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Recognizing and Resisting China's Evolving Sharp Power

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ABSTRACT

This article begins by looking into the discussion that has emerged in recent decades among some Western scholars about China's development and deployment of soft power. While a number of scholars have regarded China's soft power as benign and lagging behind the U.S. in its technology and effect, a few other specialists have sounded the alarm, noting how China's soft power efforts have become highly sophisticated and their malign influence should rather be termed "sharp power." After examining these assessments of China's soft power or sharp power, this article points out the origins of the PRC sharp power efforts in longstanding CCP (Chinese Communist Party, a.k.a. the Communist Party of China, or CPC) "thought-remolding" practices, and draw attention to the intensification of such efforts under Xi Jinping. The article discusses the danger these efforts pose for liberal democracies (with a particular focus on Taiwan), the need to raise awareness within liberal societies, and possible strategies to resist China's sharp power. Finally, the article examines China's disinformation campaign against Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill protesters to illustrate the workings of a digital dictatorship China has developed for its sharp power operations, at home and abroad, and how the democracies may counter it.

Keywords: soft power, China's sharp power, liberal democracies, Taiwan's democracy and sovereignty, "digital authoritarianism," Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill protests

INTRODUCTION

In his book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990), Joseph S. Nye, Jr. argued that in "getting others to want what you want," "soft co-optive power is just as important as hard command power"; while hard power is "usually associated with tangible resources like military and economic strength," co-optive power depends on "the attraction" of "soft sources" such as one's ideas, culture, and ideology.¹ It was from the perspective of the foreign policy of the U.S., a major liberal democracy already equipped with strong military and economic power, that Nye proposed the

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¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 31-33.

incorporation of soft power resources into its strategy. Writing again in the post-9/11 anti-terror era, Nye emphasized the importance of using the "attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies," rather than "coercion or payments," to attract others to your side, to cooperate with you, and to "win the peace."²

Discussing China's capability to become a global power challenging the U.S., Nye (1990) predicted, "Yet even with good fortune, China has a long way to go."³ In his *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (2004), Nye states his view that the culture, political ideals, and policies of a liberal democracy like the U.S. are far superior and necessarily attractive to the people in an authoritarian country like China. While acknowledging China's high annual growth rates in the past two decades, Nye nevertheless believes that "even China has a long way to go," and in soft-power resources it lags far behind the U.S.⁴ However, contrary to these predictions, China's development in both hard and soft power resources in the recent decades has been far more rapid than expected. While its authoritarian party-state system has remained unchanged by Western democratic influence, China has become the world's second-largest economy and a bona fide global power challenging the U.S. and other major liberal democracies.

This article first looks into some of the varied perceptions of Western scholars of China's development and deployment of soft power in recent decades. While a number of scholars have regarded China's soft power as benign and lagging behind the U.S. in its technology and effect, other specialists have sounded an alarm, noting how China's soft power efforts have become highly sophisticated and arguing that their malign influence should rather be termed "sharp power." After examining recent assessments of China's soft power or sharp power efforts, the article suggests that China's sharp power efforts partially stem from the CCP's (Chinese Communist Party, a.k.a. the Communist Party of China, or CPC) longstanding thought-remolding campaigns, which utilized soft power tools to manipulate or coerce target audiences into accepting its authoritarian agenda. Drawing attention to the intensification of sharp power efforts under Xi Jinping, the article discusses the danger these efforts pose for liberal democracies (Taiwan in particular), the need to raise awareness within liberal societies, and possible strategies to resist China's sharp power. Finally, the article highlights China's development of a digital dictatorship for its sharp power operations at home and abroad, using an examination of China's disinformation campaign against Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill protesters to illustrate how it works and how democracies may counter it.

CHINA'S SOFT POWER, SHARP POWER, AND THOUGHT-REMOLDING EFFORTS

In recent years, a number of Western specialists have discussed the features, tools, motives, and effects of China's development and deployment of soft power. The executive summary of *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States* noted that, "China in recent years has been pursuing its national interests through its exercise internationally of soft power and eco-

2 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x-xi.

3 Nye, *Bound to Lead*, 139. Nye based his judgment on assessment by some American specialists on China.

4 Nye, *Soft Power*, 84, 89.

conomic power as it projects a nonconfrontational, friendly diplomacy to states in developing regions," concluding that "China is using its soft-power projection to promote its own national interests, not as a direct challenge to the United States."⁵ Reflecting on how Chinese scholars have moved beyond Nye's original theoretical framework to reveal the development of "soft power with Chinese characteristics," Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy, in the same book, argued that "China's soft-power policy emphasizes culture," aiming to counter the international perception that China poses a threat, and "is largely ad hoc."⁶ They concluded that China's soft-power was not yet presenting "a challenge to the soft power of the United States," and, as China "continues to build its soft power," the U.S. and other countries should "continue through engagement to help shape the choices that China makes."⁷ In other words, these scholars argued that China's use of soft power is benign—for the promotion of its own interests and image—and not a threat or direct challenge to the U.S. in either its motives or effects.

Aided by technological advances in global internet and media as well as its economic success, though, China's soft power tools have progressed far more rapidly than scholars predicted. Its toolkit includes "thousands of people-to-people exchanges, wide-ranging cultural activities, educational programs (most notably the network of controversial Confucius Institutes), and the development of media enterprises with global reach."⁸ The impressive development and expansion of its soft power efforts are noted by such scholars as David Shambaugh, who recently observed that China is spending billions of dollars to improve its global image, "subsidizing the dramatic expansion of its media presence overseas, with the goal of establishing its own global media empire to break what it considers the Western media monopoly."⁹ Yet in assessing its effects, Shambaugh asserted that China's reputation has "steadily deteriorated."¹⁰ Nonetheless, throughout these years China has learned to package its political messages in an attractive way, greatly refine its media tools, improve their effects, and target a wider audience both at home and abroad. As scholars like Han Li demonstrate, China's new tools have included a series of skillfully made short videos from a "mysterious" (government-funded) studio since 2013, producing a veritable "neo-Communist hip-hopera," which mixes China's political messages with pop culture elements that have great appeal to "a younger, highly mobile, and global audience."¹¹

Whereas many scholars previously regarded China's soft power as benign or even as lagging behind the U.S. in its technology and effect, other special-

5 "Executive Summary" in *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*, ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009), v.

6 Bonnie S. Glaser and Melissa E. Murphy, "Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Ongoing Debate," in McGiffert, *Chinese Soft Power*, 11.

7 *Ibid.*, 25-26.

8 Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, "From Soft Power to Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World," in National Endowment for Democracy, *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, Washington, DC, December 2017, p. 8, <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf>.

9 David Shambaugh, "China's Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015): 102.

10 *Ibid.*, 107.

11 Han Li, "From Red to 'Pink': Propaganda Rap, New Media, and China's Soft Power Pursuit," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 25, no. 2 (October 2018): 89-90, 89-105.

ists have recently begun to sound an alarm to revise this assessment completely. They find China is using its well-funded cultural and media resources not just to attract others and promote its own global image, but also as channels to manipulate and pressure others into accepting its political agenda and disinformation. Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig thus warn about liberal democracies' complacency in viewing "influence efforts from authoritarian countries, such as China and Russia," through the optic of soft power, because their influence "in the spheres of media, culture, think tanks, and academia" is not so much about "attraction or even persuasion" but rather aims at "distraction and manipulation."¹² They argue that, "sharp power" is a more accurate term than attraction-based "soft power" to describe such aggressive "authoritarian influence efforts," since they "pierce, penetrate, or perforate the political and information environments in the targeted countries," and "manipulate their target audiences by distorting the information that reaches them."¹³ As China's sharp power initiatives "seek to reduce, neutralize, or preempt any challenges to the regime's presentation of itself," they are "instruments of manipulation and censorship, not simple attraction."¹⁴

A recent Hoover Institution report (2019) edited by Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance*, similarly cautions against the ways China has been, "seeking cultural and informational influence" and undermining the "democratic processes" of the U.S.: "These include efforts to penetrate and sway—through various methods that former Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull summarized as 'covert, coercive or corrupting'—a range of groups and institutions, including the Chinese American community, Chinese students in the United States, and American civil society organizations, academic institutions, think tanks, and media." Acknowledging that some of China's efforts "fall into the category of normal public diplomacy as pursued by many other countries," the report nevertheless emphasizes that many PRC efforts "involve the use of coercive or corrupting methods to pressure individuals and groups and thereby interfere in the functioning of American civil and political life."¹⁵ This report's attribution of sharp power to such types of soft-power efforts thus seems totally appropriate.

Some U.S. officials have also detected a widening scope and gravity of China's authoritarian influence on the United States. At a Senate intelligence committee hearing in February 2018, FBI director Christopher Wray noted China's targeting and infiltration of American universities, as well as "the level of naïveté on the part of the [U.S.] academic sector," to warn:

"They're exploiting the very open research and development environment that we have, which we all revere, but they're taking advantage of it. So one of the things we're trying to do is view the China threat as not just a whole-of-government threat but a whole-of-society threat on their end, and I think it's going to take a whole-of-society response by us. So it's not just the intelligence community, but it's raising awareness within our academic sector, within our private sector, as part of the defense."¹⁶

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

13 *Ibid.*

14 Walker and Ludwig, "From Soft Power to Sharp Power," 18.

15 Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, eds., *China's Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2019), 5-6. https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/chineseinfluence_americaninterests_fullreport_web.pdf.

16 Cited in Elizabeth Redden, "The Chinese Student Threat?" *Inside Higher Ed*, February 15, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/15/fbi-director-testifies-chinese-stu>

Rebutting previous assessment of China's soft power operations as entirely benign, these comments pinpoint how the PRC has utilized the open information environments of liberal democracies in order to spread its malign influence to targeted societies and undermine democratic values. In the academic sector in the U.S., we can already see China's influence on China-related research, conferences, and publications. Increasing numbers of scholars avoid politically sensitive topics or criticism of the PRC government, while a number of presses have also started to self-censor in this regard.

Following the observations of Walker and Ludwig, China's sharp power can be defined as its ability to "penetrate the political and media space of democracies," exploit "rifts within the democracies," "manipulate their target audiences by distorting the information that reaches them" while "masking its policies," and suppress, "to the extent possible, any voices beyond China's borders that are critical" of the CCP.¹⁷ Not all scholars agree, however, with the use of the term sharp power. Defining soft power as the power of attraction, political scientist Yu-Shan Wu, for example, finds the term sharp power redundant. He would simply count espionage, disinformation, and making people "disappear" as a "subcategory of hard power."¹⁸ In a sense, sharp power can be regarded as part of hard power, given that it is often backed by hard power. However, I would argue that these examples are not the same as the traditional hard power, which refers to the direct and open use of military or economic force to coerce another country.¹⁹

China actually uses its economic carrot-and-stick hard power indirectly and covertly through some of its soft power tools. Good at employing "economic activity as leverage to advance political goals in the realm of ideas," it applies "pressure with varying intensity and through indirect channels that are not always apparent."²⁰ To be precise, China's sharp power is often projected indirectly or covertly through certain types of soft power camouflage or cover. For example, the Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) on many U.S. university campuses supposedly perform "social functions," and should be considered soft power organizations; yet, they have links with PRC diplomatic missions, and use threats and retaliation to "interfere with other campus activities and broader political discourse and debate." Likewise, they engage in intimidation and "political 'peer monitoring' of Chinese students," thereby "undermining core principles of free speech and academic freedom."²¹ I therefore find the term "sharp power" useful for referring to manipulative or coercive authoritarian influences hidden under or amidst ostensibly "soft power" efforts.

A definition of sharp power may be further refined by discussing it in terms of the nature of the regime, the nature of the conduct, and the pur-

dents-and-intelligence-threats. Redden also reports on the controversy around Christopher Wray's warnings, which echoed part of Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Daniel Golden's 2017 book, which discloses how American academia has become a major target of foreign and domestic espionage. See Daniel Golden, *Spy Schools: How the CIA, FBI, and Foreign Intelligence Secretly Exploit America's Universities* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2017).

17 Walker and Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power."

18 See Yu-Shan Wu's comment in June Teufel Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power, Soft Power, and the Challenge of Democracy: A Report from the 2018 Annual Meeting of the American Association for Chinese Studies," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 25, no. 2 (October 2018): 151.

19 Nye, *Bound to Lead*, x.

20 Walker and Ludwig, "From Soft Power to Sharp Power," 18.

21 Diamond and Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests*, 57-58.

pose of the actions. We may call China's influence efforts "sharp" because they are orchestrated by an authoritarian regime, exercised in a manipulative, coercive, and often covert way, and geared toward infiltration and disinformation; they are devised for the purposes of "perforating the political and information environments in the targeted countries" to sow confusion and discord, undermine democratic values, weaken democratic countries, and strengthen authoritarianism at home. One may argue that some democratic governments also exercise sharp power, since they occasionally mislead audiences and perpetrate disinformation. However, unlike an authoritarian regime, democratic governments value freedom, human rights, accountability, and the rule of law, and the purpose of their actions is not to weaken targeted democratic countries nor to reinforce authoritarianism at home.

Why should some of China's supposed soft power efforts turn out to project sharp power in reality? Why would China move beyond conventional soft-power attraction and promotion to more direct manipulation and coercive influence efforts? According to the classic Nye formulation of soft power, a country attracts others to its side as a result of the appeal of its "culture, political ideals, and policies" rather than through "coercion or payments." The attractiveness here presumably arises naturally because others admire aspects of a specific society as they actually exist in that society. While China has had some soft power appeal through its culture, and more recently as a result of its economic growth, it has a harder time exerting any soft power or attracting others to its side in terms of its political system, ideology, and policies. Failing to see many direct results between its actual soft power and political influence, the CCP has chosen to produce the results it wants by aligning its soft power efforts with economic and other means that manipulate, pressure, and coerce others into accepting their political agenda. Soft power programs thus can be turned into covers for the application of sharp power.

China's combination of sharp power techniques with soft power efforts partially stem from the CCP's longstanding thought-remolding campaigns, which habitually incorporated propaganda, disinformation, and soft power tools into its coercive penetration of targeted groups. The Chinese party-state has distorted facts or falsified information in order to brainwash its audience and manipulate them into accepting its political authority and agenda. Some of the soft power tools adapted for propaganda, disinformation, and thought-remolding were literature and art, on which Mao Zedong set forth strict decrees in 1942. As noted by rights advocate Hu Ping, the CCP has "attached great importance to endeavors in literature and art," because they know that only through stories and images can they have "a more direct and effective control over the human mind."²² A propaganda machine monopolized by the CCP was well-established and deployed in the Mao era, combining such CCP-controlled media as newspapers, radio broadcasts, and drama and film productions. Again, Hu Ping notes that as a result of the CCP's constant fabrication and falsification of facts, "a large majority of people already cannot distinguish clearly between what is true and what is false."²³ The intensity of the CCP's various tactics of control and coercion was extreme. People were repeatedly inculcated through propaganda and intimidated through discipline and punishment in a "panoptic society"—metaphorically speaking—

²² Hu Ping, *The Thought Remolding Campaign of the Chinese Communist Party-State*, translated, annotated, and edited by Philip F. Williams and Yenna Wu (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 79.

²³ *Ibid.*, 49.

until they internalized the CCP propaganda, to the extent that they could no longer think, or dare to think, independently, and would censor themselves and others in complete obedience to the CCP authorities.²⁴ Having inherited the Mao-era propaganda system and manipulative practices, some of China's current soft power efforts also function to penetrate and manipulate targeted audiences through "covert, coercive or corrupting" means.

Instead of engaging in genuine political reform to make its system more attractive, China created soft power operations to ostensibly promote culture but in reality also advertise and advance the CCP's political agenda. In 2007, Chinese leader Hu Jintao used the term "soft power" in his report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Proposing to "enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country," Hu urged the Party-state to "build up the system of socialist core values and make socialist ideology more attractive," "publicize the theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics," "develop and manage Internet culture," and "promote patriotism, collectivism and socialist ideology."²⁵

Following Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping has been even more aggressive in pushing for innovation in "foreign publicity campaigns" and raising China's soft power.²⁶ After Xi stated in 2014 that "China should increase its soft power and improve its international communication," the Voice of China was created in March 2018, combining efforts by China Central Television (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI), and China National Radio.²⁷ Since 2013 Xi has tightened control of the media and the internet, while demanding the state media's absolute loyalty to the CCP. Meanwhile, a "Xi cult" was constructed, depicting him as the benevolent and capable "Daddy Xi" (Xi dada). The media has taken on the role of strengthening positive narratives about the CCP, encouraging Chinese people's patriotism, and persuading people at home and abroad that China's expansion of power is beneficial to the world.

Intertwined with media expansion and control is Xi's aggressive global expansion through such ambitious infrastructure investment efforts as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Though much touted by China's state media and overseas offices as an entirely positive project that will benefit participating countries, the BRI caused concerns in the U.S. and some other countries, which suspect that the BRI could be "a Trojan horse for China-led regional development, military expansion, and Beijing-controlled institutions."²⁸ The worries about China's motives are well-founded, given its aggressive territorial expansion, militarization, and belligerent stance since Xi assumed power. For example, China's state media has promoted the official narrative about its "legitimate" claims to the South China Sea and its peaceful motives. However, following its expansion into the South China Sea, the PRC has been

24 While problematic, some of Michel Foucault's ideas about how disciplinary institutions use the model of the panopticon to control the powerless individuals can be applied to Mao-era China. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, 2nd edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

25 See Hu Jintao's report to the Seventeenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China on Oct. 15, 2007, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects," <http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm>.

26 Han Li, "From Red to 'Pink,'" 92-93.

27 See Bonnie Glaser's comments in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 147.

28 Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," Council on Foreign Relations, last updated February 21, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

militarizing the region and consolidating its control by cultivating a "complex security environment," with the aim of "achieving regional dominance."²⁹

Chinese leaders thus appropriated the term "soft power" for their own use, while launching operations abroad not just to improve foreign perceptions of the PRC but also to silence criticism and exert authoritarian influence through manipulation and coercion. The results turn out to contradict the original intent of the soft-power concept suggested by Nye. Nye conceives of soft power from the perspective of a major liberal democracy and assumes that Western democratic values would be attractive to the people in an authoritarian country, thereby encouraging that country's political reform and leading to world peace. Yet, ironically, utilizing certain soft power platforms to project sharp power, China has been undermining precisely those Western democratic values. Indeed, as Walker and Ludwig correctly indicate, China has in fact blocked "external political and cultural influence at home while simultaneously preying upon the openness of democratic systems abroad."³⁰

The domestic results of these efforts inside China are easy to see. After decades of thought-remolding through propagandist education and media, the Chinese people are largely ignorant of historical truths about their own country, particularly the CCP-made tragedies that have been covered up by the regime. Having been tamed by the government's censorship, many Chinese people tend to engage in self-censoring and mutual censoring, or simply avoid discussing any politically sensitive topics. Despite its economic reforms, the development of open markets, and the pursuit of Western capital and technology during the post-Mao era, the regime has neither engaged in significant political democratization nor changed its ultra-nationalistic discourse. Furthermore, even though Chinese society has become relatively more pluralistic than before, due to the regime's blocking of "external political and cultural influence"—especially the positive aspects of liberal democracies' systems and values—and suppression of internal dissidence, many people, especially the younger generation, have become zealous ultra-nationalists.³¹ They support the regime's policies and positions, its crackdowns on dissent, as well as its condemnation of any criticism from other countries. After successfully taming many of its own people and transforming them into ultra-nationalistic helpers in its soft/sharp power campaigns at home and abroad, China has started manipulating the minds of people in other countries.

The Hoover Institution report documents a wide range of China's influence activities on the U.S. universities, think tanks, media, and corporations. For example, because of the pressure from the PRC government, many U.S. scholars and researchers engage in some level of self-censorship so as not to lose access to China visas, archives, and research collaborations, and U.S. cor-

29 Scott N. Romaniuk and Tobias Burgers, "China's Next Phase of Militarization in the South China Sea," *The Diplomat*, March 20, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/chinas-next-phase-of-militarization-in-the-south-china-sea/>.

30 Walker and Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power."

31 The topic of China's nationalism is more complicated than can be covered in this paper. See the discussion of popular nationalism in Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Christopher R. Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Note that rights advocates such as Liu Xiaobo (1955-2017), the prominent dissident and 2010 Nobel Peace laureate, and Hu Ping, opposed the ultra-nationalism incited by the regime and prevalent among the populace.

porations are forced to refer to Taiwan as a province of the PRC.³² Using economic means, the PRC has been exporting its domestic censorship abroad, seeking to manipulate some foreign presses and media into censoring materials that diverge from its political agenda and official narratives. For example, on August 18, 2017, Cambridge University Press (CUP) succumbed to China's pressure and "blocked online access in China to hundreds of scholarly articles and book reviews" published in *The China Quarterly*, covering such topics as the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy protests, the Cultural Revolution, Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan.³³ Due to severe criticism from the academic community, CUP later "reversed its decision to capitulate to the Chinese censors." However, scholars worry that "other publishers, prompted by the same commercial incentives," may acquiesce to the PRC's censorship demands.³⁴ The publishing company Springer Nature, for example, "removed an estimated one thousand publications from its internet catalog for China because their titles might not coincide with official political positions of Beijing."³⁵

A recent report from The International Forum for Democratic Studies, *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, examines how Russian and Chinese sharp power works in a number of democracies around the world, focusing on four countries (Argentina, Peru, Poland, and Slovakia). As Juan Pablo Cardenal demonstrates, China can "leverage varied tools in order to elicit friendly treatment or neutralize criticism in foreign independent media outlets," and effectively encourage Chinese companies to support the CCP's agenda. After building strong economic and political ties with Argentina, the Chinese government has used soft power tools to assume substantial control over local media, develop strong links with the academic community, and monopolize "almost every aspect of Chinese culture in Argentina."³⁶ Specifically, it dominates cultural activities in overseas ethnic-Chinese communities, erasing former Taiwanese grassroots representation and stopping cultural activities organized by groups of which it disapproves.³⁷ The regime thus co-opts and influences overseas Chinese communities in order to weaken their sense of belonging to their democratic countries and to strengthen their identification with China and support for the CCP.³⁸

There are various reasons for the slowness of liberal democracies to wake up to China's sharp power efforts. Democratic countries have been complacent in assuming—wrongly—that China's economic reform and prosperity would necessarily lead to political reform and democracy. Moreover, there is an imbalance of informational power. Due to the authoritarian regime's non-transparency and manipulation of information and data, liberal democracies have often been relatively ignorant of its true maneuvers and purposes. The

32 Diamond and Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests*, chapters 4-7.

33 John Ruwitch and Fanny Potkin, "UK Publisher Pulls Scholarly Articles from China Website at Beijing's Request," *Reuters*, August 18, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-censorship-journal/uk-publisher-pulls-scholarly-articles-from-china-website-at-beijings-request-idUSKCN1AY1FM>.

34 Nicholas Loubere and Ivan Franceschini, "Beyond the Great Paywall: A Lesson from the Cambridge University Press China Incident," *Chinoiserie*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.chinoiserie.info/cambridge-university-press-china-incident/>.

35 Diamond and Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests*, 182-83.

36 Juan Pablo Cardenal, "Navigating Political Change in Argentina," in *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, 37, 44-45.

37 See also *ibid.*, 45.

38 Walker and Ludwig, "From Soft Power to Sharp Power," 17.

gap in informational power has actually grown wider along with the development of computer and internet technology. Furthermore, as democratic countries have become more dependent on China for their trade and national economies, even their own officials might become reluctant to point out or even criticize China's interference in their countries' affairs.

A recent controversy over an opinion piece written by West Australian Liberal MP Andrew Hastie is instructive in this regard. Hastie warned that Australia failed to see the growing threats China has been posing because Australia and the West "ignore the role that ideology plays in China's actions across the Indo-Pacific region."³⁹ Calling for a change of thinking about China, Hastie suggested that,

"Australia must now, somehow, hold on to our sovereignty and prosperity. We must balance security and trade. But most importantly, we must remain true to our democratic convictions while also seeing the world as it is, not as we wish it to be."⁴⁰

Hastie's piece was denounced not only by the Chinese Embassy in Australia but also by some Australian government ministers and MPs, who worried that Hastie's warning might harm Australia's trading relationship with China. Meanwhile, Labor MP Anthony Byrne came to Hastie's defense, declaring that Hastie's apprehensions about China were "shared" by the parliament, which "passed foreign interference and anti-espionage laws" in June 2018 in recognition of such concerns.⁴¹ Noting that politicians and intelligence agencies backed Hastie's views on China's "strategic threats," Byrne stated, "we're facing an unprecedented levels of attempts to subvert our democracy through foreign interference and espionage."⁴²

While emphasizing "national/economic interest" over "national security," even the critics of Hastie's views may have also engaged in some degree of self-censorship. Rory Medcalf perceptively refers to the "pre-emptive fears of displeasing China" as one of the reasons for most critics to have missed "what Hastie actually said." As explained by Medcalf, Hastie urged us to "study the ideology propelling China's actions across the Indo-Pacific," which include "huge investments in strategic infrastructure as well as economic coercion, social interference, cyber infiltration, espionage, political influence and military presence."⁴³ The controversy thus reflects current polarized attitudes toward China's expansion and influence efforts. While some have changed their thinking, taken serious note of China's ideology and hidden purposes, and recognized some actions as applications of sharp power, others still regard them as inoffensive soft power efforts or prefer to keep quiet so as not to damage economic relationships with China.

Despite some remaining divide in thinking and attitudes on the extent of the China threat, some scholars advising caution about China's malign influence have already begun to suggest concrete measures to address it. Identifying China's techniques as including "both co-optation and manipulation"

39 Andrew Hastie, "We Must See China—The Opportunities and the Threats—with Clear Eyes," *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 8, 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/we-must-see-china-the-opportunities-and-the-threats-with-clear-eyes-20190807-p52eon.ftm1>.

40 Ibid.

41 Richard Ferguson, "Intelligence Agencies, MPs Back Hastie on China: Anthony Byrne," *The Australian*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/intelligence-agencies-mps-back-hastie-on-china-anthony-byrne/news-story/6df6f12fb64a358917bc8d1d9ff26051e>.

42 Ibid.

43 Rory Medcalf, "In Defence of Andrew Hastie," *Financial Review*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/in-defence-of-andrew-hastie-20190811-p52fyw>.

and as being targeted "at the media, academia, and the policy community," Walker and Ludwig advise the democracies to "inoculate themselves against malign authoritarian influence that corrodes democratic institutions and standards," and "take a far more assertive posture on behalf of their own principles."⁴⁴ The report, *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, recommends even more necessary steps to be taken and elaborates them in greater detail. It specifies, for example, the need to "address the shortage of information" on the Chinese political system and foreign policy strategies, "unmask authoritarian influence," "reaffirm support for democratic values and ideals," and to "recognize authoritarian influence efforts in the realm of ideas for what they are: corrosive and subversive 'sharp power' instruments that do real damage to the targeted democratic societies."⁴⁵ Bonnie Glaser likewise recently made specific suggestions on how to defend the U.S. society against China's sharp power infiltration and espionage, such as insisting on "complete transparency of Chinese united front efforts," labeling Chinese advertisements in American newspapers clearly as such, and finding "alternative funding for Chinese language teaching" instead of relying upon Confucius Institutes.⁴⁶ The Hoover Institution report strongly recommends that the U.S. authorities promote transparency, integrity, and reciprocity. For example, in the area of media, it argues that the U.S. government should require that any foreign-owned or foreign-controlled media, "particularly those that advance a foreign government line," be registered as such, and "demand reciprocity for American journalists attempting to do their professional work in China."⁴⁷

Glaser's suggestion regarding Confucius Institutes points to one particular area where there has been some divergent views. To some, the government-funded, attractively-named Confucius Institutes (CI) are simply a part of China's soft power efforts; they perform only their stated, non-political goals—offering Chinese language and cultural education to institutions abroad—and have no political influence on students in the U.S.⁴⁸ Others, however, have charged that some CIs have also served China's aggressive political agenda ranging from spreading propaganda, monopolizing international Chinese language and culture study, and restricting the host universities' academic freedom to conducting "industrial and military espionage" and carrying out "surveillance of Chinese abroad."⁴⁹ Even if the CIs themselves are apolitical, the PRC government could use them as economic leverage to coerce or threaten the host universities into obeying its demands. Nevertheless, the authors of the Hoover Institution report "do not endorse

44 Walker and Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power."

45 "Executive Summary," *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, 7.

46 See Bonnie Glaser's suggestions in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 148.

47 Diamond and Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests*, 120-22.

48 Edward A. McCord, "Where's the Beef: Confucius Institutes and Chinese Studies in American Universities," *Critical Asian Studies* 53, no. 3 (2019): 426-32.

49 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucius_Institute#Reception_and_controversies (last accessed 14 December 2018); the statement from the AAUP's (American Association of University Professors) Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes," AAUP, June 2014, <https://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes>; and Ethan Epstein, "How China Infiltrated U.S. Classrooms," *Politico*, January 17, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/01/16/how-china-infiltrated-us-classrooms-216327>. For warnings about Confucius Institutes monopolizing the content and standards of international Chinese language and culture education, see Yenna Wu, "Changes in the Research and Instruction of Chinese Language and Literature in the U.S., 1959-2008: Prospects and Challenges," *American Journal of Chinese Studies, Special Issue* 16 (2009): 93-94.

calls for Confucius Institutes to be closed, as long as several conditions are met," but recommend in detail how US institutions should better manage agreements with Confucius Institutes. Among these recommendations are to "make their CI agreements public to facilitate oversight by members of the university community," have the agreements "grant full managerial authority to the host institution," ensure that "all public programming offered by their CIs conforms to academic standards of balance and diversity and does not cross the line to become a platform for PRC propaganda," etc.⁵⁰

Although CIs have generated the most attention, in recent years the sharp power threat on U.S. campuses has largely come more from organizations such as Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSAs) that mobilize against views that they see as offensive to China, and work with the PRC embassy to deliver economic threats.⁵¹ Meanwhile, the Hoover Institute report also urges universities to "rigorously apply far stricter due-diligence procedures to scrutinize the sources and purposes of gifts and contracts from China to ensure that they do not interfere with academic freedom," and to defend the academic freedom of faculty and students.⁵² In order to resist sharp power influences, universities would do well to heed these recommendations, while also reducing their economic dependence on PRC funding.

Since China's economic and military power has grown stronger, and Xi's regime has become more aggressive, China's sharp power efforts have also grown in scope, intensity, and frequency. Some of those influence efforts have evolved from covert to overt. As noted previously, China has been trying to "leverage varied tools" to manipulate foreign media, even seeking control of some local media, in order to "elicit friendly treatment or neutralize criticism" in foreign media outlets. At the same time, the PRC has increasingly been exporting its domestic censorship abroad by having its embassy or diplomatic missions openly attack foreign independent media if their reports do not follow China's official narratives. For example, the Chinese embassy in Sweden denounced multiple Swedish news outlets in 2018, accusing their truthful reports to be lies. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Sweden intervened to tell the PRC to "stop harassing media." The head of RSF's East Asia bureau declared that such attacks "reveal the unrestrained attitude with which Beijing is now trying to impose its censorship outside its borders."⁵³ Only when protected by democratic governments that value media freedom can conscientious reporters insist on truthful reporting, unmask lies and disinformation, and thus play a crucial role in resisting China's sharp power.

What liberal democracies must recognize is that the PRC has been expanding its media control to other parts of the world, using both covert and overt means that include economic lures and intimidation. In "China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order," released on March 22, 2019, Reporters Without Borders warned that China "is expanding its hold beyond its borders to impose its 'ideologically correct' vocabulary, to deter any criticism of itself and to cover up the darker chapters in its history. . . this project poses a threat to press freedom throughout the world." China's strategies include: "modernizing its international TV broadcasting, buying extensive amounts of ad-

50 Diamond and Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests*, 65-66.

51 Ibid., 57.

52 Ibid., 66-68.

53 "Watchdog Tells China to 'Stop Harassing Media,'" *The Local*, March 18, 2019, <https://www.thelocal.se/20190318/reporters-without-borders-accuses-china-of-harassing-swedish-reporters>.

vertising in international media, infiltrating foreign media . . . but also employing blackmail, intimidation and harassment on a massive scale."⁵⁴ The regime has been buying out many Chinese diaspora media and "training" numerous journalists in emerging countries through "paid trips to Beijing" to encourage their favorable press coverage of China. It is also "exporting its censorship and surveillance tools, including the Baidu search engine and WeChat instant messaging platform, and encouraging authoritarian states to copy its repressive regulations, a particularly effective strategy in Southeast Asia."⁵⁵ As Christophe Deloire warns, "If democracies do not resist, Beijing will impose his view and his propaganda, which is a threat for journalism and democracy."⁵⁶

One key area where China has been particularly strong in deploying its sharp power abroad is in support of its efforts to deny Taiwan's right to independent nationhood. Thus this aspect of China's sharp power effort not only deserves special attention but can also serve as a case study of what can be done in response to such efforts.

TAIWAN VS. CHINA'S SHARP POWER

One of the major goals of the PRC's sharp power operations has been to manipulate or coerce the international community into accepting its agenda to deprive Taiwan of visibility, viability, and the right to independent nationhood. Under a slogan to "achieve national unification under CCP leadership," China has continuously used "methods of repression and intimidation" that counter its claim of a "peaceful rise." It routinely attacks democratic countries that criticize its human rights abuses or its military threats to Taiwan, accusing them of so-called "international hegemony" or "foreign interference into its domestic affairs."⁵⁷ The PRC has meanwhile used its military, economic, and diplomatic hard power to suppress and isolate Taiwan. While hypocritically offering a peaceful reunification in its rhetoric, it reiterates that it would not rule out taking Taiwan by force. At the same time, it uses economic means to bribe or manipulate other countries into cutting off relations with Taiwan and not recognizing Taiwan as a sovereign state. As Denise E. Zheng stated, "Chinese investment in developing countries has one condition: acceptance of the 'one-China' policy that requires recipient governments to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and recognize Taiwan as part of China's sovereign territory."⁵⁸ In 2009, when Zheng discussed China's "investment, humanitarian aid, exchange programs, diplomacy, and participation in multilateral institutions" as "soft-power" tools, most scholars regarded them as nonthreatening and justified. However, given current hindsight about the PRC's tactics and goals, some of these actions should be more aptly defined as sharp power tools.

Armed with its immense economic, military, and political clout, China under Xi Jinping has become even more dictatorial and hegemonic in inter-

⁵⁴ Reporters Without Borders, "China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order," March 22, 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/reports/rsf-report-chinas-pursuit-new-world-media-order>. See also the discussion in Amy Gunia, "China's Media Interference Is Going Global, Report Says," *Time*, March 25, 2019, <https://time.com/5557951/china-interference-global-media/>.

⁵⁵ Reporters Without Borders, "China's Pursuit."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ See Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism*, 130, 156.

⁵⁸ Denise E. Zheng, "China's Use of Soft Power in the Developing World: Strategic Intentions and Implications for the United States," in McGiffert, *Chinese Soft Power*, 3.

national politics than before. In addition to intimidating Taiwan with its growing stockpile of ballistic missiles and other weapons,⁵⁹ China has drastically increased other military threats as well as economic and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan, especially since President Tsai Ing-wen (Democratic Progressive Party; DPP) took office in 2016. Stepping up efforts to isolate and thereby subjugate Taiwan, the Xi regime has pressured more countries into excluding Taiwan's representatives or diplomats from participating in official meetings, or even refraining from establishing city-to-city, people-to-people, or cultural exchanges with Taiwan. To erase Taiwan's nationhood from the world, it has taken such aggressive measures as forcing major international corporations and airlines to wipe Taiwan off from their lists of countries and to mention Taiwan only as a province of China.

Under their "United Front" cover, the PRC also uses "divide-and-conquer" tactics to entice Taiwan's businesses and intellectuals to mainland China, exploit the rifts between Taiwan's political parties, and undermine Taiwan's internal politics, social integrity, and identity. After changing the PRC's constitution to remove presidential term limits (March 11, 2018) so he could hold his position for life, Xi claimed belligerently, "We are resolved to fight the bloody battle against our enemies," and to "safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and achieve full unification of the motherland."⁶⁰ In early January, Xi's proposal of a "one country, two systems" scenario for Taiwan—without ruling out the use of force—prompted Taiwan's President Tsai to declare immediately that the vast majority of Taiwanese "resolutely oppose 'one country, two systems,'" and to urge the PRC to "respect the commitment of the twenty-three million people of Taiwan to freedom and democracy."⁶¹ Most recently, at a security forum in Taipei on August 20, 2019, while warning the world about the PRC's military buildup and expansionism, Tsai further proclaimed, "The protests in Hong Kong are proof that China's 'one country, two systems' model does not work, because authoritarianism and democracy cannot coexist."⁶² Nonetheless, in 2019, especially since Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill protests started, many more international companies have been forced to list Taiwan only as a province of China and a number of Taiwanese companies doing business in China have been coerced to declare their support for "one country, two systems."

In advance of Taiwan's presidential election to be held in January 2020, the PRC has been intensifying its economic and political pressures on Taiwan, in an attempt to influence voters to vote for the KMT candidate (since the KMT is seen as more amenable to the concept of "one China" and eventual reunification with the mainland). Since 2016, China has been drastically reducing the number of travel permits issued to mainland tourists for travel to Taiwan, either in organized tour groups or as individuals, so as to weaken Taiwan's economy and punish its DPP leadership. These punitive travel restrictions were suddenly tightened even further on July 31, 2019, when China

59 Huang Tzu-ti, "China has 2,000 Ballistic Missiles Threatening Taiwan and US: US Military Report," *Taiwan News*, August 17, 2018, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3508977>.

60 Quoted in James Griffiths, "China Ready to Fight 'Bloody Battle' against Enemies, Xi Says in Speech," *CNN*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/19/asia/china-xi-jin-ping-speech-npc-intl/index.html>.

61 "President Tsai Issues Statement on China's President Xi's 'Message to Compatriots in Taiwan,'" January 2, 2019, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/5621>.

62 Lin Chia-nan, "HK Proves 'Two Systems' Model a Failure, Tsai Says," *Taipei Times*, August 21, 2019, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2019/08/21/2003720849>.

announced that beginning on August 1, it would stop issuing travel permits for mainlanders wishing to take individual trips to Taiwan. Clearly, China is signaling the Taiwanese that unless they elect the KMT candidate they will suffer massive economic losses from a decline in mainland tourists and trade. China may also want to keep individual mainlanders from visiting Taiwan so that they will not witness firsthand Taiwan's freedom and democracy or hear any truthful reports about Hong Kong's ongoing protests.

Taiwan also serves as a particularly strong example of China's efforts to exploit the open environment of democracies to "penetrate the political and media space" and "manipulate their target audiences by distorting the information that reaches them." For the past decade it has been increasingly trying to infiltrate and exploit Taiwan's open political and media space to conduct its United Front activities. China's sharp power targeting of Taiwan also includes covert efforts at misinformation and payments to some local media outlets in Taiwan in order to weaken its democratic governance.

On May 11, 2019, at a "media summit" in Beijing, the PRC Politburo Standing Committee member Wang Yang (Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) even urged a group of Taiwan media executives attending the summit to help the PRC promote "one country, two systems" in Taiwan. Furthermore, Wang Yang ridiculed the U.S. for having no guts to fight against China, and scorned Taiwan's current administration for "being unable to guarantee [what might happen] two years later." The leaked contents of Wang's commands and boasts to the Taiwan group understandably shocked and disgusted many Taiwanese. As Joseph Wu (Wu Jaushieh), Taiwan's current Minister of Foreign Affairs, commented, "This new battle of the CCP has only one goal: to defeat Taiwan—the front line in defending freedom and democracy—from within."⁶³

The Hong Kong anti-extradition bill (*fan song Zhong*) protests, which started in spring 2019, also shocked many Taiwanese into recognizing and resisting the PRC's invasion into Taiwan's political and media spheres. The Hong Kongers object to the extradition bill for fear that it would place them and any visitors under mainland China's authoritarian jurisdiction, and further undermine Hong Kong's judicial independence, autonomy and civil rights (supposedly guaranteed under the "one country, two systems" principle for 50 years up until 2047). On June 9, millions of Hong Kongers marched in peaceful demonstrations, demanding that the government withdraw the extradition bill. Further protests ensued—demanding an independent investigation into police brutality, the release of arrested demonstrators, etc.—and developed into a pro-democracy movement.

Hong Kongers' fears are well-founded, given that in recent years the mainland regime has been steadily undermining the rights, freedom, and autonomy they used to enjoy. The PRC's illegal kidnapping of certain Hong Kongers is a case in point. For example, five Hong Kong-based booksellers were abducted and imprisoned by China in late 2015. Without going through any due judicial process, they were forced to confess falsely on Chinese national television to crimes they never committed and their publishing company was "mysteriously bought out" by "people sent by Beijing."⁶⁴ As the

63 Lǚ Yixuan, "Wang Yang xunshi Taiwan meiti gaoceng, Wu Zhaoxie (Jaushieh Wu) shuohua le," *Liberty Times Net*, May 12, 2019, <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breaking-news/2787848>.

64 Benedict Rogers, "Hong Kong Extradition Law is a Death Sentence for Hong Kong, Says Exiled Bookseller Lam Wing-kee," *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 29, 2019, <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/06/29/hong-kong-extradition-law-is-a-death-sentence-for-hong-kong-says-exiled-bookseller-lam-wing-kee/>.

exiled bookseller Lam Wing-kee warned, "In the past, the regime kidnapped its critics, like me, illegally. With this law, they will abduct their critics legally."⁶⁵

On June 23, 2019, thousands of Taiwanese rallied in Taipei to protest against "red media" (*hongmei*), that is, pro-China local media outlets that are financed and controlled by the PRC and help the PRC conduct United Front activities in Taiwan. In rejecting red media's infiltration into Taiwan's politics and calling for government regulation of red media, these Taiwanese wanted to protect Taiwan's democracy and sovereignty. At the same time, this anti-red media rally also showed support for Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill demonstrations.

A report by Kathrin Hille of *Financial Times* on July 16, 2019 exposed the extent of this red media threat to Taiwan democracy. She noted that, "alongside military threats, Beijing is increasingly trying to influence Taiwan from within," and pro-China media has been influencing Taiwan's politics, including the recent Kuomintang (KMT) presidential primaries, and has become a "national security issue" for Taiwan's government.⁶⁶ She identified such media as the "Taiwanese television channel CTITV and its sister channel CTV," owned by "the Want Want China Times Group, a media company influenced by the Chinese government." She quoted journalists working at the *China Times* and CTITV as saying that, "their editorial managers take instructions directly from the Taiwan Affairs Office," the PRC organization that handles Taiwan issues.⁶⁷

Retaliation from Want Want China Times Media Group was swift as it announced on July 19, 2019, that it would "file defamation lawsuits against the London-based *Financial Times*, Taiwan's state-run Central News Agency (CNA), and all media companies that have cited a *Financial Times* report"—referring to Hille's report, which it blamed as a "baseless accusation."⁶⁸

China Times president Wang Feng, who made the announcement, denied Hille's report, while arguing that *China Times* has been labeled as "red media" simply because "it supports peace" across the Taiwan Strait and "seeks to rise above partisan politics." Wang even tried to turn the tables on CNA president Chang Jui-chang, attacking him for taking the lead in "spreading misinformation" and "propagating fake news."⁶⁹ Seemingly assuming the role of a victim, Wang also exploited Taiwan's values of freedom, democracy and human rights as a discursive weapon to attack the current ruling party, falsely accusing the DPP, which fought hard in the past for Taiwan to become a multi-party democracy, of being "now the butcher of freedom and liberties."⁷⁰ In fact, Hille's report was no "fake news." Wang was simply trying to intimidate reporters and other media companies into self-censorship and to

kongfp.com/2019/06/29/hong-kong-extradition-law-death-sentence-hong-kong-says-exiled-bookseller-lam-wing-kee/. See also "Hong Kong Bookseller Released by China Is Missing – Daughter," *BBC News*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-41734361>.

65 Rogers, "Hong Kong Extradition Law."

66 Kathrin Hille, "Taiwan Primaries Highlight Fears over China Influence," *Financial Times*, July 16, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/036b609a-a768-11e9-984c-fac8325aaa04>.

67 Ibid.

68 Chen Yun and Jake Chung, "Want Want China Times to Sue 'Financial Times,'" *Taipei Times*, July 20, 2019, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2019/07/20/2003718982>.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

deprive them of the freedom to report anything deemed unfavorable to the PRC.

Reuters has also found evidence that PRC authorities, especially the Taiwan Affairs Office, "have paid at least five Taiwan media groups for coverage in various publications and on a television channel." On one website, paid articles (for example, "about a new Chinese government program to lure Taiwanese entrepreneurs to the mainland") were presented as "straight news" designed to "win hearts and minds in Taiwan for China's 'reunification' agenda."⁷¹ These China-funded media organizations also engage in self-censorship—e.g., refraining from covering issues "seen as 'sensitive' by China, such as the anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989."⁷²

The Hille and Reuters' reports reveal that China has been funding and directing some of Taiwan's media to sway public opinion, and exploiting Taiwan's freedom of expression and press freedom to "manipulate their target audiences by distorting the information that reaches them," and to sabotage Taiwan's democracy and sovereignty. We also see how the red media such as Want Want China Times Media can utilize Taiwan's democratic values to intimidate or censor other media companies. This case clearly demonstrates how China uses the red media outlets as sharp power tools to penetrate Taiwan's "political and media space," spread propaganda and disinformation while silencing criticism, and sow confusion and discord.

Taiwan's government is not unaware of China's manipulation and infiltration through their paid media. Chiu Chui-cheng, deputy minister of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, declared, "China has stretched its hands into our democratic politics and into the heart of it, our media."⁷³ "It is using our press freedom to harm press freedom," said Chiu, as he vowed to "strengthen laws to close what he called 'loopholes' in Taiwan's national security."⁷⁴

What can Taiwan do when confronted with China's ever-growing sharp power? On the one hand, Taiwan's government needs to adopt some of the recommendations mentioned above for countering China's sharp power: raise alertness within the whole society, "unmask [China's] authoritarian influence," and so forth. In particular, as a small country oppressed by a far bigger and more powerful regime, Taiwan urgently needs to guard against the PRC's United Front manipulations and divide-and-conquer tactics, and set up clear-cut regulations against the PRC's infiltration into Taiwan's media space, interference in Taiwan's politics, and attempts to sabotage and undermine Taiwan's democracy and sovereignty. Taiwan also needs to reduce its economic dependence on mainland China so as not to be blackmailed or trapped in the dilemma of prosperity versus security, sovereignty, and democracy.

Recently Richard Bush raised a warning about Taiwan's extremely polarized politics and "the decline of the public confidence in the ability of political institutions to reconcile Taiwan's various priorities."⁷⁵ Instead of being hostile toward one another, both the ruling party and the opposition

71 Yimou Lee and Hwa Cheng, "Paid 'News': China Using Taiwan Media to Win Hearts and Minds on Island," *Reuters*, August 8, 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>.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Hille, "Taiwan Primaries Highlight Fears."

74 Lee and Cheng, "Paid 'News.'"

75 See Richard Bush's warning in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 154.

parties should be wary of Taiwan's precarious situation and the PRC's divide-and-conquer tactics. The government and the different parties need to be more inclusive and respectful of one another, set aside their ideological differences, unite to defend Taiwan's hard-won democracy, and work together for the people's safety and welfare. At the same time, Taiwanese society must be vigilant and take concrete actions against China's sharp power operations that infiltrate the open information environments of democracies to exploit their internal rifts and undermine democratic values.

On the other hand, being repeatedly marginalized and repressed by the PRC, Taiwan needs to greatly increase the advantages of its own natural soft power and visibility globally. Much work still needs to be done for Taiwan to secure and improve its appeal at home and abroad. Since Taiwan's major advantage is "its liberal democracy, which exists in sharp contrast to the repressive regime across the Taiwan Strait," Yu-Shan Wu has suggested that to compete with China "in the realm of attraction" and to attract "an international or mainland Chinese audience" as well as to "defeat China's power of attraction in Taiwan itself," Taiwan must "perfect its democratic institutions."⁷⁶ Praising Taiwan's "democratization with peaceful transfers of power" and its "positive record on human rights and judicial independence," Jacques de Lisle has noted that Taiwan has presented itself "as a good international citizen."⁷⁷ Observing that Taiwan's democratization is not well-known to people outside the East Asian field, Richard Bush urged Taiwan to continue to "unilaterally adhere to the rules" of the international institutions it has been blocked from joining, such as the United Nations Convention on Civil and Political Rights, "as if it were a member," and to show the international community that it is a good rule-taker.⁷⁸

Taiwan is moreover "attractive" in many other aspects, ranging from its human rights advocacy to its unique mixture of diverse ethnicities, cultures, and religions. For example, its rights advocacy, including its progressive stand on LGBTQ rights, sets a positive example in Asia. Most recently Taiwan scored a landmark victory for LGBT rights on May 17, 2019, as it became the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. The news made worldwide headlines, instantly boosting Taiwan's visibility and soft power. Taiwan can also boast of accomplishments in science and technology, environmental protection, humanitarian aid, as well as literature, cinema, performing arts, fine cuisine, athletics, and other areas. Fang-Long Shih even cited Taiwan's soft power effect of the cultural performances of Taiwanese local religious troupes, such as the rock group *The Chairman*, which performed abroad a piece entitled "May All Gods Protect Taiwan."⁷⁹ Richard Bush likewise mentions the impressive charity work performed worldwide by Taiwan's Buddhist organization, Tzu-chi Kung-te-hui Foundation, yet laments that "too few people outside Taiwan know about Tzu-chi's work."⁸⁰ Clearly, besides continuing diligently to enhance its soft power potential in all these areas, Taiwan needs to do more work to showcase its accomplishments and promote its attractiveness abroad.

Nonetheless, even when increasing efforts to raise other people's awareness of its existence and attractiveness, Taiwan must recognize the limits of

76 See Yu-Shan Wu's suggestion in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 150-51.

77 See Jacques de Lisle's remark in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 152.

78 See Richard Bush's comment in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 153-54.

79 See Fang-Long Shih's comment in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 155.

80 See Richard Bush's remarks in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 154.

such efforts and take precautions. While noting Taiwan has "successfully touted its record on democracy and human rights," Jacques de Lisle reminds us that "there were limits to how successful these efforts have been in enhancing Taiwan's international stature, especially given the limited role that 'values' issues play in the U.S. and other great powers' foreign policy" recently; with that caveat, he suggests that Taiwan still needs "continued support from liberal democracies."⁸¹ Indeed, despite the PRC's incessant obstructions, Taiwan must continue its efforts to establish and maintain cultural exchanges with other countries so as not to be crased from the international community.

Taiwan is indeed not without some international friends who are willing to resist Chinese pressure. This can be seen in a recent case where China canceled a tour of the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra in retaliation of the city's mayor, Dr. Zdeněk Hřib, for refusing to exclude a Taiwanese diplomat from an official event. Dr. Hřib—who "openly opposes the 'one China' clause in the sister city agreement signed by Prague and Beijing, welcomes dissidents from Tibet, and has met with Taiwanese leaders"—suggested that the orchestra "play in Taipei instead."⁸² Crucial to Hřib's resistance to China's sharp power in this case was his courageous insistence on democratic values. It also demonstrates the working of Taiwan's "attractiveness" to independent-minded administrators as Hřib, reinforcing an understanding of Taiwan's need to seek "continued support from liberal democracies."

There are, unfortunately, also limits to how much credit the international community gives to Taiwan for its achievements. Currently, as a result of the PRC's pressure and manipulation, not many countries recognize the reality of Taiwan as a self-governing, democratic nation. Taiwanese athletes competing in international sporting events are often not permitted to represent "Taiwan," but must use the label "Chinese Taipei" instead.

A recent example illustrates the need for Taiwan to continue to fight hard to earn international recognition of the reality of its nationhood and its accomplishments. On August 4, 2019, UN Women (the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) posted on its Facebook page the image of the flags of the nations and regions that legally allow same-sex marriages. The image contained a flag of Taiwan (ROC), but with the label, "Taiwan, Province of China." Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked UN Women to correct its identification of the nation as a "province of China" on its website. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in New York correctly commented, "China is taking credit for something it did not do and the UN is complicit in propagating falsehoods. Taiwan is not a part of China and that is the reality."⁸³ Along with other critical comments, Social Democratic Party politician Jennifer Lu protested: "The reason Taiwan could recognize same-sex marriage is because we have democracy and mature civil society, and WE ARE NOT A PROVINCE OF CHINA!! TAIWAN IS TAIWAN!!"⁸⁴ Possibly as a result of these protests as well as "criticism from peo-

81 See Jacques de Lisle's comments in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 152-53.

82 Keoni Everington, "Prague Mayor Sending Philharmonic to Taiwan Instead of China after Xi Snub," *Taiwan News*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/3690647>.

83 Lu Yi-hsuan and William Hetherington, "UN Group Asked to Correct Taiwan's Name, MOFA Says," *Taipei Times*, August 5, 2019, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/08/05/2003719950>.

84 Ibid.

ple who support Taiwan," UN Women removed the image from its Facebook page.⁸⁵ Since the PRC has manipulated or coerced many countries and international organizations into adopting the wrong identification of Taiwan as a "province of China," Taiwan needs to choose its battles wisely and fight for what matters. In such serious cases as the UN Women's crediting of Taiwan's legalization of same-sex marriage to China, Taiwan and its supporters must protest immediately and loudly, demand correction, and if necessary persist in protesting.

Urging Taiwan to take "all prudent measures to expose and counter" China's pernicious influence, Joseph Bosco maintains that, "the proxy war of ideas and information also demands a cooperative democratic truth campaign that takes the battle to the ideological adversary." Specifically, he has proposed that Taiwan and the U.S., "inform the Chinese people on such topics as what happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and what is happening now in their name, and at the cost of their honor, in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong, and in Beijing's support of North Korea." He also called for increasing funding for Radio Free Asia and the Voice of America. "Truth," he notes, "is the strongest weapon America has in the battle of ideas and information that we are finally engaging China in."⁸⁶ Bosco's highlighting of truth as the strongest weapon echoes Hu Ping's argument that in opposing totalitarian rule the most challenging task is to overcome their "huge net of many types of lies and to reconstruct historical truth."⁸⁷

This is an issue, obviously, that goes beyond any disinformation campaigns China may have directed against Taiwan. The PRC has been consistent in distorting the past and even contemporary events in order to hide its faults and reduce foreign criticism. Some may regard their lies about the regime's dark side as a public diplomacy effort of a type that many other nations are also guilty to some extent. However, in the Chinese case there are simply too many huge lies, cover-ups, and distortions. Meanwhile, the ways the regime has tried to silence criticism have often transitioned from soft-power diplomacy to sharp-power "covert, coercive or corrupting" efforts. Diligence by all parties is needed to resist PRC efforts to export censorship abroad that seeks to manipulate or force other peoples to accept their master narratives and officially sanitized or fabricated history.

CHINA'S DIGITAL DICTATORSHIP AND ITS DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST HONG KONG PROTESTERS

A new feature of China's sharp power operations at home and abroad is its increasing coordination with the development of a digital dictatorship. China's disinformation campaign against Hong Kong protesters provides a good illustration of this digital dictatorship at work and how the world's democracies may counter it.

Mao-era thought-remolding campaigns have now morphed into even more pervasive, high-tech thought-remolding campaigns in the dictatorial Xi era. A good example of this intensification of control can be seen in the way that many millions of Chinese civil servants, students, and workers have, since early 2019, been pressured into using the Study the Great Nation app, which

85 Lin Chia-nan, "UN Women Takes Down Image with Taiwan 'Province,'" *Taipei Times*, August 11, 2019, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2019/08/11/2003720273>.

86 See Joseph Bosco's comments in Dreyer, "Roundtable on Sharp Power," 150.

87 Hu Ping, *The Thought Remolding Campaign*, 50.

is devoted to strengthening ideological control, promoting—and ensuring loyalty to—Xi and the CCP.⁸⁸ Concerned intellectuals are now waking up to the reality of how China has been exploiting powerful technologies for the total control of its populace. In a new book published in June 2019, *We Have Been Harmonised: Life in China's Surveillance State*, German journalist Kai Strittmatter details how Xi's regime has been utilizing new technologies to effectively surveil and control its people.⁸⁹ As John Naughton notes, this book informs us of "China's transition from what scholars . . . used to call 'networked authoritarianism' to what is now a form of networked totalitarianism."⁹⁰ Tactics adopted by totalitarians include: to "disconnect citizen/subjects from truth and reality," "sow confusion," eliminate dissent, and foster collective amnesia.⁹¹ The West has made incorrect assumptions about China—i.e., believing that if China has capitalism and the internet, it would lead to openness and democracy—because the lenses through which the West perceived China "were distorted by arrogance, naivety, complacency, commercial greed and wishful thinking."⁹² In fact, the CCP has "embraced digital technology and used its intrinsic affordance of comprehensive surveillance to construct a successful, powerful, growing, networked totalitarian state with global ambitions."⁹³ Indeed, as indicated by Danielle Cave et al., "China's ambitions to influence the international development of technological norms and standards are openly acknowledged." The CCP recognizes "the threat posed by an open internet to its grip on power and, conversely, the opportunities that dominance over global cyberspace could offer by extending that control."⁹⁴

A recent Australian Strategic Policy Institute report, "Mapping China's Tech Giants," reveals the sharp increase of the CCP's influence and reach into private and foreign companies over the past decade. Despite a lack of transparency and reliable data, the researchers managed to map the global expansion of a dozen of China's largest and most influential technology companies. They find that Chinese companies, often with funding from the PRC government and under its control, are helping the regime "export its concepts of internet and information 'sovereignty,' as well as cyber censorship, around the world." As enablers, these tech giants play a significant role in "aiding surveillance and providing sophisticated public security technologies and expertise to authoritarian regimes and developing countries that face challenges to their political stability, governance and rule of law."⁹⁵ The research discovered that the PRC is exporting its model of "digital authoritarianism," or digitally enabled authoritarianism, well beyond China's borders. Increasingly, "the use of technology for repression, censorship, internet shut-

88 Javier C. Hernández, "The Hottest App in China Teaches Citizens About Their Leader — and, Yes, There's a Test," April 7, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/07/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-study-the-great-nation-app.html>.

89 Kai Strittmatter, *We Have Been Harmonised: Life in China's Surveillance State* (London: Old Street Publishing, 2019).

90 John Naughton, Review of *We Have Been Harmonised: Life in China's Surveillance State* by Kai Strittmatter, *The Guardian*, June 30, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/30/we-have-been-harmonised-life-china-surveillance-state-kai-strittmatter-review>.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Danielle Cave, Samantha Hoffman, Alex Joske, Fergus Ryan and Elise Thomas, "Mapping China's Tech Giants," The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, April 18, 2019, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/mapping-chinas-tech-giants>.

95 Ibid.

downs, and the targeting of bloggers, journalists and human rights activists are becoming standard practices for non-democratic regimes around the world."⁹⁶

There exists a double standard regarding how global consumers demand integrity and accountability from Western technology firms but not as much from Chinese firms. As indicated in the above report, Western technology firms have been severely censured for "making compromises in order to engage in the Chinese market, which often involves constraining free speech or potentially abetting human rights abuses." Yet global consumers have been "less critical of the Chinese firms that have developed and deployed sophisticated technologies that now underpin the CCP's ability to control and suppress segments of China's population and which can be exported to enable similar control of other populations."⁹⁷

Nevertheless, the researchers note that, "Pushing back against both the practices of digital authoritarianism and the norms and values that underpin such practices requires a clear-eyed understanding of the way they're being spread." While sovereign governments should be, "transparent and accountable in their use of technology for surveillance and information control," companies should also be held "accountable for how new technologies are used."⁹⁸ Examining the disinformation campaign conducted by China against Hong Kong protesters may show how Western technology firms, by adhering to the principle of integrity and accountability, can help unmask, recognize, and resist such sharp power efforts.

In "China Is Waging a Disinformation War Against Hong Kong Protesters," Steven Lee Myers and Paul Mozur reveal how China has aggressively "stirred up nationalist and anti-Western sentiment using state and social media, and it has manipulated the context of images and videos to undermine the protesters."⁹⁹ The PRC employs some familiar tactics to achieve its goal. When large, peaceful demonstrations started in Hong Kong in June, China's state media "largely ignored them"; yet, when some protesters "stormed Hong Kong's Legislative Council building" on July 1, China's state media began to loudly and aggressively condemn "the vandalism and violence," but "without explaining what the protesters were protesting about." Since July 1, the state media have fabricated a distorted and biased narrative, even using deceptive photos and reports, to depict the protesters as "a small, violent gang," "unsupported by residents and provoked by foreign agents," who are seen to be "calling for Hong Kong's independence and tearing China apart."¹⁰⁰ In fact, there were numerous protesters; they were supported by many residents, and not provoked by foreign agents; these weaponless citizens were far from being criminals and terrorists; and they were not demanding Hong Kong's independence.

The PRC's distorted narrative is "fueling misunderstanding—and, increasingly, anger—among the Chinese public," causing many posting on Weibo calling for Beijing to crack down on the protesters. Meanwhile, any efforts to "contextualize the situation or express sympathy for the protesters

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Steven Lee Myers and Paul Mozur, "China Is Waging a Disinformation War Against Hong Kong Protesters," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/13/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-china.html>.

100 Ibid.

were swiftly purged from social media."¹⁰¹ The disinformation campaign that incited the ultra-nationalist fury of many mainland Chinese has also been widely disseminated abroad through various media. For example, CCTV ordered its numerous followers on Weibo to "Repost! 'I am a guardian of the flag!'" The *People's Daily* later reposted CCTV's original post on Twitter (which is banned in China), thereby spreading it to "an international audience."¹⁰² In addition to dividing Hong Kong's society, the PRC government incites the mainlanders against the Hong Kongers.

As discussed above, the PRC has utilized its thought-remolding tactics to brainwash its people, thereby transforming many of them into excessively self-righteous, ultra-nationalistic, patriotic accomplices in the regime's aggressive speech or acts. The CCP has been directing this massive crowd of followers on social media to help condemn, and threaten to boycott, foreign companies that do not list Hong Kong or Taiwan as a part of China. Recently, pressured by furious condemnation from Chinese media, international brands such as Coach and Versace had to apologize for "politically incorrect" listings on their websites, recall some of their products (e.g., t-shirts), and vow to respect China's national sovereignty.¹⁰³ These ultra-nationalistic Chinese thus help police the internet, at home and abroad, on behalf of the Chinese regime.

Recent Hong Kong protests have provided another example of this process at work. Peaceful demonstrations in support of Hong Kong protesters at some Australian universities were disrupted by extremely aggressive mainland Chinese students. Hong Kong students have meanwhile suffered from Chinese students' harassment and threats, both online and offline, on or off campus.¹⁰⁴ In Santiago, Chile, a Chinese mob harassed and shut down a Taiwanese restaurant after they somehow found that its Taiwanese owner supported the Hong Kong protests. The harassment was "reportedly the latest in a series of incidents."¹⁰⁵ Conceivably, such harassment and threats could intimidate the Hong Kongers and Taiwanese abroad into silence and self-censorship, thereby depriving them of the freedom of expression.

As evidenced in recent reports, the PRC has also been exploiting such Western (social) media as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube (which are banned in China) to disseminate their disinformation against Hong Kong protesters to an international audience. On August 19, 2019, Twitter unmasked such attempts to "sow political discord in Hong Kong," announcing that it removed 936 accounts that "originated in mainland China and were part of a coordinated attempt" to "undermine the 'legitimacy and political positions of the protest movement.'"¹⁰⁶ In addition, Twitter targeted "a larger 'spammy network' of about 200,000 accounts that were suspended before they became active on the platform," and announced it would "no

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.

103 Aimee Picchi, "Versace and Coach Apologize for T-shirts Suggesting Hong Kong Is Not Part of China," *CBS News*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/versace-coach-apologize-to-chinese-consumers-after-listing-hong-kong-as-a-separate-country-on-t-shirts/>.

104 Frances Mao, "Hong Kong Protests: I'm in Australia But I Feel Censored by Chinese Students," *BBC News*, 31 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-49159820>.

105 "MOFA Condemns Chinese Harassment of Taiwanese Restaurant in Santiago," *Taipei Times*, August 26, 2019, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2019/08/26/2003721135>. The restaurant resumed operations later.

106 Dave Lee, "Hong Kong Protests: Twitter and Facebook Remove Chinese Accounts," *BBC News*, August 19, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-49402222>.

longer allow advertising from all state-controlled media outlets."¹⁰⁷ Facebook also removed several pages, groups, and accounts from a small network originating in China (and associated with the PRC government) that used "deceptive tactics" to post about the Hong Kong protests. As Facebook's head of cybersecurity policy Nathaniel Gleicher explains, "The individuals behind this campaign engaged in . . . the use of fake accounts . . . to manage Pages posing as news organizations, post in Groups, disseminate their content, and also drive people to off-platform news sites."¹⁰⁸

Following Twitter and Facebook, Google also disabled 210 YouTube channels that "behaved in a coordinated manner" while uploading videos designed to "seed doubt about and undermine the ongoing protests in Hong Kong." Google explained this action as part of an effort to protect the integrity of their platforms and the security and privacy of their users. It promised to "continue to identify bad actors, terminate their accounts, and share relevant information with law enforcement and others in the industry."¹⁰⁹ By being vigilant in protecting the integrity and security of their networks, and by cooperating with one another, these Western technology companies succeeded in exposing China's covert, deceptive practices and foiling its global propagation of disinformation to a significant degree.

CONCLUSION

Along with its economic success, China's soft power tools have become highly sophisticated and effective. However, if at first appearing benign, some of China's soft power efforts have now been unmasked by insightful scholars as malign sharp power operations. China's sharp power operations include exploiting the open information environments of liberal democracies as well as rifts within these societies, funding foreign media outlets to disseminate propaganda and disinformation, censoring and suppressing criticisms of the PRC, manipulating the target audiences with disinformation, sowing confusion and discord, undermining democratic values, and coercing or manipulating the international community into accepting its political agenda and authoritarian influence. China's malign influence efforts also aim to weaken targeted democratic countries, while strengthening authoritarianism at home. To counterbalance China's sharp power, democratic countries need to work together to raise awareness within their entire societies, avoid economic overreliance on China, formulate plans to fight disinformation and malign manipulation, reaffirm democratic values, and enhance their soft-power efforts at home and abroad.

As China has stepped up its hard and sharp power operations to deny Taiwan's right to independent nationhood, Taiwan especially needs to devise strategies to counter its threats and pressures. Besides increasing alertness within the society, securing cooperation from all political parties, and defending itself against China's infiltration and manipulation, Taiwan should reduce its economic dependence on China, continue to seek support from

107 Cathy He, "Twitter, Facebook Expose Chinese Influence Campaign Against Hong Kong Protesters," *Epoch Times*, 19 August 19, 2019, https://www.theepochtimes.com/twitter-facebook-expose-chinese-influence-campaign-against-hong-kong-protesters_3048002.html.

108 Ibid.

109 Chris Welch, "YouTube Disabled 210 Accounts for Spreading Disinformation about Hong Kong Protests," *The Verge*, August 22, 2019, <https://www.theverge.com/2019/8/22/20828808/youtube-hong-kong-protests-china-disabled-accounts-suspension-disinformation>

other democracies, and further promote its remarkable democratization and its achievements on human rights to the rest of the world.

Aided by digital technology and its own tech giants, China has become a "networked totalitarian state." The regime not only deploys surveillance and cyber censorship to control its own people but also exports its model of "digital authoritarianism" abroad. In resisting China's evolving sharp power in the media and digital spheres, democratic governments will need to work with Western technology companies and experts to institute clear regulations countering the PRC's infiltration into their media space and interference in their politics, in order to protect their own security, sovereignty, and democracy.