which were deleted by YouTube, although not by Facebook (Source: NBC News).
The hashtag #plandemic similarly gained prominence on social media and is also a name of a 26-minute-long video (the link with the debunked transcription can be found here) which has been viewed millions of times on YouTube until it was taken down for violating its policy against COVID-19 misinformation. The video stars Judy Mikovits, a virologist, an author of two books and a former research director at the Whittemore Peterson Institute (WPI). She is best known by co-authoring a research paper suggesting an agent named xenotropic murine leukemia virus-related virus (XMRV) causing chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), the claims of which fell apart. She later left the WPI and was sued by the institution (Source: NPR; Sciencemag). When inspecting the usage of the hashtag #plandemic in time, it is possible to spot that it first appeared in Media Mining System on March 12, before the video was published. The Plandemic video was uploaded to Vimeo and YouTube on May 4 and the graph below shows that this further boosted the usage of the hashtag on social media (Source: Techcrunch).
The YouTube profile on the right uses the hashtag #plandemic, apart from other hashtags such as #totalcontrol and urges other users to spread awareness, as the goal of the elites is to establish a “Totalitarian Communism by 2030”. Interestingly, this YouTube profile is not an outsider without any followers or an automated bot, but actually an influencer with over one million subscribers. This serves as an example of how conspiracy theories originating in the outskirts of the Internet can become viral and part of the mainstream and therefore, influence everyday Internet and social media users.

The fear of a “Big-Government” is driving an increasing number of people into the hands of groups that reject government completely. Especially since this scene is commonly armed and turning increasingly hostile towards the branches and institutions of government, it could become a significant threat. By monitoring various social media channels, the conspiracy theories that enjoy the most popularity regarding the spread of COVID-19 range from the 5G technology, an American-Jewish “virus-industry” to a global acting secret society lead by Bill Gates. It is furthermore important to recognise that this sub-segment of society cannot necessarily be classified according to political views, as it is commonly composed of right-wing as well as left-wing extremists (analysis provided by LADON CORP.).

The network graph on the left shows Twitter accounts engaging in the conversation about the “Plandemic”. The names of the accounts are anonymized due to the GDPR regulations, but anyone can ask for a free trial of the demo of our Media Mining System to conduct such open source investigation themselves. To do so, please click here.
In line with the ideological “us” vs. “them” division, far-right groups also use Coronavirus-related conspiracy theories and Fake News about the origins and causes of the virus to blame groups like immigrants, minorities, liberals, globalists, etc. (Source: The Guardian).

When it comes to the US far-right groups seeking to exploit the Coronavirus pandemic and commit acts of violence, the groups intelligence services are concerned about are various Neo-Nazi groups and accelerationists already mentioned earlier. FBI even warned that such extremist groups are deliberately spreading the virus itself to infect the Jewish community and police officers.

This is not only USA-specific, as British hate monitors also identified extremist groups expecting social turmoil. Those extremist groups are welcoming the pandemic as a threat to liberal democracy, seek to recruit and inspire new members and openly advocate terrorism, examples of which are the synagogue vandalisms and a conspiracy to murder (Source: The Guardian; The Washington Post; The Guardian).

As already mentioned, conspiracy theories fueled online by extremist groups are reaching and influencing wider population through social media.
Another example of scapegoating is the usage of COVID-19 pandemic by Indian far-right groups to attack the Muslim minority in the country. These attacks intensified after the Tablighi Jamaat event in Nizamuddin led to an increase in the number of infections with Coronavirus, even though other communities also violated social distancing rules (Source: Business Insider).

Soon after, the hashtag #Coronajihad referring to spreading Coronavirus as an act of terrorism by Muslims started to be used by far-right groups (Source: Business Insider).
After the Indian government linked hundreds of cases of COVID-19 to the Muslim missionary group 'Tabligh Jamaat, angry and virulent messages have flooded social media purporting to show Muslims conspiring to spread the coronavirus (Source: RFI).

Two tweets on the left feature the social media posts containing #CoronaJihad. The first tweet displays the Tweet Details. The second shows the User Details, where can be seen that this is a recently created account and it was also identified by the system as an automated bot. The Relations Graph below identifies all the users which interacted with this account.
The current Coronavirus crisis represents an enormous opportunity for various extremists to influence, recruit and further destabilize the political system with the help of the contagiousness of Fake News and conspiracy theories circulating on social media.

As demonstrated, far-right content is spreading outside of extremist networks and influences the daily social media users through fueling Fake News, conspiracy theories, anti-government attitudes and calls for action.

By analysing the data, we see an alarming trend of rapprochements of groups and organisations that are originally of different nature. In these “Black Swan” scenarios, it is still highly unlikely that groups at the very extreme ends of the political and ideological spectrum will join their forces. However, observations indicate an emergence of more pragmatic sub-groups and leaders, that are in fact willing to “bend” their ideologies. This could at least result in a knowledge-transfer with respect to propaganda and asymmetric warfare against common enemies or somewhat of a distribution and coordinated segmentation of operational territories offline and online (analysis provided by LADON CORP.).

Governments are well-advised to continue monitoring extremist sentiments of the population exploiting or reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated Fake News. In many countries and societies, a tipping point has been reached and the population is not in full support of governmental restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic anymore. Economic hardship and mass unemployment are highly likely to follow the COVID-19 pandemic and existing extremist threats will be amplified and further dynamized by conspiracy theories and fake news. A failure to address, monitor and counter these online narratives will continue to drive individuals into the arms of extremist recruiters and propagandists (analysis provided by LADON CORP.).

The graph below features how the mentions of 5G across traditional and social media co-occur with the mentions of Coronavirus. As demonstrated, the number of mentions of 5G already started to increase at the beginning of January and follow a similar pattern of occurrences as Coronavirus.
5G and COVID-19 conspiracy theory on social media as an example of disinformation

Claims lacking scientific evidence linking 5G networks to the spread of the virus are a topic of numerous posts on social media as exemplified below.

The system shows detailed information about this user’s account. When keeping a close look at these user’s tweets, it is possible to see that the user posts the same message numerous times in a short period of time.

BOT DETECTION

The highlighted tweet on the top left had its details identified by the system. It is possible to see that the Bot Factor points out that this user is a bot.
The **Pie Graph** on the left indicates the most frequent mentioned locations in the context of 5G. **London** was the most mentioned location with 28%, which could be because **David Icke**, propagator of **5G Coronavirus conspiracy**, is of UK origin.

When investigating the most shared URLs on Twitter with regards to **5G and Coronavirus** between April 15 and May 7, one can spot that the blog **Adventures in the Gold** (link [here](#)) appears here with 2 links, while one of them was the second most shared link on Twitter with regards to the topics.

The 4th most shared URL is a video named “The WHO/UN Agenda 21/30 Depopulation plan via 5-G 60 ghz millimeter waves and Toxic Corona “Virus” vaccine Injections” (video available [here](#)). It consists of various testimonials, articles, footage and text and connects COVID-19 to 5G. The comments on the video by various users include references to Adolf Hitler, Bush family, Rothschilds and even contain a denial of Holocaust during WW2.
As mentioned above, the 2nd and 9th most shared hyperlinks belong to the blog Adventures in the Gold. The article on the left is called “What can we do to protect ourselves from dangerous EMF” (Electromotive force). It speculates about the dangers of 5G on human health and gives tips and links to products which are supposed to serve as a natural remedies against 5G and, therefore, COVID-19.

The blog redirects users to another website (link here), where users can buy the recommended protection against 5G and COVID-19.
When looking at what did traditional and social media mention together with 5G and Coronavirus, one can notice that there are entities belonging to different categories, such as Mike Pompeo, currently 70th United States secretary of state, countries including United Kingdom, People’s Republic of China, the United States, Italy, Russia, locations such as Washington, Wuhan, Beijing, company Huawei and institutions like NATO and the European Union. The red line stands for different results of negative sentiment between the two entities.

With the help of SAIL LABS’ filtering mechanisms, one can further constrain the search based on the type of media (traditional or social media), languages (currently 32 available languages), locations or sentiments. Additionally, the displayed profiles can be restricted, so one can display only people, organizations, countries, etc.
Bill Gates, COVID-19 and forced vaccination with microchips

A conspiracy theory that Bill Gates is either behind COVID-19 or that he wants to use the pandemic to vaccinate people with microchips is widely vivid on social media. The protagonists of this theory often mention Gates’ activism in vaccination efforts around the world, his Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the existence of ID2020 Alliance and the simulation exercise Event 201, which is a nongovernmental organization which advocates for digital ID for the billion undocumented people worldwide and under-served groups like refugees.

One of the tweets created between April 15 and May 8 mentioning Bill Gates, Coronavirus and vaccination claims that Gates have paralyzed half a million children with Polio vaccines and redirects users to a link of a podcast from Sheila Zilinski. This Twitter profile is the same one that appeared in Chapter 1, where it posted a tweet about David Icke.

The podcast episode (link for which can be found here) is a mixture of conspiracy theories and different topics – it combines Christianity with antisemitism (several references to “Zionists” wanting to control the world), mentions globalist agenda and new world order and the host claims there that he spoke with God. It refers to ID2020, the simulation exercise Event 201 and uses Gates’ out-of-context quotes to prove that the COVID-19 pandemic was planned so that he can vaccinate the population enhanced with digital ID.
The article (can be found [here](https://t.co/ylrQqlyTsl)) is built on a claim by a woman, whose husband was told by a nurse that seven infants have died in Senegal due to Gates’ Coronavirus vaccine. The article also mentions “the Euro-Zionist empire” that hates the Kennedy family and that this alleged empire killed President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert F. Kennedy. It cites Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is a son of Robert F. Kennedy, a nephew of former president John F. Kennedy and an American environmental attorney, author, and opponent of vaccination. The article does not include the original source with Kennedy’s claims.

When inspecting the most shared URLs with regards to Bill Gates and COVID-19 between April 15 and May 7, one can spot that the 7th most shared hyperlink comes from a blog called “Gateway Pundit – We report the truth – and leave the Russia/Collusion fairy tale to the Conspiracy media” ([link here](https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2020/04/huge-brilla)). The website is an American far-right opinion website known for spreading hoaxes and falsehoods (Source: [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com)).
The article consists of Ayyadurai questioning Bill Gates’ motives behind the Coronavirus’ vaccine efforts. A video where Ayyadurai criticizes lockdowns, social distancing, the usage of ventilations and vaccination can be found here.

When it comes to social media influencers that post about Bill Gates and COVID-19 between April 15 and May 7, David Icke, an English conspiracy theorist already mentioned in Chapter 1, occupies the 3rd place.

When inspecting his Twitter profile further, we can see that this social media influencer has a potential reach of 1,800,000 social media users himself, while potentially 4 million of Twitter users could have encountered his tweets.
Examples of other Coronavirus-related Fake News circulating on social media

According to Africa Check (link here), an article on Af.feednews.com claimed that Chinese doctors informed that African blood genetic composition resist coronavirus, after a student was cured. The article was widely shared on social media platforms. The claim was debunked, as there is no evidence that African blood composition or black skin resist the coronavirus. On the contrary, some data prove that African Americans are more prone to die from COVID-19 (Source: CNN).

HELP US GET COVID 19 HERBAL CURE TO ALL THOSE WHO NEED IT CATHOLIC MONK CALLS In the wake of the barrage of questions that have assailed the Benedictine Monks of Ewu Monastery Edo State Nigeria following the discovery of CVD PLUS the Herbal remedy for the dreaded.

Due to the current situation with lockdowns and restrictions of movement in various countries around the world, various claims and conspiracy theories suggest that COVID-19 is not as dangerous as the data show and that the situation with restrictions is a necessary escalation.
Countries, people, organizations and locations associated with Coronavirus-related Fake News

The graph below displays **5 most mentioned countries with regards to Coronavirus and Fake News** by traditional and social media in **April**. The most mentioned country were the United States and China.

When looking at the countries most mentioned with regards to Fake News and Coronavirus in **May** in a form of a pie graph, one can discover that **the most mentioned countries were China (17%)**, Germany (16%) and United States (14%).

The pie graph can also be used to examine the proportion of media coverage of other types of entities, such as organizations, locations, people, etc. **The most mentioned locations concerning Fake News and COVID-19 were Europe (15%), Wuhan (13%) and Berlin (11%).**
The most mentioned organizations associated with Fake News and Coronavirus in traditional and social media in May were the profile School (13%), WHO (12%) and Police (10%). Schools have the most prominent share probably due to the current lifting of the restrictions and to countries slowly reopening the economy and public service. Many restrictions and steps to slowly reopen were often misinterpreted and used for disinformation efforts.

The most mentioned people with regards to Coronavirus and Fake News were Donald Trump (39%), Angela Merkel (14%) and Jair Bolsonaro (12%). Donald Trump was associated with Fake News and COVID-19 disproportionately more than other most mentioned people, probably due to his statements concerning the virus.
The graph below features the most mentioned entities in traditional and social media since the 1st of April. The entities can be people, political parties, organizations, events, etc., for which a user created a profile. The red line represents a result of the sentiment analysis applied to the profiles mentioned together, therefore the graph provides a suitable and quick way of visualizing multilingual data covering 32 languages coming from different types of media. When inspecting the graph, one can notice the different clusters formed in the data. There is a United Kingdom-related cluster involving David Icke, an English conspiracy theorist, Brexit, Conspiracy Theory and UK. Another cluster is a European cluster involving Partido Popular, a conservative and Christian-democratic political party in Spain, European Union and Europe. Third visible cluster refers to Nigeria, its president Muhammad Buhari, Lagos and Kano State. Nigeria was negatively mentioned together with China, which probably refers to the fact that a 15-member Chinese medical team arrived on the 8th of April to help Nigerian local doctors to tackle the Coronavirus pandemic, which was a subject to controversy (Source: Africanews). There is also a strongly interconnected American cluster including Donald Trump, White House, United States House of Representatives, etc., while the dispute between Donald Trump, WHO and China is depicted by a connection.