

CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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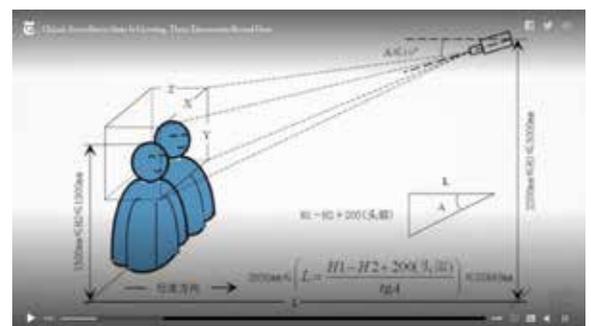
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IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Surveillance Scale Exposed

This image is from one of more than 100,000 Chinese government bidding documents examined by the [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/world/asia/china-surveillance.html) that exposed the scale and scope of the Chinese government's surveillance system. The documents reveal how Chinese police store over 2.5 billion facial images at any given time, and have sought technology to record audio of people's voices in a 300-foot radius of surveillance cameras; they further show that 25 out of China's 31 provinces and regions have made DNA databases, including by collecting the DNA of individuals who have not been convicted of any crime. The purpose of the technology was, according to one police bidding document, "controlling and managing people."

Credit: [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/06/world/asia/china-surveillance.html)



ANALYSIS

How to Resist Beijing's Campaign of Transnational Repression

By [Yana Gorokhovskaia](#) and [Angeli Datt](#)

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Democracies must take urgent action to protect exiled dissidents from the Chinese regime's cross-border intimidation efforts.

On July 7, a US grand jury [indicted](#) five men for crimes connected to a Chinese government plot aimed at silencing dissidents living in the United States. While three of the men were originally charged in March, the most recent superseding indictment included two new defendants: one current and one retired employee of the US Department of Homeland Security. The implication of US federal officials demonstrated that the Chinese regime's campaign of transnational repression—its efforts to reach across borders and stifle dissent by exiled activists and diaspora communities—involves not just Chinese agents operating on US soil, but also the co-optation of US institutions and personnel.

The use of transnational repression is spreading among like-minded authoritarian governments, and the trend may be driven in part by the proliferation of potential targets. As repression intensifies domestically in many countries around the world, more people are seeking safety abroad. In 2021 alone, some 120,000 Chinese nationals [applied for asylum](#) in other countries, not counting the tens of [thousands](#) of people who fled persecution in Hong Kong.

A recent report from Freedom House, [Defending Democracy in Exile](#), examines how democracies can respond to incidents of transnational repression and identifies weak spots in existing security, migration, and foreign policies that may be exploited by autocrats seeking to control dissent abroad. An effective response requires the recognition that campaigns like the Chinese government's are a threat to national sovereignty, democratic institutions, and the exercise of fundamental human rights.

The world's worst perpetrator of transnational repression

All authoritarian governments fear dissent because it threatens their grip on power. At home and, increasingly, beyond their borders, many autocrats have found ways to intimidate, harass, and harm those who criticize them or speak out for basic freedoms. But the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is unique in the scale and ambition of its efforts, attempting to exert control over all overseas Chinese citizens and members of diaspora communities—a fact that was recently [recognized](#) by a Canadian court.

According to Freedom House's [research](#), the authoritarian regime in China conducts the world's most sophisticated, comprehensive, and far-reaching campaign of transnational repression. It is responsible for 229 of the 735 incidents of physical transnational repression recorded between 2014 and 2021, targeting people on every inhabited continent and in at least 36 countries.

Mirroring the patterns of its repression at home, the CCP targets individual dissidents, their family members, and entire ethnic, religious, or social groups. Those at risk include former student activists from the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, Hong Kongers, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Mongolians, Falun Gong practitioners, human rights activists, journalists, former state employees, and others who criticize the regime. In February, US figure skater Alysia Liu had to [compete](#) in the Beijing Winter Olympics under escort and with security assurances after she and her father, a political refugee and human rights activist, were targeted in a transnational repression scheme that was foiled by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Ask, threaten, or bribe: Overt and covert tactics for targeting individuals abroad

The diverse tactics of transnational repression include assassinations, renditions, unlawful deportations, assaults, digital surveillance and harassment, and coercion of family members and friends in the home country. The chilling effects of these attacks ripple out beyond the individual target, deterring dissent across diaspora communities. Direct, unilateral attacks, like the [murder](#) of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents at a consulate in Istanbul, tend to grab headlines. However, it is far more common for authoritarian actors to accomplish their goals with the help of governments in the countries where exiles reside, either through overt bilateral cooperation or the manipulation of host country agencies and institutions. Given its significant economic and geopolitical clout, the Chinese government has been especially adept at securing cooperation from a wide range of foreign governments.

Chinese officials have been able to manipulate countries as diverse as Serbia, Egypt, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, and Nepal to detain and sometimes repatriate targeted individuals. Authorities in Turkey, long a relatively safe haven for Uyghurs, increasingly pressured them during 2021 as the country's economic and diplomatic relationship with China grew closer. Turkish officials [arrested](#) several groups of Uyghurs and [threatened](#) them with deportation after they [participated](#) in protests outside Chinese diplomatic facilities in the country. Authorities in [Saudi Arabia](#) and the [United Arab Emirates](#) have similarly facilitated Beijing's transnational repression.

Despite growing awareness of the issue, the Chinese regime continues to abuse Interpol Red Notices, employing them to detain and repatriate people from countries including Cambodia, Poland, South Korea, and Kenya. Last year, Beijing was able to detain a Uyghur activist, [Idris Hasan](#), in Morocco despite the fact that Interpol canceled its notice shortly after he was arrested. Hasan is now awaiting extradition to China.

The Chinese government has [concluded](#) 34 extradition treaties and has more under consideration, including with Turkey. Even if they do not result in expulsions, these agreements can interfere with people's ability to claim asylum. In 2020, the Chinese embassy in Kyiv [petitioned](#) the Ukrainian migration service to deny the asylum claim of Yilisen Aierken, an ethnic Kazakh who had fled Xinjiang, and return him to China. He has since fled to Germany, where he was [detained](#) for "illegally crossing a border."

In Western Europe, Beijing has tried to use diplomatic backchannels to silence critics. In 2019, Chinese agents met with Angela Gui to [warn](#) her to stop advocating for her father, Swedish citizen Gui Minhai, himself a victim of transnational repression who had been kidnapped from Thailand, brought to China, and eventually sentenced to 10 years in prison on politically motivated charges. The agents were able to [arrange](#) the meeting with Angela Gui through Anna Lindstedt, then the Swedish ambassador to China.

Where official channels of cooperation are less susceptible to manipulation, the Chinese government has nonetheless found the means to target individuals. For example, it has pursued thousands of people in at least 90 countries since 2014 through its “anticorruption” [Fox Hunt campaign](#), which tries to pressure individuals to either return to China to face criminal accusations or else take their own lives. Fox Hunt, and its partner campaign, SkyNet, are effectively attempts to export the Chinese legal system beyond the country’s physical borders.

In the United States, the Chinese government has [targeted](#) former student activists from the 1989 Tiananmen Square prodemocracy movement, including a candidate running for a seat in the US House of Representatives. Agents of China’s Ministry of State Security plotted to collect or fabricate damaging information on this individual or even to physically assault him, evidently fearing the impact of his critical stance on the CCP if he were elected to office. Other schemes have entailed surveilling artists, activists, and members of the Tibetan, Uyghur, Falun Gong, Hong Kong, and other diaspora communities in the United States. In these efforts, the Chinese agents hired Americans as private investigators, including current [Department of Homeland Security](#) and [New York City Police Department](#) officers. Chinese government actors have also attempted to [bribe](#) an agent of the Internal Revenue Service. Such tactics not only threaten the integrity of government agencies but also degrade trust between the affected diasporas and US authorities.

Strengthening democratic protections

Freedom House’s recent research identified a number of policies and practices that democratic host governments have used to protect exiles and diasporas from transnational repression.

In the field of security policy, awareness of the threat among law enforcement agencies helps to proactively protect potential victims and facilitates reporting by those targeted. In the United States, the Department of Justice has issued indictments that send a powerful message about how the government will respond to efforts by foreign security services to intimidate US residents. The FBI has a website with information on transnational repression, and it has circulated two unclassified counterintelligence bulletins about common tactics. These measures build resilience among vulnerable communities and impose accountability on agents of foreign states and the people who work for them.

In the migration sphere, helping Uyghurs and other targeted groups gain permanent lawful status can protect them from continued repression. Potential means to this end

include special migration pathways like those available in [Turkey](#), official recognition of group persecution to ease asylum claims as in [Sweden](#), and the opening new refugee resettlement programs for human rights defenders as in [Canada](#).

Ultimately, governments that host exiles and dissidents must impose accountability for transnational repression on senior officials in perpetrator states like China. The United States has already applied [visa bans](#) to Chinese nationals for other attacks on human rights at home and abroad. Democracies can and should impose similar targeted sanctions on those responsible for transnational repression. They should also screen incoming diplomatic staff for any past involvement in harassment of exiles. Multilateral action will improve the effectiveness of any such measures, particularly when it comes to curbing the misuse of Interpol Red Notices and other alerts.

While many of the remedies adopted to date are welcome, they are only a start. Much more is required to ensure consistent protection for exiles and diaspora groups. The United States, for example, has taken a number of important measures to counter transnational repression, but it [has not admitted](#) any Uyghurs through its refugee resettlement program in the last two years. Taiwanese authorities have prosecuted perpetrators of [physical attacks](#) on exiles from nearby Hong Kong, but its relatively strict [migration](#) policies for Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese have forced many asylum seekers to move on to other countries after failing to obtain permanent residency.

Despite growing awareness of its authoritarian practices at home and abroad, the CCP continues to brazenly harass and intimidate those whom it views as a political threat. The scope of Beijing's transnational repression campaign calls for a strong and coordinated democratic response that can both protect fundamental human rights and stem the rising tide of global authoritarianism.

IN THE NEWS

Surveillance updates: Virus app misuse, enormous data leak, Hikvision complicity, AI-powered loyalty test

- COVID-19 app used to surveil bank scandal victims and protesters:** Starting around early June, local authorities in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, manipulated the Chinese government's required COVID-19 app to [turn](#) the health codes red for customers of a local bank that had frozen millions in deposits. The change in health code effectively allowed the local authorities to [restrict](#) the movement of people attempting to travel to Henan to attempt to withdraw money from the bank or protest. After an outcry about the misuse of the health app, state media [attempted](#) to portray the situation as an isolated case of abuse by local Henan authorities, but [several other cases](#) of the COVID-19 app being used to surveil and restrict the movement of human rights lawyers and other activists have been reported. As the situation in Henan became increasingly tense, police [cracked down](#) on protesters on July 10, with plainclothes police indiscriminately beating the bank customers. Images of the violent crackdown were then [censored](#).
- Personal data of 1 billion exposed in police database hack:** In early July, a hacker tried to [sell online](#) a Shanghai police database with the records of 1 billion people, in China's biggest-ever data leak. The database reportedly contained names, addresses, national ID numbers, whether the individual was a "[key person](#)," criminal records, and other information. Censors [blocked](#) keyword searches to control online discussion about the leak. While the government never confirmed the authenticity of the database, Chinese premier Li Keqiang [called](#) on government institutions to "defend information security" on July 6. Other researchers have [discovered](#) unsecured government databases containing personal data of millions of Chinese residents.
- Hikvision awarded contract for real-time tracking in Beijing:** Chinese company Hikvision, which has been [involved](#) in building surveillance systems to support the Chinese government's atrocity crimes in Xinjiang, was [recently awarded](#) a contract to develop a software to live track "key people" for the purpose of preventing them from entering Beijing, according to the research firm IPVM. Another report from [Axios](#), drawing from documents from the massive trove of [leaked](#) Xinjiang police files, exposed how the Hikvision technology is used by Xinjiang police to surveil all 25 million Xinjiang residents. Police use facial recognition and license plate cameras from the company, which has been blacklisted by the US government. US authorities are also [considering](#) imposing sanctions on the company.
- Researchers claim artificial intelligence tool can measure loyalty of CCP members:** In an announcement posted to WeChat, Chinese researchers in Anhui Province claimed to have [developed](#) a tool that can measure the loyalty of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members. The Artificial Intelligence Research Institute of the Hefei Comprehensive National Science Center described the project as "artificial intelli-

gence empowering party-building.” The tool appears to use polygraph technology combined with measurements of facial expressions, brain waves, and skin features to produce an assessment of an individual’s “mastery of ideological and political education.” Following an [outcry](#) about the project, the center deleted an article detailing the technology posted on WeChat, and information about it on its website.

Censorship: Regulations for online content control, muzzling of global discussions

- Draft regulations call for review of every social media post:** On June 17, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), the main internet regulator, released draft [rules](#) that would require technology companies to review every social media post before it is published, and filter out “illegal and harmful” information. While it is unlikely the government would enforce the measure so strictly that billions of social media posts in China would have to be reviewed, it signals that authorities believe companies are not doing enough to review online comments for so-called “harmful” speech. The rule was included in an [update](#) to 2017 regulations, which also contained provisions to bring the earlier document in line with rules released since then on personal data protection.
- New rules restrict speech of online personalities:** On June 8, the State Administration of Radio and Television and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism jointly issued a new [code of conduct](#) for online anchors, including the hosts of live streams, podcasts, and other audiovisual mediums. The new rules prohibit any content that “weakens, distorts, or denies the leadership of the CCP,” and requires hosts to “guide users to act in a civilized manner.” The document contains a long list of prohibited behavior that includes refraining from excessive displays of luxury items, and even instructs against wasting food. A similar code of conduct was [enacted](#) in February 2021 for celebrities; the latest expansion demonstrates growing efforts by the government to extend tight controls exercised over television to online audiovisual content.
- Censorship of BBC Africa documentary:** On June 12, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Africa released a [documentary](#) on exploitative, frequently racist short videos made by Chinese nationals in Africa that depict Black Africans, especially children, for audiences back home. Following the film’s release, the Chinese foreign ministry [said](#) it had and will continue to crack down on online racism. However, experts noted the government [had not](#) addressed such films beforehand, and that in China the BBC documentary on the topic was [censored](#); [discussion](#) around it was controlled; and all livestreams on Chinese social media platforms with “Africa” in the title were [banned](#). The censorship around the discussion denied Chinese viewers a chance to hear criticism of the exploitative nature of such films.
- Foreign diplomats and discussion of economic affairs censored:** US secretary of state

Antony Blinken's May 26 speech on the US's policy toward China was [censored](#) on Chinese social media, and technology companies also deleted multiple posts by the US embassy on Weibo and WeChat. The Chinese Foreign Ministry published an 11-point [rebuttal](#) to Blinken on June 19, three times the length of Blinken's speech, at the same time it had effectively blocked Chinese netizens from reading or hearing Blinken's address. UK diplomats also faced the [censors](#) on July 1, when their Weibo post about the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong was erased after just 30 minutes. Chinese netizens commenting on the global markets have been chastised as well amid an economic [slowdown](#). The social media accounts of Wu Xiaobo, a prominent, financial writer now based in the US, were [silenced](#) after Wu compared the Chinese and American tech sectors. Wu had over four million followers across his accounts.

Arrests: Tibetan writer, Falun Gong practitioner sentenced as trials against activists, billionaire commence

- Tibetan writer sentenced to 4.5 years:** Thupten Lodoe, an author and middle-school teacher from Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, was [sentenced](#) to four and a half years in prison on June 14 for "inciting separatism." The sentence was handed down in connection with his social media posts about politics; he was initially [arrested](#) in October 2021. His family is under [surveillance](#) and his children have been barred from school, according to a report by Free Tibet. Thupten Lodoe also writes fiction under the pen name Sabuchey.
- Falun Gong practitioner sentenced for WeChat messages:** According to the Falun Gong information site Minghui.org, 59-year-old adherent Guo Xiuhai has been [sentenced](#) to nearly four years in prison for sharing a video about Falun Gong with two contacts on WeChat; she is currently being held at Fujian Province Women's Prison.
- Trials of Xu Zhiyong and Ding Jiayi:** The two human rights activists were [tried](#) behind closed doors on June 22 and June 24, respectively, at Linshu County People's Court in Shandong Province for "subversion of state power," which carries a potential life sentence. Xu and Ding were [arrested](#) after they attended a December 2019 dinner with fellow rights activists in Xiamen, Fujian Province. Ding was detained on December 26; Xu remained free until February 15, when he was arrested following a nationwide effort to track him down. During that time, he [published](#) a scathing letter calling for Xi Jinping to resign over his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. No family or supporters were able to attend the trials, and the activists' lawyers have not been allowed to speak to the press. Luo Shengchun, Ding's wife, who advocates for her husband from the United States, [tweeted](#) that the proceedings were "pitch black."
- Secret trial of prodemocracy activists reported:** Five rights activists who were [detained](#) in November 2020 on suspicion of "subversion of state power" were tried

in secret this April, according to a recent [report](#) by Rights Defenders Network. The long-time activists may have been tried because of the political nature of their dinner conversations. The outcome of their trial was unclear. Among those being tried was Fan Yiping, who participated in the 1978–9 Democracy Wall protest movement.

- **Canadian-Chinese billionaire to be tried in China:** The Canadian embassy in Beijing announced in July that [Xiao Jianhua](#), a financier with connections to China’s political elite, was to go on trial in China. The [charges](#) against Xiao and details of his trial have not been made public, but are believed to be tied to CCP efforts to crack down on entrepreneurs and elites who may pose a challenge to its rule. Canadian diplomats have been barred from attending the trial. The last reported public sighting of Xiao—who was thought to have been kidnapped by Chinese agents—was on January 27, 2017, when reports placed him at a luxury hotel in Hong Kong, being pushed through the exit in a wheelchair.
- **Bloomberg journalist released on bail:** In May, the Chinese embassy in Washington, DC, stated that [Haze Fan](#) had been released on bail in January. Fan was detained in December 2020 and formally arrested in July 2021 on a unspecified charge related to endangering national security. Bloomberg has not been able to [contact](#) her.

HONG KONG

Press barred from ceremonies, sedition prosecutions, Jimmy Lai’s lawyers threatened

- **Journalists barred from handover anniversary, chief executive inauguration:** At least 10 major local and international news outlets were [not invited](#) to cover the new chief executive’s inauguration or the official celebration of the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover from the United Kingdom to China. Still [more](#) journalists and photographers were [barred](#) from checking in to their quarantine hotels a day before the festivities began, and thus could not cover the ceremonies, which were attended by Xi Jinping in his first visit outside of the mainland since the pandemic began. Impacted media included government-friendly local outlets like *Ming Pao*, TVB, and the *South China Morning Post*, as well as international outlets like Reuters and Agence France-Presse. Hong Kong authorities [cited](#) security concerns and pandemic precautions for the denials. The Hong Kong News Executives Association issued a rare statement which [called](#) the arrangements “chaotic” and “a serious detriment to public information.” Meanwhile, articles about Hong Kong in outlets like the *Economist* and CNBC about the official handover anniversary website were in fact paid [advertorials](#), evincing the Hong Kong government’s turn to the CCP tactic of placing propaganda into news outlets to manage its image.
- **Sedition arrests ahead of handover anniversary and elderly protester convicted:** Police [arrested](#) and charged two men on June 24 with sedition over their social media activity on popular online forum [LIHKG](#), and on [Instagram](#). Hong Kong’s

colonial-era [sedition](#) law, which carries a maximum sentence of two years, has increasingly been used by police: one recent [investigation](#) found that one out of five arrests made by the national security police during the last two years have been made under the sedition law, while the rest have been made under the Beijing-imposed National Security Law (NSL). Among those [convicted](#) of sedition is Koo Sze-yiu, who was apprehended before he could carry out his planned protest of the Beijing Winter Olympics. Koo, who has late-stage cancer, was sentenced to nine months in prison on July 12.

- **Stand News sedition trial to start in October as Jimmy Lai’s lawyers receive threats:** In June, the Wan Chai District Court [announced](#) an October 31 start date for the trial of former Stand News editor in chief Chung Pui-kuen, and former acting chief editor Patrick Lam. Chung and Lam will plead not guilty, according to their lawyers. Meanwhile, media mogul [Jimmy Lai](#) faces multiple charges and likely a long prison sentence. At the beginning of July, the British barristers representing Lai told Reuters that they had received [emails](#) warning them not to “attempt entry or land in Chinese territory.”
- **Independent news outlet shuts down while trust in RTHK drops:** The award-winning investigative outlet FactWire [announced](#) its closure on June 10, making it the [10th](#) Hong Kong media outlet to shut down since the enactment of the NSL. While independent media are vanishing, trust in the public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) has [dropped](#) 10 percent since 2020, according to a recent poll. The poll numbers are likely linked to the [government takeover](#) of RTHK in February 2021, which resulted in the resignations or dismissals of respected journalists, deletion of content, and increased censorship of popular programs and “sensitive” content such as about the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre. Starting July 1, the RTHK began to [broadcast](#) radio and television programming by the Chinese state media giant China Global Television Network (CGTN).

BEYOND CHINA

TikTok data, restrictions on CCP critics at international sporting events, party school opens in Tanzania, mysterious sale of Apple Daily Taiwan

- **American, Australian TikTok user data accessed from China:** [Leaked audio](#) from internal TikTok meetings exposed multiple requests from China-based staff at ByteDance, TikTok’s parent company, for private data about US-based users of the app. The revelations stood in contrast to public statements TikTok made in the past asserting that it was not in the practice of seeking out such information. Soon after the leak, nine Republican senators sent a [letter](#) to TikTok asking if China-based employees have access to US users’ data. The company responded on July 1, [confirming](#) that China-based employees had such access. TikTok also confirmed that it

has [access](#) to Australian user data in response to an inquiry from Australia’s Minister of Cyber Security. Concerns about access to user data has been prompted by the Chinese government’s ability to demand access to any data inside the country.

- **Myanmar deploying Chinese surveillance systems:** [Reuters](#) reported on July 10 that Myanmar’s military government is purchasing security cameras and facial recognition equipment from China-based companies Huawei, Hikvision, and Dahua—all of which have been implicated in contributing to human rights violations in Xinjiang—to expand “safe city” projects to more locales across the country. Ostensibly to prevent crime, the authorities have started similar projects in at least five cities since the February 2021 coup; another five were deployed or planned by the previous administration under Aung San Suu Kyi.
- **Peng Shuai, Taiwan activists face restrictions at international sporting events:** The International Basketball Federation’s World Cup in Melbourne, Australia, was the site of political scuffles among fans and organizers. At the China vs. Australia match on June 30, protesters shouting “Free East Turkestan! Free Hong Kong!” were [accosted](#) by spectators. The following evening, a fan attending the match between China and Chinese Taipei (the name given to Taiwan at international sporting events) was [prevented](#) from carrying a Taiwanese flag into the arena by security personnel, who produced documentation that the flag is on the list of items banned from federation events. At [Wimbledon](#) the following week, activists wearing T-shirts printed with the words “Where is Peng Shuai?” were stopped by security and had their bags searched. They were allowed to continue wearing the shirts, but were told not to start any conversations about Peng. (Another protester wearing the same shirt was [removed](#) from center court after he held up a sign and shouted “Where is Peng Shuai?” during a break in play at the men’s final.) A recent revision to China’s Law on Physical Culture and Sports, slated to go into effect next year, will permit “[countermeasures](#) if any country, region, or organization undermines the nation’s sovereignty, security, development interests, or dignity in international sports events.”
- **CCP governance school in Tanzania:** Named for the first prime minister of independent Tanzania, the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Leadership School [aims](#) to build “party-to-party diplomacy” between the CCP and regional political parties associated with the anticolonial movements of the mid-20th century. Movements from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Angola, and Namibia are set to be included in its programming. Before the pandemic, many regional politicians from these countries would [travel](#) to China for trainings; this school would help allow such exchanges to continue.
- **New poll shows growing unfavorable views towards Chinese government:** The Pew Research Center [found](#) that negative views of China in the 19 countries it surveyed are at or near historic highs, primarily due to concerns about human rights and military power. The survey included respondents in mostly European and Asian countries, as well as in the United States and Canada.

FEATURED PUSHBACK

Tangshan women's assault sparks outrage

A viral video depicting the beating of several women by several men, which came after the women rebuffing one man's sexual harassment, sparked outrage online. Netizens widely discussed the incident, which took place in a restaurant in Tangshan on June 10. Discussions including the slow police response to the violence, particularly compared to rapid and often heavy-handed police enforcement of pandemic measures; how the women involved seemed to try protect one another, with no men stepping in to do so; and broader concerns about widespread violence against women in China. Hashtags related to the case attracted billions of views, according to the [What's on Weibo](#) site.



A clip from the surveillance video of the brutal assault on women at a restaurant in Tangshan, which sparked heated discussions about women's rights in China.

Credit: [Screenshot CNA](#)

While state media and officials denounced the attack, they also [attempted](#) to portray the incident as isolated, sparking further outcry. Many online comments recalled the [viral case](#) earlier this year of a woman found chained in a hut in Xuzhou, and several other recent examples of violence against women. Chinese social media platforms soon began to [censor](#) some of the discussions, including a WeChat article that discussed pervasive misogyny in Chinese society; Weibo, for its part, [banned](#) a hashtag reading "I'm speaking out for the Tangshan girls," and over 900 accounts for violations including "deliberately provoking gender confrontation."

Provincial authorities in Hebei, where the attack took place, [launched](#) a crackdown a few days later on "fake media, fake reporters, and fake news," in a likely attempt to suppress discussions of the case and broader failures by authorities to protect women's rights. Despite the pressure on journalists, state media reporters continued to [try](#) and report on the case from Tangshan. Several posted online about encountering police obstruction, including assaults, detention, harassment, and having items confiscated or footage deleted. Officers reportedly smashed the news vehicles of the state broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV). The restrictions of reporting on the case caused a further angry backlash online among netizens disgusted by suppression of the news.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **Xi Jinping visits periphery regions ahead of Party Congress:** Xi Jinping visited [Hong Kong](#) for the July 1 handover anniversary, his first trip outside of the mainland since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. He later traveled to [Xinjiang](#) on July 12-15 for the first time since 2014. Watch for further efforts to boost Xi's achievements ahead of this autumn's party congress, when he's expected to be appointed to a historic third term—despite [contractions](#) in the economy and unhappiness over his lockdown policies.
- **Hong Kong emulating mainland COVID-19 policies:** Hong Kong's health secretary [announced](#) July 11 new changes to the territory's COVID-19 app to make it more like the mainland app, such as requiring real-name registration and using a traffic light system to restrict people's movements. Watch for further adoption of mainland policies and possible signs of surveillance of dissidents under the guise of COVID-19 rules as Chief Executive John Lee's new government settles into office.
- **New research on CCP influence operations toward Uyghurs abroad:** A new [report](#) by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) examined CCP efforts to both influence and monitor members of the Uyghur diaspora and exile groups overseas through United Front Work Department (UFWD)-linked diaspora associations. Watch for further research and efforts to shine a line on UFWD activities in countries overseas, as well as for efforts by local governments to protect these communities, which may also face intimidation and threats.

TAKE ACTION

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- **Share the *China Media Bulletin*:** Help friends and colleagues better understand China's changing media and censorship landscape.
- **Access uncensored content:** Find an overview comparing popular circumvention tools and information on how to access them via GreatFire.org, [here](#) or [here](#). Learn more about how to reach uncensored content and enhance digital security [here](#).
- **Support a prisoner:** Learn how to take action to help journalists and free expression activists, including those featured in passed issues of the *China Media Bulletin*, [here](#).
- **Visit the *China Media Bulletin Resources* section:** Learn more about how policy-makers, media outlets, educators and donors can help advance free expression in China and beyond via a [new resource section](#) on the Freedom House website.

For more information

- For archives, go to: www.freedomhouse.org/China-media
- For additional information on human rights and free expression related to China, see: *Freedom in the World 2021*, *Freedom on the Net 2020*, *Beijing's Global Megaphone*, and *The Battle for China's Spirit: Religious Revival, Repression, and Resistance under Xi Jinping*



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