

CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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IMAGE OF THE MONTH

The emperor's new clothes

On October 16, a group of protesters [gathered](#) outside China's consulate in Manchester, England, as the CCP's 20th Party Congress opened in Beijing—an event during which Xi Jinping is expected to be made the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong. The protesters displayed a large banner of this image, depicting Xi wearing only underwear and a crown and holding in his arms likenesses of Taiwan, and bloodied Ukraine and Hong Kong; yet, he sees himself in the mirror in fine clothing and as “representing 1.4 billion Chinese people.” The staff at the consulate attacked the protesters, reportedly dragging one man onto the consulate grounds and beating him. A spokesperson later [attempted to justify](#) the assault, saying the protesters had “hung an insulting portrait of the Chinese president at the main entrance.”

Credit: [Kris Cheng, Twitter](#)



ANALYSIS

How Long Can Beijing Avoid Accountability for Its Abuses in Xinjiang?

By [Angeli Datt](#)

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THIS [ARTICLE](#) WAS ALSO PUBLISHED IN THE DIPLOMAT ON OCTOBER 20, 2022.

A new report on the regime's global media influence suggests that it remains vulnerable to democratic pushback.

The Chinese government won an important [victory](#) at the UN Human Rights Council on October 6, using its political and economic influence to defeat a [motion](#) that called for debate on the human rights situation in Xinjiang. The motion failed by a [margin](#) of two votes, ensuring a smooth [opening](#) for the Chinese Communist Party's 20th Congress on October 16.

While the result ensured that the council would not examine a damning [report](#) by the former UN high commissioner for human rights, it did little to suppress the broader circulation of information about Beijing's persecution of Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minority groups.

To further shield itself from accountability for the atrocities being committed in Xinjiang, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has worked vigorously to reshape media narratives around the world. A Freedom House report published last month, [Beijing's Global Media Influence: Authoritarian Expansion and the Power of Democratic Resilience \(BGMI\)](#), assessed such efforts in 30 different countries. We found that Beijing is deploying considerable resources to counter criticism and boost its image abroad, and that it has gained traction in some areas. But there were also many cases in which its campaigns backfired or encountered notable resistance from local journalists, activists, and governments, raising questions about the durability of the CCP's strategy.

An array of tactics to spread favored narratives

Beijing's efforts to influence media coverage of its human rights violations in Xinjiang include disseminating propaganda through traditional channels like Chinese state media and its diplomats' social media accounts, but it has also adopted more covert and coercive tactics, including the laundering of its propaganda through more credible local outlets.

Coverage of Xinjiang is a major component of the CCP's media influence campaign in [Indonesia](#), home to the world's largest population of Muslims. A significant amount of Chinese state-produced content about Uyghurs is published in the country through content-sharing or cooperation agreements. For example, the Indonesian state news agency Antara has a content-sharing agreement with Xinhua, its Chinese counterpart, and its content is regularly republished by other outlets. The Chinese embassy in Indonesia has also subsidized or organized paid trips to Xinjiang and other parts of China for reporters from major national and Muslim media outlets, as well as for members of local Islamic groups, some of whom returned home and repeated CCP narratives. Com-

ing from Indonesian journalists or Islamic scholars, such narratives may have resonated more with local audiences.

In [Malaysia](#), another country with a large Muslim population, Chinese state actors have similarly used targeted influence tactics to shape coverage about Xinjiang. The *Star*, a popular English-language newspaper, republishes Xinhua and *China Daily* content and has adopted an editorial line that backs the Chinese government's policies in Xinjiang. The paper's largest shareholder is the Malaysian Chinese Association, which has signed a memorandum of understanding with the CCP. Over the past several years, a number of Malaysian journalists participated in trips to Xinjiang organized by the Chinese authorities and later wrote positive articles about government policies toward Muslims in China.

In [Ghana](#), [Senegal](#), and [Tunisia](#), the Chinese embassies have held press conferences for local journalists since 2019 to spread false or misleading information about the situation in Xinjiang, which was uncritically republished by some Ghanaian and Senegalese outlets.

In [Kenya](#) and [South Africa](#), China Radio International employed African journalists in China to produce Xinjiang “diaries” and “journals” in Kiswahili and English, which were then disseminated in east and southern Africa to whitewash human rights abuses. Our report also found that international vloggers from the [United Kingdom](#), [Israel](#), and other countries were paid or otherwise used to promote CCP messaging on Xinjiang.

In [France](#) in March 2021, the state broadcaster China Global Television Network published an article by a French journalist identified as “Laurène Beaumont,” who allegedly lived in China and visited Xinjiang several times. The piece was a glowing endorsement of the CCP's crackdown in the region. Journalists later discovered that the article was written by a former French presenter for China Central Television under a pseudonym that has not been used since. In this instance, the effort largely backfired by generating significant media discussion about its dubious authenticity.

More coercive tactics employed by CCP-linked actors to [manipulate](#) global public opinion about Xinjiang include cyberbullying or trolling to suppress criticism and launching coordinated campaigns of inauthentic social media posts to drown out critics or create a false show of support. In [Australia](#), researcher Vicky Xiuzhong Xu [suffered](#) from cyberbullying by nationalist Chinese users after she published a report about forced labor among Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

Civil society and independent media lead resistance

As the close vote at the UN Human Rights Council suggested, there are limits to the effectiveness of Beijing's influence efforts. The BGMI report found that while some political leaders are willing to cater to the CCP's interests, independent news outlets and civil society play a crucial role in pushing back against the Chinese government's media manipulation, including on its rights abuses in Xinjiang. This nongovernmental resistance in turn can help build up public pressure that compels governments to hold Beijing accountable for its abuses.

For example, although the government in Senegal has close relations with Beijing, the population is 95 percent Muslim, and the media have reported on public expressions of [solidarity](#) with Uyghurs. In Kenya, the independent Media Council publicly [rebuked](#) the public broadcaster Kenya Broadcasting Corporation for republishing Chinese government propaganda about Xinjiang. More recent efforts to directly disseminate the Chinese government's response to the human rights commissioner's report in [Ghana](#) have failed to gain traction on social media.

Indonesian media have critically covered Uyghur issues, and there have been [several protests](#) in front of the Chinese embassy in Jakarta. Many Muslim intellectuals in Malaysia [reacted angrily](#) to a 2019 campaign by China's ambassador, who authored several op-eds denouncing "Western reports" about rights abuses in Xinjiang. A coalition of Muslim civil society groups wrote to the Indonesian and Malaysian foreign ministries [ahead](#) of the Human Rights Council vote this month, calling on them to support the motion for a debate.

A temporary victory

Ultimately, seven of the countries examined in the BGMI report abstained or voted with Beijing at the UN Human Rights Council. Five of them—Argentina, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, and Senegal—were [assessed](#) as being "vulnerable" to the CCP's media influence efforts. The remaining two, Brazil and India, were both rated "resilient" by Freedom House, though their governments chose to abstain.

While the Chinese government succeeded in Geneva this time, global support for the fundamental rights of Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang is growing, as evidenced by [statements](#) from other UN experts and the "yes" votes from countries like Somalia, Honduras, Paraguay, Japan, and South Korea.

Journalists and activists in the countries that voted "no" or abstained should continue to push back on CCP media influence and encourage their governments to defend freedom and human rights at home and abroad. Our research clearly indicates that Beijing's pressure campaigns can be blunted by robust democratic societies. This was the first vote on China at the Human Rights Council, but it need not be the last.

IN THE NEWS

Historic 20th Party Congress characterized by propaganda, censorship, intimidation

- Propaganda around 20th Party Congress:** Party propaganda ahead of the congress, which opened on October 16, focused on [highlighting](#) “achievements” since Xi came to power and emphasizing that Xi Jinping is the future of the party. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mouthpiece, the People’s Daily, published a [record](#) of CCP “achievements” with “Xi Jinping at [their] core” that included poverty alleviation and hosting of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics; it characterized these as examples of the “strong leadership of the Communist Party of China” forming “the most reliable backbone of the Chinese people.” The publication also firmly placed Xi at the center of China’s disastrous initial [response](#) to COVID-19—and with his ongoing measures having resulted in the extended lockdown of entire cities—stating that “Xi Jinping was firm and calm, courageous and responsible, and responded scientifically” to the outbreak in Wuhan. A September 2022 [academic analysis](#) found that party-led scripting in news media had become more obvious and ideological in the past decade under Xi Jinping’s leadership; the study found that the shift was likely due to efforts by officials to show their loyalty to Xi and signal to online outlets that such flattering content should be reprinted. Researchers also questioned whether this could have drawbacks for the party, first by training readers to identify propaganda, while at the same time effectively withholding information indicating public discontent with Xi’s policies from CCP leadership.
- Intensified online censorship ahead of congress:** According to censorship monitoring platform [GFW Report](#), starting October 3, censors increased obstruction of circumvention tools, which tech-savvy users employ to access blocked sites, mainly affecting transport layer security (TLS)-based programs. This was reportedly the [largest](#)-scale block of TLS-based tools to date. Censors also [blocked](#) search terms on Weibo, Douban, and other social media platforms, including “reelection,” slang terms, and a Japanese anime site. Searches of Xi Jinping’s name were also tightly controlled on social media platforms, according to analysis by the [Wall Street Journal](#). According to the [China Digital Times](#), 35,467 different phrases were blocked online when mentioned in proximity to Xi Jinping.
- Police threaten activists, watch for dissent ahead of congress:** According to Radio Free Asia, petitioners (individuals who pursue complaints against local governments) and other activists around the country have been [threatened](#) by police, who warned them to stay away from Beijing and refrain from speaking out or giving interviews to foreign journalists. One petitioner said police warned that if they traveled to Beijing, authorities would detain them in a COVID-19 quarantine center. Following a protest on a bridge in Beijing on October 13 (see featured pushback), authorities [deployed](#) “bridge watchers” to patrol bridges across the city to ensure no more protests were held. On September 28, the Ministry of Public Security [is-](#)

[sued](#) a statement that it had arrested 1.4 million “criminal suspects” in a “Hundred Days of Action” campaign between the end of June and September to “create a safe and stable political and social environment” for the party congress.

Censorship updates: Tech firms expand capabilities, lockdown anguish in Xinjiang and Tibet silenced, new topics suppressed online

- Tech companies expand, automate censorship:** Reports from users and from companies themselves highlight steps Chinese social media platforms have taken to support the CCP’s information-controls system. In July, one netizen drew attention for [pointing out](#) that domestic cloud-storage applications such as WPS Office, a popular Chinese alternative to Google Drive, could arbitrarily restrict access to or delete private user files in order to comply with existing Chinese internet regulations. In late August, Weibo [rolled out](#) a trial feature that would display user comments made on media and government accounts on their profile pages, likely leading to increased self-censorship. In early September, users of the question-and-answer site Zhihu [expressed](#) alarm when the platform began testing a hidden watermark feature. Douban had rolled out a similar feature in December 2021, which creates a hidden watermark on an image that can be used to determine the origin of a screenshot. (Sharing screenshot images is a popular tactic for circumventing online censorship.) In late September, Weibo chairman Cao Guowei [wrote](#) in an article published by Cyberspace Administration of China, the state internet regulator, that strict government rules had helped “clean up” the internet and that Weibo would actively promote content from government-affiliated accounts to “better” guide online discussion.
- Posts from locked-down regions of Xinjiang, Tibet suppressed:** Severe COVID-19 lockdowns lasting over a month led Uyghurs, Tibetans, and members of other minority groups in Xinjiang and Tibet to post their [frustrations](#) online, resulting in censorship and for some, arrest. According to a [leaked directive](#) published by China Digital Times, censors were ordered in early September to engage in “content flooding” efforts on Weibo, aimed at drowning out posts about the Xinjiang lockdown with lifestyle and cooking posts, and other innocuous material. Xinjiang police [also](#) detained four internet users accused of “spreading rumors,” and over 600 protesters. A week later, netizens in Lhasa began [begging](#) social media users to “please pay attention” to harsh lockdown measures and poor medical care amid a wave of positive COVID-19 cases there. Weibo responded by deprioritizing a hashtag on Tibet, and set Xinjiang’s food and scenery as trending topics.
- Newly sensitive topics suppressed on social media:** Since July, Chinese internet censors have blocked new kinds of content that previously had been tolerated. For example, the social media accounts of two nationalistic commentators were banned in August: Sima Nan, who had 44 million followers across Weibo, WeChat, Bilibili,

and Douyin, had his accounts [frozen](#) on August 23, while Kong Qingdong, another well-known nationalist media figure, was similarly banned around the same time. The developments prompted [observations that](#) censors were cracking down on the sort of inflammatory nationalist sentiment that authorities had previously encouraged. Since the party's declaration of victory in eradicating absolute poverty at the end of 2020, authorities have also sometimes struck back at depictions of poverty in China. In recent months, censors [removed](#) from theaters and streaming sites "Return to Dust," a low-budget film critically acclaimed for its realistic depictions of poverty in China. Its name was also banned on Weibo. The popular health-information sharing platform Dingxiangyuan was [suspended](#) for posts challenging traditional Chinese medicine and its use in combating COVID-19. Chinese censors have also continued to target Western news sources, more common targets for content restrictions. WeChat [shut down](#) Bloomberg's "Daybreak" account, which had posted global market updates since January 2021, after allegedly receiving "complaints" that the account had breached Chinese regulations. Censors also [blocked](#) Weibo and WeChat posts from the US embassy about the August 31 release of a United Nations report on human rights abuses Xinjiang.

Free expression cases: Lawyer tried in secret; WeChat and separatism cases; reports of death, torture in custody

- **Closed-door trial in Chang Weiping case:** The closed-door [trial](#) in Shaanxi of human rights lawyer Chang Weiping on July 26 for "subversion of state power" ended without a verdict. Security forces prevented his wife, Dr. Chen Zijian, from attending the trial under the pretense of COVID-19 restrictions. Originally [detained](#) in October 2020 after posting a YouTube video detailing allegations of police torture he faced in January 2020, Chang was [reportedly](#) tortured again between October 2020 and April 2021. In another case, the family of rights activist Xu Qin [reported](#) in late June that she had been "paralyzed" while awaiting trial in a in Jiangsu Province detention center. Xu had been detained in February 2018 on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble," an allegation commonly levied against rights defenders, and had begun a hunger strike to protest her detention.
- **Tibetan arrested for not registering WeChat group:** On July 25, Chinese officials [arrested](#) a Tibetan man in Kardze, Sichuan Province, for setting up an "unlawful" WeChat group to honor Tibetan religious leaders. The group, named "Happy 80th Birthday," reportedly had around 100 members.
- **Taiwanese activist held incommunicado in China:** On August 4, Zhejiang police [de-tained](#) Taiwanese prodemocracy activist Yang Chih-yuan on suspicion of "separatism" and "endangering national security" and placed him under residential surveillance at a designated location, a form of enforced disappearance. He is accused of supporting Taiwanese statehood and "Hong Kong secessionists" during Hong

Kong's 2019 protest movement. Yang's arrest took place the day after US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi had arrived in Taipei.

- **Details emerge on death in custody, trial of dissident:** On August 21, Voice of America [reported](#) that the dissident and retired professor Sun Wenguang became ill in mid-August 2021 and is believed to have passed away last September at the age of 87. In 2018, police forced Sun to end a live interview with Voice of America after he criticized Xi's "coin-spending" diplomacy. Sun subsequently went missing and was believed to have been detained for the past four years, and his family has been pressured by Chinese authorities to remain silent. Separately, on August 13, the Chinese rights monitoring website Weiwanwang reported that the dissident writer Sun Daluo, formerly known as Sun Zhiming, had been [tried](#) in secret in December 2021 on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." Police detained Sun in June 2021 after he published articles about Mao Zedong, Xi Jinping, and other political topics in Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and Chinese diaspora outlets. Police [reportedly](#) tortured him in detention and threatened his lawyer and his lawyer's family. The details of his sentence are unknown.

HONG KONG

Journalist jailed, harsh cybercrime proposals, Facebook pages closed, police program aims to stem criticism of officers

- **Journalist jailed, another arrested as crackdown on civil society worsens:** On October 7, a Hong Kong court [sentenced](#) online radio host Edmund "Giggs" Wan Yiu-sing to 32 months in prison and handed down a HK\$4.87 million (US\$620,000) fine. Wan [pleaded](#) guilty to one count of sedition and three counts of money laundering in a plea deal that reduced the charges against him. The sedition charge was over political content on his show, and money laundering charges over calls for donations to support political activists fleeing from Hong Kong to Taiwan. In another blow to press freedom, the head of the Hong Kong Journalist Association (HKJA), Ronson Chan, was [arrested](#) on September 7 and [charged](#) days later with obstructing police while reporting on a homeowners' committee meeting. HKJA is one of the few groups that still speaks out against government abuses. Chan had been planning to leave the territory at the end of September to start a fellowship in the United Kingdom, raising suspicion the charges were a politically motivated means of keeping him inside the territory and subject to its restrictive laws. The Congressional Executive Commission on China interviewed 42 members of Hong Kong's civil society in a [report](#) released in October, which found that two years under the National Security Law (NSL) has had a devastating effect on civil society and turned Hong Kong into a "city of fear."
- **Legislative proposal would mandate heavy penalties for cybercrime:** In June, the Law Reform Commission's subcommittee on cybercrime proposed new cybercrime

[offences](#) with harsh sentences, including recommending that certain “aggravated offences” should carry a maximum penalty of life in prison. While the commission started its work in early 2019, it [said](#) it took into account the 2020 Beijing-imposed NSL and “the duty of Hong Kong to safeguard national security.” Critics [raised concern](#) over proposals that would create uncertainty about what constitutes criminal action, as well as a prohibition on “unauthorized disclosure” that could be used against journalists or researchers who receive leaked data. Other concerns include allowing Hong Kong courts jurisdiction over offenses deemed to damage the security of Hong Kong or the authority of its public officials from overseas.

- **Facebook “Secrets” pages closed after sedition arrests:** Hong Kong police [arrested](#) two civil servants on August 9 on charges of sedition for operating a Facebook page where public officials could share gossip or anonymous grievances about government departments. Police accused the two individuals of disseminating messages that “promote feelings of ill will and enmity between different classes of the population.” The page, called Civil Servant Secrets, [had](#) 240,000 followers before the arrests, after which it was made unavailable by its administrators. Several other “Secrets” pages, including those for the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hospital Authority, and other [groups](#) also [shut down](#) days later.
- **Hong Kong man arrested under colonial sedition law:** On September 19, police arrested a Hong Kong man mourning Queen Elizabeth II outside the British consulate on suspicion of “seditious intent.” Hong Kong authorities have [weaponized](#) the colonial-era sedition law in recent years, with a district judge affirming in a September 2022 case that the law—which once targeted efforts to provoke contempt or disaffection against “Her Majesty, or her heirs or successors,” or the Hong Kong government—could also be construed to apply to Chinese authorities.
- **Police launch tracker to monitor department criticism:** On August 15, the Hong Kong Police Force [launched](#) a rebranded public relations wing aimed at identifying and quashing criticism against it. Its head said the force had [worked](#) with an unnamed tech company to develop an online data collection tool that monitors public opinion on social media, and detects when “smears” about the police are shared, which the police would then debunk. According to the officer, “fake news” and “misinformation” contributed to society’s deteriorating relationship with the police; he characterized media and other reports of police violence during the 2019 protest movement as “fake,” and stated that such material was designed to harm the force and was only tamped down by the introduction of the NSL.

BEYOND CHINA

Transnational repression, TikTok censorship and monitoring, and inauthentic tactics to push global propaganda

On September 8, Freedom House published a special report titled [Beijing's Global Media Influence: Authoritarian Expansion and the Power of Democratic Resilience](#). In addition to the items below, please see our report for new analysis of how Beijing seeks to influence media around the world, and how journalists, lawyers, lawmakers, and civil society sectors have responded. The report also includes 30 in-depth country cases studies on CCP efforts to influence information landscapes, and countries' resilience.

- **Overseas police stations, UK consulate attack reflect CCP transnational repression efforts:** According to a September [report](#) from Safeguard Defenders, Chinese police operate 54 “overseas police service centers” on five continents. A Chinese foreign ministry official [confirmed](#) the existence of such centers, explaining that they exist to pressure Chinese nationals accused of crimes in China to return to the country because “bilateral treaties are very cumbersome and Europe is reluctant to extradite to China.” One such [station](#), in New York City, is linked to a nonprofit with a mission to be a “social gathering place for Fujianese people.” Following the report’s release, an inauthentic campaign began on Twitter, with [hundreds](#) of fake new users registering accounts under the Safeguard Defenders name and tweeting pro-Chinese-police content. The CCP’s transnational repression has become increasingly brazen. On October 16, staff from China’s consulate in Manchester, England, [including](#) the consul-general were involved in an [attack](#) on Hong Kong protesters outside of the consulate, including dragging a man into the consulate grounds and beating him before he was rescued by police.
- **New reports of TikTok censorship, monitoring:** Since July, several developments related to the Chinese-owned social media app TikTok raised concerns globally. In late July, New Zealand’s parliament speaker [wrote](#) to lawmakers, telling them not to use TikTok over concerns that the Chinese government could access their data. The UK Parliament [closed](#) its account shortly after it was opened in early August following a letter from several members of parliament to the speakers of both houses, that raised similar data-privacy concerns. In August and September, TikTok removed a video posted by the French news program “[20 Minutes](#)” about US-Taiwan relations, while a Dutch website that tracks trends on Chinese social media, [What’s on Weibo](#), said that its TikTok account had been suspended after it posted about a COVID-19 lockdown and flash floods in Sichuan Province. A researcher also [discovered](#) in late August that an in-app browser in the platform’s iOS app could track the keystrokes of users, including while TikTok itself was not in use. The company said the feature was for “debugging, troubleshooting, and performance monitoring.”

- New tactics for promoting disinformation overseas:** New research has exposed the changing tactics used by Chinese party-state actors to promote CCP propaganda globally, including promotion of false content. On August 4, the threat-intelligence firm Mandiant released a [report](#) documenting 72 disinformation sites in 11 different languages that were run by a Shanghainese marketing company. The content [attacked](#) critics of the CCP’s crackdowns in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and promoted pro-Beijing narratives. In late September, Meta announced it had taken down a coordinated inauthentic network linked to China that was [spreading](#) false information about the US midterm elections and the Czech Republic’s foreign policy toward China and Ukraine. The China Media Project [examined](#) a documentary film that presented pro-Beijing views of the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong, and found that the film’s producers had falsely claimed that it was screened at the Cannes Film Festival, and that it had won an award at a nonexistent festival in Prague. The individuals linked to the film had created other progovernment propaganda films about Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and had similarly claimed to have won fake or misleading foreign awards in an apparent attempt to confer legitimacy on government propaganda. Separately, a wave of low-quality, propagandistic e-books promoting China’s claim over Taiwan have been [released](#) on Amazon’s Kindle platform. The books were poorly written or plagiarized; one researcher counted at least 61 such titles.

FEATURED PUSHBACK

Beijing protest highlights dissent to Xi Jinping’s policies

No covid test, we want to eat. Remove dictator and national traitor Xi Jinping. On October 13, a Beijing man [lowered](#) two banners over a city bridge, shouted slogans, and lit a fire in protest of the government’s COVID-19 policies, and demanded freedom and dignity for Chinese people. Occurring days before the CCP’s all-important Party Congress opened on October 16, the “Bridge Man” protest was an act of defiance in a country suffering for months under Xi’s unyielding “zero-covid” policies, as their architect was set to be anointed with another term.



Bridge Man’s banners hung on the Sitong Bridge in Beijing read: (left) “No Covid test, we want to eat. No restrictions, we want freedom. No lies, we want dignity. No Cultural Revolution, we want reform. No leaders, we want votes. By not being slaves, we can be citizens;” and (right) “Go on strike at school and work, remove dictator and national traitor Xi Jinping.”

Credit: [Twitter](#)

The demonstration drew attention on social media, which was met with [rapid censorship](#) and the deployment of police and minders across the capital. It was [not the only public act of dissent](#) against Xi's covid policies. A forthcoming Freedom House project, the *China Dissent Monitor*, documented 37 cases of Chinese citizens protesting COVID-19 restrictions between June and September 2022. They include a protest that drew hundreds of people to the streets, and online hashtag movements featuring hundreds of thousands of posts.

Bridge Man's protest also prompted expressions of solidarity in China and internationally. In Shanghai, retired teacher Gu Guoping [retweeted](#) photos and videos before police seized him on October 16. He is now missing. An activist in Henan, Wang Wei, has also reportedly been [detained](#) after expressing support for Bridge Man. On university campuses around the world, including the [United States](#), United Kingdom, Europe, Hong Kong, and Australia, Chinese and other students have [hung](#) signs with the slogans he used and similarly denounced Xi Jinping. Bridge Man's fate is unclear, and he will likely face harsh reprisals. However, his protest and its offshoots show that Xi does not enjoy the universal support he publicly claims that he's secured.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **New CCP leadership to be unveiled, with Xi at the helm:** The 20th Party Congress is set to end on October 22, and the new party leadership to be unveiled the day after. Xi Jinping is widely expected to be handed a third term as general secretary, and [rumors](#) have circulated that Li Qiang, the Shanghai party leader in charge of the disastrous lockdown there earlier this year, will be promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee and potentially named premier in 2023. The party's next five-year plan [includes](#) a focus on security over economic growth, such as building a world-class military and continued saber-rattling over Taiwan; watch for signs of Xi's allies receiving top positions overseeing the strategy's execution.
- **Democracy dropped from Hong Kong curriculum:** As Beijing continues to impose new restrictions and rules over Hong Kong, an October [update](#) to the junior high school curriculum dropped "core values" like democracy and added the "the importance of the National Security Law" and understanding China's constitution. Watch for continued adjustments to the public curriculum in Hong Kong as the government seeks to reduce knowledge of human rights and force Beijing's preferred notions of Chinese national identity on young people.
- **Chinese spy agency infiltrating foreign tech companies:** On September 13, Twitter's former head of security-turned whistleblower [told](#) the US Senate Judiciary Committee that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had informed the company in January 2022 that the Ministry of State Security, China's spy agency, had an agent working at Twitter. While the company denied the claim, watch for further signs that Chinese state agents have attempted to join the payrolls of international social media platforms.

TAKE ACTION

- **Subscribe to the *China Media Bulletin*:** Have the bulletin's updates and insights delivered directly to your inbox each month, free of charge. Visit [here](#) or e-mail cmb@freedomhouse.org.
- **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*



Freedom House is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights.

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