

# Media Warfare: How Taiwan Can Win the Battle for the Cognitive Domain

Kerry K. Gershaneck

Professor & Taiwan Fellow

Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies, College of International Affairs, National  
Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan

## Abstract

The People's Republic of China (PRC)'s *Media Warfare* against the Republic of China (Taiwan) poses an existential threat to this island-nation and its democracy. Also called *Public Opinion Warfare*, *Media Warfare* involves using public opinion as a weapon by propagandizing and coercion through various forms of media to weaken the adversary's will to fight while ensuring strength of will and unity on one's own side. As one of the foundational *Three Warfares* that underpin the PRC's general *Political Warfare*, *Media Warfare* is a powerful manifestation of Beijing's *Sharp Power* and a vital weapon in Beijing's drive to achieve global hegemony. Beijing's ultimate goal is to absorb Taiwan into communist China. To achieve this goal, its primary objectives are to destroy Taiwan's democracy and to deter any attempt by Taiwan to formally seek what Beijing calls "independence". To these ends, the PRC employs *Media Warfare* to divide and demoralize the people of Taiwan in conjunction with other strategies such as military threats, diplomatic containment, and economic absorption.

This paper is designed to help the government of the ROC (Taiwan) to better understand how to identify and combat PRC *Media Warfare* so that it can retain its hard-won democracy, sovereignty, and freedoms.

## **An Overview of PRC Media Warfare Overview**

The PRC's version of *Media Warfare* is expansive: it entails persuasion, incitement, buying, coercion, online terror, and propaganda, as well as false messages via misinformation, disinformation, and fake news.

And that is just a start.

According to the *Prospect Foundation's* Yu-yen Chien, “studies show that, in addition to purchases of media stocks, system operators' stocks, and news content through media replacement, the PRC also exerts its sharp power using anonymous IP addresses to set the agenda, influence news trends, do news laundering, and get fabricated news into Taiwan Media.”

<sup>1</sup> These media manipulations, in turn, suppress Taiwan's “consciousness” which “impacts elections in Taiwan, Taiwanese people's national identity, and their feelings about China”.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Chia-Lung Lin, former chairman of the *Taiwan Thinktank*, reports:

*China is exploiting Taiwan's democratic and open system, via the raising of multiple wedge issues simultaneously, with the intent of causing contradiction, competition, and conflict within Taiwanese society.*

*In addition, China is facilitating the dissemination of false information through the control of newspapers, television, radio, and online media in*

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<sup>1</sup> Yu-yen Chien, “The Influence of China's Sharp Power on Taiwan's Media” (March 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, 《*The Prospect Foundation*》, <https://www.pf.org.tw/files/6477/E2F99601-AEDC-48C9-89D6-660C73C968EA>.

<sup>2</sup> Yu-yen Chien, “The Influence of China's Sharp Power on Taiwan's Media”.

*Taiwan. Even more disturbing is that China has directly supported pro-China forces within Taiwan to speak on behalf of Beijing.*

*This piercing, infiltration, or penetration of the political and information environment allows authoritarian countries to use sharp power to infiltrate the social structure of a democratic system, and incite as well as widen the existing differences, and is the most serious challenge currently facing Taiwan.*<sup>3</sup>

While the origins of the PRC's *Media Warfare* extend back before the advent of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1920s, it was propelled far beyond any previously imagined capabilities beginning in 2009. As part of an overhaul of China's external propaganda structure caused by perceived "discourse power" failures leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the CCP devised its "Grand Overseas Propaganda Campaign." In 2009, China announced that it would be investing 45 billion RMB (approximately \$6.6 billion USD) into strengthening the international presence of party-state media outlets.<sup>4</sup>

Since General Secretary Xi Jinping ascended to power in 2012, he has led a massive expansion in political and *media warfare*, investing new energy, attention, and resources to achieve once-hidden-but-now-openly-expressed global ambitions.<sup>5</sup> He has framed the importance of *Media Warfare* as part of his broader push to achieve China's *national rejuvenation* and the CCP's *Two Centenary Goals*. Both are ambitious

<sup>3</sup> Chia-Lung Lin, "How to Face China's Sharp Power Collaboratively between Taiwan-US: Welcome Remarks" (2018 2nd Annual TTT-GTI Conference on Taiwan-US Relations, Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Taipei City, Taiwan, December 2, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> David A. Gitter & Brock M. Erdahl, "Telling China's Story Well: An Investigation into Chinese Influence Operations Targeting American Chinese-Language Media Outlets" (Center for Advanced China Research (CACR), June 15, 2020), pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Szu-Chien Hsu & J. Michael Cole, *Insidious Power: How China Undermines Global Democracy* (Manchester, UK: Eastbridge Books, 2020), pp. xxix-xxxix.

programs for reaching national prosperity and achieving strength and dominance in the Indo-Pacific region by the 21st century's midpoint. Further, both programs entail absorbing the free republic on Taiwan into the CCP's cold embrace, either via Political Warfare or through military assault.<sup>6</sup>

As stated, *Media Warfare is one of The Three Warfares* that lay the traditional foundation for the malign influence operations of the PRC. University of Cambridge professor Stefan Halper describes the Three Warfares as “a dynamic three dimensional war-fighting process that constitutes war by other means.” Of great concern, notes Halper, “this weapon is highly deceptive.”<sup>7</sup> *Media Warfare*--combined with the other two pillars of the Three Warfares (*Psychological Warfare and Legal Warfare*, also called *Lawfare*) and the recently developed concept of *Cognitive Warfare*--poses a unique threat to Taiwan's continued freedom, sovereignty, and democracy. Before examining the PRC's *Media Warfare* against Taiwan, though, it is essential to examine *Media Warfare* within the broader context of the CCP's *Political Warfare*.

## Media Warfare: A Pillar of CCP Political Warfare

The CCP wages *political warfare* for control and influence, using coercion, corruption, and violent covert operations. The CCP claims that this war is meant to “rejuvenate” China to its former imperial grandeur as the *Middle Kingdom*—to once again be “everything under the sun,”

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<sup>6</sup> Gitter & Erdahl, “Telling China's Story Well: An Investigation into Chinese Influence Operations Targeting American Chinese-Language Media Outlets,” pp. 2-4.

<sup>7</sup> Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2013), p. 11.

the all-powerful hegemon power. It is, as well, a war to ensure the CCP's total control over the PRC's population and resources. Taiwan is Beijing's immediate target for acquisition, but it is important to understand that the CCP seeks control of those of foreign nations that the Chinese have historically called "barbarian states," both nearby and throughout the world.<sup>8</sup>

Much like the emperors of the *Celestial Empire* at its peak, the CCP classifies these barbarian nations as either *tributary states* that recognize the PRC's hegemony or *potential enemies*. Despite the lofty pretext of peaceful national rejuvenation reflected in PRC ruler Xi Jinping's *China Dream*, the CCP has no desire for equality among nations. Nor, in the case of Taiwan, does the CCP have any intention of allowing a fiction it once described as "one country, two systems". Rather, Beijing seeks to impose its all-encompassing civilization on other lesser states. The ideological foundation of Xi's China Dream is ultimately totalitarian, Leninist, and based on Marxist principles.<sup>9</sup>

For the CCP, this is a total war for regional and global supremacy, and it incorporates elements of military, economic, informational, and political warfare. PRC political warfare (especially the media warfare component), is both offensive and defensive in nature. It takes the form of *unrestricted warfare* and it is conducted on an international scale.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Steven W. Mosher, *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Mosher, *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World*, p. 3; "Full Text of Xi Jinping's Report at 19th CPC National Congress" (November 4, 2017), visited date: October 15, 2020, 《*China Daily*》, [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content\\_34115212.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm); Bill Birtles, "China's President Xi Jinping Is Pushing a Marxist Revival—but How Communist Is It Really?" (May 3, 2018), visited date: October 15, 2020, 《*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*》, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-04/china-xi-jinping-is-pushing-a-marxist-revival/9724720>.

<sup>10</sup> Qiao Liang & Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: Assumptions on War and Tactics in the Age of Globalization* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999).

## The Nature of the PRC Regime Matters!

It matters greatly which side wins this “unrestricted war”—a point missed by those enablers who have been co-opted by PRC’s global malign influence campaign to appease the PRC, apologize or explain away its brutal expansionist objectives and actions, and even actively support the CCP’s expansionist ambitions. The nature of the Chinese Communist Party matters! Accordingly, as a prelude to this study, it is crucial to answer these key questions:

- *Why does it matter that the PRC seeks regional and ultimately global hegemony?*
- *Why can’t the world accept and tolerate a “rising China,” a seemingly nonthreatening term so often used by PRC propaganda outlets and Beijing’s foreign advocates?*
- *What is there to fear about “China’s peaceful rise” and the CCP’s goal of a “Chinese-led world order?”*<sup>11</sup>

The answer to each question is simple--and the same:

**The PRC is a coercive, expansionist, hyper-nationalistic, militarily powerful, brutally repressive, genocidal, fascist, and totalitarian state.**

“The world has seen what happens when expansionist totalitarian regimes such as [the PRC] are left unchallenged and unchecked,” testified an expert on the PRC, retired U.S. Navy Captain James E. Fanell. “In the world of this type of hegemon, people are subjects—simply property—of the state, and ideals such as democracy, inalienable rights, limited

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<sup>11</sup> The terms are used in Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), p. 16; *China’s National Defense in 1998* (Beijing: State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 1998).

government, and rule of law have no place.”<sup>12</sup> The people in the PRC--the CCP’s “subjects”--are as much victims of this totalitarian regime as are the people of the countries that the PRC targets globally.

The PRC embodies the general characteristics of *totalitarianism*, such as the identification of individuals as merely subjects of the state; control of media outlets, economic sectors, and educational institutions; control by a single political party with a separate chain of command alongside that of the government; a lack of checks and balances; personality cults; militarism; and a historical narrative of humiliation leading to hyper-nationalism and an entitlement to aggression. These are defining characteristics that the world witnessed during the twentieth century in countries such as Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union, Adolf Hitler’s Germany, Benito Mussolini’s Italy, Imperial Japan, and Pol Pot’s Cambodia. Such political structures and narratives established a framework of governance for empires and dictatorships like the PRC long before the founding of the CCP. There is nothing new or inherently Chinese about totalitarian fascism.

The danger of contemporary totalitarian Sino-fascism, however, is unprecedented. The power of modern technology is especially evident in the PRC’s *Media Warfare*, and in the CCP’s swift convergence of massive political, military, and economic power position it to be, according to Canada’s prestigious Fraser Institute, “world freedom’s greatest threat.”<sup>13</sup>

By successfully employing *Media Warfare* as one of its key strategies, the CCP has proven that it can effectively leverage the openness of

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<sup>12</sup> James E. Fanell, “China’s Global Naval Strategy and Expanding Force Structure: Pathway to Hegemony,” *Naval War College Review* Vol. 72, No. 1 (2019).

<sup>13</sup> Fred McMahon, “China—World Freedom’s Greatest Threat” (May 10, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, 《*Fraser Institute*》, <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/article/china-world-freedoms-greatest-threat>.

democratic systems to achieve hegemony over those democracies. It prefers to achieve this hegemony peacefully if possible--not entirely *without a struggle* but ideally without kinetic combat. Nevertheless, the PRC has continually indicated that it is now strong and confident enough to fight a war to achieve that hegemony, even if it must pay a very large price.<sup>14</sup>

*Media Warfare* supports Beijing's political war aimed at "fracturing and capturing regional institutions that could otherwise raise collective concerns about China's behavior" and "intimidating countries in maritime Asia that seek to lawfully extract resources and defend their sovereignty, according to Ely Ratner at the Council on Foreign Relations,"<sup>15</sup>

## Media Warfare in Support of the PRC's Internal Repression

One priority for Beijing's *Media Warfare* is to conceal the extent of its brutal internal repression. In the past few years, the PRC has been criticized by organizations such as *Amnesty International* and governments including the United States and Taiwan for imprisoning at least a million ethnic Uighurs in "re-education camps" under particularly cruel circumstances.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the repression of Uighurs and other Muslim sects

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<sup>14</sup> Jonas Parello-Plesner & Belinda Li, *The Chinese Communist Party's Foreign Interference Operations: How the U.S. and Other Democracies Should Respond* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2018); Discussions with senior Republic of China political warfare officers at Fu Hsing Kang College, National Defense University, Taipei, Taiwan, 2018-19; Tara Copp & Aaron Mehta, "New Defense Intelligence Assessment Warns China Nears Critical Military Milestone" (January 15, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *Defense News*, <https://www.defensenews.com/news/your-military/2019/01/15/new-defense-intelligence-assessment-warns-china-nears-critical-military-milestone/>.

<sup>15</sup> Ely Ratner, "Rising to the China Challenge" (February 15, 2018), visited date: October 20, 2020, *Council on Foreign Relations*, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17364?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17364?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>16</sup> "Up to One Million Detained in China's Mass 'Re-Education' Drive" (September 24, 2018), visited date: October 20, 2020, *Amnesty International*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/china-up-to-one-million-detained/>.



is part of a much more insidious trend—according to *The Washington Post*, “China’s systematic anti-Muslim campaign, and accompanying repression of Christians and Tibetan Buddhists, may represent the largest-scale official attack on religious freedom in the world.”<sup>17</sup> Further, *The Washington Post* calls Beijing’s suppression in Xinjiang “genocide”<sup>18</sup> as do other organizations—but to read PRC-controlled news media, both in China and globally, one only sees that such accusations are the “biggest lies of the century”.<sup>19</sup> These accusations are “groundless” and merely reflect the West’s “deep-rooted egotism and prejudice towards China”.<sup>20</sup> Despite these indignant denials, the PRC’s internal political repression is long standing, and it involves a brutality much more lethal than religious suppression and thought control of the mass population. It involves mass murder.

The CCP is responsible for the deaths of millions of Chinese during disastrous large-scale reigns of terror such as the *Great Leap Forward* (1958–62) and *Cultural Revolution* (1966–76) and smaller atrocities such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Hong Kong-based historian Frank Dikötter confirmed, based on findings in the PRC’s archives, that during the Great Leap Forward alone, “systematic torture, brutality, starvation and killing of Chinese peasants” was the norm. More than 45 million people were “worked, starved or beaten to death” in China during those four years, while the Cultural Revolution resulted in the murder of at least 2 million

<sup>17</sup> “China’s Repressive Reach Is Growing” *Washington Post*, September 27, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Editorial Board, “What’s Happening in Xinjiang Is Genocide” (July 6, 2020), visited date: October 23, 2020, *The Washington Post*, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/whats-happening-in-xinjiang-is-genocide/2020/07/06/cde3f9da-bfaa-11ea-9fdd-b7ac6b051dc8\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/whats-happening-in-xinjiang-is-genocide/2020/07/06/cde3f9da-bfaa-11ea-9fdd-b7ac6b051dc8_story.html).

<sup>19</sup> “China Calls U.S. Accusations ‘Biggest Lies of the Century’” (July 17, 2020), visited date: October 23, 2020, *Xinhua*, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/17/c\\_139218277.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-07/17/c_139218277.htm).

<sup>20</sup> Xin Zhang, “Smearing Won’t Deny China’s Concrete Human Rights Progress” (July 7, 2020), visited date: October 23, 2020, *Xinhua*, [http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-07/07/content\\_9848322.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-07/07/content_9848322.htm).

more, and another 1 to 2 million were killed in “other campaigns, such as land-reform and ‘anti-rightist’ movements” in the 1950s.<sup>21</sup>

This murderous repression also includes plausible reports that the PRC currently executes Falun Gong practitioners and other prisoners of conscience on a mass scale “in order to harvest organs that can be monetized for substantial profits by [CCP] officials.”<sup>22</sup> Estimates of those in China killed directly or indirectly by CCP actions against the people of China are strongly debated, but during Mao Zedong’s reign alone they range as high as 70 million deaths.<sup>23</sup> But within China’s *Great Firewall* that censors online media, and through its domination of many newspapers and broadcast organizations worldwide, one sees and hears nothing in PRC-owned or controlled media of these holocausts.

The CCP employs *Media Warfare* to make it nearly impossible to access information about these systematic campaigns of mass murder and terror within the PRC. The depth and breadth of censorship both within its borders create a vacuum of information that can even remotely be considered criticism of the CCP. *Media Warfare*--in the form of social media, the state-controlled news media, and the manipulation and suppression of foreign news media--plays a massive role in this thought

<sup>21</sup> Arifa Akbar, “Mao’s Great Leap Forward ‘Killed 45 Million in Four Years’” (September 17, 2010), visited date: October 15, 2020, *Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/maos-great-leap-forward-killed-45-million-in-four-years-2081630.html>; Ian Buruma, “The Tenacity of Chinese Communism” (September 28, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/china-communist-party-confucianism-70-anniversary.html>; Ian Johnson, “Who Killed More: Hitler, Stalin, or Mao?” (February 5, 2018), visited date: October 15, 2020, *New York Review of Books*, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/02/05/who-killed-more-hitler-stalin-or-mao/>.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew P. Robertson, “Examining China’s Organ Transplantation System: The Nexus of Security, Medicine, and Predation, Part 2: Evidence for the Harvesting of Organs from Prisoners of Conscience” (May 15, 2020), visited date: October 15, 2020, *Jamestown Foundation*, <https://jamestown.org/program/examining-chinas-organ-transplantation-system-the-nexus-of-security-medicine-and-predation-part-2-evidence-for-the-harvesting-of-organs-from-prisoners-of-conscience/>.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, “Who Killed More: Hitler, Stalin, or Mao?”

suppression.

In her seminal work *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*, Louisa Lim details the extraordinary lengths to which the CCP employs *Media Warfare* to enforce “collective amnesia” to suppress any memory of the 1989 *Tiananmen Massacre* from Chinese consciousness.<sup>24</sup> As simple examples of the pervasive CCP program of “whitewashing” the massacre through *Media Warfare*, Lim writes:

*The authorities national reflex has been to simply clamp down, banning sensitive words on Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter, and deleting postings as quickly as possible. Every June 4th, the authorities' level of paranoia can be charted by increasingly lengthy lists of banned words. Terms deemed sensitive enough to be forbidden include “today”, “tomorrow”, “that year”, “special day”, and “sensitive word” .....sensitive images are also often scrubbed from the Internet, including birthday cake candles featuring the numbers 4 and 6; photos of chrysanthemums, which are traditional flowers of mourning; anything with the slightest similarity to a tank, including LEGO tanks.....(and) even yellow rubber ducks.”*<sup>25</sup>

Although the CCP is responsible for what amounts to mass murder in its own country, it still tightly holds the reins of power in the PRC, and its media idolizes the man who presided over its deadliest repression: Mao Zedong. Evidence of the CCP's continued admiration for Mao is reflected nearly daily through state media. One example is the China Daily's fawning description as “unprecedented” respect and “piety” that Xi Jinping and the CCP displayed for Mao during celebrations for the seventieth anniversary of

<sup>24</sup> Louisa Lim, *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 72, 80, 85–86, 88, 96, 98–100, 129, 132, 136, 145, 156, 173, 210.

<sup>25</sup> Louisa Lim, *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*, pp. 99–100.

the founding of the PRC in October 2019.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Russia, with its eventual denunciation of Stalin's murderous reign, the CCP has proven ideologically incapable of acknowledging and atoning for its genocidal history. Through *Media Warfare*, the CCP tries to ensure the CCP's subjects in the PRC will never know the truth of Mao's murderous reign.

While *Media Warfare* is simply one weapon in the CCP's complex political warfare apparatus, it has a monumental impact. According to the *New York Times*, the PRC's *Media Warfare* machine "has mastered the power of symbol and symbolism in the mass media and social media era." As a consequence of relentless exposure to PRC media, many Chinese eagerly embrace the CCP's hyper-nationalistic "patriotic education" programs. Also, as part of this internal *Media Warfare*, those residing in the PRC face censorship and thought control unimaginable to most citizens of liberal democracies.<sup>27</sup>

Externally, through its extensive propaganda and influence outlets, Beijing savages rules or actions that, in the CCP's view, "contain China's power" or "hurt the feelings of the Chinese people." Meanwhile, PRC foreign ministry and propaganda organs lambast as "immoral" those who criticize its egregious human rights abuses and as "racist" those who object to overseas Chinese malign influence activities.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Laurence Brahm, "Nothing Will Stop China's Progress" (October 2, 2019), visited date: October 26, 2020, *China Daily*, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201910/02/WS5d940a3aa310cf3e3556e93d.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Li Yuan, "China Masters Political Propaganda for the Instagram Age" (October 5, 2019), visited date: October 26, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/05/technology/china-propaganda-patriotism.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Liu Chen, "U.S. Should Stop Posing as a 'Savior'" (September 27, 2019), visited date: October 26, 2020, *People's Liberation Army Daily*, <http://faujireporter.com/blogs/us-should-stop-posing-as-a-savior/>; Amy King, "Hurting the Feelings of the Chinese People" (February 15, 2017), visited date: October 15, 2020, *Wilson Center*, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/hurting-the-feelings-the-chinese-people>; "China Slams Use of Bringing up Human Rights Issues with Political Motives as 'Immoral'" (December 12, 2018), visited date: October 15, 2020, *Xinhua*, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/11/c\\_137666717.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/11/c_137666717.htm); Ben Blanchard, "China's Top Paper Says Australian Media Reports Are Racist".

## Media Warfare in Support of the PRC's Hegemonic Ambitions

Since 2004, the CCP has directly linked *Media Warfare* (especially involving foreign media) to its national security. Beijing seeks to “guide the international narrative on important issues like Taiwan, the South China Sea, the US military presence in Asia, and China’s economic and military activities overseas”.<sup>29</sup> In a May 2020 report to Congress, U.S. President Donald J. Trump highlighted the global impact of PRC *Media Warfare*: “China’s party-state controls the world’s most heavily resourced set of propaganda tools. Beijing communicates its narrative through state-run television, print, radio, and online organizations whose presence is proliferating in the United States and around the world.”<sup>30</sup>

The narratives these media platforms present promote positive views of a peaceful “Rising China” as well a benign perspective of *The China Model* (the CCP’s totalitarian regime); encourage investment in the PRC and openness to PRC investment and strategic engagement abroad; and suppress or curtail negative coverage of PRC’s political system. The PRC’s latest addition to its narratives presents the CCP’s “authoritarian governance style” as not simply benign: it is now the model for developing countries, challenging the attractiveness of both democracy and US international leadership.<sup>31</sup> The breadth and scope of activities to convey these narratives is expansive and should be of urgent concern to Taiwan

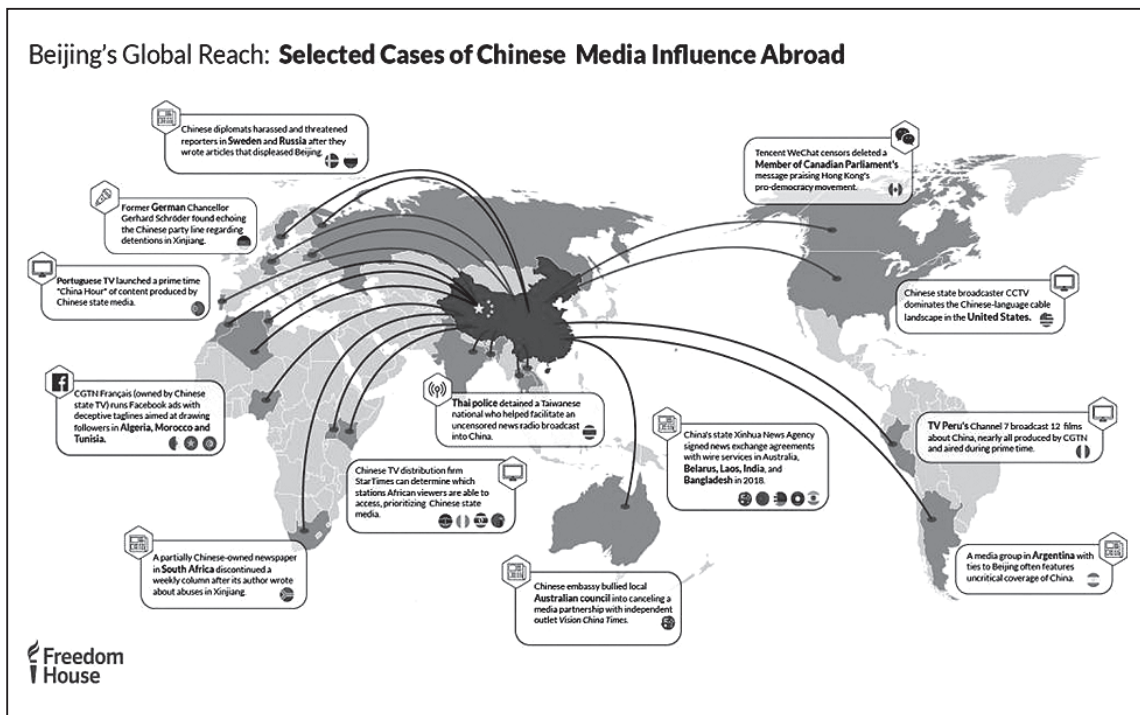
<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Bachman, “Black and White and Red All Over: China’s Improving Foreign-Directed Media” (August 2020), visited date: October 27, 2020, 《*Center for Naval Analysis*》, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/DRM-2020-U-027331-1Rev.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2020-U-027331-1Rev.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Donald J. Trump, “United States Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China” (May 20, 2020), visited date: October 27, 2020, 《*White House*》, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/U.S.-Strategic-Approach-to-The-Peoples-Republic-of-China-Report-5.20.20.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Cook, “The Implications for Democracy of China’s Globalizing Media Influence,” visited date: October 15, 2020, 《*Freedom and Media Report 2019*》, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral>.

and democracies worldwide. Figure 1-1, from the *Freedom House 2019 Freedom and Media Report*, depicts examples of the scope of these activities.<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 1-1: Selected Cases of Chinese Media Influence Abroad**



Source: Sarah Cook, "The Implications for Democracy of China's Globalizing Media Influence," *Freedom and Media Report 2019*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral>.

Freedom House highlights these current trends in the CCP's global *Media Warfare* aspirations:

- *The Chinese government, Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and various proxies have rapidly expanded their influence over media production and dissemination channels abroad. As a result, the*

<sup>32</sup> Cook, "The Implications for Democracy of China's Globalizing Media Influence".

*CCP has enhanced its ability to interfere aggressively in other countries, should it choose to do so.*

- *Chinese authorities influence news media content around the world through three primary strategies: promoting the CCP's narratives, suppressing critical viewpoints, and managing content delivery systems.*
- *These efforts have already undercut key features of democratic governance and best practices for media freedom by undermining fair competition, interfering with Chinese diaspora communities, weakening the rule of law, and establishing channels for political meddling.*

The report concludes (perhaps over optimistically) that policymakers and media development donors in democracies “will play a critical role in coming years in countering the potential negative impact of Beijing’s foreign media influence campaigns”. In the meantime, Beijing’s *Media Warfare* forces continue to shape the media environment worldwide, to include censoring and co-opting news media and related organizations on foreign soil.

The CCP’s censorship ensnares the news media on Taiwan, of course, as examined later in this study. It also ensnares American institutions such as the National Basketball Association (NBA), chastised in *The Washington Post* for “essentially importing to the United States China’s denial of free speech.” In fact, the CCP routinely censors world-famous brands including Marriott, United Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Givenchy, and Versace, as well.<sup>33</sup> Beijing is quite clear in conveying its coercive

<sup>33</sup> “The Day the NBA Fluttered before China” (October 7, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *Washington Post*, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-day-the-nba-fluttered-before-china/2019/10/07/21638f14-e926-11e9-9c6d-436a0df4f31d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-day-the-nba-fluttered-before-china/2019/10/07/21638f14-e926-11e9-9c6d-436a0df4f31d_story.html); Amy Qin & Julie Creswell, “China Is a Minefield, and Foreign Firms Keep Hitting New Tripwires” (October 8, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/08/world/asia/china-nba-tweet.html>.

copyright requirements, as reflected in a *Global Times* headline: “Global Brands Better Stay Away from Politics.” The article condemned “so-called ‘freedom of speech’” and carried explicit and implicit threats to those who did not toe the CCP line.<sup>34</sup>

Like Taiwan, America’s entertainment industry is a major target and tool for PRC *Media Warfare*. Hollywood has been co-opted “to avoid issues that the CCP would consider sensitive and produce soft propaganda movies that portray China in a positive light to global audiences.”<sup>35</sup> Through Hollywood, the CCP influences American and other foreign audiences to accept the PRC’s narratives on such issues as Taiwan and the South China Sea, according to cyber security policy expert Dr. Ji-jen Joseph Hwang.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Hwang cites TV series such as the *Netflix* series “*Away*”, which conveys PRC propaganda narratives that will be subliminally assimilated by American, overseas Chinese, and other audiences. By the PRC influencing these audiences this way, PRC *Media Warfare* aims to have Americans, overseas Chinese, and other foreign audiences ultimately influence Taiwan.

Economic coercion is another means by which the PRC exports its *Media Warfare*, while *Media Warfare* helps Beijing open the door for its economic expansion. As one example, the CCP uses the promise of its global *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI, also known as One Belt One Road) to build what the *China Daily* describes as “a new platform for world

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<sup>34</sup> “Global Brands Better Stay Away from Politics” (October 7, 2019), visited date: October 27, 2020, 《*Global Times*》, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1166183.shtml>.

<sup>35</sup> Ross Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting: Chinese and Russian Political Warfare Campaigns and How the West Can Prevail, vol. I* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), p. 36.

<sup>36</sup> Ji-jen Joseph Hwang, Associate Faculty, George Mason University. Interviews by the author in Taipei, Taiwan, September 21 and October 16, 2020.



economic cooperation.”<sup>37</sup> China’s global news media coverage of BRI presents a relentless refrain of BRI’s promise. One small but significant example is a widely distributed *China Daily* article in July 2020, in which PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi praised Xi Jinping for proposing BRI in 2013, and claimed BRI is “a new public good for the world to promote international cooperation for common development”. Wang boasted that “by the end of January, 138 countries and 30 international organizations have signed 200 cooperation documents with China on joint building of the Belt and Road”.<sup>38</sup>

The BRI story is not so rosy, of course. David R. Stilwell, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, characterizes the BRI and other PRC economic coercion schemes less charitably than *China Daily* and Wang Yi. Stilwell reports that, through BRI, Beijing employs “market-distorting economic inducements and penalties, influence operations, and intimidation to persuade other states to heed its political and security agenda.”<sup>39</sup> Former U.S. National Security Council official Robert Spalding describes the BRI as “infrastructure warfare.” It may be, he writes, “the most subtle and most corrosive of China’s unrestricted aggressions. Though it is always packaged in PRC media as generous ‘win-win’ development deals, the ultimate goal is a bait-and-switch in which infrastructure is provided but full control of the platform is never fully

<sup>37</sup> Yang Han & Wen Zongduo, “Belt and Road Reaches out to the World” (September 30, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *China Daily*, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/global/2019-09/30/content\\_37513299.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/global/2019-09/30/content_37513299.htm).

<sup>38</sup> Desheng Cao, “Xi’s Thought on Diplomacy Shares Visions” (July 21, 2020), visited date: October 20, 2020, *China Daily*, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202007/21/WS5f1624d8a31083481725ad84.html>.

<sup>39</sup> David R. Stilwell, “U.S. Policy in the Indo-Pacific Region: Hong Kong, Alliances and Partnerships, and Other Issues” (September 18, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, United States Senate*, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/us-policy-in-the-indo-pacific-region-hong-kong-alliances-and-partnerships-and-other-issues>.

given. It remains in the hands of Beijing.”<sup>40</sup> But the statements by Stillwell and Spalding received far less public attention than that allowed Wang, as a result of the PRC’s massive global media reach.

Of equal concern, the PRC employs *Media Warfare* to shape public opinion both inside and outside its borders “to undermine academic freedom, censor foreign media, restrict the free flow of information, and curb civil society.”<sup>41</sup>

The PRC employs an extensive and extraordinarily complex United Front strategy to divide Taiwanese society by attempting to “sow divisions in Taiwan” and “lure Taiwanese people to support pro-China ideas and unification with China.”<sup>42</sup> In 2015, the CCP issued the first official regulation issued that “comprehensively governs United Front work and more importantly seeks to institutionalize, standardize, and establish procedures regulating this work.” The regulation explicitly links “the unification of Taiwan to the goal of the ‘great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ and the ‘China dream’.”<sup>43</sup> Taiwan authorities estimate that the PRC spends more than \$337 million annually on UFWD recruiting efforts in Taiwan, and there might be additional “invisible funding,” as well.<sup>44</sup> The *Taipei Times* notes that the PRC uses economic incentives to target “local townships, young people and students, Chinese spouses of Taiwanese, Aborigines, pro-China political parties and groups, temples, descendants of

<sup>40</sup> BGen Robert Spalding, USAF (ret), *Stealth War: How China Took Over while America’s Elite Slept* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2019), pp. 162–63.

<sup>41</sup> Ratner, “Rising to the China Challenge”.

<sup>42</sup> Discussions with senior Republic of China political warfare officers at Fu Hsing Kang College, National Defense University, Taipei, Taiwan, 2018-19.

<sup>43</sup> Russell Hsiao, “China’s Relations with U.S. Allies and Partners in Europe and the Asia Pacific” (April 5, 2018), testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 115th Congress.

<sup>44</sup> Chung Li-hua & Sherry Hsiao, “China Targets 10 Groups for ‘United Front’” (January 15, 2018), visited date: October 20, 2020, *《Taipei Times》*, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2018/01/15/2003685789>.

Chinese who retain roots in China, labor groups, farmers' and fishermen's associations, and military veterans.” Those who collaborate with the CCP are given public recognition in the media and/or economic rewards.<sup>45</sup>

But Taiwan is only one democracy of many impacted by the CCP. As President Trump reported to Congress, “Beyond the media, the CCP uses a range of actors to advance its interests in the United States and other open democracies. CCP United Front organizations and agents target businesses, universities, think tanks, scholars, journalists, and local, state, and federal officials in the United States and around the world, attempting to influence discourse and restrict external influence inside the PRC.”<sup>46</sup>

Australia and New Zealand, Europe, Oceania and the Pacific Islands, South America, the Arctic nations, and Africa have all belatedly awoken to the remarkable degree to which the PRC's malign influence, particularly *Media Warfare*, has infiltrated their regions in pursuit of Beijing's diplomatic, economic, and military interests.<sup>47</sup> Canada and the United

<sup>45</sup> Chung & Hsiao, “China Targets 10 Groups for ‘United Front’”.

<sup>46</sup> Trump, “United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China”.

<sup>47</sup> John Garnaut, “Australia's China Reset” (August, 2018), visited date: October 20, 2020, *《Monthly》*, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2018/august/1533045600/john-garnaut/australia-s-china-reset#mtr>; Didi Kirsten Tatlow, “Mapping China-in-Germany” (October 2, 2019), visited date: October 15, 2020, *《Synopsis》*, <https://synopsis.cz/en/mapping-china-in-germany/>; Austin Doehler, “How China Challenges the EU in the Western Balkans” (September 25, 2019), visited date: October 27, 2020, *《Diplomat》*, <https://thedi diplomat.com/2019/09/how-china-challenges-the-eu-in-the-western-balkans/>; Grant Newsham, “China ‘Political Warfare’ Targets U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands” (August 5, 2019), visited date: October 27, 2020, *《Asia Times》*, <https://asiatimes.com/2019/08/china-political-warfare-targets-us-affiliated-pacific-islands/>; Derek Grossman et al., *America's Pacific Island Allies: The Freely Associated States and Chinese Influence* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019); C. Todd Lopez, “Southcom Commander: Foreign Powers Pose Security Concerns” (October 6, 2019), visited date: October 27, 2020, *《U.S. Department of Defense》*, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1981449/southcom-commander-foreign-powers-pose-security-concerns/>; Heather A. Conley, “The Arctic Spring: Washington Is Sleeping through Changes at the Top of the World” (September 24, 2019), visited date: November 15, 2020, *《Foreign Affairs》*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/commons/2019-09-24/arctic-spring>; Andrew McCormick, “Even If You Don't Think You Have a Relationship with China, China Has a Big Relationship with You” (June 20, 2019), visited date: November 15, 2020, *《Columbia Journalist Review》*, <https://www.cjr.org/special-report/china-foreign-journalists-oral-history.php>.

States have had equally rude awakenings regarding the efficacy of PRC united front operations, *Media Warfare*, and other forms of coercion, repression, and violent attacks within their borders.<sup>48</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has also alerted many nations to the PRC's harmful intentions and influence, despite Beijing's extraordinarily aggressive global propaganda campaign.<sup>49</sup>

Of equal concern, as the PRC has co-opted major international institutions, exercising extraordinary control and influence of organizations such as the *United Nations* (UN), *Organization of Islamic Cooperation* (OIC), and *World Health Organization* (WHO). Beijing's "decade long campaign to secure more clout at the United Nations is now helping shield Beijing from international scrutiny," according to a *Wall Street Journal* report.<sup>50</sup>

John Garnaut, a former senior advisor to Australian Prime Minister Malcolm B. Turnbull, notes the nature of many countries' long-overdue awakenings concerning PRC political warfare as well as the lack of consensus on how they should respond:

*Belatedly, and quite suddenly, political leaders, policy makers and*

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<sup>48</sup> Tom Blackwell, "How China Uses Shadowy United Front as 'Magic Weapon' to Try to Extend Its Influence in Canada" (January 28, 2019), visited date: November 15, 2020, *National Post*, <https://nationalpost.com/news/how-china-uses-shadowy-united-front-as-magic-weapon-to-try-to-extend-its-influence-in-canada>; Alexander Bowe, *China's Overseas United Front Work: Background and Implications for the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2018).

<sup>49</sup> "World against the CCP: China Became the Target at the World Health Assembly" (May 21, 2020), visited date: November 15, 2020, *Chinascopes*, <http://chinascopes.org/>.

<sup>50</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, Drew Hinshaw & Kate O'Keefe, "How China Is Taking Over International Organizations, One Vote at a Time" (September 29, 2020), visited date: November 15, 2020, *Wall Street Journal*, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-china-is-taking-over-international-organizations-one-vote-at-a-time-11601397208?st=znpa21rp9j7kf75>; Kenneth Roth et al., *Human Rights Watch World Report 2020: China's Global Threat to Human Rights* (New York: Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2020), pp. 8-9.

*civil society actors in a dozen nations around the world are scrambling to come to terms with a form of China's extraterritorial influence described variously as 'sharp power,' 'United Front work' and 'influence operations'.*" He adds that "a dozen [other nations] are entering the debate.....but none of these countries has sustained a vigorous conversation, let alone reached a political consensus."<sup>51</sup>

The use of *Media Warfare* is not unique to the PRC, of course. All nation-states conduct influence operations that include *Media Warfare*, such as public affairs, public relations, and public diplomacy, to secure their own national interests. During the Cold War, for example, the United States and its partners and allies engaged in an ultimately successful political warfare effort, a major part of which involved *Media Warfare*, to bring down the Soviet Union's brutal Iron Curtain that divided much of the world. During China's civil war, the KMT also employed *Media Warfare* operations against the communists, and continued to employ it for decades against the PRC following the ROC's retreat to Taiwan in 1949. The ROC included in this battle a means of communicating with and combatting the PRC that it called *Media Diplomacy*.<sup>52</sup> These operations, in conjunction with broader propaganda efforts, were sophisticated if not always effective. They have been conducted through an array of organizations and through traditional (print, internet, TV and radio news broadcasts) as well as non-traditional means (video news releases, satellite broadcast, movies, TV entertainment programming), and targeted *Overseas Chinese* as well as audiences within the PRC and in Taiwan.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Garnaut, "Australia's China Reset".

<sup>52</sup> Gary D. Rawnsley, *Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy and Propoganda, Studies in Diplomacy* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 106-112.

<sup>53</sup> Rawnsley, *Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy and Propoganda, Studies in Diplomacy*, pp. 22-135.

But the PRC's version of political warfare is different than that of other nations, and the goals and intensity of its *Media Warfare* are unique, according to Singaporean diplomat Bihahari Kausikan. A highly respected expert of PRC malign influence, Kausikan notes that the PRC is a totalitarian Leninist state that takes a "holistic approach which melds together the legal and the covert" in conjunction with "persuasion, inducement and coercion." Importantly, he argues that the aim of the PRC is not simply to "direct behavior but to condition behavior..... In other words, China does not just want you to comply with its wishes. Far more fundamentally, it wants you to think in such a way that you will of your own volition do what it wants without being told. It's a form of psychological manipulation."<sup>54</sup>

As it wages global *Media Warfare* to achieve its diplomatic, economic, and military goals, the PRC exports authoritarianism, as detailed in studies by respected organizations such as the *National Endowment for Democracy*, *Freedom House*, and *Human Rights Watch*. Beijing intentionally undermines the credibility of democracy and individual freedoms to bolster support for its own totalitarian regime, which it calls the *China Model*.<sup>55</sup>

To this end, the PRC continues its *Media Warfare* to take control of the territory and people of Taiwan. Accordingly, the government, institutions, and people of Taiwan must better understand how to combat PRC *Media Warfare* so that it can retain its hard-won democracy, sovereignty, and

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<sup>54</sup> Bihahari Kausikan, "An Expose of How States Manipulate Other Countries' Citizens" (July 1, 2018), visited date: November 15, 2020, *《Straits Times》*, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/an-expose-of-how-states-manipulate-other-countries-citizens>.

<sup>55</sup> Juan Pablo Cardenal et al., *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for Democracy, 2017); Roth et al., *Human Rights Watch World Report 2020: China's Global Threat to Human Rights*, pp. 1-20, 130-42; Cook, "The Implications for Democracy of China's Globalizing Media Influence".

political and economic freedoms.

Taiwan has seen significant successes in the past 12 months. Most important is President Tsai Ing-wen's personal leadership in this effort, behind the scenes in mobilizing assets and most publicly visible in speeches such as her second inaugural address.<sup>56</sup> Also of particular note are the legislative achievements designed to assist the courts and law enforcement and intelligence officials. Nevertheless, there is more to do.

### Legal Foundations: Improving But Still Lacking

Eight years of the Ma administration's pro-Beijing policies allowed the PRC a wide range of *media warfare*, espionage, and other corrosive malign influence successes against Taiwan. Governmental institutions were ill prepared and, in some cases, not interested, in taking on the fight. Consequently, despite being well aware of this existential threat, it took the Tsai Administration government until 2019 to begin to fight back effectively. J. Michael Cole attributes the delayed response, in part, "to forces in the opposition, which used democracy against itself to create a 'moral equivalence' by depicting any measure and legislative amendment adopted by the government to address hostile external influences as 'undemocratic.'" <sup>57</sup>

When Tsai assumed the presidency, the existing laws that provided the foundation for the executive branch to investigate and prosecute illegal

<sup>56</sup> Ing-wen Tsai, "President Tsai Ing-Wen Inaugural Address" (May 20, 2020), visited date: November 10, 2020, 《Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)》, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6004>.

<sup>57</sup> J. Michael Cole, "Democracy Under Fire: China's Political Warfare Against Taiwan During President Tsai Ing-Wen's First Term" (July, 2020), visited date: November 15, 2020, 《deslibris》, <https://www.deslibris.ca/ID/10104436>.

acts in support of the PRC included the *National Security Act*, the *Political Donations Act*, and the *Organized Crime Prevention Act*. While there were some successful prosecutions, these legal foundations proved insufficient and it was clear that new laws would be required to empower the courts and intelligence and law-enforcement agencies to effectively confront the PRC's highly sophisticated political warfare. One major problem that had to be overcome was, posed by the ROC Constitution: Taiwan authorities were unable to categorize the PRC as an "enemy state". One consequence of this legal limitation was that media owned by PRC-controlled entities and pro-Beijing groups could not be prosecuted for aiding the PRC in its *Media Warfare* against Taiwan.

In 2019, the Legislative Yuan amended the *Criminal Code* to help law enforcement and intelligence agencies act against individuals who collude with enemy forces in PRC, to include Macau, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. The Tsai administration also addressed weak laws that, for example, imposed small penalties for passing classified information to CCP agents. This longstanding failure to address this problem was a tremendous political warfare victory for the PRC, as it not only allowed it to more easily recruit spies in Taiwan but it also corroded U.S. faith in the value of working with Taiwan's government. In addition to the Criminal Code, bills governing national security that were amended included the *Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area*, the *Classified National Security Information Protection Act*, and the *National Security Act*.

As important, on December 31, 2019, the LY passed the *Anti-Infiltration Act*. This act prohibits intervention in Taiwan's democratic political system through "infiltration sources" such as "individuals,



institutions or organizations affiliated with or sponsored by a government, political party or other political group of a foreign hostile force”. Under this act, a hostile foreign force is defined “as a country or political entity at war or engaging in a military standoff with Taiwan, including but not limited to China”.<sup>58</sup>

Proving the relationship between the PRC and *Media Warfare* attacks poses a problem for Taiwan’s intelligence and law enforcement agencies, though, due to limited assets. This allows Beijing “plausible deniability”.<sup>59</sup>

Also, there remains an “absence of appropriate regulations to govern the media, especially the ‘grey zones’ involving new media and social media.” Punitive measures adopted by the *National Communications Commission* (NCC) against media outlets that willingly generate or distribute false content are insufficient. One problem is the funding of these outlets: the businesses that fund them “have billions of dollars in their bank accounts and which receive large subsidies from China”. Some have already accused the Tsai administration of instituting a “Green Terror” as a result of its efforts to improve legal authorities to confront PRC political warfare with stronger laws. If its actions are not properly explained to the public and justified if, the administration may appear to be “excessively harsh”, which “would give Beijing what it wants by undermining Taiwan’s democratic values”.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, Taiwan has not yet pushed hard for regulating PRC-affiliated *Media Warfare* platforms.

<sup>58</sup> “Anti-Infiltration Act Passed by Taiwan’s Legislature” (January 2, 2020), visited date: November 15, 2020, 《*Taiwan Today*》, <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2,6,10,15,18&post=168755>; “Taiwan Passes Law Targeting Chinese Political Interference” (December 31, 2019), visited date: November 15, 2020, 《*Associated Press*》, <https://apnews.com/article/43e9cf4cd5190c6c296854f88cfbef78>.

<sup>59</sup> Aaron Huang, “Combatting and Defeating Chinese Propaganda and Disinformation: A Case Study of Taiwan’s 2020 Elections” .

<sup>60</sup> Cole, “Democracy Under Fire: China’s Political Warfare Against Taiwan During President Tsai Ing-Wen’s First Term” .

Stronger laws and regulations are required, as is a national strategy and useful organizational structure. Nine major recommendations to address strategic shortfalls in Taiwan's battle against PRC *Media Warfare* follow.

## Recommendations

1. **Mandate the development of a national Taiwan strategy to counter general PRC political warfare, with appropriate organization, training, manpower, and funding.** *Media Warfare* must be confronted within the context of the general PRC *Political Warfare* it supports. Accordingly, through legislation,
  - a. mandate a national counter-Political Warfare strategy,
  - b. appoint a highly respected coordinator for Political Warfare within Taiwan's National Security Council,
  - c. establish a strategic operational center of gravity with broad authority to execute the strategy, such as a *Strategic Communications Agency* in Recommendation 2.
  - d. develop counter-political warfare primary and/or secondary career paths in diplomatic and intelligence organizations generally aligned with the existing military career path.
  - e. as part of the strategy, mandate systematic whole-of-society education programs (See Recommendation 4).

As first steps, Taiwan must first state its goals in combating political warfare, and then develop a “theory of victory” and an end state.”<sup>61</sup> Part of this strategy should focus on building a coalition of democratic allies

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<sup>61</sup> Ross Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting: Chinese and Russian Political Warfare Campaigns and How the West Can Prevail, vol. I* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019), p. 80.

to jointly counter such PRC warfare and win this battle of ideas against totalitarianism.

**2. Establish a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Strategic Communications Agency (SCA) to execute the Counter-Political Warfare strategy, under direct control of the National Security Council.** The SCA would help focus the many useful-but-diffused counter-*Media Warfare* activities within the government, such as MOFA's successful education and fake news debunking programs and MND's superb online work by elements of the Political Warfare and Cybersecurity staffs. The SCA should be staffed with carefully selected personnel from all key Ministries and agencies, through recruiting from the private sector, and in partnership with civil society organizations. The breadth of knowledge, skills, and ability must span Strategic and Crisis Communications and National Security, Education, Economic & Commercial, Legal, Law Enforcement, Intelligence, Foreign Policy, and Ministry of National Defense Political Warfare functions. Augmentation from private enterprise, such as expertise from public relations and advertising "creative" and media data professionals, is essential for success, as these "out of the box thinking" capabilities do not normally reside in civil service or the media. Such an organization should be mandated and resourced on an urgent basis. A standard, mandatory *Mission and Functions Orientation Course* for all newly joining SCA personnel is essential: the rationale is that Taiwan no longer has education programs to prepare personnel to fulfill the crucial counter-Political Warfare/*Media Warfare* functions, so such an orientation is necessary to align all new SCA personnel from across the government, private sector, civil society, the legal community, and the news media.

**3. Institutionalize 2020 counter-election interference successes to ensure capacity to undertake such whole-of-society responses over the long term.**

- a. Codify ministry/agency policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that should have been written within Ministries and agencies based on the successes and failures of the past two election cycles.
- b. Improve the policies and SOPs with periodic workshops and test them periodically with table-top exercises and war-games. *Media Warfare* is an art even with an SOP in place, and it requires practice. To develop decision-making skills and mental and organizational agility, regular training programs must include workshops, tabletop exercises, and war games for those officials engaged in the effort.

**4. Establish systematic education and training programs within its government, business, industry, academic, civil society and public communities regarding PRC political/media warfare operations.**

- a. Perhaps under the direction of the proposed Strategic Communications Agency, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, Justice, Education, and Commerce, with support from the National Security Bureau and the National Communications Commission, should cooperate to systematize courses of varying lengths for senior-level and intermediate-level professionals. Entry-level courses should also be planned for students within the Foreign Service, military, intelligence, commerce, public affairs, and academic communities.
- b. This education program would be voluntary for individuals within private-sector industries and nongovernmental organizations but

compulsory for government workers, federal contractors, and students attending Taiwan-government education institutions. Similarly, the private sector and civic groups should initiate public information programs in coordination with news media organizations.

- c. The focus of these courses will be on building internal defenses within the most highly valued PRC target audiences: elected officials, senior policy makers, thought leaders, national security managers, and other information gatekeepers. Retirees and those soon to be retired are also key audiences for this education program, based on PRC successes co-opting this influential segment of Taiwan’s population. Similar governmental, institutional, and public education programs were employed successfully during the Cold War, with threat briefs and public discussion a routine part of each.
- d. Part of the training, as addressed in Recommendation 3, must include workshops, tabletop exercises and wargames for those officials and civil society representatives engaged in the effort.

**5. Continue working with the United States Government (USG) to improve each other’s ability to deter, detect, confront, and defeat PRC Media Warfare.**

- a. Part of this cooperation should entail continuation of the *Global Cooperation and Training Framework* (GCTF) conferences on media literacy and combating disinformation. Push for broader participation from countries such as the Baltic States, which have extensive experience combatting Russian *Media Warfare*, as well as Japan and Sweden which have also officially joined the effort.

- b. Seek USG support to establish consistent relationships between U.S.-based social media companies and the Taiwanese government and civil society groups. The most popular social media platforms *in Taiwan* are U.S.-based companies. Facebook and YouTube were the top two social media outlets for Taiwanese internet users as of January 2019, and Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp were also in the top eight.<sup>62</sup>
- c. Pursue cooperation with the USG to more effectively employ Artificial Intelligence (AI) to counter PRC Cognitive Warfare in general and *Media Warfare* in particular. Taiwan has already begun to use AI to identify *Social Media Warfare* by automatically identifying and deleting content. The PRC emphasizes using AI to generate and spread disinformation and propaganda, so it is critical for Taiwan to accelerate its efforts in this technological race if it is to preserve its independent media environment.<sup>63</sup>
- d. Establish an information exchange mechanism with the U.S. that provides systematic passing of information gleaned from each country's monitoring and reporting on PRC *Media Warfare* globally. Taiwan demonstrated superb abilities to monitor *Media Warfare in Taiwan* in the last election cycle, but it has less capacity to do so abroad. Both Taiwan and the U.S. have unique capabilities to monitor and assess the PRC's *Media Warfare* activities, but there is currently

<sup>62</sup> Linda Zhang, "How to Counter China's Disinformation Campaign in Taiwan" (September-October 2020), visited date: November 15, 2020, *Army University Press*, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/September-October-2020/Zhang-Disinformation-Campaign/>.

<sup>63</sup> Zheng, "How to Counter China's Disinformation Campaign in Taiwan".

little systematic, consistent exchange of the information. This routine exchange would require more effort in the diplomatic and intelligence communities to monitor these *Media Warfare* operations abroad, to include trends, characteristics, and people and entities involved, but the payback would be substantial. The exchange would allow discussion of current efforts to combat *Media Warfare* and best practices. This collection function regarding *Media Warfare* will be new for both countries, but it will be worth the effort as it will expand each country's understanding of the scope of the threat and allow for more effective whole-of-society responses by each government. Further, this exchange mechanism should also afford the means to request mutual assistance in the monitoring and assessing mission.

- e. Work with the US Treasury Department and State Department to sanction PRC *Media Warfare*-related entities under applicable laws and orders. As proposed by U.S. diplomat Huang, sanctions could be used to block these entities from hiring local agents and intermediaries in target countries for *Media Warfare* purposes. Propaganda and disinformation are often created and spread not by the attacking entities, but local intermediaries funded by these entities. In Taiwan's case, notes Huang, these intermediaries are compromised media outlets. Without local knowledge, expertise, and support, these attacks will likely be easier to identify and less effective in manipulating public opinion and discourse.<sup>64</sup>

**6. Establish a regional Asian Strategic Communications Center of Excellence (ASCCE).** Taiwan showed it is capable of global leadership

<sup>64</sup> Huang, "Combatting and Defeating Chinese Propaganda and Disinformation: A Case Study of Taiwan's 2020 Elections".

as it led the way in combatting COVID-19: it can show global leadership in combatting PRC *Media Warfare* as well. It should establish the ASCCE, which would be similar to the Finland-based *European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats and the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence*. By establishing the ASCCE, Taiwan will build more powerful capacity in support of its own preservation; by focusing the ASCCE *outward* with an international focus, Taiwan helps build the capacity of like-minded nations and partially circumvents the PRC's diplomatic isolation campaign. The ASCCE would be a whole-of-government effort, but in practice its primary Taiwan government sponsors would be the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, Justice, Education, and Commerce, with support from the National Security Bureau.

- 7. Pass legislation that allows for more aggressive prosecution of Media Warfare-related activities in order to diminish the offensive power of PRC news media and social media.** Freedom of the press must be scrupulously safeguarded in Taiwan's democracy, but allowing the totalitarian PRC to dominate Taiwan's news media is the path to national suicide. Taiwan passed the vitally important *Anti-Infiltration Law*, but reportedly has not yet focused on regulating the media platforms; discussions with academics indicate this may be because Taiwan had success focusing on crowd-sourced fact checking, rapid government debunking, and raising media literacy for susceptible groups. But ultimately stronger laws and regulations will be required. As stated, punitive measures adopted by the *National Communications Commission* (NCC) against media outlets that willingly generate or distribute false



content are insufficient.<sup>65</sup> It is, therefore, imperative to develop and pass stronger legislation, perhaps in the *National Security Law*.

- a. Based on the U.S. experience with failed enforcement regarding PRC malign influence operations, in preparation for developing this legislation it will be important to review existing laws, legislation, and policies that apply to PRC *Media Warfare* to ensure the existence of clear mission statements, requirements for action, assessments of success, as enhanced analytical, investigative, and legal training.<sup>66</sup> If these fundamental requirements are lacking, they should be included as mandates in the legislation.
- b. The *Ministry of Justice*, the *Ministry of Defense*, the *National Communications Commission*, and the *Intelligence Community* each play key roles in investigating, disrupting, and prosecuting PRC *Media Warfare*. In the legislation, task these and other relevant ministries, bureaus, and agencies with investigating, disrupting, and prosecuting *Media Warfare* activities, and hold these organizations accountable for success.
- c. Legal experts should examine legislative remedies to protect Taiwan citizens from interference by PRC-affiliated news media and businesses with free speech, censorship, and intimidation through direct threats to corporate business interests and physical harassment of individual journalists and their families.

## **8. Raise the cost of the PRC's Media Warfare, both to the CCP organs**

<sup>65</sup> Cole, "Democracy Under Fire: China's Political Warfare Against Taiwan During President Tsai Ing-Wen's First Term".

<sup>66</sup> Peter Mattis, "U.S. Responses to China's Foreign Influence Operations" (March 21 2018), testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, United States House of Representatives, 115th Congress.

**and to those in Taiwan that engage in such malign influence or facilitate it. To this end, publicly expose covert and overt PRC political warfare operations on a routine basis.**

- a. Through legislation and/or executive order, Taiwan should mandate an annual, National Security Council-led, Ministry of Justice-supported publicly disseminated report on the CCP's Political/*Media Warfare* conducted against it.
- b. The annual report would focus on PRC united front interference and influence operations. It would include practical advice for ordinary citizens about how to recognize and avoid those threats. Such an annual report on the CCP's activities would force Taiwan's ministries and agencies to come together to discuss the problem and make decisions about what information needed to be released for public consumption. It would also help raise awareness within the disparate parts of Taiwan's government that may not cooperate together on a routine basis. A classified annex could be produced for internal government consumption.<sup>67</sup> This annual report could be part of a broader annual report on PRC Political Warfare activities against Taiwan.
- c. To operationalize the public exposure of PRC *Media Warfare*, Taiwan's government should continue to work with academic institutions, journalists, think tanks, and other organizations to map out PRC *Media Warfare* assets and operations and expose those that can be publicly uncovered without harming national security.  
➤ One approach is to design a "PRC Narrative Tracker" that can

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<sup>67</sup> Mattis, "U.S. Responses to China's Foreign Influence Operations".

expose PRC *Media Warfare* fronts, enablers, and operatives and hold them accountable, similar to the efforts by Doublethink Lab during the COVID-19 “Infodemic”. This tracker could, for example, reveal news organizations that routinely parrot PRC talking points and narratives: this information could be objectively provided to the public so the public could see the patterns and make decisions accordingly. As Cole points out, the media organizations may not be capable of being shamed into stopping support for PRC *Media Warfare*, but public exposure is useful to protect the credibility and viability of Taiwan’s democracy.

➤ Other steps that should be taken include publicly identifying those involved in foreign censorship and influence in the news media. For example, many people in Taiwan are likely unaware that PRC-based news organizations are organs of the CCP and that their reporting is directed by the CCPs Propaganda Department, as opposed to the reporting of most commercial news media organizations. It is also important to publicize business organizations and public relations and law firms involved in supporting PRC *Media Warfare* enterprises, as well as academics and universities that facilitate and defend PRC *Media Warfare*.

**9. Encourage academic study and thesis development at government and public education institutions that focus on PRC Media Warfare and how to contain, deter, and/or defeat the threat.**

a. The Taiwan government, with Ministry of Justice in the lead, should support research into this existential challenge and how to combat it. To this end, Ministry of Justice and other ministries should provide

funding to students researching the subject, and offer internships, assured government employment if qualified, and special high-level recognition and awards to encourage superior students to pursue this field of study.

- b. This government-funded push should cause Taiwan's institutions of higher learning to re-think their Strategic Communication curriculum to encompass a more multi-disciplinary focus. Fields of study that, when clustered, support counter-*Media Warfare* include Law Enforcement-related majors, Strategic Communications, Crisis Communications, Data Science, International Relations, Intelligence/Counterintelligence, National Security, and Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations.