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Wuhan Coronavirus – Dr. Li Wenjiang

Robert Lawrence Kuhn, February 7, 2020

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

CHINA TO INVESTIGATE DEATH OF DOCTOR WHO WARNED OF VIRUS

LIVE

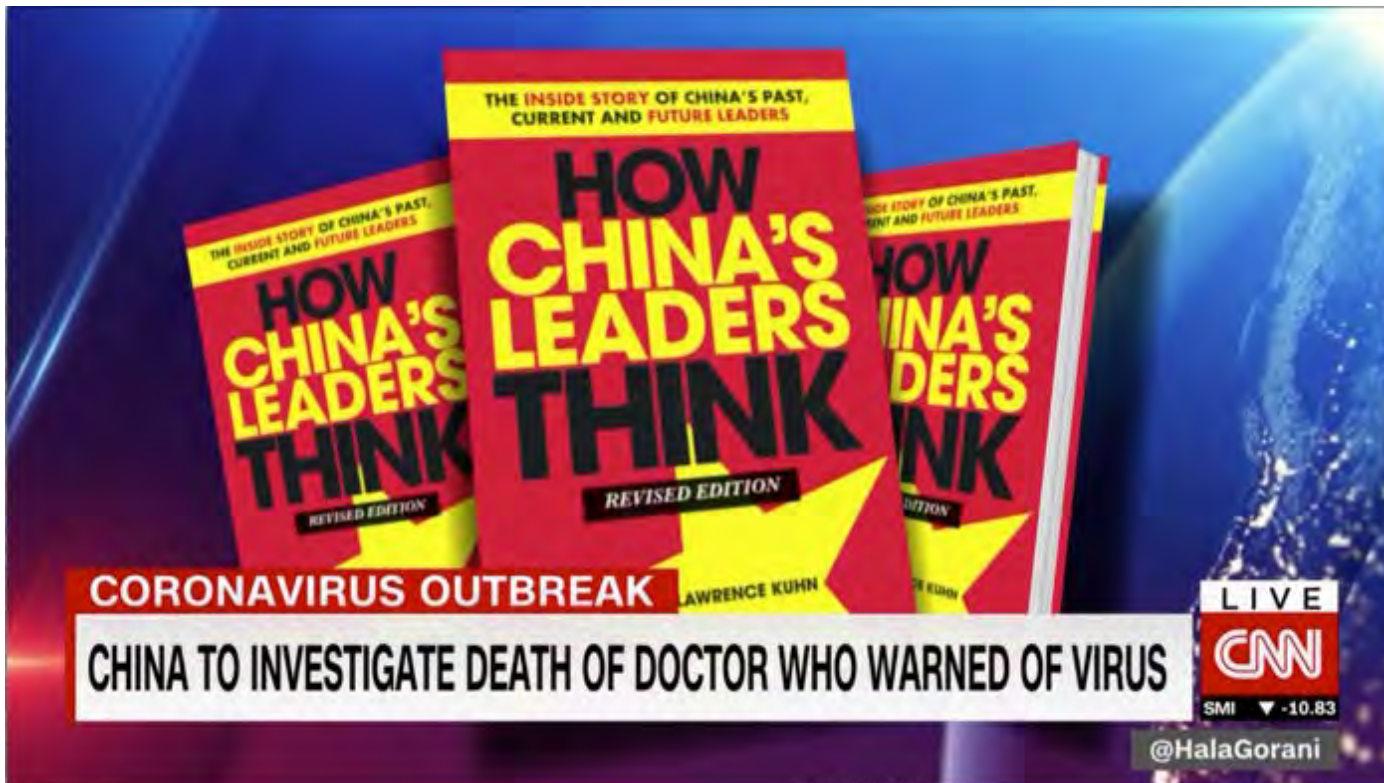
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FTSE ▼ -38.09

HALA GORANI
TONIGHT



HOST / HALA GORANI:
Let's talk more about the virus with someone who can help us understand what is happening inside of China right now. Robert Lawrence Kuhn is the author of *How China's Leaders Think*. He's also a longtime adviser to Chinese leaders and corporations as well. He's in Los Angeles.





HOST: Talk to me about this effort by authorities to censor some of these online posts on Weibo. They were trending topics and people have been very angered. They believe that Dr. Li Wenliang was mistreated by authorities, that the Wuhan government owes Dr. Li Wenliang an apology — that was censored on Weibo. What are authorities trying to achieve here?





ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN: First of all, we need to understand the whole context of the novel coronavirus epidemic and how China is relating to it. China's strong government system has great competences and we see that in the mobilization occurring to contain the virus (locking down millions, building hospitals in days).



KUHN: But it also has to deal with the flow of information, which in this case has become out of control because of the situation. The tragic death of Dr. Li has highlighted that and has caused an outpouring of sympathy and anger focused on basically the local government.



KUHN: The authorities will always want to manage public opinion, to encourage social stability and to avoid instability at all costs. And the normal reaction is to censor anything that could cause instability or panic. But in this case, it has gotten more complicated. It's gotten a bit out of control.





KUHN: So, there has been some uncertainty in how you deal with it. Sometimes they have censor or sometimes... they now have allowed a broader conversation about Dr. Li to flourish. As long as the focus is on local governance and improving the governance system of China, which for the first time...



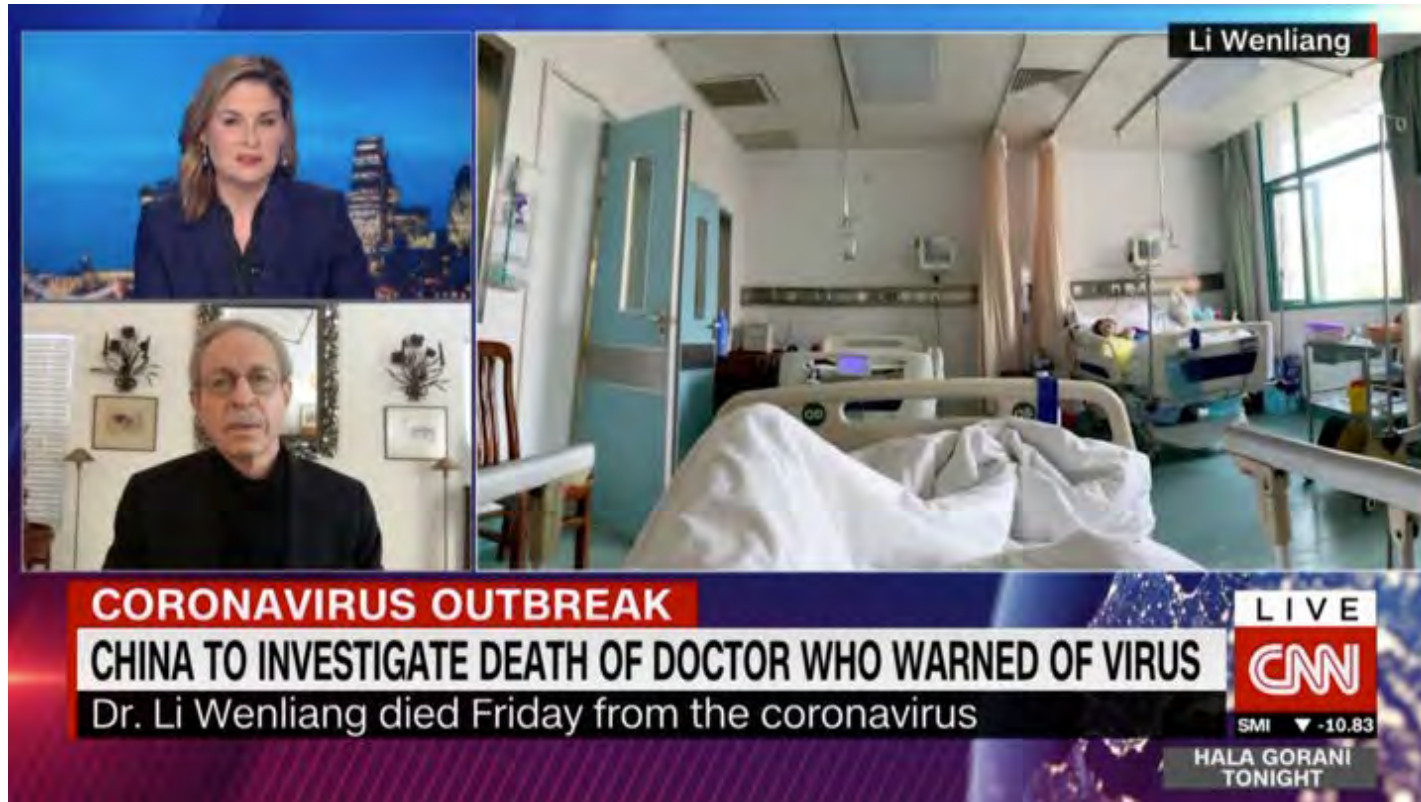


HOST: ...Sorry to jump in. It's not exactly misinformation that they're censoring or redirecting. They're censoring and removing posts that are expressing solidarity with Dr. Li. We want freedom of speech is another one that was censored. That was one of the very popular hashtags on Weibo as well. Is this a blow to them or are they concerned that this could be a challenge to the central government, this whole coronavirus epidemic and crisis.





KUHN: The whole crisis is absolutely a potential existential crisis. It is very different than in Hong Kong. Western media, and we outside (of China), have sort of equated the Hong Kong situation as threatening to China.





KUHN: But Hong Kong was never an issue from Chinese mainland point of view; the vast majority of the Chinese people never considered Hong Kong a critical issue. On the other hand, the coronavirus epidemic is a major issue, gigantic issue, affecting lives.



KUHN: And so there has been uncertainty about how they manage public opinion, as they would put it, to encourage stability. And the trend now is that they cannot fully censor this. But competency and protecting the people come first.

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Li Wenliang

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

CHINA TO INVESTIGATE DEATH OF DOCTOR WHO WARNED OF VIRUS

Dr. Li Wenliang died Friday from the coronavirus

LIVE

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7:11 PM GMT

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