

[HOME](#) > [NEWS](#) >

# China Information Operations Newsletter 8 June 2021

8 June 2021



The China Information Operations Newsletter is edited by Hannah Bailey and Hannah Kirk, researchers at the [Programme on Democracy and Technology](#) (DemTech) at Oxford University. Today's newsletter is a **five minute read**

China's Evolving Discourse Power

## Is China's Diplomatic Soft Power Strategy Changing?

**The language used in a collective study session of China's Politburo last week initially appeared to indicate a tonal shift in China's approach to public diplomacy, in particular emphasising China's need to expand its "circle of friends in international public**

**opinion**". However, further reporting by the [China Media Project](#) reveals that Zhang Weiwei, who led the collective study session, is a proponent of "self-confidence" in international diplomacy discourse. Rather than striving for a more conciliatory diplomatic approach, it appears that Zhang, and the Politburo, may favour the current "Wolf Warrior" diplomatic messaging.

## China's Toolkit for Influencing International Discourse

**As we [reported](#) last month, Chinese ambassadors on Twitter are backed by large networks of inauthentic users, but China's tools of influence go beyond this Twitter network.** A [survey](#) of 50 countries conducted by the *International Federation of Journalists* found that China has successfully used its international media infrastructure to spread positive narratives during the pandemic. In 56% of countries, coverage of China in their national media has been more positive since the start of the pandemic. The report claims this is due to factors such as China's broad infrastructure of international training programs, content sharing agreements that feed China's state messages into international news ecosystems, and increased ownership of publishing platforms.

## China's Disinformation Campaign in Taiwan

**An [investigation](#) by Doublethink Lab found that a substantial amount of Chinese government-sponsored disinformation was targeted toward Taiwan in 2020.** This campaign focussed on delegitimising Taiwan's democratic government and improving Beijing's image. China's efforts can be categorised into four types of attacks: propaganda disseminated by state-backed media outlets; mobilising Chinese nationalists; farming content which contains disinformation; and collaborations with influencers in the target country.

## What Kind of "Power" Can Discourse Have?

**So how does manipulating international discourse benefit China?** A 2019 [book](#) by Dr Andreas Fulda titled *"The Struggle for Democracy in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong: Sharp Power and its Discontents"* unpacks how and why the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is increasingly employing "sharp power". Ultimately, influencing discourse in Western democracies helps the CCP to set the terms of the debate and suppress dissenters within and outside of the mainland. Fulda argues that China's manipulation of information inside Taiwan and Hong Kong has backfired, and has instead mobilised support for the very beliefs it aims to quash.

## Domestic Surveillance

### China's Use of Domestic Surveillance

**In an [article](#) published in the April 2021 issue of *American Journal of Political Science*, Dr Xu Xu explores how digital surveillance enables authoritarian states to better prevent coordinated uprisings.** Xu examines how China's digital surveillance system, the Golden Shield Project, increases the probability of detecting radical opponents, and thereby allows China to now favour targeted repression over co-option. However, better surveillance systems increase public expenditure while decreasing public goods provisions, so may make citizens worse off.

## China's AI Strategy

### Strategic Investment in Domestic AI Industry

**A recent [report](#) by the *Center for Security and Emerging Technology* takes a closer look at the role of the Artificial Intelligence Industry Alliance (AIIA), one of the major Chinese industry alliance groups.** The report finds that the Chinese government uses this alliance to enhance collaboration among local governments, academia and companies, while at the same time strategically targeting its funding toward selected favoured companies it deems to be “winners”.

### Uncovering China's System of Technology Transfer

**In a [book](#) titled “*China's Quest for Foreign Technology: Beyond Espionage*” editors William Hanas and Didi Tatlow analyse the role that China's foreign technology acquisition has played in its rise to world power status.** The authors explore how China has exploited its networks in Europe, Japan, South Korea and the US to identify and acquire foreign technology. Several chapters focus on the prominent role played by the People's Liberation Army and the United Front in these efforts.

Sign up for the DemTech Newsletters on COVID-19 Misinformation and China Information Operations

[SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTERS](#)

## RELATED CONTENT

Podcast: Oxford Sparks How is misinformation about the war in Ukraine spreading?

*Post, 20 April 2022*

**[READ NOW](#)**

Press: For Russian diplomats, disinformation is part of the job

*Post, 19 April 2022*

**[READ NOW](#)**

**[READ NOW](#)**