

China Engaging in Cognitive Warfare Campaign to Gain Regional Support

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OE Watch Commentary

China has been spreading disinformation about the United States in a clear effort to gain regional support toward its end-goals, one of which is to reunify with Taiwan. The following articles' from non-Chinese, foreign perspective sources offer insight into China's activities, described as a cognitive warfare campaign to discredit U.S. society and its system of government. The first article, published by *Radio Free Asia*, a private nonprofit corporation that broadcasts news and information to listeners in Asian countries, talks about images and videos that had been doctored and captioned to mislead the public. The images and videos first appeared in Chinese social media earlier this year. While the images were actually of a series of deadly prison riots in Ecuador, they were captioned to mislead the public into believing they were of "American blacks and whites in California killing Chinese." According to the article, similar images and videos began showing up in other regional countries, such as Russia and Thailand, spreading anti-American sentiment among the populations. The article explains that the goal was to reduce regional support for the United States.

The second article, published by *Taipei Times*, part of Taiwan's state-owned Central New Agency, discusses a recent study conducted by the Information Operations Research Group (IORG), a Taiwan-based non-governmental research organization. According to the article, the IORG concluded that China is trying to convince the Taiwanese public that an authoritarian system is preferable to a democratic one by spreading misinformation about the United States through Taiwan's social media, television programs, YouTube, and others. More than just an example of information warfare, this activity fits squarely with China's strategic security perspective of three, interlinked battle domains: a physical/natural domain, made up of land, air, sea, and outer space, an information domain that consists of the cyber and electromagnetic space, and the cognitive domain of psychological and/or political operations. Chinese theorists argue that, whereas in the age of mechanization, dominating one or more of the physical domains was enough to claim a victory, in the current age of information technology, victory is not possible without achieving a political and/or psychological victory.

“China’s disinformation and cognitive warfare campaign is aimed at convincing people that authoritarianism is better than democracy... It is a competition between China and the West.”

Source: Jane Tang, “China’s Information Warfare and Media Influence Sow Division in Thailand,” *Radio Free Asia* (private nonprofit corporation that broadcasts news and information to listeners in Asian countries), 13 May 2021. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/thailand-infowars-05132021072939.html>

By the time video scenes of a brutal prison riot in Ecuador earlier this year reached Asia, the video’s caption had been changed and read, “American Blacks and Whites in California Killing Chinese,” and the clip went viral.

Lilly Lee, an independent researcher who has been following Chinese Communist Party (CCP) information warfare, pointed out that the dissemination of distorted information fits two main themes of recent CCP information warfare. China seeks to fortify the narrative that the Chinese governing model is better than that of Western democracies during the pandemic, and it works to manipulate recent hate crime incidents against Asians in America – widely covered in the U.S. media – to promote China as the power best suited to maintain world order.

In CCP information warfare, whether the message is to smear the U.S. as a chaotic country or to praise China, all push a broader narrative that serves the party: “Democracy is not a good way to rule the people in a country,” she said.

Source: Yu-fu and William Hetherington, “Group Sounds Alert on China’s Cognitive Warfare,” *Taipei Times* (part of Taiwan’s state-owned Central New Agency), 21 October 2020. <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2020/10/21/2003745531>

China is trying to convince Taiwanese that an authoritarian system is preferable to democracy, the Information Operations Research Group (IORG) said at a conference yesterday.

China has been employing Taiwanese sympathetic to its “united front” tactics to help spread disinformation about democracy and Taiwanese society through social media, television programs, YouTube and by other means, the group said at the conference to promote public awareness of China’s cognitive warfare campaign.

China’s disinformation and cognitive warfare campaign is aimed at convincing people that authoritarianism is better than democracy, National Chengchi University assistant professor Huang Jaw-nian (黃兆年) said.

“It is a competition between China and the West,” Huang said.

“China seeks hegemony — it wants to gain approval through ideological and cultural dominance,” he said, adding that Beijing hopes to change the world’s perception of it through the flow of people and money.