

# Combatting and Defeating Chinese Propaganda and Disinformation

A Case Study of Taiwan's  
2020 Elections

Aaron Huang



**HARVARD** Kennedy School  
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

# COMBATTING AND DEFEATING CHINESE PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION: A CASE STUDY OF TAIWAN'S 2020 ELECTIONS

Aaron Huang<sup>1</sup>  
Master in Public Policy (May 2020)  
Harvard Kennedy School of Government  
Policy Analysis Exercise<sup>2</sup>  
April 7, 2020

Faculty Adviser: Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns  
Seminar Leader: Professor Dara Cohen  
Client: US Department of State

---

1 This Policy Analysis Exercise reflects the author's views only. It should not be viewed as representing the views of the US State Department, nor Harvard University or any of its faculty.

2 This Exercise is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Public Policy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Acknowledgments	4
About the Author	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Key concept explained: sharp power	7
Chinese sharp power in the past	8
Chinese sharp power now	8
Why Taiwan's 2020 elections as a case study?	8
Report overview	9
Methodology	11
Qualitative interviews	11
Media monitoring	11
Literature review	11
A note on estimating effects	11
Main Chinese Sharp Power Attacks in the 2020 Elections	13
Dissecting Chinese Propaganda and Disinformation: Motives, Tactics, Actors	17
Motives	17
Tactics	18
Actors	25
Effects on the 2020 Elections	28
No significant effect on the election results	28
Some effect on polarization and generational divides	29
Combatting and Defeating Chinese Sharp Power: A Whole-of-Society Endeavor	30
Government	30
Private sector	34
Civil society	36
Environmental factor: the 2019 Hong Kong protests on the fugitive extradition bill	38
Word of caution	39
Why Should the US Care?	40
Policy Recommendations	42
Appendix	47
Appendix A: Interviewees	47
Appendix B: General interview questions	48
Appendix C: Taiwanese outlets' political and governmental affiliations	50
Appendix D: Taiwan's most active social media platforms in 2018	51
Appendix E: Salient Chinese propaganda and disinformation examples	52
Appendix F: Disclaimers	55
Bibliography	56

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Dara Cohen for her guidance throughout the exercise, including walking me through research methods, providing feedback on my prospectus and first draft, and answering my questions in countless office hours. I want to thank Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns and Professor Anthony Saich for their insights into the intricacies of the State Department bureaucracy and cross-Strait politics. I also would like to thank Professor Joan Donovan for teaching me the fundamental puzzles and theories around media manipulation and disinformation in her Fall 2019 semester class. I am grateful for the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation for their financial field-research support that made this project possible. Lastly, I want to thank Professor Cohen, Ambassador Burns, Professor Saich, and Rice University's Dr. Steven Lewis for their invaluable edits to this report.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Huang is a US State Department Thomas R. Pickering fellow studying at the Harvard Kennedy School for a public policy master's degree. Most recently, he was the American Institute in Taiwan's (the US mission in Taiwan) acting spokesperson, implementing a strategic communications campaign to reaffirm America's commitments to the island. He was also a fellow at the State Department's intelligence bureau, where he assessed China's relations with Japan, Russia, and North Korea. During his stints at the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency, and Baker Institute for Public Policy, he helped the United States communicate and work with officials from China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam on issues such as territorial disputes and environmental degradation. He also worked at the UK House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee to examine the British government's performance on equality issues, for example, its treatment of asylum seekers and LGBTQ+ persons. Aaron holds a BA in economics, policy studies, and Asian studies from Rice University in Houston, Texas.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

In its 2020 presidential and legislative elections, Taiwan combatted and defeated Chinese propaganda and disinformation through a whole-of-society approach, one in which the government became better at debunking fake news and raising awareness of these attacks; civil society became more alert and created non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to detect, debunk, and block fake news online; and companies such as Facebook and LINE (similar to WhatsApp) became faster at finding and removing fake accounts and disinformation.

Using Taiwan's most recent elections as an example to elucidate the nature of Chinese propaganda and disinformation, this report identifies China's motives, tactics, and actors in its foreign information warfare. Similar to Russia's, China's motives are to destabilize democracy and weaken governance in a target country by sowing doubts and chaos in its society, undermining its self-confidence, and increasing polarization and disunity. Its tactics include the following: 1) worsen existing social, political, economic, and generational divides; 2) exploit weaknesses in the informational system; 3) financially control and absorb traditional media; 4) employ its cyber army; 5) obfuscate the attack source through technological, commercial, and legal means; and 6) make the attacks partisan so that one side will at worst not condemn it and at best magnify the effects of its attacks. Its actors are the Chinese Cyberspace Administration, Central Propaganda Department, United Front Department, People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force, State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office, 50-Cent Party (cyber army) and its content farms, and provinces, as well as agents from the target country employed by the Chinese government.

With a fuller understanding of Chinese propaganda and disinformation operations, the US government can better protect America at home (when it comes to election interference) and abroad (in terms of Chinese operations in other countries against the US) and fight against the Chinese Communist Party's narratives and values around the world. The Taiwanese government was successful against these operations because it increased public communication, improved its credibility with Taiwanese society, partnered with other sectors, and reacted swiftly and uniformly. Drawing on its success, the author suggests the policy recommendations below for the US State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) (charged with combating foreign propaganda and disinformation) to begin that work. They are ordered by the level of importance (least [1] to most [12]) and implementation ease (easiest [1] to hardest [12]).

1. Create a database of propaganda and disinformation experts from around the world and track their research findings.
2. Cooperate with the State Department's special envoy on countering China's UN in-

fluence to understand and combat Chinese efforts to use propaganda and disinformation to reshape international norms and values.

3. Draw from the Taiwanese government's debunking strategy to create a State Department standard operating procedure (SOP) for responding to foreign propaganda and disinformation.
4. Conduct "combatting foreign propaganda and disinformation" workshops with Public Affairs Bureau officers so they can react quickly and efficiently when attacks occur.
5. Require each diplomatic mission to submit an SOP for responding to propaganda and disinformation against the US in its host country for the GEC's approval.
6. Add monitoring and reporting on Chinese propaganda and disinformation operations globally to the State Department's regional China watchers' portfolio.
7. Add monitoring and reporting on propaganda and disinformation against the US in the host country to the portfolio of each mission's information officer.
8. Host a conference that brings together relevant civil societies, businesses, NGOs, and government agencies worldwide to brainstorm ways to combat propaganda and disinformation and exchange best practices.
9. Host a high-level conference or ministerial on propaganda and disinformation to highlight the issue's severity and find ways for America and its allies and partners to jointly address this problem.
10. Contract NGOs and businesses to monitor propaganda and disinformation against the US in each country through US diplomatic missions.
11. Work with intelligence agencies (e.g. the National Security Agency, the Treasury Department's Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Office, and the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau) to identify which entities are launching these attacks against the US and its allies and partners.
12. Work with the US Treasury Department and other State Department sanctions bureaus to sanction these entities (see point 11) so that they cannot hire local agents in target countries to create and amplify their propaganda and disinformation.

## INTRODUCTION

---

The US was overwhelmed by Russian propaganda and disinformation<sup>3</sup> during its 2016 elections. American society has since embarked on a quest to combat these Russian attacks and safeguard its electoral process. However, on the eve of its 2020 elections, and in an era of Sino-American great power competition, there is a new electoral threat: Chinese propaganda and disinformation. Combined with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Chinese propaganda and disinformation have the potential to influence the world's perception of Beijing, distort America's image globally, and reshape international norms and values on human rights, rule of law, and sovereignty, having significant implications for geopolitics and the international order.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the US and its State Department must better comprehend China's propaganda and disinformation power and ways to defeat it. Using Taiwan's 2020 presidential and legislative elections as a case study, this report aims to do just that: 1) to analyze Chinese propaganda and disinformation's capabilities and limits and 2) to understand how a small country such as Taiwan (smaller than China by a factor of 23 in GDP, 60 in population size, and 267 in land mass) was able to combat and defeat China's information campaigns.

### KEY CONCEPT EXPLAINED: SHARP POWER

This report employs the concept of sharp power to explain Chinese propaganda and disinformation activities. Coined by the National Endowment of Democracy, sharp power is a country's asymmetric ability to perforate the target country's political and informational ecosystems.<sup>5</sup> The goals are to cut the target country's fabric of society and to stoke and amplify existing divisions.<sup>6</sup> Sharp power tactics include those of information warfare: propaganda, media manipulation, and disinformation. It is different from soft power because it is not about attraction or persuasion, but manipulation, distraction, confusion, division, and repression.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, unlike soft power, sharp power 1) lacks transparency, accountability, journalistic integrity, and diversity of thought and 2) focuses on political, not cultural, aims, such as advancing state narratives.<sup>8</sup> Sharp power has become of special concern because research

---

**...sharp power is a country's asymmetric ability to perforate the target country's political and informational ecosystems.**

---

- 
- 3 Disinformation is "false information deliberately and often covertly spread (as by the planting of rumors) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth," according to Merriam-Webster.
- 4 Rolland, Nadege, "China's counteroffensive in the war of ideas," *Lowy Institute*, 24 February 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-s-counteroffensive-war-ideas>.
- 5 Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," *National Endowment for Democracy*, December 2017.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 National Endowment of Democracy (NED) interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/13/19.

is showing that falsehood diffuses "significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects [are] more pronounced for false political news."<sup>9</sup>

## CHINESE SHARP POWER IN THE PAST

China has long engaged in sharp power activities. "To achieve victory, one must, as far as possible, make the enemy blind and deaf by sealing his eyes and ears and...creating confusion in his mind" is a Mao Zedong adage that has been followed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since its founding.<sup>10</sup> What is now referred to as Chinese sharp power is commonly called United Front work.<sup>11</sup> Before, it would come in the form of airdropping propaganda leaflets over Taiwan-controlled areas to spread rumors about defections, stir up unrest to misdirect enemy planning, and amplify people's fear that the US was unable to protect Taiwan.<sup>12</sup>

## CHINESE SHARP POWER NOW

In October 2007, then-CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao announced in his 17th National Congress of the Communist Party report a new push to "shape public opinion and perceptions around the world," now referred to as the "global propaganda expansion" (大外宣).<sup>13 14 15</sup> This expansion entailed a six-billion-dollar investment into domestic and foreign media companies and other information organizations to exert discourse control in other countries.<sup>16 17 18</sup>

## WHY TAIWAN'S 2020 ELECTIONS AS A CASE STUDY?

One should pay special attention to Taiwan when analyzing Chinese sharp power because it is a testing ground for the People's Republic of China (PRC) to perfect its sharp power model and export its operations elsewhere, including the US.<sup>19 20</sup> Taiwan and China have been in a "hostile relationship" since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen, who opposes uni-

---

9 Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, Deb, and Sinan Aral, "The spread of true and false news online," *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): 1146-1151.

10 Schmitt, Gary, and Michael Mazza, "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy," *Global Taiwan Institute*, October 2019.

11 Taiwan Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) Dr. Yi-Suo Tzeng interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

12 Hsiao, Russell, "CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age," *The Jamestown Foundation*, 24 April 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/ccp-propaganda-against-taiwan-enters-the-social-age/>.

13 Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence."

14 *Liberty Times (LT)* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

15 Former National Taiwan University (NTU) Journalist Chih-Te Lee (李志德) interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

16 何清漣. *紅色滲透: 中國媒體全球擴張的真相*. 新北市: 八旗文化出版, 2019, pp. 25.

17 邱學慈, "《紅色滲透》何清漣: 台灣門戶洞開, 統一遲早的事," *天下雜誌*, 10 May 2019, <https://www.cw.com.tw/article/article.action?id=5095149>.

18 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

19 Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

20 NED interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/13/19.

fication, was elected in 2016.<sup>21</sup> Reiterating Beijing's past position, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping in early 2019 said in a speech at the Great Hall of the People that complete reunification was a historic task and that "we make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means."<sup>22</sup> One of these means, as stated in a

---

**Taiwan is ranked as the country most exposed to foreign disinformation, much higher than the US (13th) and Ukraine (14th)—both currently inundated with Russian disinformation.**

---

Chinese government media editorial, is to "adopt various measures to make Taiwan ruled by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) turn into a Lebanon situation which 'Taiwan independence' forces cannot afford," meaning to exacerbate ethnic, political, and social rifts within Taiwan.<sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> China seeks to accomplish this through sharp power,

which is why Taiwan is ranked as the country most exposed to foreign disinformation, much higher than the US (13th) and Ukraine (14th)—both currently inundated with Russian disinformation.<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>

## REPORT OVERVIEW

This report begins with a brief discussion of its research methodology, namely qualitative interviews, media monitoring, and literature review. It then highlights the main Chinese sharp power attacks in Taiwan's 2020 elections, including questioning President Tsai's doctoral degree, attempting to influence top Taiwanese media leaders at a Beijing conference, rehashing contentious domestic issues such as same-sex marriage legalization, smearing a former Chinese spy who exposed China's covert influence operations, attacking the Taiwanese government's bill against foreign interference, and creating doubts around Taiwan's election integrity. Thereafter, using these attacks and other smaller operations, this paper dissects the anatomy of Chinese sharp power, describing its motives, tactics, and actors.

The report then argues that while Chinese propaganda and disinformation in this election period deepened social and generational divides, they did not affect the election outcome. This is because Taiwan had a whole-of-society response to combat and defeat Chinese sharp power: simply put, the government worked with civil society to provide accurate

---

21 Taiwan National Security Council (NSC) interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

22 Kassam, Natasha, "China Has Lost Taiwan, and It Knows It," *The New York Times*, 1 December 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/opinion/china-taiwan-election.html>.

23 Ibid.

24 "Taiwan can't gamble on cross-Straits crisis," *Global Times*, 1 April 2019, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1144298.shtml>.

25 Su, Alice, "Can fact-checkers save Taiwan from a flood of Chinese fake news?," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-16/taiwan-the-new-frontier-of-disinformation-battles-chinese-fake-news-as-elections-approach>.

26 孔德廉, 柯皓翔, 劉致昕, 許家瑜, "打不死的内容農場——揭開「密訊」背後操盤手和中國因素," *報導者*, 25 December 2019, <https://www.twreporter.org/a/information-warfare-business-content-farm-mission>.

information quickly, online platforms worked with civil society to fact-check and remove fake news, and the government worked with online platforms to take down content that threatened to harm Taiwan's electoral process. Additionally, Taiwan was helped by the fact that China's sharp power apparatus was also focused on Hong Kong's November 2019 local elections. Afterward, the report offers a word of caution to those combatting propaganda and disinformation, contending that the Taiwanese government and society could potentially overreact, over politicize, and give in to hysteria when faced with sharp power attacks. Finally, this report concludes with implications for the US and policy recommendations for the State Department's Global Engagement Center to respond to propaganda and disinformation from the PRC and other foreign entities.

The appendix contains the list of interviewees (A), general interview questions (B), a chart of major Taiwanese media outlets' political and governmental affiliations (C), a 2019 graph showing Taiwan's most used social media platforms (D), examples of Chinese propaganda and disinformation from Taiwanese newspapers (E), and disclaimers on research assumptions, limitations, and ethical considerations (F).

## METHODOLOGY

---

The report utilizes three research methods to gauge the effects of Chinese sharp power on the elections and of Taiwan's cross-sector response: qualitative interviews, media monitoring, and literature review.

### QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

First, the project's focus was on qualitative interviews. The author interviewed 40 individuals, most of whom are Taiwanese government officials in the digital, communications, and security spheres; television, print, and online journalists; political and civil society leaders; and academics. Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, most individuals are attributed only by their respective organizations. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Taipei, Taiwan, with nine done in the US. They were semi-structured and mostly in Mandarin. Appendix A is the interviewee list, and Appendix B is the list of general questions asked.

### MEDIA MONITORING

Second, for two months before Taiwan's 2020 elections, the author monitored the daily newspapers of three major Taiwanese print outlets accused of being influenced by China (i.e. *China Times*, *Want Daily*, *United Daily News*). The author systematically scanned for and collected propaganda and disinformation content from the front pages. Appendix C is a chart of major Taiwanese news organizations' political and governmental affiliations, and Appendix E contains examples of such content.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Lastly, this project reviewed existing English- and Chinese-language research on related topics:

- » Sharp power definition and history
- » Typology of media manipulation and disinformation operations
- » Architecture and process of propaganda and disinformation campaigns
- » Response strategies to propaganda and disinformation campaigns
- » History of Chinese sharp power in Taiwan

### A NOTE ON ESTIMATING EFFECTS

There is not yet a sound, quantitative way to measure the effects of propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation on an election.<sup>27 28 29</sup> Taiwan's top disinformation expert Dr.

---

27 Harvard Kennedy School Dr. Joan Donovan interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/4/19.

28 Harvard Kennedy School Dr. Matthew Baum interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/12/19.

29 Taiwan National Taipei University Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

Puma Shen is attempting to quantitatively gauge their effects on the 2020 elections now through an experiment involving voter surveys before and after the elections, as well as a focus group with those the surveys identified as fake news victims.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime, this report uses the preponderance of evidence method<sup>31</sup> to gauge the effects of Chinese sharp power and Taiwan's response. This qualitative method builds a case on how effective both sides were by reaching convergent conclusions from an accumulation of circumstantial evidence from different expert interviews and polls. The method is similar to the one University of Pennsylvania Communications Professor Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson used to show the effects of Russian sharp power on America's 2016 elections.<sup>32</sup>

---

30 Ibid.

31 Preponderance of evidence is "the standard of proof in which the party bearing the burden of proof must present evidence which shows that the fact to be proven is more probable than not," according to Merriam-Webster.

32 Jamieson, Kathleen H. *Cyberwar: How Russian Hackers and Trolls Helped Elect a President*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

# MAIN CHINESE SHARP POWER ATTACKS IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS

---

## ORIGINS

Chinese sharp power campaigns in Taiwan began around 2008, experts suggest.<sup>33 34</sup> Through traditional Taiwanese media, Chinese propaganda thrived during former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou's tenure (2008 to 2016).<sup>35</sup> It thrived because the propaganda was focused on how amazing China was, and that was beneficial to Ma's friendly cross-strait relations agenda.<sup>36</sup> Negative online disinformation operations, however, became apparent in 2016, after Tsai was elected president and as Taiwanese people of all ages, especially older people, started using Facebook and LINE (similar to WhatsApp).<sup>37</sup> Since then, Taiwan's traditional media and social media have been spreading and mutually reinforcing falsehoods from China.<sup>38</sup> During the 2020 election period, as Tsai stated, "China has increased its coercion tactics... It has been doing so through a combination of military threats, disinformation and propaganda, infiltration, and other methods."<sup>39</sup>

---

***"China has increased its coercion tactics... It has been doing so through a combination of military threats, disinformation and propaganda, infiltration, and other methods."  
— President Tsai***

---

Below are six of the main Chinese sharp power attacks during the 2020 elections:

## QUESTIONING PRESIDENT TSAI'S DOCTORAL DEGREE (MAY 2019)

First is the falsehood that Tsai's London School of Economics (LSE) doctoral degree was fake. Here, China's role was in propagating and amplifying this false story.<sup>40</sup> If any attack were to affect the elections, it would have been this one.<sup>41 42</sup> The false story came about during the ruling DPP's presidential primary election. Because Tsai was unable to find her LSE diploma, thesis, and transcript at the beginning to prove her degree, the story gained

---

33 LT interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

34 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

35 Senior foreign journalist #2 interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

36 Ibid.

37 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

38 Cole, J. Michael, "China Intensifies Disinformation Campaign Against Taiwan," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 19 January 2017, <https://sentinel.tw/china-disinformation-tw/>.

39 Pan, Jason, "Beware of disinformation ahead of vote, Tsai warns," *Taipei Times*, 28 October 2019, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/10/28/2003724792>.

40 Taiwan Presidential Office (PO) interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

41 Davidson College Dr. Shelley Rigger interview, Taipei, 1/6/20.

42 Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

further traction.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, China's cyber army flooded Taiwan's social media space with this story.<sup>44</sup> Even though the LSE later confirmed her doctorate in an official statement, this disinformation continued to be spread by both traditional and social media outlets.<sup>45</sup>

### **INFLUENCING TAIWAN'S TOP MEDIA LEADERS AT A BEIJING CONFERENCE (MAY 10, 2019)**

In its second notable influence operation, the Chinese government gathered 70 Taiwanese media leaders in Beijing on May 10, 2019, and asked them to fulfill their social responsibilities and help promote the peaceful unification process.<sup>46</sup> <sup>47</sup> The "Cross-Strait Media People Summit" was cohosted by Taiwan's Want Want China Times Media Group, long suspected of taking direction from the Chinese government, and China's Beijing Newspaper Group, a Chinese state media entity. During the conference, Wang Yang, a Politburo Standing Committee member and one of China's seven top leaders, said that media from both sides of the Strait must, "uphold national ethics, fulfill their social responsibilities, and jointly play the role of communicating to people on both sides of the Strait by promoting Chinese culture, deepening the integration of emotions, and continuing to promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and the process of peaceful reunification of the motherland, and strive to realize the China dream."<sup>48</sup> After laughing at his mocking of the Taiwanese government, Taiwanese executives were told by Wang, "...as we want to realize 'peaceful unification, one country, two systems', we need to rely on the joint efforts with our friends in the media...I believe you understand the situation...history will remember you."<sup>49</sup> Unsurprisingly, the executives were from outlets accused of being under Beijing's influence.<sup>50</sup>

### **REHASHING CONTENTIOUS DOMESTIC ISSUES (THROUGHOUT THE ELECTION)**

Third is the online rehashing of contentious domestic issues that dominated the 2018 midterms elections, when the ruling DPP lost significantly. Experts claimed that the Chinese cyber army and content farms created and/or circulated in Taiwan's cyberspace fake stories on polarizing issues, including same-sex marriage (see Exhibit A), LGBTQ+ rights,

---

43 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

44 "諷刺! 猛攻小英論文慘淪中國農場文 觀點新聞, 17 October 2019, <https://www.viewpoint.media/archives/1583>.

45 陳弘美, "小英「論文門」成美國政治事件 他驚不妙了!" 中時電子報, 5 March 2020, <https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20200305003164-260407?chdtv>.

46 Cole, J Michael, "More Than 70 Participants From Taiwanese Media Industry Attend 4th Cross-Strait Media Summit in Beijing," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 11 May 2019, <https://sentinel.tw/more-than-70-participants-from-taiwanese-media-industry-attend-4th-cross-strait-media-summit-in-beijing/>.

47 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

48 Schmitt, Gary, and Michael Mazza, "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy."

49 Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan primaries highlight fears over China's political influence," *Financial Times*, 16 July 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/036b609a-a768-11e9-984c-fac8325aaa04>.

50 Senior foreign journalist #2 interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

pensions reform, nuclear energy, and labor laws.<sup>51 52 53</sup> For example, there were fake stories claiming that queer Taiwanese blood donors were causing HIV to spread.<sup>54</sup> Other fake on-line claims accused the Taiwanese government of 1) using pension funds to attract Korean and Japanese tourists to make up for the drop in Chinese tourists and 2) giving Taiwanese Pride Parade organizers financial support so that they could bring in overseas queer people to join the parade.<sup>55 56</sup>



**Exhibit A:**  
Supporters celebrating Taiwan's legalization of same-sex marriage outside the Legislative Yuan (Photo: Chiang Ying-ying/AP).

### **SMEARING A DEFECTED CHINESE SPY WHO EXPOSED ITS COVERT INFLUENCE OPERATIONS (NOVEMBER 2019)**

Fourth, China launched a smear campaign to discredit William Wang, the defected Chinese spy who blew the whistle on Chinese interference operations abroad.<sup>57 58</sup> Wang, who is now in Australia seeking asylum, detailed how he was given a fake South Korean passport in May to infiltrate Taiwan and launch an operation to defeat Tsai in the 2020 elections.<sup>59</sup> This operation would have included directing a cyber army, working with Taiwanese media executives, and creating media and internet companies to launch targeted attacks

51 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

52 Taiwan National Chengchi University Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

53 *LT* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

54 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

55 Su, Alice, "Can fact-checkers save Taiwan from a flood of Chinese fake news?"

56 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

57 McKenzie, Nick, et al., "Defecting Chinese spy offers information trove to Australian government," *The Age*, 25 November 2019, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/defecting-chinese-spy-offers-information-trove-to-australian-government-20191122-p53d1l.html>.

58 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

59 Myers, Steven L., and Damien Cave, "Would-Be Chinese Defector Details Covert Campaigns in Hong Kong and Taiwan," *The New York Times*, 23 November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/world/asia/defector-spy-taiwan-hong-kong.html>.

and shift political opinions.<sup>60</sup> Almost immediately, the Chinese government dismissed his accusations and said he was a convicted criminal.<sup>61</sup> Chinese disinformation tried to paint Wang as being close to the DPP by propagating a picture of someone who looks like him at a DPP gathering.<sup>62 63</sup> In the two months leading up to the elections, *Want Daily*, a newspaper reportedly under Chinese influence, published four front-page propaganda stories against Wang, two of which came directly from Chinese state media (see Appendix E). Likewise, *China Times*, under the same media group as *Want Daily*, published five such front-page propaganda stories, two of which were pulled directly from Chinese state media *Global Times* (see Appendix E).

### ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN INTERFERENCE BILL (DECEMBER 2019)

Fifth, there was a concerted attack online, on television, and in newspapers against the government's Anti-Infiltration Bill, which sought to stem foreign infiltration into Taiwan's political system.<sup>64 65</sup> For example, in the two months leading up to the elections, *Want Daily* had six front-page propaganda stories against this bill, with lines similar to those of the Chinese government (see Appendix E). Similarly, *China Times* had two front-page propaganda stories, one of which came directly from Chinese state media *China News Service* (see Appendix E).

### CREATING DOUBTS AROUND TAIWAN'S ELECTION INTEGRITY (JANUARY 2020)

Finally, China sought to affect the public perception of the integrity of Taiwan's election results.<sup>66</sup> Before the elections, Taiwan's Central Election Commission (CEC) debunked two to three salient false news stories per day.<sup>67</sup> Such disinformation questioned the CEC's fairness and integrity.<sup>68</sup> After the elections, there were Chinese disinformation packages aiming to invalidate Tsai's victory and blame the CIA for manipulating the results.<sup>69 70</sup> The Taiwan Fact Check Center, a nonprofit dedicated to debunking falsehoods, also reported significant disinformation activities around the electoral process.

---

60 McKenzie, Nick, et al., "Defecting Chinese spy offers information trove to Australian government."

61 McKenzie, Nick, and Alex Joske, "Recant or die: Alleged threat to self-confessed Chinese spy Wang Liqiang," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/recant-or-die-alleged-threat-to-self-confessed-chinese-spy-wang-liqiang-20200107-p53pkl.html>.

62 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

63 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

64 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

65 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

66 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

67 Central News Agency (CNA) interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

68 Ibid.

69 Taiwanese Digital Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

70 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

# DISSECTING CHINESE PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION: MOTIVES, TACTICS, ACTORS

## MOTIVES

The Chinese government's ultimate goal is to keep the CCP in power, and it does that by maintaining legitimacy through developing the economy and protecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>71</sup> As economic development slows, territorial integrity becomes more important, and thus the Taiwan issue increases in importance as well.<sup>72</sup>

---

**Beijing wants to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence because it worries that Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet would then be inspired to follow suit**

---

Taiwan is a core CCP issue, and while the CCP's eventual goal is unification, its immediate goal is to deter Taiwanese independence.<sup>73</sup> <sup>74</sup> Beijing wants to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence because it worries that Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet would then be inspired to follow suit, endangering China's territorial integrity and domestic stability.<sup>75</sup> What has been fueling Taiwan's desire to declare independence is its democracy: Taiwan's democracy is strengthening a Taiwanese identity that is separate from China's, a commitment to a constitutional system that is missing in China, and a sentiment that is against Chinese nationalism.<sup>76</sup> <sup>77</sup> <sup>78</sup> Therefore, China needs to disrupt that democracy, that identity, and that independence movement, and this is where Chinese propaganda and disinformation come in.<sup>79</sup>

In the short term, Beijing seeks to use sharp power to defeat the more pro-independence DPP and influence the election results.<sup>80</sup> <sup>81</sup> On one hand, it wants to make the DPP government seem ineffective and create distrust between the DPP government and the public.<sup>82</sup> <sup>83</sup> On the other hand, it aims to support the China-friendly Kuomintang (KMT), as it sees KMT as less encumbered by ideology and better able to stabilize cross-Strait relations.<sup>84</sup> <sup>85</sup>

---

71 Harvard University Professor on China interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/10/19.

72 Ibid.

73 MOFA interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

74 Harvard University Dr. Steven Goldstein interview, Los Angeles, CA, 12/19/19.

75 Harvard University Professor on China interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/10/19.

76 Goldstein interview, Los Angeles, CA, 12/19/19.

77 Harvard University Professor on China interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/10/19.

78 Boston College Dr. Robert Ross interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/11/19.

79 Ibid.

80 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

81 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

82 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

83 孔德廉, 柯皓翔, 劉致昕, 許家瑜, "打不死的内容農場——揭開「密訊」背後操盤手和中國因素."

84 Ross interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/11/19.

85 Cole, J Michael, "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's Elections is Part of a Two-Pronged Attack on Democracy,"

In the long term, the Chinese government plans to employ its sharp power to soften and weaken Taiwan for unification.<sup>86 87 88</sup> First, this includes sowing confusion, doubt, and chaos, attempting to distract and stifle discussions.<sup>89 90</sup> Then, Beijing aims to polarize the Taiwanese society, ensuring that Taiwanese people are disunited.<sup>91 92</sup> With chaos and polarization, they begin to lose trust in democracy and themselves.<sup>93 94</sup> After creating this insecurity, China seeks to use propaganda to make its authoritarian system appear superior.<sup>95 96</sup> Taiwanese people, feeling weak and lacking self-confidence, then start to believe that they cannot survive without China and become resigned to eventual unification, moving China one step closer to unification.<sup>97</sup>

## TACTICS

To meet its objectives, China employed the following methods in Taiwan's 2020 elections:

1. worsening existing social, political, economic, and generational divides;
2. exploiting weaknesses in the informational system;
3. controlling and absorbing traditional media financially;
4. using its cyber army;
5. obfuscating attack sources through technological, commercial, and legal means; and
6. making the attacks partisan so that one side will at worst not condemn them and at best magnify their effects.

### Increase social, political, economic, and generational polarization

First, China learned from Russian propaganda and disinformation operations in Ukraine and the US and uses sharp power to create and exacerbate societal divisions within Tai-

---

*Taiwan Sentinel*, 24 October 2018, <https://sentinel.tw/chinese-interference-in-taiwans-elections-is-part-of-a-two-pronged-attack-on-democracy/>.

86 Kuomintang (KMT) interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

87 Senior foreign journalist #1 interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

88 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

89 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

90 Monaco, Nicholas J., "Computational Propaganda in Taiwan: Where Digital Democracy Meets Automated Autocracy," *Computational Propaganda Research Project*, 2017.

91 KMT interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

92 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

93 Senior foreign journalist #1 interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

94 Cole, J Michael, "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's Elections is Part of a Two-Pronged Attack on Democracy.

95 *United Daily News (UDN)* interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

96 Monaco, Nicholas J., "Computational Propaganda in Taiwan: Where Digital Democracy Meets Automated Autocracy."

97 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

wan.<sup>98 99 100 101</sup> One can see this with the Chinese cyber army's persistent rehashing of contentious domestic issues from Taiwan's 2018 referenda, such as queer sex education and pensions reform, during the 2020 elections. These issues in 2018 were able to split the society based on education, income, generation, and geography. This method is particularly useful because extreme polarization is a major weakness of democracies.<sup>102</sup> With severe interest divergence, politics becomes more antagonistic and hostile, consensus becomes more difficult to build, it becomes more challenging for a government to serve the majority's interests, and governing becomes harder.

### Exploit weaknesses in the informational system

Second, China takes advantage of the many vulnerabilities within Taiwan's media ecosystem.

Taiwan's media sector is intensely *commercial*; media is less about educating the public and more about profit-seeking through advertisements.<sup>103 104</sup> In Taiwan, outlets frequently do not disclose that their advertisements are advertisements; there can be articles or segments that seem like news stories but are in fact paid advertisements.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, as uncovered financial transaction documents have shown, China has been able to pass much of its propaganda as news stories, even though they were paid advertisements.<sup>106 107</sup> China also has been able to influence and direct numerous media organizations because it is a major source of their advertisement revenue.<sup>108</sup>

Taiwan's media sector is also overly competitive.<sup>109</sup> Because the economic situation is deteriorating for these media companies, and because social media is drawing people away

---

**...because social media is drawing people away from traditional outlets, the focus is on surviving, and these outlets survive by publishing stories that get the most clicks and the highest ratings.**

---

---

98 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

99 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

100 Dr. Yi-Suo Tzeng interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

101 NED interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/13/19.

102 Ibid.

103 CNA interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

104 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

105 Senior foreign journalist #2 interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

106 Hsu, Chien-Jung, "China's Influence on Taiwan's Media," *Asian Survey* 54, no. 3 (2014), 515-539.

107 Lee, Yimou, and I-hwa Cheng, "Paid 'news': China using Taiwan media to win hearts and minds on island - sources," *Reuters*, 9 August 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-media-insight/paid-news-china-using-taiwan-media-to-win-hearts-and-minds-on-island-sources-idUSKCN1UZ014>.

108 Hsu, Chien-Jung, "China's Influence on Taiwan's Media."

109 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

from traditional outlets, the focus is on surviving, and these outlets survive by publishing stories that get the most clicks and the highest ratings.<sup>110 111 112 113</sup> Unfortunately, what garner the most attention are often falsehoods, not truths.<sup>114</sup> As a result, many journalists report on suspicious, sensational stories as quickly as possible without fact-checking, accelerating the diffusion of Chinese propaganda and disinformation.<sup>115</sup>

This illustrates two more weaknesses: the public's desire for speed (求快) and sensation. Reporters interviewed shared that with the current "speed culture" (速時文化) and the advent of "instant news" (即時新聞), journalists do not have the time to verify information and sources.<sup>116 117 118</sup> Even when reporters want to verify, there is upper management pressure against it. For example, during the election season, Taiwan's top military official died in a helicopter crash. Yet there was a fake news story indicating that the general was rescued. When *Apple Daily* reporters tried to fact-check it, their managers asked them why it was not up when other outlets had already published it. In the end, the reporters had to report the fake news and contributed to the spread of misinformation.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, because the Taiwanese public rewards sensational stories through clicks and shares, journalists have undue pressure to report sensational, polarizing stories from Facebook and PTT (Taiwanese equivalent of Reddit), including those from Chinese content farms.<sup>120 121</sup> Combining these two weaknesses, traditional Taiwanese journalists end up inadvertently amplifying Chinese sharp power.<sup>122</sup>

The final vulnerability discussed here is the Taiwanese government's *hesitance to regulate the press*. Because of Taiwan's decades-long history with martial law, the government does not wish to be seen in any way as infringing on media freedom.<sup>123</sup> For example, the ruling DPP did not pass a foreign agent registration act in May 2019 because it was worried about accusations of "green

---

**Because of Taiwan's decades-long history with martial law, the government does not wish to be seen in any way as infringing on media freedom.**

---

---

110 SET interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

111 *Apple Daily* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

112 CNA interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

113 TTV interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

114 Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, Deb, and Sinan Aral, "The spread of true and false news online."

115 UDN interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

116 *Apple Daily* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

117 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

118 TTV interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

119 *Apple Daily* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

120 Ibid.

121 UDN interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

122 Schmitt, Gary, and Michael Mazza, "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy."

123 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

terror" (green is the DPP's color, and "green terror" is recalling White Terror, Taiwan's martial law period when political dissidents were persecuted, tortured, and disappeared).<sup>124</sup> Thus, no one is regulating print and online journalism (television and radio news are regulated by the Taiwan National Communications Commission (NCC) for content accuracy and balanced reporting).<sup>125 126 127</sup> There is not even a penalty for reporting fake news as long as it is corrected afterward at some point.<sup>128</sup> China exploited this lack of governance and injected rampant propaganda and disinformation into Taiwan's media environment during the 2020 elections.<sup>129</sup>

### Control and absorb traditional media financially

Third, the Chinese government exercises its sharp power by controlling Taiwanese media groups financially. It does this through 1) supporting media owners' businesses in China, 2) becoming an important part of news outlets' revenue stream, and 3) establishing its own outlets in Taiwan.<sup>130 131</sup> Many Taiwanese media owners conduct business in China.<sup>132</sup> To protect their Chinese business interests and gain Chinese government support (whether legal or commercial), the owners, who often already have pro-China views, take newspaper directions from Beijing and other Chinese provincial leaders.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, because the Chinese government is essential to their revenue stream (whether through advertisements or covert subsidies), outlets, especially smaller ones, take China's instructions and self-censor on "sensitive" issues.<sup>134</sup> For example, on June 4, 2019, many Taiwanese outlets did not report on the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.<sup>135</sup> While one often views propaganda as pushing information, this is propaganda by removing information from the media ecosystem.<sup>136</sup> The Chinese government also establishes its own outlets in Taiwan, such as the *Taiwan China Review News* (台灣中國評論通訊社).<sup>137</sup> In this case, the *Taiwan China Review News* has offices and reporters in Taiwan and is legally a Taiwanese media agency, but it is tied to Hong Kong's *China Review News*, which reportedly takes Chinese government instructions.<sup>138</sup>

---

124 Dr. Yi-Suo Tzeng interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

125 CNA interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

126 Storm Media interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

127 LT interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

128 Apple Daily interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

129 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

130 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

131 Hsu, Chien-Jung, "China's Influence on Taiwan's Media."

132 Senior foreign journalist #1 interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

133 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

134 Lee, Yimou, and I-hwa Cheng, "Paid 'news': China using Taiwan media to win hearts and minds on island - sources."

135 Senior foreign journalist #2 interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

136 Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence."

137 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

138 Ibid.

**Want Want China Times Media Group:** One noteworthy case is the Want Want China Times Media Group one. It is now well-documented that outlets acquired by this group in 2006 and 2008, including *China Times*, *Want Daily*, CTi TV, and CTV (known as "red media"), are under strong Chinese influence.<sup>139 140</sup> Privately, all Taiwanese journalists interviewed attested to this fact. The Chinese government obtained this influence by providing the group's chairman, Tsai Eng-meng, with commercial support for his food and media businesses in China and contributing to these compromised Taiwanese outlets' budget.<sup>141 142</sup> <sup>143</sup> The model is this: Tsai builds political power through his outlets, directs these outlets to spread Chinese propaganda and disinformation, and gains Chinese favor in return for PRC assistance for his mainland businesses.<sup>144 145 146</sup> The level of Chinese influence in these outlets is substantial. According to multiple sources, Chinese State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) sets major news directions for the Want Want Group, gives these outlets' chief editors reporting and coverage-framing instructions—which are then passed on to reporters—feeds these outlets with content to report (via phone calls or physical envelopes), monitors their news coverage, and "visits" (i.e. inspects) their offices.<sup>147 148</sup> <sup>149 150 151 152</sup> On the other side, these outlets ask the TAO how to cover a story, send articles to the TAO before publishing, and self-censor based on China's and Chairman Tsai's positions.<sup>153 154 155</sup> As an example, in 2017, a former DPP operative (李明哲) was disappeared and subsequently arrested in China for political reasons, and *China Times* told its reporters not to cover this story so as to not damage China's image.<sup>156</sup> There are also many cases of Want Want outlets directly publishing a Chinese state media report and posting the same script as that of a Chinese state media outlet before that outlet posted it.<sup>157</sup>

**Other Taiwanese outlets:** Other outlets with monied interests in China, such as those whose managers attended the 2019 "Cross-Strait Media People Summit," have also been

---

139 Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan primaries highlight fears over China's political influence."

140 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

141 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

142 Former senior *China Times* journalist interview, Cambridge, MA, 1/29/20.

143 Former TVBS journalist interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

144 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

145 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

146 Senior foreign journalist #1 interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

147 Ibid.

148 Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan primaries highlight fears over China's political influence."

149 Former senior *China Times* journalist interview, Cambridge, MA, 1/29/20.

150 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

151 Former TVBS journalist interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

152 TVBS interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

153 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

154 Senior foreign journalist #2 interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

155 *Apple Daily* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

156 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

157 *Storm Media* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

implicated by interviewees for receiving financial and/or tacit support from the Chinese government and being influenced by it.<sup>158 159 160 161 162 163 164</sup> The financial support comes in the form of commercial revenue or budgetary funding.<sup>165 166</sup> These outlets experience similar Chinese influence as that of those under the Want Want Group. One illustrative case is of TVBS being directed by China to take down a November 2018 exclusive interview with former American Institute in Taiwan (US mission in Taiwan) Chairman James Moriarty.<sup>167</sup> It was removed because Moriarty remarked, "There are obviously attempts by external powers here in Taiwan to try and alter the debate and spread false information, and those are dangerous."<sup>168</sup>

### Employ its cyber army

Fourth, the Chinese government utilizes its cyber army (i.e. fake accounts, purchased accounts, content farms, and online media outlets) to exert sharp power in three ways: spreading disinformation online and on PTT (Taiwanese equivalent of Reddit), creating and/or circulating negative propaganda about Taiwan, and propagating fake news in LINE (similar to WhatsApp).<sup>169</sup> All three are further amplified online, on television, and in newspapers by compromised traditional Taiwanese media.<sup>170 171</sup> These fake news stories have the effect of not only changing perceptions but also dictating the narrative and topic of the day. A study showed that PTT accounts that were moderately pro-DPP shifted to pro-CCP after being purchased on Taiwanese and Chinese auction sites ahead of the elections.<sup>172</sup> Journalists reported that small, online media outlets post content directly from the Chinese government and content farms; in one case, 23 of these outlets posted the same PRC propaganda article simultaneously without even changing the title.<sup>173 174 175</sup> Moreover, an investigation found that 60 percent of contentious information and fake news on LINE

---

158 UDN interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

159 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

160 Former TVBS journalist interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

161 TVBS interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

162 Former senior *China Times* journalist interview, Cambridge, MA, 1/29/20.

163 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

164 Senior foreign journalist #2 interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

165 Former TVBS journalist interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

166 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

167 Someone with direct knowledge of the situation, Taipei.

168 DeAeth, Duncan, "Interview with AIT chairman causes controversy at Taiwanese TV station," *Taiwan News*, 17 November 2018, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3577702>.

169 "瞄準總統大選「無聲戰爭已開打」解析五毛黨擾台3招," *Apple Daily*, 13 September 2019, <https://tw.appledaily.com/highlight/20190912/TBGFIS25265JQ237YZ23NRC2X4/>.

170 Ibid.

171 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

172 Schmitt, Gary, and Michael Mazza, "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy."

173 TTV interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

174 *Apple Daily* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

175 "紅色滲透 台23網媒照抄中國官媒 簡體字原封不動 同步批蔡英文 疑幕後黑手操控," *Apple Daily*, 12 July 2019, <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20190712/38389276/>.

came from abroad.<sup>176</sup> Much of them were from China with simplified Chinese characters, Chinese language usages, and Chinese government propaganda.<sup>177</sup>

### Obfuscate attack sources through technological, commercial, and legal means

Fifth, China obfuscates and hides its attack sources. For its cyber army accounts, their IP addresses and locations bounce to Australia, Singapore, and other places, so it is difficult for Taiwan's national security apparatus to obtain technical proof on where the cyber information attacks originate from.<sup>178</sup> For its "advertisements" (i.e. propaganda) in traditional

---

**For traditional media capture, China speaks only to compromised outlets' top managers to prevent reporters and middle management from knowing where these directions come from.**

---

media, the TAO has created companies such as Jiuzhou Culture Communication Center and Publishing Exchange Center Across the Taiwan Strait to purchase stories, according to uncovered contracts and multiple people with direct knowledge of the arrangements.<sup>179</sup> For traditional media capture, China speaks only to compromised outlets' top managers to prevent reporters and middle management from knowing where these directions come from.<sup>180</sup>  
<sup>181</sup> <sup>182</sup> <sup>183</sup> Reporters are often not even told that what they are writing are "advertisements" (i.e. 業配). Instead, they are simply directed by editors to draft these stories.<sup>184</sup> Further-

more, when a *Financial Times* journalist blew the whistle on China's influence on the Want Want Group, the group sued her and sent people to harass her, hoping to make an example out of her for anyone who wished to speak out.<sup>185</sup> <sup>186</sup>

### Make the sharp power attacks partisan

Sixth, China makes its propaganda and disinformation partisan so that many KMT supporters either do not acknowledge that there are Chinese influence operations or do not actively condemn Chinese fake news. Moreover, they often help spread these false news. All major political parties interviewed except the China-friendly KMT openly admitted that there are Chinese sharp power attacks against Taiwan, and this is likely because such at-

---

176 "致听, 柯皓翔, 許家瑜," LINE群組的假訊息從哪來? 跨國調查, 追出內容農場「直銷」產業鏈," 報導者, 12 December 2019, <https://www.twreporter.org/a/information-warfare-business-disinformation-fake-news-behind-line-groups>.

177 Ibid.

178 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

179 Lee, Yimou, and I-hwa Cheng, "Paid 'news': China using Taiwan media to win hearts and minds on island - sources."

180 UDN interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

181 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

182 TVBS interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

183 CNA interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

184 Former senior *China Times* journalist interview, Cambridge, MA, 1/29/20.

185 Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan primaries highlight fears over China's political influence."

186 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

tacks, often anti-DPP and anti-independence, benefit the KMT politically.<sup>187 188 189 190 191</sup> Reporters shared that since the disinformation packages are partisan, one frequently sees the KMT and pro-KMT media amplifying these packages.<sup>192 193</sup> A clear example of the KMT's response to Chinese sharp power is its reaction in November 2019 to defected Chinese spy William Wang's claims regarding Chinese covert influence campaigns in Taiwan's elections: immediately after the Australian, Taiwanese, and international media reported on Wang's claims, the KMT rejected them, and then-KMT presidential candidate Han Kuo-yu called Wang a scammer and vowed to sue him if he were to step foot in Taiwan.<sup>194 195</sup> Thereafter, in late December 2019, Alex Tsai (蔡正元), then-KMT deputy secretary general, worked with a China-based businessman and threatened Wang, according to Australian security agencies.<sup>196</sup> In a series of messages, Wang was told that if he recorded a video before the presidential election saying that the DPP had bribed him into making his whistleblowing claims, he would be able to return to China or Taiwan, receive financial benefits, and ensure his family's safety; if he refused, he would be extradited to China and face death, or he would be targeted in Australia.<sup>197 198</sup> Regardless of the veracity of Wang's claims, the KMT's response illustrates how difficult it is for a political party to recognize and condemn Chinese sharp power when the propaganda or disinformation is partisan.

## ACTORS

Many components of the Chinese state and national security apparatus help the PRC exercise its sharp power, particularly in Taiwan and its most recent elections.<sup>199</sup> Below is a non-exhaustive list:<sup>200</sup>

- » *Cyberspace Administration of China* (i.e. the Office of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs): Headed by Xi, this supra-ministerial policy and coordina-

---

187 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

188 Taiwan People's Party (TPP) interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

189 New Power Party (NPP) interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

190 KMT interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

191 Rigger interview, Taipei, 1/6/20.

192 *China Times* interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

193 *LT* interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

194 KMT interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

195 "韓國瑜酸王立強共謀冒牌貨 如來台一定提告【最新快訊】," *TTV News*, 26 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9atq3szY>.

196 McKenzie, Nick, and Alex Joske, "Recant or die: Alleged threat to self-confessed Chinese spy Wang Liqiang."

197 *Ibid.*

198 羊正鈺, "澳媒報導王立強被蔡正元威脅「遭民進黨收買」, 蔡正元公布錄音否認," *The News Lens*, 9 January 2020, <https://www.thenewslens.com/article/129821>.

199 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

200 沈伯洋, 黃祥儒, "深度評論: 我站在2020大選網路戰最前線," *Apple Daily*, 2 January 2020, <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/20200102/GKKQIITMXD6CRDC2CS6VM5FFXM/>.

tion body worked with the Central Propaganda Department to create a working group on Taiwan.<sup>201</sup>

- » *Central Propaganda Department*: This department is cited as having a professional cybergroup to influence Taiwanese elections and providing compromised Taiwanese outlets with content for them to write positive stories about China.<sup>202</sup>
- 203
- » *United Front Work Department*: This department is traditionally tasked with influencing foreign individuals and organizations.<sup>204</sup> It also works extensively in Hong Kong.<sup>205</sup>
- » *People's Liberation Army's Strategic Support Force*: The Taiwanese government is confident that this force is behind many "troll factories" and "content farms" that are spreading Chinese propaganda and disinformation in Taiwan.<sup>206</sup>
- » *State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO)*: Through uncovered, signed contracts between the TAO and compromised Taiwanese outlets, Reuters found that the TAO is paying these companies for coverage.<sup>207</sup>
- » *Provinces*: Reuters found that municipal governments and provincial TAOs also sponsor Chinese propaganda in Taiwanese news organizations, based on interviews and uncovered financial documents.<sup>208</sup>
- » *50-Cent Party (五毛黨)*: The party consists primarily of government employees paid by the Chinese government to create posts on a part-time basis outside their normal jobs.<sup>209</sup> Its aim is to counter government criticism and prevent collective action through strategic distraction and censorship.<sup>210</sup> It operates by

---

201 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

202 Kassam, Natasha, "China Has Lost Taiwan, and It Knows It."

203 Lee, Yimou, and I-hwa Cheng, "Paid 'news': China using Taiwan media to win hearts and minds on island – sources."

204 沈伯洋, 黃祥儒, “深度評論: 我站在2020大選網路戰最前線.”

205 Lo, Sonny Shiu-Hing, et al., *China's New United Front Work in Hong Kong*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

206 Cole, J Michael, "That's What 'Fake News' Looks Like and What It Does to Democracy," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 12 November 2018, <https://sentinel.tw/fake-news-kaohsiung-democracy/>.

207 Lee, Yimou, and I-hwa Cheng, "Paid 'news': China using Taiwan media to win hearts and minds on island – sources."

208 Ibid.

209 King, Gary, et al., "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument," *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 3 (2017), 484-501.

210 Ibid.

inserting pro-Chinese government comments into online conversations.<sup>211</sup> The party produces 448 million posts annually, with the aim of overwhelming the information system.<sup>212</sup> It is accused of interfering in Taiwan's 2018 and 2020 elections.<sup>213</sup>

- » *Chinese content farms*: Farms that operate on Taiwan include 密訊 (one of the most shared in Taiwan), 觸極者, 每日頭條, 壹讀, 觀察哲網, and Buzz Orange.<sup>214 215</sup>  
216
  
- » *Local collaborators*: China also employs local intermediaries, Chinese firms established in Taiwan, and online Taiwanese celebrities (網紅/網美) as conduits for its sharp power work.<sup>217 218 219 220</sup>

---

211 Ibid.

212 Harvard University Dr. Gary King interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/19/19.

213 Cole, J Michael, "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's Elections is Part of a Two-Pronged Attack on Democracy."

214 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

215 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

216 孔德廉, 柯皓翔, 劉致昕, 許家瑜, "打不死的内容農場——揭開「密訊」背後操盤手和中國因素."

217 Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence."

218 Cole, J Michael, "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's Elections is Part of a Two-Pronged Attack on Democracy."

219 沈伯洋, 黃祥儒, "深度評論: 我站在2020大選網路戰最前線."

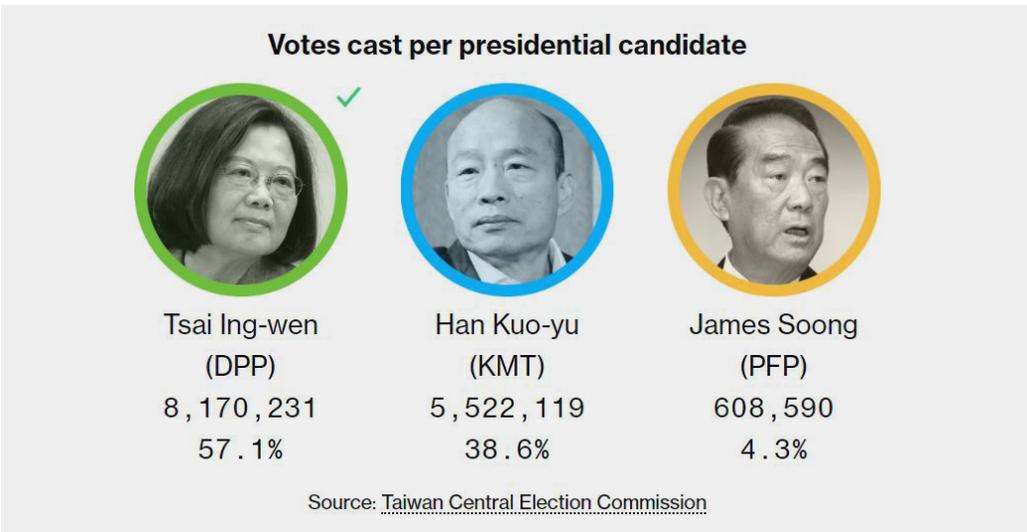
220 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

# EFFECTS ON THE 2020 ELECTIONS

## NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ELECTION RESULTS

Despite how serious of a threat Chinese sharp power is, Taiwan was able to blunt its impact on the 2020 elections. All interviewees said that Chinese influence operations this time had little effect on the election results.<sup>221</sup> They observed that compared to the 2018 local elections, the 2020 elections saw significantly fewer Chinese and general propaganda and disinformation packages. The interviewees added that most propaganda and disinformation stories were unable to inflict maximum damage, as they were swiftly exposed and debunked. All four major political parties (DPP, KMT, TPP, NPP) stated that Chinese sharp power did not affect their polling numbers and election results.<sup>222 223 224 225</sup> If one of China's objectives was to elect a China-friendly president and legislature, then Beijing failed in that regard. On January 11, 2020, Tsai was reelected with a historic 8.17 million votes (57.13 percent) (see Exhibit B).<sup>226</sup> In the legislature, the ruling DPP retained its majority with 61 out of 113 seats. Turn-out increased as well, with 74.90 percent of eligible voters voting, compared to 66.27 percent in 2016.

**All four major political parties (DPP, KMT, TPP, NPP) stated that Chinese sharp power did not affect their polling numbers and election results.**



**Exhibit B:** Tsai defeated Han by over 18.5 percent (2.648 million votes) (Photo: Bloomberg).

221 This statement excludes interviewees without knowledge and understanding of Taiwan's 2020 elections.  
222 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.  
223 KMT interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.  
224 TPP interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.  
225 NPP interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.  
226 Sam, Cedric, "Taiwan 2020 Election Results," *Bloomberg*, 11 January 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-taiwan-election-results/>.

## SOME EFFECT ON POLARIZATION AND GENERATIONAL DIVIDES

However, Chinese sharp power did worsen political and social polarization and widen the generational divide to a certain extent.<sup>227 228</sup> It made political and social bubbles (同溫層) more difficult to pop, increased mutual suspicion between the KMT and the DPP, and strengthened conservatives' and the KMT base's disdain for Tsai.<sup>229 230 231</sup> Generationally, Chinese actions included infiltrating a Facebook support group page for young people whose parents voted for Han in order to move young people's political positions further away from their parents.<sup>232</sup> In terms of media, it further split the informational space, one for the pro-China side and the other for the anti-China side.<sup>233</sup>

---

227 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

228 NPP interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

229 UDN interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

230 Dr. Yi-Suo Tzeng interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

231 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

232 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

233 UDN interview, Taipei, 1/13/20.

## COMBATting AND DEFEATING CHINESE SHARP POWER: A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY ENDEAVOR

---

How did Taiwan, the country ranked most exposed to foreign disinformation globally, survive, combat, and defeat China's information attacks?<sup>234</sup> The answer is that after being inundated and overwhelmed by Chinese propaganda and disinformation in the 2018 mid-term elections, Taiwan embarked on a whole-of-government, whole-of-society (i.e. civil society, private sector) mission in 2019 and 2020 to defend against such attacks.

### GOVERNMENT

After the 2018 electoral losses, the government realized that it had to communicate with the public more effectively, better explain its activities and actions on a regular basis, and build more trust with its citizenry.<sup>235</sup> Rooted in these aims, the government started countering propaganda and disinformation in five main ways: 1) monitoring traditional and social media constantly, 2)

---

*After the 2018 electoral losses, the government realized that it had to communicate with the public more effectively, better explain its activities and actions on a regular basis, and build more trust with its citizenry.*

---

debunking falsehoods efficiently and effectively using information-spreading strategies, 3) raising awareness of sharp power through a public health narrative, 4) creating and enforcing laws to punish sharp power actors, and 5) working with other countries to jointly address the foreign propaganda and disinformation issue.

### Monitor media around the clock

To improve internal coordination, the ruling DPP created a cross-government and DPP communication group that searches for propaganda and disinformation around the clock.<sup>236</sup> <sup>237</sup> This social media group analyzes where the online political discussions are going (風向) and how information is disseminated and consumed on the internet.<sup>238</sup> Once someone finds a fake news story, top officials determine its validity and harm.<sup>239</sup> It is then a judgment call on whether to respond.<sup>240</sup> The two must-respond criteria are if the fake news story is reported on television and if there are many online engagements with that story.<sup>241</sup>

---

234 孔德廉, 柯皓翔, 劉致昕, 許家瑜, “打不死的内容農場——揭開「密訊」背後操盤手和中國因素。”

235 NSC interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

236 Ibid.

237 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

238 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

239 Ibid.

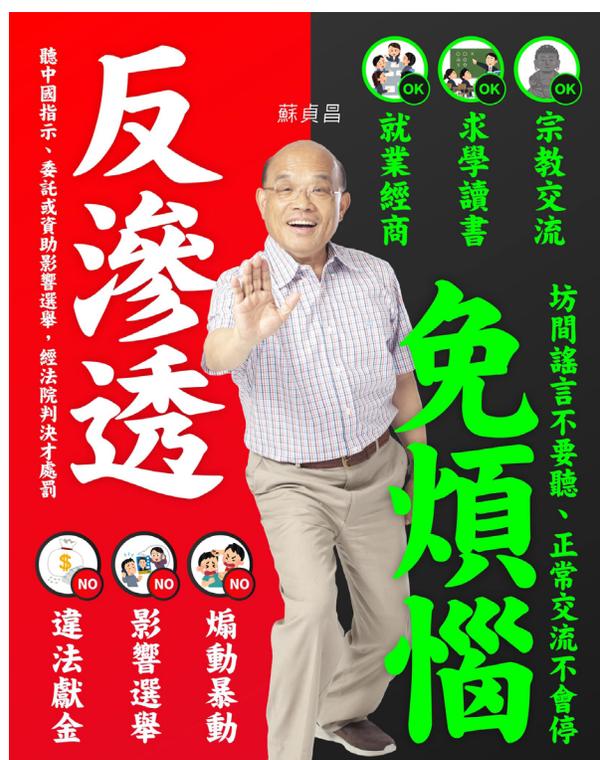
240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.

If they decide to respond, then they will delegate the debunking to the most appropriate agency or authority.<sup>242</sup>

### Debunk falsehoods using information-spreading strategies

Once the government moves to the debunking stage, the race to win the narrative begins. The debunking criteria are that the response has to be fast, short, easily understandable, humorous, high level, and easily spreadable.<sup>243</sup> First, the government releases a press statement providing the accurate information.<sup>244</sup> Second, it uploads a debunking meme on its social media pages. The government chooses to deliver the correct information through a meme (see Exhibit C) because it is short, funny, easy to understand, and easy to share, all qualities that online viral content share.<sup>245</sup> The reasoning behind the humor requirement is twofold: one, humor and outrage are two mutually exclusive outlets of anger, so the government uses humor to prevent and disarm outrage.<sup>246</sup> Two, humor attracts young netizens, who can then share the meme with their less media-literate family members, and according to the trusted messenger theory, people tend to accept clarifications more from those they trust.<sup>247</sup> Third, the government asks its online followers and supporters to share the meme as broadly as possible.<sup>248</sup> Fourth, if the fake news is severe, the appropriate government minister will host a high-level press conference to draw on traditional media's reach and debunk the falsehood.<sup>249</sup> The goal of these steps is to make the clarification propagate faster and farther than the fake news story, for facts to dominate the information space before falsehoods do.<sup>250</sup> The government aims to give the public an information "immunization shot" by



**Exhibit C:** In this meme, Taiwanese Premier Su Tseng-chang debunks fake news about the Anti-Infiltration Act (Su's Facebook page, 1/15/20).

242 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

243 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

244 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

245 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

246 Ibid.

247 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

248 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

249 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

250 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

preempting fake news with accurate ones so that people are exposed to the truth before learning about the falsehood.<sup>251</sup>

Thus far, the government has been successful.<sup>252 253</sup> It sets an ambitious goal of responding in two hours, but many of its ministries have been able to do so in only 60 minutes.<sup>254</sup> <sup>255</sup> Because the government times its clarification with the news cycle, its response is reported by traditional media.<sup>256</sup> As for reach, journalists interviewed shared that they generally do not hear about a fake news story until they see the government's response, and Facebook stated that the government's debunking responses spread more broadly than fake news on its platform.<sup>257</sup> In this way, the government has the potential to overcome the familiarity bias trap (i.e. repeating a false claim strengthens the claim) because people hear the facts before they are exposed to the falsehoods.<sup>258</sup>

### Raise awareness of fake news through a public health lens

Besides reactively countering fake news, the Tsai administration has been actively raising public awareness of both general and Chinese propaganda and disinformation. On the general side, the approach is a public health one. The government is trying to build the public mindset that fake news is simply a virus and that people who believe and share it are not bad people; rather, they simply caught the virus.<sup>259</sup> Anyone can catch and spread the virus, so everyone should work together to detect and prevent its spread.<sup>260</sup> This framing takes away the good-bad binary from fake news and thereby removes fake news' polarization effect.<sup>261</sup> There is no shame or blame for being tricked by it or spreading it because anyone can be a victim.<sup>262</sup> From here, the focus shifts to education. The government has been driving media literacy trucks to rural places to conduct workshops on how to identify fake news for citizens with less media experience (often older people), similar to what misinformation expert Dr. Matthew Baum describes as targeted interventions to subgroups.<sup>263 264</sup> On the Chinese fake news issue specifically, the ruling DPP proposed and passed the Anti-Infiltration Bill before the elections primarily to warn the public about the ongoing, malicious foreign activities occurring in its midst.<sup>265</sup>

---

251 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

252 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

253 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

254 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

255 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

256 Ibid.

257 Facebook Taiwan interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

258 Baum interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/12/19.

259 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

260 Ibid.

261 Ibid.

262 Ibid.

263 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

264 Baum interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/12/19.

265 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

## Draft and enforce laws to deter and punish sharp power activities

There are three other reasons for passing the now Anti-Infiltration Law: to deter Chinese interference in the upcoming elections, react to defected Chinese spy Wang's revelations on Chinese sharp power activities, and frame the elections as a referendum on Chinese penetration into Taiwan.<sup>266</sup> The law states that if any person or entity receives support from "overseas hostile forces" in donations, in an election or referendum, in lobbying, and in disrupting assembly, that person or entity will face imprisonment of up to five years and fines of up to 335,000 dollars (ten million NTD).<sup>267</sup> So far, it appears to be having an effect. Immediately after it became law, Master Chain (大師鏈), the only Taiwanese media that had an office in China, criticized the law, closed its Taiwan operations, and relocated to Beijing.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, Want Want Group's top media managers are now worried about how the law will affect them.<sup>269</sup> Separately, the NCC has been more strictly enforcing Taiwan's factual and balanced reporting regulation for television and radio. For example, Want Want Group's CTi TV was fined over 186,000 dollars (5.63 million NTD) in 2019 mostly for broadcasting and spreading falsehoods (see Exhibit D).<sup>270</sup> Combined with the public rally against their biases, Want Want Group's outlets have been relatively more balanced in their reporting since.<sup>271</sup>

### 中天新聞台 108 年內容裁處及發函改進一覽表

109. 1. 15

#### 一、核處罰鍰

編號	播出日期、時間、標題或節目	違規類型	罰鍰(新臺幣)
1.	107 年 11 月 12 日 12 時 55 分許「陳其邁回防大旗美, 邱議瑩「大家參離開」打悲情牌」新聞	事實查證	20 萬元
2.	107 年 8 月 18 日「週末大爆卦」節目「金孫見父叫舅舅? 兒媳離婚…… ○○○最不忍心的事」內容	兒少身份資訊(兒少法)	3 萬元
3.	108 年 2 月 1 日 18 時 1 分許「瑪奇夢想生活手遊- 娜歐篇 10」手遊廣告	妨害兒童或少年身心健康	20 萬元
4.	108 年 2 月 28 日 8 時 11 分許「百美超商簽約險破局 靠李佳芬「一句話」神助攻」新聞	事實查證	60 萬元
5.	108 年 2 月 18 日 12 時 26 分許「異象?! 三市長合體 天空出現「鳳凰展翅」雲朵」新聞	妨害公共秩序或善良風俗、事實查證	40 萬元
6.	108 年 3 月 8 日 14 時「大政治大爆卦」節目有關傾倒文旦內容	事實查證	100 萬元
7.	108 年 1 月 20 日「1100 中天新聞」節目, 11 時 10 分至 11 時 12 分許「全裸歌舞 燙下體 傳車手「黑吃黑」遭私刑」新聞	妨害公共秩序或善良風俗	40 萬元

**Exhibit D:** A partial list of reasons CTi TV was fined by the NCC in 2019; many were for reporting falsehoods (NCC, 1/15/20).

266 "反滲透法: 台灣大選前夕通過該法瞄準了哪些目標," BBC, 31 December 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/chinese-news-50922074>.

267 "反滲透法》條文看這! 受滲透干預大選最重罰5年、罰千萬," Liberty Times, 31 December 2019, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/3025949>.

268 "反滲透法剛過...大師鏈插旗北京急了 宣布: 放棄台灣市場," SETN, 31 December 2019, <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=664029>.

269 China Times interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

270 "去年被罰600萬! 中天電視遭檢舉造謠 NCC再度開罰60萬," Yahoo News, 15 January 2020, <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E5%8E%BB%E5%B9%B4%E8%A2%AB%E7%BD%B0600%E8%90%AC-%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%A9%E9%9B%BB%E8%A6%96%E9%81%AD%E6%AA%A2%E8%88%89%E9%80%A0%E8%AC%A0-ncc%E5%86%8D%E5%BA%A6%E9%96%8B%E7%BD%B060%E8%90%AC-082900734.html>.

271 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

## Cooperate internationally to jointly combat Chinese propaganda and disinformation

Taiwan has little space to maneuver internationally, but Chinese sharp power has helped Taiwan gain global attention and given the island an opportunity to better cooperate with other countries on the common challenge of Chinese influence operations. Because other states are now concerned about Chinese sharp power in their countries, they are looking to Taiwan for the expertise in addressing it.<sup>272 273 274</sup> Chinese sharp power additionally has helped Taiwan highlight its shared democratic values with likeminded countries.<sup>275</sup> Thus, through the Global Cooperation and Training Framework programs on disinformation and media literacy, Taipei has been able to share its know-how with other states and further cooperation with the US.<sup>276</sup>

### PRIVATE SECTOR

Facebook and LINE, two main disinformation hotbeds in Taiwan, were also crucial in combatting Chinese sharp power through their numerous advances over 2019.

#### Facebook

Facebook does not have a policy that everything on its platform has to be true, but it does remove content and accounts that violate its community standards, hide content that breaks local laws, and downgrade fake news, and Facebook actively did all three during the election season.<sup>277</sup> In both October and December 2019, Facebook removed hundreds of accounts and content farms for breaking community standards by engaging in abusive audience building.<sup>278</sup> Specifically in the December 13 case, as part of the effort to protect Taiwan's election integrity, Facebook removed 118 fan pages, 99 groups, and 51 duplicate accounts for "artificially inflating their posts' reach."<sup>279 280</sup> Facebook also cooperated closely with Taiwan's Central Election Commission during the election period to remove voter suppression content (e.g. false election information that could suppress votes) and hide posts that broke Taiwanese electoral laws.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, Facebook worked, and continues to work, with a third-party fact-checking organization (i.e. Taiwan Fact Check Center) to downrank false information.<sup>282</sup> Operating independently, the center rates Facebook

---

272 Donovan interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/4/19.

273 NED interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/13/19.

274 MOFA interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

275 Ibid.

276 MOFA interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

277 Facebook Taiwan interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

278 孔德廉, 柯皓翔, 劉致昕, 許家瑜, "打不死的内容農場——揭開「密訊」背後操盤手和中國因素."

279 吳妍, "韓粉15萬人臉書社團遭下架 網: 國家機器動得很厲害," *Mirror Media*, 13 December 2019, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20191213edi015/>.

280 Su, Alice, "Can fact-checkers save Taiwan from a flood of Chinese fake news?"

281 Facebook Taiwan interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

282 Ibid.

content for its validity. If it rates a post as false or mixed, then it downranks that post. Once it is downranked, users will no longer be passively exposed to its false information. A user can still actively find this post, but the post will then have the correct information (provided by the center) attached to it.<sup>283</sup>

One of Facebook's greatest contributions to countering Chinese sharp power during the elections was establishing an Election Operation Center, or the "war room."<sup>284</sup> Its objective was to ensure the elections' integrity by rooting out disinformation, monitoring false news, and deleting fake accounts as quickly as possible.<sup>285 286</sup> Whereas before this work would require waiting for teams in Dublin and Silicon Valley to go online and take action (due to the different time zones), the war room brought together Facebook's policy, legal, and security representatives; content moderators; and local experts on politics, elections, and law, so they could meet face to face and expedite the decision-making process on what accounts to delete and what fake news to downrank/remove.<sup>287</sup> In addition, the war room operated 24/7 because of Facebook Dublin's and Silicon Valley's support.<sup>288</sup> Facebook found the war room effective, and Dr. Puma Shen, Taiwan's top Chinese sharp power professor, stated that the war room was one of the key reasons why Chinese propaganda and disinformation did not have much effect on Taiwan's elections this time.<sup>289 290</sup> Shen explained that the war room was able to block a significant amount of foreign-produced fake news, making the information environment much better than that of the 2018 elections.<sup>291</sup>

## LINE

LINE, the Japanese equivalent to WhatsApp, is arguably the most important social media application in Taiwan. It has 21 million monthly active users on an island of only around 24 million people.<sup>292</sup> 9.3 billion LINE messages are sent every day in Taiwan, and each Taiwanese user receives over 100 daily messages on average.<sup>293</sup> Fake news runs rampant on the application, and its end-to-end encryption makes it extremely difficult to track the spread and origins of fake news.<sup>294</sup> However, it announced the "LINE Digital Responsibility Plan"

---

283 Ibid.

284 Wu, Jeffrey, and Joseph Yeh, "Facebook to establish 'war room' in Taipei ahead of elections," *Focus Taiwan*, 30 December 2019, <https://focustaiwan.tw/sci-tech/201912300015>.

285 Facebook Taiwan interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

286 Huang, Tzu-Ti, "Facebook to set up 'war room' in Taiwan ahead of elections," *Taiwan News*, 31 December 2019, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3847551>.

287 Facebook Taiwan interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

288 Wu, Jeffrey, and Joseph Yeh, "Facebook to establish 'war room' in Taipei ahead of elections."

289 Facebook Taiwan interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

290 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

291 Ibid.

292 LINE written response, Taipei, 1/7/20.

293 Ibid.

294 陳瑞霖, "LINE 訊息查證平台正式上線, 未來可望用 AI 輔助人類揪出固定模式的可疑訊息," *Tech News*, 22 July 2019,

(「LINE數位當責計劃」) (see Exhibit E) in March 2019 and worked with Taiwan's executive branch and four NGOs to create the "LINE information checker" portal in July 2019, right in time for the elections.<sup>295</sup> Whenever users find questionable information on LINE, they can forward it to the portal and receive a fact-checking report created by these NGOs. As of January 7, 2020, four days before the elections, it had fact-checked over 30,000 suspicious news/stories sent by 140,000 users, and its debunking page had been viewed over four million times.<sup>296</sup>



**Exhibit E:** The "LINE Digital Responsibility Plan" has three components to combatting fake news: *halting* falsehoods through users' reporting of possible fake news, *diffusing* facts by working with partners on fact-checking, and *preventing* users from being tricked through societal media literacy programs (trans., LINE, 1/7/20).

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Shocked by the overwhelming force of PRC propaganda and disinformation in the 2018 elections, the Taiwanese public became more alert to the problem and began engaging in activism and *organizational-building* to counter Chinese sharp power.<sup>297</sup> For example, its activism work culminated in the Anti-Red Media March (red refers to the CCP's color) (see Exhibit F) in June 2019, when 20,000 people rallied against compromised Tai-



**Exhibit F:** Demonstrators rallying against "red media" in front of Taiwan's Presidential Office on June 23, 2019 (Photo: Hsu Tsun-hsu/AFP via Getty Images).

<https://technews.tw/2019/07/22/line-launch-fact-checker-platform-officially-it-might-be-possible-to-use-ai-helping-human-fact-checkers/#more-489372>.

295 LINE written response, Taipei, 1/7/20.

296 Ibid.

297 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

wanese media, such as *China Times* and CTi TV.<sup>298</sup> In another example, young people organized and created the LINE group "Have You Cared For Your Elders Today?" (你今天關心長輩了嗎?), a "debunking farm" that creates and shares fake-news debunking memes so that young people can forward them to their more susceptible family members (see Exhibit G).<sup>299 300</sup>



**Exhibit G:** The LINE group “你今天關心長輩了嗎” along with its latest debunking memes (LINE, 3/26/20).

Taiwanese civil society also made strides in building organizations that drastically decreased disinformation during the 2020 elections.<sup>301</sup> First, in terms of fact-checking, civil society organizations Taiwan Fact Check Center (TFCC), MyGoPen, Cofacts (真的假的), and Rum Toast (蘭姆酒吐司) have been working with Facebook and LINE since 2019 to identify, verify, and downrank dubious posts.<sup>302 303</sup> These groups also have been working with the Taiwanese government to obtain accurate, up-to-date information quickly.<sup>304</sup> Because of the amount of disinformation, groups such as Cofacts and Watchout have been using crowdsourcing and bots for rapid fact-checking and response.<sup>305</sup> Their hard work paid

298 "10萬人凱道雨傘花 紅色媒體 滾出台灣 反滲透 群眾自發上街 沒便當沒動員 不畏風雨相挺," *Apple Daily*, 24 June 2019, <https://tw.news.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20190624/38373356/>.

299 LT interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

300 PO interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

301 DPP interview, Taipei, 1/14/20.

302 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

303 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

304 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

305 Han, Kirsten, "Line is another chat app rife with spam, scams, and bad information. The volunteer-supported Cofacts is fact-checking them in the open," *Nieman Lab*, 21 August 2018, <https://www.niemanlab.org/2018/08/>

off; Dr. Puma Shen credited them, as well as Double Think Labs, for blocking Chinese disinformation and dulling Chinese sharp power's effects in the 2020 elections.<sup>306</sup> Second, for attribution work, the TFCC has been able to trace disinformation packages back to the Chinese government (in its investigation number 204 for example), helping convince the public that Chinese infiltration operations are alive and well.<sup>307</sup> Third, Double Think Labs is now conducting a study through surveys and focus groups to attempt to estimate the effects of fake news on the 2020 voters and their decisions.<sup>308</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR: THE 2019 HONG KONG PROTESTS ON THE FUGITIVE EXTRADITION BILL

In addition to its whole-of-society mobilization, Taiwan was helped by the situation in Hong Kong. On the Chinese side, due to the worsening Hong Kong-mainland relationship, Beijing and its cyber army were focused on influencing Hong Kong's municipal elections, which took place a month and a half before Taiwan's elections. Chinese propaganda and disinformation in Taiwan, on YouTube, for example, decreased sizably as a result.<sup>309</sup> <sup>310</sup> On the Taiwanese side, Hong Kong government responses to the Hong Kong protests (see



**Exhibit H:** One of the many demonstrations protesting the Hong Kong government's fugitive extradition bill and Hong Kong's dwindling autonomy (Photo: Danish Siddiqui/Reuters).

---

line-is-another-chat-app-rife-with-spam-scams-and-bad-information-the-volunteer-supported-cofacts-is-fact-checking-them-in-the-open/.

306 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

307 蘇志宗, "防網軍帶風向 唐鳳: 加快澄清找出訊息傳播路徑," CNA, 11 December 2019, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201912110191.aspx>.

308 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

309 Ibid.

310 Dr. Yi-Suo Tzeng interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

Exhibit H) made Taiwanese citizens realize the dangers of Chinese encroachment and penetration.<sup>311</sup> This realization made people more aware of Chinese sharp power and made the elections increasingly about national security and sovereignty.<sup>312</sup> Disinformation thrives on polarization, and because the elections were no longer about divisive domestic issues, and because Chinese hostilities in Hong Kong united a large majority of the Taiwanese citizenry—even those who do not support independence—against closer ties with Beijing, the effects of Chinese sharp power were blunted.<sup>313 314 315</sup>

## WORD OF CAUTION

While Taiwan was successful in defeating Chinese sharp power, there could be potential for the government and society to over-politicize and overreact to the issue. The Taiwanese government was effective in raising awareness of Chinese information infiltration, but China expert Shelley Rigger observed that the DPP also used Chinese sharp power operations to build the narrative that citizens should vote for the DPP because it is the only party that can protect Taiwan's freedom, sovereignty, and democracy against Beijing.<sup>316 317</sup> It painted a binary of the DPP and the CCP. Thus, the KMT, Taiwan People's Party (TPP), and New Power Party (NPP) (three main opposition parties) asserted that the DPP and its supporters sought to "smear them as red" (抹紅) during the campaign.<sup>318 319 320</sup> <sup>321</sup> DPP supporters accused the NPP, a pro-independence party, of being red because the NPP did not fully agree with the DPP's procedures in passing the Anti-Infiltration Bill, and they charged that the TPP is red because the China Central Television aired a profile on TPP leader Ko Wen-je.<sup>322 323</sup> Moreover, in this binary, people are starting to paint blue (KMT's color) as red, and China-friendly as pro-China and pro-unification.<sup>324</sup> While it does not seem to be the case yet, there could be a point at which parties and people begin to label a view or person as red to end a debate, an act antithetical to the democracy and freedom that Taiwan holds dear.

---

311 NPP interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

312 Rigger interview, Taipei, 1/6/20.

313 Baum interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/12/19.

314 Minister Audrey Tang interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

315 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

316 Rigger interview, Taipei, 1/6/20.

317 王霜舟, "關於2020年台灣總統選舉, 你應該知道的幾個問題," *The New York Times*, 11 January 2020, <https://cn.nytimes.com/asia-pacific/20200111/taiwan-election/zh-hant/dual/>.

318 Lee, Yimou, and Ben Blanchard, "Chinese 'rumors' and 'cyber armies' - Taiwan fights election 'fake news,'" *Reuters*, 17 December 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-election-media/chinese-rumors-and-cyber-armies-taiwan-fights-election-fake-news-idUSKBNIYL2MF>.

319 KMT interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

320 TPP interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

321 NPP interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

322 Ibid.

323 TPP interview, Taipei, 1/16/20.

324 Storm Media interview, Taipei, 1/17/20.

## WHY SHOULD THE US CARE?

---

With a better understanding of what Chinese sharp power is (i.e. actors, tactics, effects) and how to defeat it, the US can further protect its elections domestically and defend its partners, image, and values internationally.

Domestically, the US can take steps to secure its information space and elections against Chinese influence operations. As the two great powers become increasingly competitive against one another, it would not be surprising to see China launch extensive information campaigns to distort truths, sow confusion, deepen polarization, and disrupt democracy from within American society. Taiwan is a testing ground for China to perfect its sharp power capabilities.<sup>325</sup> Just as Russia tried its influence campaigns in Ukraine first before launching them in the US in the 2016 elections, China could do the same.<sup>326</sup> In fact, similar to what it is doing in Australia, Beijing is already influencing Chinese Americans and Taiwanese Americans through controlling Chinese-language media outlets in the US.<sup>327</sup> <sup>328</sup> <sup>329</sup> As the American government and society prepare for the impending Russian sharp power attacks in the 2020 elections, they should consider the impact of sharp power from not one but two great powers.

Internationally, the US can protect its partners, its image, and its values in third countries. While China is investing in BRI infrastructure projects worldwide, it is also purchasing stakes of media companies in BRI countries.<sup>330</sup> With such financial control, Beijing can influence these outlets' reporting.<sup>331</sup> For example, it can silence stories on the human rights abuses in Xinjiang and on people's negative experiences with Chinese infrastructure projects.<sup>332</sup> As many BRI states are US allies and partners, America should help them guard against Chinese media infiltration. The US can and should do this because Chinese propaganda and disinformation in third countries can be directed at America as well. For example, during Taiwan's 2020 elections, Chinese propaganda and disinformation argued that Taiwan is just a chess piece to the US, that the US is an unreliable partner, that US President Donald Trump may sell out Taiwan, and that the US is meddling in Chinese internal affairs with its stance on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Taiwan Strait

---

325 MOFA interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

326 NED interview, Cambridge, MA, 12/13/19.

327 MOFA interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

328 Hartcher, Peter, "Power and Paranoia: Why the Chinese government aggressively pushes beyond its borders," *The Age*, 23 November 2019, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/peter-hartcher-on-china-s-infiltration-of-australia-20191118-p53bly.html?fbclid=IwAR3pZ61K3en7fAHZ6VID-pOfaA6KljhDpRq6AqqtI-Sps1xwUy2ihXJmD13c>.

329 Rolland, Nadege, "China's counteroffensive in the war of ideas."

330 Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence."

331 Reporters Without Borders. China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order

332 Essa, Azad, "China Is Buying African Media's Silence," *Foreign Policy*, 14 September 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/14/china-is-buying-african-medias-silence/>.

(see Appendix E).<sup>333</sup> Finally, the US can use lessons learned from Taiwan to defend its values in other countries. Beijing believes that journalism serves the government and not the people, that democratic values (such as the current global conception of human rights) are only "Western values," and that democratic rule is ineffective, and it is using sharp power in third countries to push these beliefs.<sup>334 335</sup> In a competition to see who can reshape the world order, including what that order stands for and values, the US must be in the race and combat the ways China advocates for its beliefs.<sup>336 337</sup>

---

333 Schmitt, Gary, and Michael Mazza, "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy."

334 Reporters Without Borders interview, Taipei, 1/7/20.

335 Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence."

336 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

337 Rolland, Nadege, "China's counteroffensive in the war of ideas."

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

---

Based on this report's findings on Chinese sharp power in Taiwan's 2020 elections, the author gives the 12 policy recommendations below for the US State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC) to better understand, identify, combat, and defeat Chinese and other foreign propaganda and disinformation for the US and its partners and allies. They are ordered by the level of importance (least [1] to most [12]) and implementation ease (easiest [1] to hardest [12]), taking into consideration time, budgetary resources, human resources, the level of bureaucratic approval, and the extent of inter-office, interagency coordination.

- 1. Create a database of propaganda and disinformation experts around the world and track their research findings:** Effective policies should be based on sound information, but the problem with crafting policies to counter sharp power currently is that this field is still emerging and information is lacking. However, different countries, such as Taiwan, have had a plethora of experiences researching fake news and experimenting with counter policies. By building this database, the GEC can close this information gap, accumulate these countries' knowledge and best practices, and use them as a foundation for counter-sharp-power strategies. The GEC can begin to implement this by working with regional bureaus to task US missions to collect this data in their respective countries.
- 2. Cooperate with the State Department's special envoy on countering China's UN influence to understand and combat Chinese efforts to use propaganda and disinformation to reshape international norms and values:** China has long been using propaganda and disinformation to paint global human rights standards as Western, imperialist, and anti-sovereignty in international fora. The US, along with its democratic allies, should have a strategy to counter such operations to win the battle of ideas against authoritarianism. The GEC and the special envoy can start by tracking and documenting sharp power actions at the UN to better understand their nature and aims.
- 3. Draw from the Taiwanese government's debunking strategy to create a State Department standard operating procedure (SOP) for responding to foreign propaganda and disinformation:** From accusing America of orchestrating the Hong Kong protests against the fugitive extradition bill to alleging that the US military brought the coronavirus to Wuhan, the Chinese government, alongside countless other foreign entities, is frequently spreading disinformation against the US and its foreign

activities.<sup>338 339</sup> The State Department should thus debunk and disarm such disinformation to protect America's image abroad by crafting an SOP response based on the characteristics of Taiwan's debunking strategy. These include being fast, short, high level, easily understandable, and easily spreadable. These characteristics will help the State Department propagate its message and dominate the international information space before disinformation against the US does.

4. **Conduct "combatting foreign propaganda and disinformation" workshops with Public Affairs Bureau officers so that they can react quickly and efficiently when attacks occur:** As the Taiwanese government has shown, responding to sharp power is an art even with an SOP in place. It is always a judgment call on if, when, and how it responds. Therefore, the GEC should host workshops and tabletop exercises for Public Affairs Bureau officers to teach them how to best respond efficiently and effectively without GEC support every time. For example, the GEC can explain to officers that the headline and first sentence of a debunking statement should be on the truth, not on the fake news, to avoid helping the fake news spread. It could also bring in experts such as Dr. Joan Donovan to help officers understand the nature of propaganda and disinformation and how they spread and infiltrate.
5. **Require each diplomatic mission to submit an SOP for responding to propaganda and disinformation against the US in its host country for the GEC's approval:** Because the State Department in Washington does not have the capacity to respond to every significant piece of disinformation against the US, and because not every piece of disinformation merits a response as high level as the State Department's, each mission should have its own SOP for rapidly and effectively countering sharp power against the US in its host country. Each SOP should be tailored to the host country's cultural and informational environments, as the audience is not the international community—like the State Department's—but that country's people and media. In this way, each mission will be able to reclaim America's narrative in its host country and not allow others to reshape America's image.
6. **Add monitoring and reporting on Chinese propaganda and disinformation operations globally to the State Department's regional China watchers' portfolio:** There is currently little systematic and consistent monitoring of Chinese influence operations abroad, so the State Department does not have a full picture of the problem. Without understanding the issue's severity, it cannot build sufficient and sound policy options. Foggy Bottom can address this by tasking its regional China watchers to

---

338 Myers, Steven L., "In Hong Kong Protests, China Angrily Connects Dots Back to U.S.," *The New York Times*, 5 September 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/05/world/asia/china-hong-kong-protests.html>.

339 Myers, Steven L., "China Spins Tale That the U.S. Army Started the Coronavirus Epidemic," *The New York Times*, 13 March 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/world/asia/coronavirus-china-conspiracy-theory.html>.

document the trends and characteristics of Beijing's propaganda and disinformation campaigns in different regions. With the collected information, the GEC can then help craft a whole-of-government strategy to counter Chinese sharp power.

- 7. Add monitoring and reporting on propaganda and disinformation against the US in the host country to the portfolio of each mission's information officer:** The Taiwan case study shows that Chinese influence operations adapt to each country's political and informational environments and infiltrate accordingly. Similar to Russia's, Chinese operations exploit existing weaknesses in the target country's media ecosystem and widen the societal divides that are already present. Thus, recognizing that sharp power activities against the US look differently in each country, each mission should task its information officer and media team to analyze and report on such activities, as well as provide recommendations for countermeasures. In this way, each mission can have a strategic communication counterstrategy that is both targeted and focused.
- 8. Host a conference that brings together relevant civil societies, businesses, NGOs, and government agencies worldwide to brainstorm ways to combat propaganda and disinformation and exchange best practices:** Every country struggles with foreign sharp power, and every country understands and confronts this problem differently. In Taiwan, instead of focusing on regulating the platforms, it has focused on crowdsourced fact-checking, rapid government debunking, and raising media literacy for susceptible groups (e.g. the elderly). Through this conference, the State Department can draw from knowledge around the world, create networks that can help expedite learning on this issue, and provide a forum where ideas and insights can build on one another to create innovative counter policies. The State Department should pay special attention to what democratic societies are doing and how they defend against sharp power while still respecting, and even using, liberal ideals such as transparency and individual rights protection.
- 9. Host a high-level conference or ministerial on propaganda and disinformation to highlight the issue's severity and find ways for America and its allies and partners to jointly address the problem:** Many smaller countries (e.g. less-developed ones in the BRI) may feel powerless against influence operations from larger states such as China and Russia. The Taiwanese government shared that partnerships with the US and other countries have made it realize that it is not alone in this fight and given it the confidence to rise and resist Chinese sharp power.<sup>340</sup> By hosting this conference, the US can accomplish several objectives: highlight to the world how widespread and detrimental authoritarian sharp power is; show its allies and partners that the US is

---

340 MOFA interview, Taipei, 1/8/20.

with them in this battle; signal to China, Russia, and its other competitors that the US will deploy resources to meet this challenge; and demonstrate America's global leadership on this issue.

10. **Contract NGOs and businesses to monitor for propaganda and disinformation against the US in each country through its diplomatic missions:** The Taiwanese government's media monitoring group reveals that identifying propaganda and disinformation and their impacts requires knowing what the local culture and media ecosystem are, how information travels through that ecosystem, and how content becomes viral in that system. US diplomats and their local staff may not have the expertise and bandwidth to acquire that knowledge, so each mission can fill that knowledge and time gap by contracting local entities to identify and assess the propaganda and disinformation packages against the US in its host country. This information will be helpful to each mission in reporting on the problem and recommending policies to address it.
11. **Work with intelligence agencies (e.g. the National Security Agency, the Treasury Department's Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Office, and the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau) to identify which entities are launching these propaganda and disinformation attacks against the US and its allies and partners:**<sup>341</sup> Taiwanese experts on Chinese sharp power stated that many countries like Taiwan do not have the intelligence capabilities to attribute foreign attacks and uncover operations.<sup>342 343</sup> As a result, aggressors can claim plausible deniability. The GEC can receive support requests from American partners through US missions and work with the intelligence community to help them identify these attacks and their aggressors. By doing so, the US can show its allies and partners who their real friends and adversaries are.
12. **Work with the US Treasury Department and other State Department sanctions bureaus to sanction these entities (see point 11) so that they cannot hire local agents and intermediaries in target countries to create and amplify their desired propaganda and disinformation:** Propaganda and disinformation are often created and spread not by the attacking entities, but local intermediaries funded by these entities.<sup>344</sup> In Taiwan's case, these intermediaries are compromised media outlets. To stem

---

341 Costa, Christopher P., and Joshua A. Geltzer, "To Fight Disinformation, Rethink Counterintelligence," *Defense One*, 14 October 2019, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2019/10/fight-disinformation-rethink-counterintelligence/160582/>.

342 Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang interview, Taipei, 1/15/20.

343 Journalist Chih-Te Lee interview, Taipei, 1/20/20.

344 Hala, Martin, "Making Foreign Companies Serve China: Outsourcing Propaganda to Local Entities in the Czech Republic," *The Jamestown Foundation*, 17 January 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/making-foreign-companies-serve-china-outsourcing-propaganda-to-local-entities-in-the-czech-republic/>.

the funding, the GEC can work with the Treasury Department and other State Department bureaus to sanction these entities.<sup>345</sup> This will limit their financial reach and their ability to recruit locals in targeted countries to do their bidding. Without local knowledge, expertise, and support, these attacks will likely be easier to identify and less effective in manipulating public opinion and discourse.

---

345 Dr. Puma Shen interview, Taipei, 1/21/20.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWEES

### Academia

Dr. Gary King, Harvard University  
Dr. Jaw-Nian Huang (黃兆年), National Chengchi University  
Dr. Joan Donovan, Harvard University  
Dr. Kai-Ping Huang (黃凱莘), National Taiwan University  
Dr. Lawrence Reardon, University of New Hampshire  
Dr. Matthew Baum, Harvard University  
Dr. Puma Shen (沈伯洋), National Taipei University  
Dr. Robert Ross, Boston College  
Dr. Shelley Rigger, Davidson College  
Dr. Steven Goldstein, Harvard University  
Professor on China, anonymous, Harvard University  
Senior Journalist Chih-Te Lee (李志德), National Taiwan University

### Civil society

Dr. Yi-Suo Tzeng (曾怡碩), Taiwan Institute for National Defense and Security Research  
National Endowment for Democracy  
Reporters Without Borders, Taiwan

### Government

Audrey Tang, Taiwan's Digital Minister  
Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Taiwan's National Communications Commission  
Taiwan's National Security Council  
Taiwan's Presidential Office

### News media

Online  
Central News Agency (state-owned)  
Foreign journalist #1  
Foreign journalist #2  
News Lens  
Storm Media  
Print (the four main newspapers)  
Apple Daily  
China Times (2)  
Liberty Times  
United Daily News  
Television  
SET  
TTV  
TVBS

### Politics

Democratic Progressive Party (ruling party)  
Kuomintang (main opposition party)  
New Power Party (4th largest party) (2)  
President Tsai's re-election campaign  
Taiwan People's Party (3rd largest party)

### Private sector

Facebook  
LINE

## APPENDIX B: GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### General questions for experts

- Are there sharp power attacks from China?
- When did the attacks start?
- How do you detect Chinese sharp power?
- Is China meeting its objectives?
- What other traditional and new media outlets are compromised?
- Was there learning from Russia? Any evidence?
- What were the effects of Chinese sharp power on Taiwan's 2018 elections?
- Did they launch sharp power campaigns on the 2020 elections? How do you know?
- What were the aims of Chinese sharp power in Taiwan's 2020 elections? Did it succeed?
- What were the tools of Chinese sharp power in Taiwan's 2020 elections?
- What were the effects of Chinese sharp power in Taiwan's 2020 elections?
- What are the differences between Taiwan's 2018 and 2020 elections, in terms of Chinese sharp power attacks?
- Why should the US care? How can the US help?

### General questions for parties

- How does your party view Chinese propaganda and disinformation?
- What is your party's policies on Chinese propaganda and disinformation? On propaganda and disinformation in general?
- Was your party a target of Chinese propaganda and disinformation in the 2020 elections? What about general propaganda and disinformation? If so, what were the attacks? What did they look like?
- How did your party respond? Were the responses effective?
- Do you think your party's election results were affected by Chinese propaganda and disinformation? If so, how?
- Was your party a target of Chinese propaganda and disinformation since its founding? Of general propaganda and disinformation?
- Lessons learned on Chinese propaganda and disinformation?

### General questions for reporters

- What are some weaknesses in Taiwan's media ecosystem?
- How do you view the Want Want Media Group case? Do you believe that the Taiwan Affairs Office regularly gives editorial orders to those under Want Want?
- How do you view the lawsuit against CNA and *Financial Times* from Want Want?
- What are other types and cases of Chinese infiltration in Taiwan's media space?
- Are there cases of it in the online media space?
- Why are journalists, especially those in compromised companies, not speaking up?

What have been the effects of Chinese media infiltration on journalism in Taiwan?  
How are journalists themselves fighting back against Chinese media infiltration?  
How do journalists view the Anti-Infiltration Bill? Why do they view it like that?

## APPENDIX C: TAIWANESE OUTLETS' POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFILIATIONS<sup>346</sup>

### Pro-DPP (green camp)

Print

» *Liberty Times* (自由時報)

Television

» Formosa TV (民視)

» SET (三立)

### Pro-KMT (blue camp)

Print

» *United Daily News*  
(聯合報)

Television

» ETTV (東森)

» TVBS

Online

» *Storm Media* (風傳媒)

### "Red media" (accused)

Print

» *China Times* (中國時報)

» *Want Daily* (旺報)

Television

» CTi TV (中天)

» CTV (中視)

### Publicly owned

Television

» CTS (華視)

» Public Television  
Service (公視)

Wire Service

» *Central News Agency*  
(中央社)

### Less partisan

Print

» *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報)

Television

» Era TV (年代)

» Next TV (壹電視)

» TTV (台視)

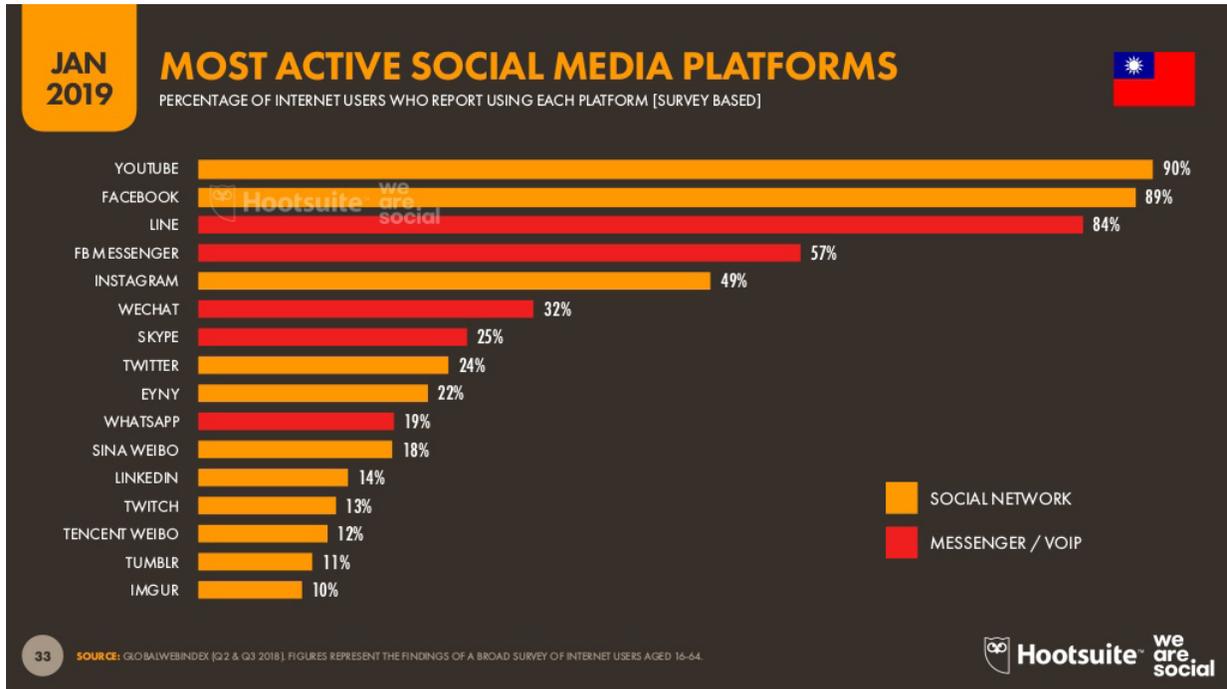
Online

» *Up Media* (上報)

---

346 Based on interviews with journalists and government officials.

## APPENDIX D: TAIWAN'S MOST ACTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN 2018



## APPENDIX E: SALIENT CHINESE PROPAGANDA AND DISINFORMATION EXAMPLES

The author collected these examples during his two-month (November 2019 to January 2020) media monitoring of outlets with suspected Chinese government ties.

### Against defected Chinese spy William Wang



**Figure 1:** "Victim of William Wang exposing him as a fraud" (*Want Daily*, 12/30/19)



**Figure 2:** "Global Times' exclusive discovery: Xiang Xin does not know William Wang" (*Want Daily*, 11/29/19).



**Figure 3:** "Mainland media publishing video showing William Wang's fraud case court trial" (*Want Daily*, 11/28/19).



**Figure 4:** "Fake CCP spy case, the Green camp gets hit in the face" (*Want Daily*, 11/25/19).



**Figure 5:** "From Global Times, William Wang defrauds money, kneels and begs for forgiveness afterward" (*China Times*, 2019).



**Figure 6:** "Australian media: CCP spy case a farce" (*China Times*, 12/1/19).



**Figure 7:** "Mainland media publishes court case video, William Wang case: fraudster becomes spy" (*China Times*, 11/28/19).



**Figure 8:** "A Ponzi scheme" (re Chinese spy defection case) (*China Times*, 11/24/19).



**Figure 9:** "CCP spy case, a Western intelligence manipulation" (*China Times*, 11/2019).

## Against Taiwan's Anti-Infiltration Bill



**Figure 10:** "Anti-Infiltration Law should change its name to 'Blocking Cross-Strait Exchanges Law'" (*Want Daily*, 12/31/19).



**Figure 11:** "The mainland will benefit Taiwan, counterstrike against Anti-Infiltration Bill" (*Want Daily*, 12/30/19).



**Figure 12:** "Anti-Infiltration Bill, controlling one million Taiwanese merchant families" (*Want Daily*, 12/27/19).



**Figure 13:** "Anti-Infiltration Bill about to pass a reading, Taiwanese merchants worry about a return to martial law" (*Want Daily*, 12/24/19).



**Figure 14:** "Xi promotes peaceful unification; the green camp changes the law to resist, builds a wall against exchanges" (*Want Daily*, 12/23/19).



**Figure 15:** "The green camp blocks cross-Strait scholarly exchanges" (*Want Daily*, 11/28/19).



**Figure 16:** "Han blasts Anti-Infiltration Bill, the bill is strapping a bomb on the citizenry's neck" (*China Times*, 12/30/19).



**Figure 17:** "China News Service: obtaining a scholarship or internship could be illegal, Anti-Infiltration Bill is hurting Taiwan's own youth" (*China Times*, 12/22/19).

## Against the United States



**Figure 18:** "Surrounding China, the US completes its set up" (*Want Daily*, 12/20/19).



**Figure 19:** "Five of America's Indo-Pacific partners disrupting the Taiwan Strait, provoking China" (*Want Daily* 12/8/19).



**Figure 20:** "China strikes back against America's meddling of internal affairs" (*Want Daily*, 12/4/19).



**Figure 21:** "Trump signs 'Hong Kong Interference Act,' infuriating Beijing" (*Want Daily*, 11/29/19).



**Figure 22:** "American think tank promotes US-Taiwanese official communication office, China promises military retaliation if the office is established" (*Want Daily*, 11/27/19).



**Figure 23:** "The US Congress passes the 'Hong Kong Interference Act'" (*Want Daily*, 11/21/19).



**Figure 24:** "The cross-strait status quo is hard to maintain" (*Want Daily*, 11/16/19).



**Figure 25:** "Scholar: Trump might sell out Taiwan" (*Want Daily*, 11/9/19).



**Figure 26:** "Xi-Trump phone call: China is concerned about American interference into Hong Kong and Taiwan affairs" (*China Times*, 2019).

## APPENDIX F: DISCLAIMERS

*Assumptions:* This report operates under the assumption that the interviewees were honest and candid. The author has no reason at the time of writing this to question that assumption. Where possible, the information provided by the interviewees was cross-checked with information from other interviewees and publicly available information.

*Limitations:* This report has two main limitations: one, the author did not interview Chinese government officials and give them an opportunity to provide their views. The author sought to address this by interviewing Taiwanese organizations accused of being infiltrated by the Chinese government but understands that the Chinese perspective is still lacking. Two, this research relies only on qualitative data. This is mainly because the study of the effects of propaganda and disinformation is such a new field that scholars are still attempting to create a sound quantitative method to estimate their effects.

*Ethical considerations and financial transparency:* Due to the sensitivity of this topic and the Chinese government's penetration into Taiwanese society, this report attributes most interviewees by only their respective organizations. The author deems this necessary to protect the sources' safety, even if it affects this report's credibility. This project is funded by Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation. Each center provided 2,000 dollars for the author to conduct research in Taiwan.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Aspinwall, Nick, "Taiwan's War on Fake News Is Hitting the Wrong Targets," *Foreign Policy*, 10 January 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/10/taiwan-election-tsai-disinformation-china-war-fake-news-hitting-wrong-targets/>.
- Aspinwall, Nick, "Taiwan Shaken by Concerns Over Chinese Influence in Media, Press Freedom," *The Diplomat*, 27 July 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/taiwan-shaken-by-concerns-over-chinese-influence-in-media-press-freedom/>.
- Backes, Oliver, and Andrew Swab, "Cognitive Warfare: The Russian Threat to Election Integrity in the Baltic States," *Harvard Kennedy School*, 2 April 2019.
- Cardenal, Juan P., et al., "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," *National Endowment for Democracy*, December 2017.
- Cheng, Ting-fang, and Lauly Li, "Taiwan to block Tencent and Baidu streaming sites on security risk," *Nikkei Asian Review*, 29 March 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Taiwan-to-block-Tencent-and-Baidu-streaming-sites-on-security-risk>.
- Chien, Li-chung, et al., "China using fake news to divide Taiwan," *Taipei Times*, 16 September 2018, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2018/09/16/2003700513>.
- Chung, Li-hua, "Little new in China's incentives: official," *Taipei Times*, 13 March 2018, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2018/03/13/2003689173>.
- Cole, J Michael, "China Intensifies Disinformation Campaign Against Taiwan," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 19 January 2017, <https://sentinel.tw/china-disinformation-tw/>.
- Cole, J Michael, "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's Elections is Part of a Two-Pronged Attack on Democracy," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 24 October 2018, <https://sentinel.tw/chinese-interference-in-taiwans-elections-is-part-of-a-two-pronged-attack-on-democracy/>.
- Cole, J Michael, "More Than 70 Participants From Taiwanese Media Industry Attend 4th Cross-Strait Media Summit in Beijing," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 11 May 2019, <https://sentinel.tw/more-than-70-participants-from-taiwanese-media-industry-attend-4th-cross-strait-media-summit-in-beijing/>.
- Cole, J Michael, "That's What 'Fake News' Looks Like and What It Does to Democracy," *Taiwan Sentinel*, 12 November 2018, <https://sentinel.tw/fake-news-kaohsiung-democracy/>.

- Costa, Christopher P., and Joshua A. Geltzer, "To Fight Disinformation, Rethink Counterintelligence," *Defense One*, 14 October 2019, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2019/10/fight-disinformation-rethink-counterintelligence/160582/>.
- DeAeth, Duncan, "Interview with AIT chairman causes controversy at Taiwanese TV station," *Taiwan News*, 17 November 2018, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3577702>.
- Donovan, Joan, and Brian Friedberg, "Source Hacking: Media Manipulation in Practice," *Data and Society*, 4 September 2019, <https://datasociety.net/output/source-hacking-media-manipulation-in-practice/>.
- Essa, Azad, "China Is Buying African Media's Silence," *Foreign Policy*, 14 September 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/14/china-is-buying-african-medias-silence/>.
- "Freedom in the World 2019: Taiwan," *Freedom House*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/taiwan>.
- Government Communication Service, "RESIST: Counter-disinformation toolkit," *UK Government*, 2019.
- Han, Kirsten, "Line is another chat app rife with spam, scams, and bad information. The volunteer-supported Cofacts is fact-checking them in the open," *Nieman Lab*, 21 August 2018, <https://www.niemanlab.org/2018/08/line-is-another-chat-app-rife-with-spam-scams-and-bad-information-the-volunteer-supported-cofacts-is-fact-checking-them-in-the-open/>.
- Hartcher, Peter, "Power and Paranoia: Why the Chinese government aggressively pushes beyond its borders," *The Age*, 23 November 2019, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/peter-hartcher-on-china-s-infiltration-of-australia-20191118-p53bly.html?fbclid=IwAR3pZ61K3en7fAHZ6VID-pOfaA6KljhDpRq6AqqtISps1xwUy2ihXJmD13c>.
- Hille, Kathrin, "China's 'sharp power' play in Taiwan," *Financial Times*, 21 November 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/5c272b90-ec12-11e8-89c8-d36339d835c0>.
- Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan primaries highlight fears over China's political influence," *Financial Times*, 16 July 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/036b609a-a768-11e9-984c-fac8325aaa04>.
- Hobbs, Renee, "The Blurring of Art, Journalism, and Advocacy: Confronting 21st Century Propaganda in a World of Online Journalism," *Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, 2013.

- Hochschild, Jennifer, "Conducting Intensive Interviews and Elite Interviews," Workshop on Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research [Internet], *Harvard University*, 2009.
- Horton, Chris, "Specter of Meddling by Beijing Looms Over Taiwan's Elections," *The New York Times*, 22 November 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/22/world/asia/taiwan-elections-meddling.html>.
- Hsiao, Russell, "CCP Propaganda against Taiwan Enters the Social Age," *The Jamestown Foundation*, 24 April 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/ccp-propaganda-against-taiwan-enters-the-social-age/>.
- Hsieh, Milo, "Red Media and CCP's Influence Operations: How Taiwanese Media Became Beijing's Proxy," *The New Lens*, 9 July 2019, <https://international.thenewslens.com/article/121803>.
- Hsu, Chien-Jung, "China's Influence on Taiwan's Media," *Asian Survey* 54, no. 3 (2014), 515-539.
- Huang, Jaw-Nian, "The China Factor in Taiwan's Media: Outsourcing Chinese Censorship Abroad," *China Perspectives*, March 2017, <https://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/7388>.
- Huang, Paul, "Chinese Cyber-Operatives Boosted Taiwan's Insurgent Candidate," *Foreign Policy*, 26 June 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/26/chinese-cyber-operatives-boosted-taiwans-insurgent-candidate/>.
- Huang, Tzu-Ti, "Facebook to set up 'war room' in Taiwan ahead of elections," *Taiwan News*, 31 December 2019, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3847551>.
- Jamieson, Kathleen H. *Cyberwar: How Russian Hackers and Trolls Helped Elect a President*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Jennings, Ralph, "Taiwan Raises Suspicion Rival China Is Influencing Elections," *Voice of America*, 30 July 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/taiwan-raises-suspicion-rival-china-influencing-elections>.
- "June 13: Swinging the Vote: How the CCP Influences the Media and Elections in Taiwan and Beyond," *Global Taiwan Institute*, 13 June 2019, <http://globaltaiwan.org/2019/06/june-13-swinging-the-vote-how-the-ccp-influences-the-media-and-elections-in-taiwan-and-beyond/>.

- Kassam, Natasha, "China Has Lost Taiwan, and It Knows It," *The New York Times*, 1 December 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/opinion/china-taiwan-election.html>.
- King, Gary, et al., "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument," *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 3 (2017), 484-501.
- Lee, Yimou, and Ben Blanchard, "Chinese 'rumors' and 'cyber armies' - Taiwan fights election 'fake news,'" *Reuters*, 17 December 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-election-media/chinese-rumors-and-cyber-armies-taiwan-fights-election-fake-news-idUSKBN1YL2MF>.
- Lee, Yimou, and I-hwa Cheng, "Paid 'news': China using Taiwan media to win hearts and minds on island - sources," *Reuters*, 9 August 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-media-insight/paid-news-china-using-taiwan-media-to-win-hearts-and-minds-on-island-sources-idUSKCN1UZ0I4>.
- Lin, I-fan, "Made-in-China fake news overwhelms Taiwan," *Stop Fake*, 14 December 2018, <https://www.stopfake.org/en/made-in-china-fake-news-overwhelms-taiwan/>.
- Lin, Sean, "Host of amendments to combat fake news proposed," *Taipei Times*, 14 December 2018, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2018/12/14/2003706076/1>.
- Lo, Sonny, et al., *China's New United Front Work in Hong Kong: Penetrative Politics and Its Implications*, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Lytvynenko, Jane, and Logan McDonald, "Hundreds of Propaganda Accounts Targeting Iran and Qatar Have Been Removed From Facebook," *Buzzfeed News*, 3 October 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/janelytvynenko/uae-propaganda>.
- Mansted, Katherine, "The Public Square in the Digital Age: Protecting Australia's democracy from cyber-enabled foreign interference," *Harvard Kennedy School*, 27 March 2018.
- McKenzie, Nick, and Alex Joske, "Recant or die: Alleged threat to self-confessed Chinese spy Wang Liqiang," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/recant-or-die-alleged-threat-to-self-confessed-chinese-spy-wang-liqiang-20200107-p53pkl.html>.
- McKenzie, Nick, et al., "Defecting Chinese spy offers information trove to Australian government," *The Age*, 25 November 2019, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/defecting-chinese-spy-offers-information-trove-to-australian-government-20191122-p53d1l.html>.

- Miller, Carl, "China and Taiwan clash over Wikipedia edits," *BBC News*, 5 October 2019, [https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-49921173?fbclid=IwAR0UK56cWuEcAGQUPR3sZxk-MEQgNvYN3VI91UyYkWsxd4zbb\\_Odoe4kQYLw](https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-49921173?fbclid=IwAR0UK56cWuEcAGQUPR3sZxk-MEQgNvYN3VI91UyYkWsxd4zbb_Odoe4kQYLw).
- Monaco, Nicholas J., "Computational Propaganda in Taiwan: Where Digital Democracy Meets Automated Autocracy," *Computational Propaganda Research Project*, 2017.
- Myers, Steven L., "China Spins Tale That the U.S. Army Started the Coronavirus Epidemic," *The New York Times*, 13 March 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/world/asia/coronavirus-china-conspiracy-theory.html>.
- Myers, Steven L., "In Hong Kong Protests, China Angrily Connects Dots Back to U.S.," *The New York Times*, 5 September 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/05/world/asia/china-hong-kong-protests.html>.
- Myers, Steven L., and Damien Cave, "Would-Be Chinese Defector Details Covert Campaigns in Hong Kong and Taiwan," *The New York Times*, 23 November 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/world/asia/defector-spy-taiwan-hong-kong.html>.
- Pan, Jason, "Beware of disinformation ahead of vote, Tsai warns," *Taipei Times*, 28 October 2019, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/10/28/2003724792>.
- Rolland, Nadege, "China's counteroffensive in the war of ideas," *Lowy Institute*, 24 February 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/china-s-counteroffensive-war-ideas>.
- Sam, Cedric, "Taiwan 2020 Election Results," *Bloomberg*, 11 January 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-taiwan-election-results/>.
- Schmitt, Gary, and Michael Mazza, "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy," *Global Taiwan Institute*, October 2019.
- Su, Alice, "Can fact-checkers save Taiwan from a flood of Chinese fake news?," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-16/taiwan-the-new-frontier-of-disinformation-battles-chinese-fake-news-as-elections-approach>.
- "Taiwan can't gamble on cross-Straits crisis," *Global Times*, 1 April 2019, <http://www.global-times.cn/content/1144298.shtml>.
- Teng, Pei-ju, "Taiwan media conglomerate receives orders from Chinese authorities: report," *Taiwan News*, 17 July 2019, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3746341>.

Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, Deb, and Sinan Aral, "The spread of true and false news online," *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): 1146-1151.

Walker, Christopher, and Jessica Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power: How Authoritarian States Project Influence," *Foreign Affairs*, 16 November 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power>.

Walker, Christopher, et al., "How Democracies Can Fight Authoritarian Sharp Power," *Foreign Affairs*, 16 August 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-08-16/how-democracies-can-fight-authoritarian-sharp-power?cid=int-lea&pgtype=hpg>.

Woliver, Laura R., "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing," *American Political Science Association*, December 2002.

Wood, Daniel, et al., "China Used Twitter To Disrupt Hong Kong Protests, But Efforts Began Years Earlier," *NPR*, 17 September 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/17/758146019/china-used-twitter-to-disrupt-hong-kong-protests-but-efforts-began-years-earlier?fbclid=IwAR2JHmGcbeZXlqVERLE1viWgcuULuOE1-h4NMQjt1gYOUdzjA1oObfSSqJE>.

Wu, Jeffrey, and Joseph Yeh, "Facebook to establish 'war room' in Taipei ahead of elections," *Focus Taiwan*, 30 December 2019, <https://focustaiwan.tw/sci-tech/201912300015>.

Yeh, Su-ping, and Evelyn Kao, "President Tsai warns of China's influence on Taiwan's media," *Focus Taiwan*, 12 May 2019, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201905120006.aspx>.

"《反滲透法》條文看這! 受滲透干預大選最重關5年、罰千萬," *Liberty Times*, 31 December 2019, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/3025949>.

"10萬人凱道雨傘花 紅色媒體 滾出台灣 反滲透 群眾自發上街 沒便當沒動員 不畏風雨相挺," *Apple Daily*, 24 June 2019, <https://tw.news.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20190624/38373356/>.

"中國砸錢置入 墮落台媒「歌頌中共」," *蘋果日報*, 13 September 2019, <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20190913/38443885/>.

"中國網軍假新聞轟炸: 網路斬首鎖定小英," *壹週刊*, 25 January 2017, <https://tw.nextmgz.com/realtimenews/news/232418>.

"去年被罰600萬! 中天電視遭檢舉造謠 NCC再度開罰60萬," *Yahoo News*, 15 January 2020, <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E5%8E%BB%E5%B9%B4%E8%A2%AB%E7%BD%B0600%E8%90%AC-%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%A9%E9%9B%BB%E8%A6%96%E9%81%AD%E6%AA%A2%E8%88%89%E9%80%A0%E8%AC%A0-ncc%E5%86%->

8D%E5%BA%A6%E9%96%8B%E7%BD%B060%E8%90%AC-082900734.html.

"反滲透法：台灣大選前夕通過該法瞄準了哪些目標," BBC, 31 December 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/chinese-news-50922074>.

"反滲透法剛過...大師鏈插旗北京急了 宣布：放棄台灣市場," SETN, 31 December 2019, <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=664029>.

"瞄準總統大選「無聲戰爭已開打」解析五毛黨擾台3招," 蘋果日報, 13 September 2019, <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20190913/38443880/>.

"紅色滲透 台23網媒照抄中國官媒 簡體字原封不動 同步批蔡英文 疑幕後黑手操控," Apple Daily, 12 July 2019, <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/daily/20190712/38389276/>.

"諷刺! 猛攻小英論文慘淪中國農場文!," 觀點新聞, 17 October 2019, <https://www.viewpoint.media/archives/1583>.

"韓國瑜酸王立強共諜冒牌貨 如來台一定提告【最新快訊】," TTV News, 26 November 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9atq3sztY>.

何清漣. *紅色滲透：中國媒體全球擴張的真相*. 新北市：八旗文化出版, 2019.

劉榮, 丁國鈞, "【全文】盟邦提供情資憂台成克里米亞 境外訊息戰關鍵報告曝光," *Mirror Media*, 27 October 2018, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20181024inv004/?fbclid=IwAROXtdN08TEaDd7UMJCMCfc1P83zjFSloxUBaxeCmW>.

劉致昕, "台灣被檢舉的假消息 三成來自中國," *Business Weekly*, 20 September 2018, [https://www.businessweekly.com.tw/magazine/Article\\_mag\\_page.aspx?id=64444](https://www.businessweekly.com.tw/magazine/Article_mag_page.aspx?id=64444).

劉致昕, 柯皓翔, 許家瑜, "LINE群組的假訊息從哪來? 跨國調查, 追出內容農場「直銷」產業鏈," *報導者*, 12 December 2019, <https://www.twreporter.org/a/information-warfare-business-disinformation-fake-news-behind-line-groups>.

吳妍, "韓粉15萬人臉書社團遭下架 網：國家機器動得很厲害," *Mirror Media*, 13 December 2019, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20191213edi015/>.

孔德廉, 柯皓翔, 劉致昕, 許家瑜, "打不死的内容農場——揭開「密訊」背後操盤手和中國因素," *報導者*, 25 December 2019, <https://www.twreporter.org/a/information-warfare-business-content-farm-mission>.

張榮祥, "小吃店傳綁特定新聞台 公平會立案調查," *CNA*, 20 March 2019, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201903200142.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1tEVKJPQA7Tt2xjS2eRp>.

5cJ-5oaKul27NQR3tBxbjSJPvhk0oDcUR8h3k.

張讚國, "張讚國觀點: 從中共偽政權到中國假新聞," *風傳媒*, 24 September 2018, <https://www.storm.mg/article/506656>.

沈伯洋, 黃祥儒, "深度評論: 我站在2020大選網路戰最前線," *Apple Daily*, 2 January 2020, <https://tw.appledaily.com/headline/20200102/GKKQIITMXD6CRDC2CS6VM5FFXM/>.

王霜舟, "關於2020年台灣總統選舉, 你應該知道的幾個問題," *The New York Times*, 11 January 2020, <https://cn.nytimes.com/asia-pacific/20200111/taiwan-election/zh-hant/dual/>.

羊正鈺, "澳媒報導王立強被蔡正元威脅「遭民進黨收買」, 蔡正元公布錄音否認," *The News Lens*, 9 January 2020, <https://www.thenewslens.com/article/129821>.

蘇志宗, "防網軍帶風向 唐鳳: 加快澄清找出訊息傳播路徑," *CNA*, 11 December 2019, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201912110191.aspx>.

邱學慈, "《紅色滲透》何清漣: 台灣門戶洞開, 統一是遲早的事," *天下雜誌*, 10 May 2019, <https://www.cw.com.tw/article/article.action?id=5095149>.

鍾麗華, 許國楨, "國安單位: 反年改陳抗有中國勢力介入," *自由時報*, 18 July 2017, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/1119633>.

陳弘美, "小英「論文門」成美國政治事件 他驚不妙了!," *中時電子報*, 5 March 2020, <https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20200305003164-260407?chdtv>.

陳瑞霖, "LINE 訊息查證平台正式上線, 未來可望用 AI 輔助人類揪出固定模式的可疑訊息," *Tech News*, 22 July 2019, <https://technews.tw/2019/07/22/line-launch-fact-checker-platform-officially-it-might-be-possible-to-use-ai-helping-human-fact-checkers/#more-489372>.

**Report Design:  
Matthew Ragazzo**



**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT