



IPC

International Press Corps

SNISMUN 2020

Background Guide: SNIS MUN 2020

“The role and misuse of propaganda in the midst of the pandemic”

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Greetings delegates! Welcome to the International Press Corps here at SNIS Model United Nations 2020. It gives us great pleasure to invite you to this premier edition of SNIS MUN, and to the IPC.

As members of this committee, it is your responsibility to justify the purpose and uphold your position as a press member, you are now privy to a great deal of power and opinion. But as the saying goes, responsibility shall also accompany you once you take your places in committee.

Nevertheless, remember – the goal is to have fun and enjoy yourselves, whilst interacting with your fellow delegates and learning more. Speaking from our personal experiences, there is no better way to end a MUN conference than by taking something back with you – whether it’s an improved set of speaking and communication skills, or a certificate. Model United Nations committees can often seem like an intimidating but daunting affair, but nothing serves as a better counter to that fear than standing up, and voicing your opinion. We know what it is like to be first time delegates in committees, and we are always here to clarify any doubts or uncertainties you may have as delegates. Just remember, each word is worth its weight in gold, if you make it so!

To kick off your preparation, go through the Background Guide below, but ensure that it serves just as a platform for your research, not its entirety. Feel free to move beyond the Guide if necessary. We expect each and every delegate to be well-versed with all aspects of the agenda, as well as your seats’ stances with regards to the same. In committee, we hope to see some highly progressive opinionated debate and comprehensive ideas and reports.

All of you are welcome to contact the Executive Board in case of any doubts, queries or if you'd just like to talk about anything regarding the committee or agendas. We wish you all the very best, and hope to see you all in committee.

Regards,

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INTRODUCTION

A simple Google search will give you the meaning of propaganda:
Information, especially of a biased or a misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.

Propaganda is a powerful tool in the hands of the media and is frequently used by public figures in order to further their agenda, this being especially prevalent in the midst of the global pandemic that is Covid-19.

At a time when world leaders need to come together to conquer this black swan event of the 21st century, a meaningless avalanche of misinformation and blame games is undermining the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, fostering a climate of fear and distrust among people in a globalised world that should be co-operating with resources and expertise. With untold suffering across the world, this really is no time to indulge in an international tug-of-war for power. The art of propaganda has been a tool of international power play since ancient times. Venerated thinkers on strategies of statecraft such as Chanakya, Lao Tzu and Machiavelli were advocates of waging silent wars against their adversaries. In their foresight, they recognised the psychological, economic, and social power of fake news. With countries forging greater links through trade and cultural exchange, wars for supremacy and power dynamics brought maturity into this thinking during the early years of the 20th century. With the broadening of universal suffrage, opinions of ordinary people became more important than ever; therefore, the need to control it greater. From the proliferation of media (radio &

newspapers) at that time; to rapid globalization with digitization now, has made conditions ideal for the deliberate shaping of public opinion.

Attitudes towards propaganda in international relations were shaped in the years during and after the First World War, with states' putting effort into building international support, and for justification of their actions. They devoted massive resources and effort to produce some really powerful information to sell their side of the story and mobilise the support of their citizens.

Fake news as we know it is one aspect of propaganda created to either spread misinformation about an opponent or draw attention away from things that really matter. In a COVID confused world, arresting the spread of fake news has become as important as the spread of the virus itself. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), there has been an 'infodemic' of misinformation during this international health crisis. Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General, UN, tweeted, "Our common enemy is #COVID19, but our enemy is also an "infodemic" of misinformation. To overcome the #coronavirus, we need to urgently promote facts & science, hope and solidarity over despair and division".

The internet has been brimming with conspiracy theories about the Coronavirus, a number of it promoted by countries attempting to hide their failures in the wake of the pandemic. One of the most radical ideas being discussed is the theory about the origin of the virus, and that it could be a bio-weapon. While the US President Trump calls it the 'Chinese Virus', the Chinese are pushing the propaganda that it is an American disease introduced to Wuhan through members of the US Army who travelled there in October of 2019. This accusation was proliferated on China's tightly controlled social media. Some widely shared posts on Instagram also suggest that the virus was planned by Bill Gates to benefit US pharmaceutical companies.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently stated that world governments are fighting a battle on two fronts, Covid-19 and the large influx of information regarding the pandemic which have been called 'infodemics' by some. This flow of information provides an opportunity for misinformation and false news to spread quickly. With the advent of digital resources and a lesser reliance on print media, false news is spreading at an alarming pace, by virtue of a click or even a simple 'forward'. It then becomes necessary for the

Government to take regulatory measures to control the spread of such misinformation. Curbing fake news while protecting the freedom of speech and expression at the same time is no easy task and at a time when the world is reeling at the feet of a deadly virus such as this, the lines between the two are further blurred.

We all know the popular spread of misinformation in India over WhatsApp with health myths being spread widely and even practised by those who don't know better. Propaganda has the power to kill amidst the pandemic if not used better and propaganda lies in the hands of the press.

Thus, delegates with that, as members of the international press, we give you both the duty of monitoring other committees and discussing how you can tackle propaganda being on the forefront of practising it.