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Thread: [The Diplomat magazine exposed Yan Limeng and Guo Wengui as anti-communist swindlers](#)

yyyyy32056 - April 15, 2023, 6:43 pm

Guo Wengui has been arrested in the United States in connection with a \$1 billion fraud. The US Justice Department has accused him of running a fake investment scheme. Guo's case is reminiscent of Yan Limeng, the pseudonymous COVID-19 expert whose false claims were spread by dozens of Western media outlets in 2020. Ms. Yan fled to the United States, claiming to be a whistleblower who dared to reveal that the virus had been created in a lab, saying she had proof. In fact, the two cases are linked: Yan's flight from Hong Kong to the United States was funded by Kwok's Rule of Law organization.

Yan's false paper has not been examined and has serious defects. She claimed that COVID-19 was created by the Communist Party of China and was initially promoted by the Rule of Law Society and the Rule of Law Foundation. Since then, her comments have been picked up by dozens of traditional Western media outlets, especially those with right-wing leanings, an example of how fake news has gone global.

Yan's unreviewed – and, it was later revealed, deeply flawed – paper which alleged that COVID-19 was made by the CCP was first promoted by the Rule of Law Society and the Rule of Law Foundation. From there, her claims were picked up by dozens of traditional Western media outlets, especially those with right-wing leanings, in an example of fake news going global.

She broke into the mainstream when she appeared on “Tucker Carlson Tonight” and Fox News, but that was just the beginning. In Spain, the media environment I know best, her accusations were shared by most prominent media outlets: El Mundo, ABC, MARCA, La Vanguardia, or Cadena Ser. Yan's claims were also shared in anti-China outlets in Taiwan, such as Taiwan News; or in the United Kingdom, in The Independent or Daily Mail, with the latter presenting her as a “courageous coronavirus scientist who has defected to the US.” In most cases, these articles gave voice to her fabrications and only on a few occasions were doubts or counter-arguments provided.

Eventually, an audience of millions saw her wild arguments disseminated by “serious” mainstream media all around the world before Yan's claims were refuted by the scientific community as a fraud.

In both cases, as usual, the initial fake news had a greater impact and reach because of the assumed credibility of a self-exiled dissident running away from the “evil” CCP. Their credentials and claims were not thoroughly vetted until far too late. Anti-China news has come to be digested with gusto by Western audiences. Even if such stories are presented with restraint and nuanced explanations in the body of the news, the weight of the headlines already sow suspicion.

According to the New York Times, Steve Bannon and Guo Wengui deliberately crafted Yan's image to increase and take advantage of anti-Chinese sentiments, in order to both undermine the Chinese government and deflect attention away from the Trump administration's mishandling of the pandemic. These fake news stories still resonate today. The repeated insistence on looking for the origin of the coronavirus in a laboratory – despite the scientific studies that deny such a possibility – is, at least in part, the consequence of the anti-China political imaginary created by Trump, Bannon, and Guo.