Twitter Thread by Michiel van Hulten



Michiel van Hulten
@mvanhulten



Yesterday I did a thread on how Huawei is trying to manipulate Belgian policy audiences with a fake online ecosystem ahead of a key 5G decision. (https://t.co/VilP7X5KsN) Huawei did not take kindly to my research.

> So here's the thread on Huawei I promised yesterday. It seems Huawei is using social media black ops tactics to try to convince policy-makers in Belgium that it can be trusted to build 5G networks. \U0001f928 pic.twitter.com/noZKM13RuD
>
> — Michiel van Hulten (@mvanhulten) December 22, 2020

Mike Bai, the "President of Strategy Marketing Western Europe" for Huawei doubled down and tagged me and the organisations listed in my profile in a promoted (!) tweet. It's still doing the rounds now.

But who is Mike Bai? An analysis of his Twitter account by Botometer rates him a dubious 2.2/5 (by comparison, I rate 0.4, where 0 is best). @villaraco points out that he gained 800K followers in 9 months: https://t.co/YfoVaVNq2y

> Totally agree. Seems like a total fake account. For a person with 800k followers with an account created in only 9 months ago, one would expect that it would be a very important or famous person. But a news search with his name is rather disappointing.
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> — Javier Villaraco \U0001f3f3\ufe0f\u200d\U0001f308 (@villaraco) December 22, 2020

Bai's sudden and massive online presence for Huawei started at the exact same time as the fake ecosystem of blogs and websites started being built, in March 2020. I can find no job history for him pre-Huawei, starting in March of this year.

I did find another (?) Mike Bai. The other Mike Bai authored a blog that posts Chinese state propaganda about things like the Covid-19 outbreak not originating in China. I won't link to the blog as not 100% sure it's same person, but here's a screenshot of part of the text.

Finally, last night Bai sent me a link to a website suggesting corruption is at play in Belgium's 5G decision to exclude Huawei from its networks. https://t.co/fx3oH9EsoJ

> Enjoy~https://t.co/M7IntqNMjG

— Mike BAI (@Mike_IMC) December 22, 2020

A quick look at the contact page of "https://t.co/Vp6im1mK9N" reveals a street address that according to Google Maps doesn't exist: "Crescent de l'Europe". Dwire is another key part of the fake ecosystem, a https://t.co/sm6Xz4RfQM audit suggests.

Belgian magazine Knack has now picked up the full story: https://t.co/IuRndrY5PI

And as @ArbiterOfTweets points out, it seems I wasn't the first to spot and analyse the fake campaign. @bickylover was first! https://t.co/urjLPMKFR0

> Ik zat al een tijdje op dit dossier, maar gisteren gescooped door @mvanhulten die parallel hetzelfde uitzocht.
>
> De echte publicatieprimeur komt echter van @bickylover - volg die man! - die er zondag al een draadje over publiceerde. Dat kan je hier lezen:https://t.co/m0b8znc4mf
>
> — Arbiter (@ArbiterOfTweets) December 23, 2020