Anti-Asian COVID-19 Disinformation and Misinformation:

A Global Security Threat and its Governance Responses

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic saw an onslaught of disinformation and misinformation (hereafter DMI). Much of the COVID-19 DMI (hereafter CDMI) was racist and xenophobic, specifically targeting Asian communities worldwide. Since the onset of COVID-19, scholars have observed how anti-Asian CDMI became a major factor in the rise of hate of anti-Asian racism – this will be elaborated upon in this paper’s literature review. The resulting racism materialized as hate speech and more severely, as hate crimes. Ranging from online and verbal harassment to physical assault, Asian communities worldwide were attacked as a result of racist and xenophobic CDMI. Based on how anti-Asian CDMI inspired physical harm, it was, and is, a security threat: anti-Asian CDMI’s ability to transform into hate crimes and transcend national boundaries.


borders makes anti-Asian CDMI a global human security issue. As a global security issue, this paper is interested in how different nation-states responded to anti-Asian CDMI. Therefore, this paper will answer the following question: how did the United Kingdom (U.K.), Canada, and the United States of America (U.S.) compare in terms of their responses to anti-Asian CDMI and the hate crimes it inspired?

This paper will assess these three states because they have some of the largest Asian diasporas outside of Asia, have accessible hate crime statistics, are all part of the Organization

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for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and most importantly, because they all ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) decades ago. Comparing the responses between governments is important because these juxtapositions will highlight any common shortcomings and any differences in successes, both of which may allude to the impact of politics and agendas on institutions. Hence, in addition to being timely, this paper is relevant because it will illustrate the stagnation or evolution of state responses.

This paper’s research question arises because scholars have not compared state responses to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes. On that account, this paper will contribute to the literature by labelling anti-Asian CDMI a security threat, providing a comparative model that can analyze other state responses to anti-Asian CDMI, revealing both collective and unique shortcomings and successes in global security governance in the context of racist and

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xenophobic CDMI, and by bringing the Asian diaspora into human security conversations. The last point is important because as “model minorities,” Asians communities’ experiences with racism are often overlooked and ergo underrepresented or unrepresented in media, hate crime statistics, and “funding priorities,” especially in the states this paper focuses on.

Methodology

To answer the research question, this paper will draw from primary sources such as social media analyses and anti-Asian hate speech and hate crime data. This paper also relies on secondary literature from scholars who have written about the causal relationship between CDMI and different forms of anti-Asian racism. This paper will then synthesize this data through comparing individual case studies. In each case study, state responses will be examined based on


how they responded to anti-Asian CDMI and hate crimes. The three states’ responses will be evaluated and compared based on the three aspects of the United Nations’ (UN) framework for human security governance that are the most relevant to governing anti-Asian CDMI: top-down “norm management,” preventative measures, and victim support.16

Roadmap

This paper will first outline the parameters and definitions pertinent to my research. The next section will provide a literature review of works that have studied the connection between anti-Asian CDMI and its consequences, as well as discuss the historical context of racist and xenophobic DMI during epidemiological crises. Using pre-existing literature to establish the connection between anti-Asian CDMI and its consequences is integral to this paper’s analysis because it proves that anti-Asian CDMI directly resulted in anti-Asian hate crimes (the literature provides evidence of causation and not just correlation), justifies anti-Asian CDMI’s classification as a global human security threat, and highlights the importance of assessing and


comparing state responses to that threat. The following sections will answer the research question by assessing and comparing the three states’ responses to anti-Asian CDMI. Beginning with the U.K.’s response, following with Canada’s, and ending with the U.S.’s, this section will also demonstrate the evolution, or lack thereof, of their responses. After this will come a discussion that compares the three states’ responses through the human security governance framework outlined in the methodology. This paper will conclude with important takeaways, applications, and future research directions.

**Definitions and Research Parameters: Operationalizing Disinformation and Misinformation (DMI), Using the Term “Asian,” and Outlining Limitations**

*Definitions*

This paper will refer to disinformation and misinformation collectively by using the abbreviation DMI to address them (CDMI will be used to refer to COVID-19 disinformation and misinformation). The difference between disinformation and misinformation is intention: disinformation intentionally spreads false information while misinformation unintentionally does so.18 As such, determining the intention behind someone else’s actions cannot be confirmed without evidence and context.19 Therefore, to avoid assuming people’s intentions, this paper will use DMI because it accurately and collectively acknowledges that malicious speech and actions


may come from either ignorance or hate. In the case of the repercussions of anti-Asian CDMI, both components of DMI proved to be equally harmful in online and offline spaces.

Determining the difference between DMI does not change the fact that spreading conspiracy theories, lies, and hate speech intentionally or ignorantly resulted in real-life hate crimes. The difference between DMI did not change the outcomes of hate crimes, nor did it prevent the spread of hate speech. With the same result of both disinformation and misinformation, determining whether the people posting this content genuinely believed the deceptive and misleading content they shared or posted is less effective than addressing their joint impact.


Operationalizing DMI does not justify hate crimes; it simply recognizes the shortcomings of this research while also recognizing the equally dangerous impact of DMI.\(^{25}\) In relation to criminal law, since this paper cannot prove the mens rea of the people who posted anti-Asian CDMI, this paper will not assume that every instance of anti-Asian CDMI was disinformation.\(^{26}\)

This paper will also use the term “Asian” to refer to people of Asian descent who were discriminated against around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic for being and looking Asian.\(^{27}\) When used by itself, the term is sometimes considered problematic for its homogenizing implications.\(^{28}\) However, this paper is mainly focused on the discrimination experienced collectively by people of Asian descent around the world.\(^{29}\) After all, although the racialized hate

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during the pandemic primarily targeted people of East Asian descent (especially Chinese people), people from other Asian backgrounds (Southeast and South Asian in particular) did not walk away unscathed. Therefore, while the term “Asian” will be used to primarily refer to East Asians and the East Asian diaspora (the main targets of CDMI and subsequent hate crimes), it also has the capacity to refer to and include the experiences of Asians and Asian diasporas who have different cultures and heritages.

Caveat and Limitations

This paper has research limitations. Using hate crimes statistics to contextualize the three states’ responses is not a perfect method. Firstly, each state has different legal processes and definitions regarding hate crimes, leading to differences in prosecution and charges. Secondly, many hate crimes were not reported to authorities, and Asian communities have a history of


underreporting hate crimes they experience.\textsuperscript{33} Hence, one limitation in this paper is knowing that hate crime statistics do not capture the whole picture because some crimes are not considered hate crimes by law enforcement, and because many hate crimes were not reported to authorities.\textsuperscript{34} Additionally, while there were other reasons behind the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes during the pandemic, such as geopolitics, economic competition, and claims of job theft,\textsuperscript{35} authorities, activists, and academics attribute the surge to COVID-19 racism and


xenophobia. As a result, this paper will work with the understanding that COVID-19 was the main reason behind anti-Asian CDMI and the hate crimes it inspired from 2020 to 2022.

Moreover, since diseases have historically been used to marginalize “others,” the racism and discrimination Asians have experienced due to COVID-19 is not a new phenomenon. Within Asian diasporic histories, COVID-19 was not the first disease used to vilify and blame Asians: scapegoating Asians for diseases has a long history, especially in, but not reserved to, the West, and in terms of the “Yellow Peril.” In the present context, anti-Asian


racism due to COVID-19 also happened outside of the states this paper focuses on; as detailed in the introduction, one reason these countries have been selected is because of the available hate crime data. COVID-19 also targeted other minorities, and specifically fueled Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments. Because of its scope, this paper will not be able to focus on and account for differences in hate crime legislation, underreporting, counterfactual arguments, and all past and contemporary victims of epidemiological discrimination in its analysis.

**Literature Review, Historical Background, and Why Anti-Asian CDMI should be considered a Security Threat**

**General Trends**

There are major trends in the literature that focuses on anti-Asian COVID-19 racism, hate speech, and CDMI. One point made by scholars and journalists alike is that former American President Donald Trump’s use of “China Virus” and “Kung Flu” instead of COVID-19 in his speeches and tweets exacerbated anti-Asian hate speech, hate crimes, and anti-Asian CDMI in

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44. This literature review assesses both academic and media sources.
the U.S. and around the world.\textsuperscript{45} While scholars and researchers noted that online racism had been directed towards Asians prior to Trump’s use of these terms due to “the racialisation of the virus as ‘Chinese,’”\textsuperscript{46} there was a significant spike in social media posts targeting Asians after Trump’s statements.\textsuperscript{47} Similarly, media outlets point to Trump blaming China for COVID-19 as a milestone in the timeline of increasing anti-Asian sentiment throughout the pandemic.\textsuperscript{48} It is also important to acknowledge that after Trump’s racialization of COVID-19, members of his administration followed his lead in using and popularizing terms like “China Virus.”\textsuperscript{49} Hence,


\textsuperscript{46} Yeh, “Covid-19, Anti-Asian Racial Violence, and The Borders of Chineseness.”


\textsuperscript{49} Han, Riddell, and Piquero, “Anti-Asian American Hate Crimes Spike During the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 9.
the literature shows a consensus regarding the fact that Trump was an important actor in propelling anti-Asian CDMI and hate crimes by associating the virus with Chinese people.\textsuperscript{50}

The policy implications of Trump’s intentional anti-Asian CDMI is another theme in the literature.\textsuperscript{51} Trump’s tactical framing of COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” also capitalized on his supporters’ animosity towards China and Asian immigrants to push the American right-wing, nationalist, anti-China, and anti-immigrant agenda; scapegoating China for COVID-19 became a central part of Trump’s re-election campaign.\textsuperscript{52} Consequently, this was demonstrated by Trump’s ban on and restriction of Chinese students entering the U.S., and by how his persistent claim that China manufactured and spread COVID-19 to the U.S. resulted in the prohibition of “Chinese


technology,” and to “. . . [Trump threatening] new tariffs on Beijing.” Trump was not alone in using the pandemic to foster animosity towards minorities and encourage anti-immigrant sentiments, as seen by the work of other right-wing politicians in different continents.

While most of the literature focuses on the impact of anti-Asian CDMI on Asian American and Pacific Islander communities (AAPI), anti-Asian CDMI, before and after Trump’s actions, had consequences worldwide. Moreover, the literature that does study the connection between hate crimes, hate speech, and anti-Asian CDMI mainly discusses misinformation, especially regarding fake news, conspiracy theories, and racist rhetoric. Overall, most scholars agree that the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes is tied to the proliferation of many forms of anti-Asian CDMI.

Historical Context

Many scholars in this field have also contextualized anti-Asian CDMI within the larger history of how DMI has been weaponized to push an anti-immigrant agenda against Asian people, and how it has resulted in violence and systemic discrimination.\(^{59}\) Tracing these racist and xenophobic sentiments to the “Yellow Peril” and to centuries-old rhetoric that portrayed Asians as unhygienic and “other.”\(^{60}\) Expanding on the context provided in the caveat section, the historical background of anti-Asian COVID-19 scapegoating Asian people, specifically Chinese people, is rooted in Western, “orientalist” attitudes that “other” Asian immigrants and see them as inferior, backward, and uncivilized.\(^{61}\) Situating the experiences of Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic within histories that have seen predominantly colonial-settler states use diseases to push anti-immigrant and anti-Asian legislation and agendas since the nineteenth century, Kim Yi Dionne and Fulya Felicity Turkmen detailed historical events through the lens of racial discrimination driven by pandemics, something they highlight is absent in international studies scholarship.\(^{62}\) Likewise, Anita Jack-Davies, Michelle Yiu, Jarmin Yeh, Kourtney Nham, Carroll Estes, and other researchers and scholars have applied the historical lens of the “Yellow Peril,”\(^{63}\)

\(^{59}\) For example, see Dionne and Turkmen, “The Politics of Pandemic Othering,” E215-E219.


a nineteenth-century fear in North America that equated Asian immigration to “the plague,” to the treatment and representation of Asians during COVID-19, and to the violent consequences of racist narratives. Going a step further, Jack-Davies tied insights from Amy Go about how anti-Asian CDMI has been the reason behind the racism many Asians have experienced into the larger picture of anti-Asian hate crimes in 2020. Since the history behind the racism Asian people have endured due to COVID-19 is evidently central in understanding the outcomes of anti-Asian CDMI, historical context is often discussed in research regarding anti-Asian CDMI, hate speech, and hate crimes.

The Consequences of Anti-Asian CDMI: Hate Speech and Hate Crimes

Researchers mainly used quantitative methods to conduct social media and targeted word analyses, to assess the demographic and geographic distribution of anti-Asian CDMI and hate


67. For example, see Choi and Lee, “To Mask or To Unmask,” 240-241; and Kim and Kesari, “Misinformation and Hate Speech,” 2-3.
speech, and to track the pathways and trends of anti-Asian CDMI. The most pertinent literature to this paper is the literature demonstrating the causal relationship between anti-Asian CDMI and hate crimes, and demonstrating how anti-Asian CDMI transforms into hate speech, which later becomes hate crimes. Jonathan Corpus Ong recognized the impact of racist CDMI on Asian Americans and touched on how Asian voices are ignored by the media. On a panel for Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage month, Corpus Ong also identified right-wing-oriented hate speech’s capacity to spread across the world. Jae Yeon Kim and Aniket Kesari recorded the number of tweets and different contexts using the phrase “Chinese Virus” in the U.S. after former President Trump first used it, and concluded that “… Trump’s anti-Asian tweet increased hate and counterhate speech among the US Twitter users,” thus solidifying the link between CDMI and anti-Asian hate speech, and also revealing alternative uses of the phrase. Similarly, Tyler Reny and Matt Barreto conducted a survey inspired by how anti-Asian CDMI intersected with racist, political rhetoric; they observed that CDMI influenced how “… anti-Asian attitudes [became] associated with both concern about the disease [and] also with xenophobic behaviors and policy preferences.” Other scholarly studies, such as those by Fatemeh Tahmasbi et al. and Thu Nguyen et al., conducted targeted word searches and social media content analyses.


(especially using tweets as a unit of analysis) to reaffirm the causal relationship between anti-Asian CDMI, media framing, hate speech (particularly through racial slurs), and the racist rhetoric used by American politicians.\textsuperscript{74} Specifically, Nguyen et al.’s study went a step further by situating their results within “...reports from the FBI, newspapers, and other commentaries [that reveal] a rise in anti-Asian hate crimes [in early 2020].”\textsuperscript{75}

Moreover, a map created by researchers at the University of Utah to chart the geographical distribution of anti-Asian COVID-19 hate speech in the U.S. was motivated by evidence that suggested that hate speech can predict hate crimes.\textsuperscript{76} In line with this, reporters such as Marielle Segarra and Davey Alba have shed light on how CDMI, especially through conspiracy theories, “...seeded the idea that the public should be suspicious of Asians.”\textsuperscript{77}

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Drawing from studies conducted by New York University and by UC San Francisco that revealed how hate speech directly influenced hate crimes, and demonstrated the linear relationship between Trump’s CDMI (through the infamous “Chinese Virus”) and “ overtly racist hashtags,” Alba identified the “. . . arc of misinformation going into hate speech and going into real-world violence.” Activist scholars have also published findings that prove the connection between anti-Asian CDMI (especially through rhetoric) and anti-Asian hate by quantifying survey data and highlighting the role rhetoric plays in fueling “virulent animosity.”

Scholars and news agencies have also established the direct connection between anti-Asian CDMI and hate crimes worldwide. According to Bushra Ebadi, CDMI has given rise to

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“. . . increased acts of racism and violence towards Asian people.”83 This observation can be substantiated by Rebecca Ruiz’s article that borrowed from Russel Jeung’s insights to explain how anti-Asian CDMI, through racializing COVID-19, indicated the racist dimension of COVID-19’s “infodemic,”84 and resulted in the proliferation of verbal harassment and physical assault against Asian Americans.85 Additionally, Diana Yeh further strengthened the causal relationship between anti-Asian CDMI and hate crimes by stating how Trump’s “Chinese Virus” resulted in racist speculation about COVID-19’s origin and “. . . an unprecedented rise in racial violence – physical, verbal, symbolic, and structural – that took place on the streets, in public transport, at workplaces, in the media and social media, and in the mouths of the political elite.”86 Similar to Yeh, Chrysalis Wright and Hang Duong contextualized their research by identifying the simultaneous rise in COVID-19 fake news, anti-Asian attitudes, and anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S.87 Within the U.S., Sungil Han, Jordan Riddell, and Alex Piquero noted how immediately following the dissemination of the phrases “Kung Flu” and “Chinese Virus,”88 there was a momentary but rapid rise in anti-Asian hate crimes.89 On a global scale, different


studies outlined how xenophobic and racist CDMI, specifically anti-Asian CDMI, transferred from online to offline spaces.\textsuperscript{90}

The literature exhibited how anti-Asian CDMI contributed to hate crimes, and confirmed that anti-Asian CDMI transformed into hate crimes against Asian communities around the world; hence, the literature demonstrated the causal relationship between anti-Asian CDMI and anti-Asian hate crimes, and proved that anti-Asian CDMI should be considered a global security threat.\textsuperscript{91} However, the literature does not delve much into the evolution of different state responses to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes.\textsuperscript{92} As a result, this paper will provide a comparative analysis of state responses to assess different governance examples to the same global security threat. This comparative analysis will contribute to the literature by categorizing different state responses, and identifying their successes and shortcomings through further exploring the transformation of anti-Asian CDMI into hate speech and hate crimes. Since “... [there is still a] limited understanding of how [CDMI] erodes the well-being of those in the

\textsuperscript{90} For example, see Ali, “Combatting Against Covid-19 & Misinformation,” 342-343; Hswen et al., “Association of ‘#covid19’ Versus ‘#chinesevirus’ With Anti-Asian Sentiments on Twitter,” 956-957, 961; and Dionne and Turkmen, “The Politics of Pandemic Othering,” E220.


crosshairs of conspiracy theories and disininformation,“93 and because anti-Asian perspectives motivated by COVID-19 continue to exist,94 the findings in this paper are relevant.

**Governance around the World Case Studies: How did the U.K., Canada, and the U.S. respond to anti-Asian CDMI and its Consequences?**

This section will first outline how each state responded to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes, and will then compare the responses to each other. Outlining and comparing the role of the state in these three case studies is important because juxtaposing them emphasizes where each succeeded or failed in security governance.

**The U.K.**

With COVID-19 and Trump’s “Chinese Virus” rhetoric travelling around the world, the U.K. saw a significant rise in anti-Asian hate crimes compared to the data from 2019.95 Aside from being disregarded by the state, anti-Asian racism, inspired by anti-Asian CDMI, grew both

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online and offline. For instance, one study, based in the U.K., noticed prevalence of conspiracy theories and over 45% of the theories blamed China for COVID-19. Moreover, after Trump’s first use of “Chinese Virus,” there were “. . . at least 317 [hateful tweets emanating] from within the UK.”

Throughout the first year of the pandemic, there was a 2,770% increase in hate speech targeting Asians. In real life, there was a 21% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes days after the pandemic officially began, and a 300% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes months after the start of the pandemic; this increase was unique to Asian, specifically Chinese, communities in the U.K.

In response to this context, the British government adopted an indifferent position. Firstly, there was no publicized government statement of solidarity for Britain’s Asian


99. Ditch the Label and Brandwatch, Uncovered, 12.


communities. In fact, the only time the government announced its condemnation of anti-Asian racism during COVID-19 was when it responded to a petition that was asking for funding to help communities suffering from COVID-19-related racism and for anti-racism initiatives. Second, the first time anti-Asian racism related to COVID-19 was discussed in parliament was in October 2020; at this parliamentary meeting, “... not a single Conservative, not a single Government Member, decided to turn up.” Because there was no publicized statement condemning anti-Asian racism and because the discussion regarding anti-Asian racism related to COVID-19 happened months after the onset of anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes, the state evidently did not care. Third, in the government’s reply to the Online Harms White Paper, which emphasized the severity of online hate, “race” and “racism” are not mentioned. Ultimately, the state never addressed or took any measures against the racialization of COVID-19 and the consequences of this racialization.


Additionally, the British government has also been antagonistic towards Asian communities in the U.K. On the societal level, the government rejected a petition that listed actions the government could take to “prevent Anti-Asian hate crime in Britain,”109 such as stopping the media from visually associating COVID-19 with Asian communities, which was a trend noticed by Mai-Anh Peterson and Amy Phung;110 the government rejected this petition based on it “. . . not [being] clear [about] what [it was] asking the UK Government or Parliament to do.”111 Moreover, the government denied and overlooked systemic racism in its response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.112 Based on how over twenty organizations have shunned the Commission’s work,113 and on how the Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, Marsha de Cordova, thought the Commission “. . . [downplayed] institutional racism in a pandemic where black, Asian and ethnic minority people have died disproportionately and are now twice as likely to be unemployed,”114 the state, as seen by its positive response to the Commission and its “Inclusive Britain” recommendations based on the


Commission’s results, clearly failed to address racist, specifically anti-Asian, CDMI (and DMI), while also perpetuating the harmful “model minority” image for Asian communities.\textsuperscript{115}

Ultimately, the British government’s response to anti-Asian CDMI and related discrimination did not evolve: from its parliamentary indifference in 2020 to its ignorance with the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities and its “Inclusive Britain” response to the Commission in 2022, the state overlooked the human security threat anti-Asian CDMI and its subsequent hate crimes posed, and remained indifferent and antagonistic throughout the pandemic.\textsuperscript{116} In terms of “norm management,”\textsuperscript{117} preventative measures, and victim support, the U.K. had no human security governance response to anti-Asian CDMI and the hate crimes it inspired.\textsuperscript{118}

\textit{Canada}

Aligned with the global trend of increased hate crimes against Asian communities and rise of racist CDMI blaming Asians for COVID-19, Canada saw a nation-wide increase in hate


\textsuperscript{117}Kinzig et al., “Social Norms and Global Environmental Challenges,” 5-6.

crimes against Asian Canadians and Asians residing in Canada. In terms of the impact of anti-Asian CDMI, a survey conducted in early 2020 recorded that many of the survey participants believed “. . . that Chinese and/or Asian Canadians were the carriers of COVID-19.” Thus, the national increase in hate crimes against Asians surged because of COVID-19, and specifically because of anti-Asian CDMI. Regarding the offline consequences of anti-Asian CDMI, Vancouver’s 2020 statistics made it the “anti-Asian hate crime capital of North America,” the number of anti-Asian hate crimes increased sevenfold in Ottawa compared to 2019, and major cities across Canada have seen similar trends.

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Acknowledging the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes during the pandemic, Prime Minister Trudeau released public statements condemning anti-Asian racism. Moreover, the Canadian government created the Digital Citizen Contribution Program (DCCP) to combat online disinformation. In particular, the DCCP was discussed on the government’s Asian Heritage Month 2021 page, and the government specifically addressed how the program would be used to respond to racist CDMI; the government also listed the funding it dedicated during the pandemic to anti-racism measures on the same page. The government has also created a webpage that lists resources for people to learn about and stand against anti-Asian racism: one of these sources leads to a page that outlines the connection between anti-Asian CDMI and anti-Asian racism, and allows victims or witnesses of anti-Asian COVID-19-related hate crimes to report their experiences. Additionally, the government is updating its national anti-racism strategy by including anti-Asian racism, something that had been missing in the 2019 federal anti-racism


plan. The Canadian government has also taken actions related to racism caused by the pandemic, but not specifically regarding anti-Asian CDMI. One example of this is the COVID-19 Taskforce, which allows people to communicate with policymakers: a specific area of interest this Taskforce deals with is anti-Asian racism relating to the pandemic. Another example of the government addressing matters related to anti-Asian CDMI was how in 2021, a bill was introduced to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act to broaden the definition of discriminatory to include spreading hate speech; if passed, this bill would grant the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal more legal power to punish perpetrators.

Overall, Canada’s response to anti-Asian CDMI has been ambivalent. While the state did publicly support Asian communities and has taken preventative measures against the spread of anti-Asian CDMI and hate through funding anti-racism plans and forming the COVID-19 Taskforce, it has yet to update its hate speech and DMI legislation to better address


discriminatory DMI.\textsuperscript{134} Considering the rise in discriminatory, but especially anti-Asian, hate speech and hate crimes during the pandemic, the Minister of Justice introduced a bill to update DMI legislation better address racist hate speech and propaganda, but the bill died.\textsuperscript{135} Consequently, Canada still has weak DMI infrastructure, as seen by how despite the Canadian government being aware of the connection between DMI, hate speech, and hate crime years before the pandemic,\textsuperscript{136} Canada still saw record-breaking levels of anti-Asian CDMI-related hate crimes in 2020;\textsuperscript{137} in 2022, “Canada continues to report a higher number of anti-Asian racism incidents per capita than the United States by over 100%.”\textsuperscript{138} However, the state’s security response did evolve and continues to evolve, as seen by the ongoing efforts to prevent and combat the consequences of anti-Asian racism and anti-Asian CDMI.\textsuperscript{139} The Canadian government also continues to voice its support for Asian communities and recognize the need to stop blaming Asians for COVID-19.\textsuperscript{140} Canada’s human security governance response to anti-Asian CDMI and the hate crimes it inspired focused primarily on “norm management,”\textsuperscript{141} as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134} Mason and Walker, \textit{Legislative Summary of Bill C-36}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Mason and Walker, \textit{Legislative Summary of Bill C-36}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{141} Kinzig et al., “Social Norms and Global Environmental Challenges,” 5-6.
\end{itemize}
demonstrated by the state’s publicized support and the inclusion of anti-Asian racism in the federal anti-racism plan, and on preventative measures, as evidenced by the DCCP and proposed legislation.\textsuperscript{142} However, while Canada moves towards implementing more human security-inspired measures, its response so far has delivered more plans than action.\textsuperscript{143}

\textit{The U.S.}

The U.S. presents an interesting case study because the presidency changed during the pandemic; regardless, both administrations responded to the same issue of anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes.\textsuperscript{144} Preceding the national trend of the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes,\textsuperscript{145} anti-Asian CDMI was prolific, especially during Trump’s presidency.\textsuperscript{146} There was an over 650%

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{144}The White House, “Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.,” last modified January 20, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/.
  \item \textsuperscript{146}Hswen et al., “Association of ‘#covid19’ Versus ‘#chinesevirus’ With Anti-Asian Sentiments on Twitter,” 956-957, 961.
\end{itemize}
increase in hate speech in the U.S. on Twitter after Trump’s first use of “Chinese Virus.””147 Furthermore, a Center for Public Integrity poll recorded one third of the participants had seen people “. . . blaming Asian people for the COVID-19 epidemic,”148 and it “found that about three in ten Americans blamed China or Chinese people for the pandemic.”149 Additionally, studies conducted in 2020 found that almost 30% of American adults subscribed to the idea of COVID-19 being a bioweapon manufactured by China.150 The U.S. was ultimately one of the countries with the most anti-Asian CDMI and bias.151 Consequently, there was an approximate 76.6% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S. in 2020.152 In 2021, there was a 339% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes,153 and on March 16, 2021, three spas were targeted and six Asian women were murdered in the infamous Atlanta Spa Shootings.154


151. Ng, “Anti-Asian Sentiments During the COVID-19 Pandemic Across 20 Countries,” 1, 5.


As mentioned throughout this paper, Trump was responsible for exacerbating the hate Asian Americans, and Asians around the world, experienced; consequently, his response to anti-Asian CDMI reflected this attitude.\(^\text{155}\) Known as a popular progenitor of anti-Asian CDMI, Trump continued to fuel anti-Asian CDMI and hatred by blaming China for COVID-19, claiming that COVID-19 was a Chinese bioweapon, and by reiterating his racist rhetoric.\(^\text{156}\) After national backlash, Trump continued to blame China for COVID-19 and remained indifferent when being asked about the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S.\(^\text{157}\) In addition to his own use of “Chinese Virus” and other terms, some politicians used this rhetoric in public statements as well.\(^\text{158}\) Trump’s anti-Asian CDMI response also had an international agenda: to further the hostile relationship between China and the U.S., Trump’s administration implemented policies, in the name of COVID-19 and geopolitics, that banned Chinese students (based on their educational histories) from the U.S., and issued espionage charges against Chinese and Chinese American scholars to the extent it has been considered “racial profiling.”\(^\text{159}\) Under Trump’s


administration, the UN heavily criticized the U.S.’s response to anti-Asian COVID-19-related racism, stating how “... U.S. authorities ... utterly failed to take the steps required to detect, monitor, and prevent racist and xenophobic incidents.”

Thus, during former President Trump’s time in office, the state, aside from Congresswoman Grace Meng and a few other government officials, was unresponsive to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes; this greatly contrasted the prompt federal response to racialized hate following SARS and the September 11 attacks.

In contrast, President Biden took immediate action once he was inaugurated in January 2021. From his decision to issue a presidential memorandum to combat anti-Asian COVID-19-related racism and allot more funding AANHPI (Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders) communities’ research to his administration’s COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and more, Biden’s response to anti-Asian CDMI went beyond promises. While his measures did not directly counter anti-Asian CDMI, they did prioritize lessening anti-Asian prejudice.

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addition to implementing policies, Biden’s response also included collaborating with renowned Korean pop music group BTS to further normalize the condemnation of anti-Asian racism,\(^{165}\) funding initiatives to increase AANHPI communities’ access to multilingual resources, and helping AANHPI communities get justice.\(^ {166}\) Although the Biden administration’s response focused more on helping victims of anti-Asian CDMI and hate crimes than on addressing racist CDMI, it still illustrated how states can create legislation to advance national human security.\(^ {167}\) Despite the flaws behind some of Biden’s anti-Asian racism response, his administration’s initiatives still made anti-Asian COVID-19-related hate crimes a presidential matter and set a precedent.\(^ {168}\) Given this, the Biden administration’s response prioritized the human security of Asian communities in the U.S., and demonstrated how the U.S.’s response to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes evolved.\(^ {169}\) In terms of human security governance, Trump’s response was

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absent; however, under Biden’s administration, the U.S.’s human security governance response to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes mainly focused on “norm management,” as seen by the state’s publicized support and its decision to invite BTS to the White House during the pandemic to condemn anti-Asian racism, and on victim support, as seen by how the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act was created to help victims of hate crimes attain justice by making federal and law enforcement services more accessible.

Discussion: Comparing States’ Responses

Comparing and categorizing the states’ responses provides a framework that distinguishes which countries need to take more action (as illustrated by figure 1). Despite their different responses, the three states shared the common trait of having a late response (in relation to rise of anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes in early 2020); this was demonstrated by the number of hate crimes and hate speech incidents that happened before states acknowledged and


acted against anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes, if at all.\textsuperscript{172}

Moreover, Canada’s and the U.S.’s responses were also similar in terms of trying to influence norms because both states publicly condemned anti-Asian racism.\textsuperscript{173} However, based on Biden’s memorandum and the U.S. government’s decision to invite influential recording artists to the White House to speak out against anti-Asian racism in 2021, the U.S.’s effort to shape norms went further than Canada’s.\textsuperscript{174} Moreover, the U.S. directed resources towards addressing anti-Asian hate crimes inspired by COVID-19 rather than towards the root cause of these crimes.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Visualization of the three states’ responses to and measures against anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes compared to each other. The purpose of the arrow is to illustrate the evolution of their responses, as well as their potential evolution. Diagram created by author.}
\end{figure}


which was anti-Asian CDMI.\textsuperscript{175} Although both states funded relevant research and tried to influence social norms, Canada’s response focused on preventative measures while the U.S.’s response covered more area in terms of addressing racism but focused more on helping the victims of hate crimes.\textsuperscript{176}

Based on the case studies, the U.K.’s security response did not evolve beyond being absent: the government remained indifferent and antagonistic.\textsuperscript{177} On a worse note, the Trump administration’s response to anti-Asian CDMI was antagonistic, as evidenced by the anti-Asian CDMI Trump popularized himself, by the lack of action taken by federal institutions,\textsuperscript{178} and by the policies he implemented.\textsuperscript{179} Thus, the U.K. and the Trump administration presented no security response to anti-Asian CDMI and its consequences. In contrast, while Canada’s DCCP is important in studying the impact of racist disinformation and even though its inclusion of anti-


Asian racism in the federal anti-racism plan demonstrates state growth, the state’s security governance initiatives and deliberations did not translate into anti-racism or anti-Asian CDMI federal policies during the pandemic. Going beyond plans and promises, the Biden administration’s response to anti-Asian COVID-19-related hate crimes was the most significant security response to anti-Asian CDMI. Making the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act a part of American law and approving initiatives to support victims of anti-Asian hate crimes demonstrated how Biden turned his words into actions, and how his administration’s response to the consequences of anti-Asian CDMI was the most thorough example of a human security-based response among the three states compared in this paper. For instance, Biden had already signed the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act by the time the Canadian Minister of Justice introduced a bill that would make hate speech and hate crime laws more extensive, and include more regulations in the online realm (this bill died months later). However, Biden’s response was


181. Mason and Walker, Legislative Summary of Bill C-36, 1.


Therefore, in terms of human security governance, the U.K.’s and Trump’s responses were absent. Moreover, Biden’s and Canada’s responses both prioritized “norm management,” but the former was more dedicated to supporting victims while the latter focused on future prevention. Despite the trend of anti-Asian COVID-19-related hate crimes happening around the world after 2020, this paper illustrates how some states are motivated enough to continue acting against and evolving their responses to anti-Asian CDMI and its consequences.

Conclusion

This purpose of this paper is to the following question: how did the United Kingdom (U.K.), Canada, and the United States of America (U.S.) compare in terms of their responses to anti-Asian CDMI and the hate crimes it inspired? Based on the analysis of the three states’ responses to the security threat of anti-Asian CDMI, there was no universal response. The U.K., Canada, and U.S. all had different security responses to anti-Asian CDMI and related hate crimes: the U.K. did not respond, Canada has an evolving stance and potential for significant security governance measures, and the U.S.’s response drastically evolved with changing administrations and resulted in human security-based measures being enacted to combat anti-Asian COVID-19-related hate crimes. The main point that policymakers and governments can

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take away from this study is that there needs to global security measures that ensure state responses are coherent and cohesive, and that these responses protect human rights and security; state indifference and antagonism towards Asian communities during the pandemic revealed the absence of such measures.

Admittedly, these three states’ responses are not the only responses that occurred, and other state responses might have been a combination of the responses outlined in this paper (as illustrated by figure 2). Even though those states fall outside of this paper’s scope, potential analyses of their responses can be situated within the framework provided by this paper and placed within figure 2.

The events from the past two years justify the importance of studying anti-Asian CDMI because the lessons from state inaction can be used to not only improve human security for Asian communities around the world, but can also be applied to general DMI governance and human security policies. Since this paper has outlined the connection between anti-Asian CDMI and security, this paper calls on policymakers to realize and study the connection between DMI and racism, and to implement better strategies against racist and xenophobic CDMI, CDMI, and DMI in general.

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Anti-Asian CDMI has been a human security threat around the world for the past two years, and more research is warranted.\textsuperscript{194} Some future research directions include conducting more research on Asian activists’ role in pressuring states’ to respond to anti-Asian CDMI and the hate crimes it inspired,\textsuperscript{195} and on how social media’s lack of speech regulation measures prolonged and exacerbated impact of anti-Asian CDMI.\textsuperscript{196} Overall, anti-Asian CDMI continues to be a human security issue that needs to be better addressed by states, and addressed by global governing organizations. While states’ responses to anti-Asian CDMI over the past two years have varied, there is reason to be optimistic about the future actions states take against anti-Asian CDMI because this paper has demonstrated how security governance responses are capable of evolving.

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\textsuperscript{194}Yellow Horse and Chen, \textit{Two Years and Thousands of Voices}, 3, 10.


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