

CHINA MEDIA BULLETIN

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IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Unanimous vote for Xi

On March 9, delegates to China's National People's Congress appointed Xi Jinping to another five years as head of state, an unprecedented third term. The vote was a unanimous 2,952 to 0. A netizen's later attempt to print a [t-shirt](#) using this image was rejected and his Alipay account reportedly disabled. The [People's Daily also deleted its own article from 2011](#) that warned of public resentment if "the people's will continues to be hijacked through 'unanimous elections.'"

Image: [Olivia Siong](#), Twitter



ANALYSIS

Beijing Commits Itself to Another Five Years of Xi Jinping's Information Policies

By Sarah Cook

Sarah Cook is a senior advisor for China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan at Freedom House.

The annual legislative and consultative sessions indicate that China's leaders will not waver from their emphasis on tightening control at home and aggressiveness abroad

On March 13, the Chinese government concluded its “Two Sessions,” the annual plenary meetings of the country’s rubber-stamp legislature, the National People’s Congress (NPC), and the political advisory body, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The proceedings included the NPC’s unanimous [appointment](#) of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) chief Xi Jinping to an unprecedented third term as head of state.

Xi’s position at the center of the Chinese political system was on clear display throughout the sessions. Nearly every document and official speech included references to him as the [“core” of the party](#) and to his signature contribution to CCP ideology, known colloquially as [“Xi Jinping Thought,”](#) as a source of guidance.

As Xi concludes a decade in power and begins his new five-year term, the official gatherings highlight the distinctive ways in which the CCP has adapted to new technologies, centralized party control, and expanded foreign influence efforts under his leadership.

Technological innovation, adaptation, and control

Compared with their predecessors, Xi and his advisers have demonstrated a savvy understanding of media technology and how to harness private firms to advance the party’s goals. In mid-2013, not long after he first took power, Xi gave a speech that [launched a crackdown](#) on the Sina Weibo microblogging platform, effectively ending its relatively freewheeling approach to political and social commentary. The lingering impact of that campaign was illustrated this month as Weibo [censored search queries](#) referencing the NPC’s 2,952–0 vote to reappoint Xi and [manipulated trending topics](#) to elevate the “achievements” of the [NPC over Oscar victories](#) for Asian actors and actresses at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles.

The CCP’s efforts to adapt to emerging technological trends were also evident during the “Two Sessions.” Budget documents and [structural reforms](#) explicitly cited the goals of “building our [self-reliance](#) and strength in science and technology.” Meanwhile, tech sector representation at the CPPCC session included executives from firms specializing in artificial intelligence and surveillance—like [SenseTime](#), which has faced sanctions from the United States for involvement in abuses against Uyghurs—as well as chip-makers like [Cambricon Technologies](#). Executives from social media and internet giants [Tencent and Baidu were notably absent](#), either because they are perceived as less rele-

vant to current regulatory discussions or because their past attendance has been noted abroad as a troubling indicator of close CCP ties.

Bureaucratic centralization and elevation of party over state

Among the measures approved during the NPC session was a plan for bureaucratic reform. An earlier restructuring in 2018 significantly weakened or eliminated state agencies, including those related to the media and information space, in favor of tighter control by the party itself. The 2023 reforms are less wide-ranging, but they will continue the trend of consolidating centralized authority over key governance sectors and enhancing CCP influence over state entities.

In two changes relevant to [the technology sector](#), a new national data administration will be established, and the Ministry of Science and Technology will be [strengthened](#) and repositioned under a newly created CCP body, the Central Science and Technology Commission. The data administration will reportedly take over certain areas of responsibility from the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, including coordinating the construction of “smart cities” and the [“informatization of public services and social governance.”](#) The complete picture of these changes will become clearer in the coming weeks as new rules, regulations, and lines of authority are laid out and made public. But the overall pattern of creating powerful party commissions to drive policy at the expense of government agencies has been a feature of Xi’s style of governance since the [beginning](#) of his rule.

More aggressive foreign influence efforts

One of the documents published annually during the “Two Sessions” is a budget [report](#) by the Ministry of Finance that reviews the previous year and lays out plans for the forthcoming year. Although the figures cited are impossible to verify, they provide insight into the CCP’s priorities and investments across various activities and sectors. The 2023 report notes a growing dedication of resources for “diplomatic endeavors,” which received a 12.2 percent increase compared with 2022. This was the second-highest increase in any category. Although the absolute total of 54 billion yuan (\$7.9 billion) is much smaller than the budgets for other categories, the proportional increase is larger than those anticipated for defense spending (7.2 percent), public security (6.4 percent), or science and technology (2 percent).

The “diplomatic endeavors” category covers not only expenses and personnel for Chinese diplomatic missions but also those for external propaganda—including efforts to strengthen [“capacity for international communication”](#) and promote the Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, another hallmark of Xi’s rule. As China emerges from the regime’s “zero-COVID” policy, the world is likely to see a revival of Beijing-hosted international conferences—including the third [Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation](#)—as well as scholarships and travel opportunities for foreign journalists. Such open influence activities may be accompanied by greater investment in more covert or coercive tactics for shaping foreign news environments. According to [Freedom House research](#), the Chinese government under Xi’s leadership has been accelerating a massive campaign to influence media outlets and news consumers around the world.

This increased investment is closely linked to the regime's willingness to be more confrontational on the world stage and to present itself as an [alternative](#) to US global leadership, a tendency that was also evident in official speeches and comments during the "Two Sessions." Xi himself issued an unusually direct rebuke of the United States during his opening remarks. According to the CCP mouthpiece [People's Daily](#), Xi also used a particular [24-character formula](#) in other comments that represented a clear departure from the cautious policies of former CCP leader Deng Xiaoping. Where Deng said "hide our capacities and bide our time," Xi proclaimed "be proactive and achieve things," and "dare to fight."

During his decade in power, Xi has exerted a clear influence on how China is governed and interacts with the world. Conditions for Chinese citizens have certainly become more repressive, as reflected in the country's declining scores in Freedom House's annual [Freedom in the World](#) report, and the CCP's more pugnacious stance abroad has galvanized considerable resistance among democracies.

The "Two Sessions" suggest that the regime has no intention of wavering from the course set by its top leader since 2013, including in the technology and media space. Government officials, companies, and ordinary citizens in China and globally will have to plan accordingly as they prepare for the next five years of Xi's open-ended presidency.

IN THE NEWS

Censorship updates: Chatbot anomalies, foreign correspondent restrictions, Weibo manipulation of NPC topics

- CCP censorship linked to chatbot anomalies:** Several recent events demonstrated the effects Chinese Communist Party censorship could have on the rollout and operations of [artificial intelligence chatbots](#). On March 12, [Radio Free Asia](#)'s Asia Fact Check Lab published the results of tests conducted in English, simplified Chinese, and traditional Chinese with Open AI's ChatGPT. Researchers found inconsistencies when the application responded to questions on politically sensitive topics such as mass detentions in Xinjiang and the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, reflecting the greater dominance the CCP has over simplified Chinese language material online compared to English. Within China, on February 22, [Nikkei Asia](#) reported that government regulators had told tech firms like Tencent and Ant to discontinue access to ChatGPT, and to alert regulators about any plans to develop their own AI-driven chatbots. Meanwhile, [Wall Street Journal](#) reporters tested several Chinese chatbots, finding that they refused to answer questions related to Xi Jinping, prompting joking online references to Chinese Chat-GPT-like services as "ChatCCP." On March 16, Baidu held a [preliminary launch](#) of its much-awaited Ernie Bot with a prerecorded rather than live demonstration, disappointing investors and ushering in a 6-percent drop in stock value. The application will initially be available to a select number of users but plans are to integrate it into Baidu's search and other products. Ahead of the rollout, reports emerged of [employees scrambling](#) and some selling shares in advance for fear of a sell-off.
- Restricted foreign journalist access to "Two Sessions," impersonations:** Several [foreign correspondents](#) reported difficulty covering the annual National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) sessions held in Beijing from March 5 to 13. Some were denied access even after receiving accreditation, while others had their applications rejected all together. Among the outlets unable to attend were the Australian and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). One reporter from Singapore's Straits Times noted that she saw only [20 China-based foreign correspondents](#) at the opening ceremony and [only 40 at the close](#), fewer than in the past. Separately, [two Reuters journalists](#) based in China and Hong Kong were impersonated by unknown individuals across multiple social media platforms including Telegram and Instagram, with the fake accounts used to contact Chinese activists and dissidents. The impersonator (or impersonators) sought information about protests against strict COVID-19 controls that took place in late 2022. The annual report of the [Foreign Correspondents Club of China](#) published on March 1 describes the broader set of controls and risks facing foreign journalists in China, their Chinese colleagues, and sources.
- Weibo restricts comments, manipulates NPC-related trending topics:** Reflecting the political sensitivities surrounding the event, Sina Weibo intensified censorship

related to the “Two Sessions” of the NPC and the CPPCC, particularly on Xi Jinping’s appointment to a third term as head of state and the rotation of premiers from Li Keqiang to Li Qiang. Multiple observers documented [comments](#) being shut off for online articles about the premier transition, only official or [verified accounts](#) being permitted to post about even innocuous aspects of the event or quotes from Xi’s speech, and searches for the [number 2,952](#)—the total of votes Xi received in his unanimous approval—being blocked. On March 13, the topic “China’s people become the masters of their own fate” was at the top of the list of [trending topics](#) alongside other NPC-related items, although Weibo data showed that Oscar wins was a much more commented upon topic by ordinary users at the time.

Surveillance updates: Annul clampdown in Tibet, Uniview exposé, COVID-19 data deletion

- Police tighten surveillance, cell phone checks in Tibet:** Several religious holidays and politically sensitive anniversaries related to Tibet take place in February and early March, and Chinese security forces typically tighten restrictions in the region during this time. This year, the Tibetan New Year Losar ran from February 20 to 26, March 10 marked the anniversary of a 1959 uprising and the Dalai Lama’s flight from Tibet, and March 14 was the 15th anniversary of antigovernment protests in 2008 that spread across the region. [Police websites](#) and reporting from [Radio Free Asia](#) documented intensified monitoring and police presence. Among measures reported were the installation of more [surveillance cameras](#) in regional capital Lhasa, requirements for real-name registration for [pilgrimages](#) to religious sites, and police checks of [personal cell phones](#) throughout Tibet, including to identify whether an individual had communicated with people overseas. At least one [woman](#) was reportedly detained on March 2 after police found in a random check that she had sent photos to people outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region, although the content of the photos was unknown. On March 9, Freedom House published its annual assessment of political rights and civil liberties, including in [Tibetan territories](#), which were rated among the least free in the world.
- Uniview aids state surveillance, faces possible sanctions:** On February 20, the news site IPVM published [an investigative report](#) on Uniview—the third-largest surveillance manufacturing company in China—outlining collaboration with the CCP and China’s security forces including in Xinjiang and Tibet. Unlike its top two competitors—Dahua and Hikvision—Uniview has not been sanctioned to date, a fact that its chief executive was cited in [Chinese state media](#) as saying was an “opportunity” for business. In addition to providing monitoring equipment to police and prison authorities across China, the investigation found that Uniview “created Uyghur tracking software, and coauthored government standards on ethnicity-detection technology.” The company has also been active in Tibet since at least 2012 and in May 2022, a branch there reportedly held a conference touting its “public safety” solutions. Another website post from 2022 quotes its chief executive praising a

mind map of Xi Jinping Thought as “very rich and worth learning.” On March 13, [IPVM reported](#) that a bill in the [US Congress](#) had been introduced which would impose sanctions on Uniview.

- **Wuxi city reports deleting personal data collected under COVID-19 controls:** Authorities in Wuxi, a city of 7.5 million people in Jiangsu Province, claimed on March 2 to have deleted 1 billion pieces of personal data collected by the public security bureau since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a statement published on [social media](#) and cited by [CNN](#), the data had been collected for the purposes of COVID-19 testing and contact tracing during the government’s stringent “zero-COVID” policy that ended in December. The city also said it had dismantled over 40 local apps that had been used for “digital epidemic prevention.” It remains unclear whether other cities will follow suit. Independent verification of the data destruction was not possible; nevertheless, the report points to both the massive amount of personal data collected under the “zero-COVID” policy and an attempted official response to [public sensitivities](#) over data privacy, which have been increasing in China in recent years.

Detentions: “Two Sessions” restrictions, arrests over elder protests, Kazakh musician held in Xinjiang

- **Rights defenders detained, travel restricted during “Two Sessions”:** Dissidents and activists across China have been under [surveillance](#) by authorities who warned them to stay away from Beijing and refrain from traveling—as often happens ahead of politically sensitive events. Prominent human rights lawyer Liu Xiaoyuan reportedly [disappeared](#) after police stopped him from boarding a train in Jiangxi Province to go to Guangdong. Wang Quanzhang, another lawyer who had been jailed previously for his rights defense work, and his wife, herself the recipient of a German rights award, had their [residence](#) surrounded by 20 security agents. The wife of imprisoned dissident poet Wang Zang also [reported](#) that she and her three children were under 24-hour surveillance by two dozen agents who followed her everywhere. The authorities have long monitored Hu Jia, a prominent human rights activist; Hu was [forced](#) to travel away from home beginning March 4, apparently to keep him from away from reporters during the Two Sessions, even as his father’s health was deteriorating. Hu was therefore gone when his father passed away on March 9.
- **Netizens held for supporting elderly protesters:** Police have reportedly detained several participants and netizens who posted information about [mass protests](#) in Wuhan and Dalian against cuts to government medical benefits, which were mostly attended by elderly citizens. On February 22, [Radio Free Asia](#) reported that at least five people had been detained in connection with the protests, which started February 8. They included individuals who has shared information about the events who were located outside Wuhan and Dalian. In Shenzhen, police [detained](#) a young

activist Zhang Hai on February 17, who had reposted information about the protests on Twitter, which is blocked in China. Another man was [arrested](#) on February 15 for singing China's anthem, the "Internationale" with elderly people during a protest, and a taxi driver was taken into custody around February 20 and handed a 10-day administrative detention sentence for attending the protests. There have also been reports of police using [facial-recognition](#) technology to identify protesters.

- **Kazakh musician detained, Uyghur teacher's sentence confirmed:** On February 10, Kazakhstan-based rights group Atajurt reported that outspoken ethnic Kazakh musician Zhanargul Zhumatai had been [detained](#) in China. Her arrest followed months of harassment after she spoke in January to Radio Free Asia about abuses suffered in a reeducation camp where she was detained after criticizing government appropriation of ethnic Kazakh communities' land. Zhanargul's current whereabouts are unknown. On February 13, authorities detained her mother, sister, and two brothers, reportedly for [failing](#) to prevent her from speaking with foreign journalists. Separately, on March 3, information [emerged](#) that a Uyghur teacher detained in 2017 had been sentenced to 19 years in prison, apparently in connection with his role in writing Uyghur literature textbooks.

HONG KONG

Tiananmen vigil convictions, labor rights activist arrest, Coconut HK shuts down, Oscars controversy

- **Three Tiananmen vigil group members convicted:** On March 4, a Hong Kong court [convicted](#) Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan, and Tsui Hon-kwong for failing to comply with a national security police request for information. The three men were former leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, the main organizer of a candlelight vigil to mark the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre held annually until 2019 in Hong Kong. The event had drawn tens of thousands of people each year, but authorities prohibited the vigil for several years under COVID-19 protocols, and HK Alliance disbanded in 2021. Prosecutors [accused](#) the group of being a "foreign agent" and sought to investigate its alleged ties to international democracy groups. HK Alliance's former leaders including Chow have denied these claims. The defendants have been sentenced to [four and a half months](#) in prison. Chow faces an additional charge of subverting state power under the national security law along with Lee Cheuk-yan and Albert Ho, two other former leaders of the group.
- **National security arrests of labor activist, woman who called for Hong Kong independence:** Veteran labor activist Elizabeth Tang was [arrested](#) for suspected foreign collusion outside Stanley Prison on March 9 after visiting her husband in jail. Reporters from the state-owned Wen Wei Po were [waiting](#) outside the prison and videotaped Tang's arrest. Tang had previously been accused by the state-owned Ta Kung Pao of receiving foreign funding while she was a board member of the labor

advocacy group Asia Monitor Resource Center, and pro-Beijing supporters had [called](#) for her arrest. Another woman was arrested for secession allegations on the same day, reportedly because she had posted calls for Hong Kong's independence online. The [two arrests](#) mark the first known national security detentions in ten months, and the first since John Lee became the city's leader. Tang was released on bail on March 11. Her sister, Marilyn Tang, and lawyer, Frederick Ho, were [arrested](#) on the same day on suspicion of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. The two were detained while police were executing a search warrant in connection with Elizabeth Tang's case.

- **Coconuts HK shuts down:** The independent news outlet Coconuts Hong Kong [announced](#) that it would stop regular updates to its news site on March 1, due to increasing journalistic and commercial challenges in Hong Kong. The [digital outlet](#) was well regarded for its extensive coverage of the 2019 prodemocracy protests, as well as in-depth profiles and other local news. Coconuts will continue to [operate](#) new sites covering Malaysia, Singapore, and other locations in Asia.
- **Hong Kong controversies surrounding the Oscars:** An online [petition organized](#) by Hong Kong prodemocracy activist Tong Wai-hung demanding the removal of Donnie Yen as a presenter at the March 12 Academy Awards received 100,000 signatures in two weeks. Yen, a Hong Kong action star who had referred to 2019 protests as a "riot," was also a delegate for Hong Kong to the annual CPPCC earlier in March. After Michelle Yeoh's historic win for the Best Actress award, she thanked her family in Hong Kong, where she had started her career. The secretary of the Hong Kong Culture, Sports, and Tourism Bureau [congratulated](#) Yeoh for her win, saying that it demonstrated the strength of Hong Kong actors and its film industry. Some Hong Kong activists [argue](#) instead that Yeoh's win highlights Hong Kong's unique historic and cultural role in the world, a position that is threatened as recent crackdowns have curtailed artistic freedom.

BEYOND CHINA

TikTok bans on government devices, scholarship loyalty contracts, Pacific influence operations

- Expanding TikTok bans on government devices:** On February 27, the White House issued a [memo](#) giving government agencies 30 days to remove TikTok, a short video application owned by the Beijing-headquartered ByteDance, from federal devices and systems. [Canadian authorities](#) announced a TikTok ban on government devices on the same day. On February 28, the [European Parliament](#) also banned TikTok from staff devices. The European Union's other two main institutions, the European Commission and the European Council, are implementing similar bans. Between March 6 and 16, [Denmark's Defense Ministry](#), [Belgium's National Security Council](#), and the [UK government](#) also banned the app on official devices. [Australian authorities](#) are mulling similar actions pending security reviews, while the [Czech Republic's](#) cybersecurity agency recommended the app not be installed on government phones. Members of the US Congress have proposed [multiple bills](#) that would give the federal government the authority to ban TikTok from all US devices based on national security concerns. [Rights groups](#) have [condemned](#) the possible nationwide ban and warned that such legislation could have concerning implications for freedom of expression.
- German, Swedish investigations find China Scholarship Council agreements contravene academic freedom:** Swedish paper *Dagens Nyheter* [reported](#) on January 13 that at least 30 doctoral students from China studying in Sweden on scholarships provided by the China Scholarship Council (CSC) had been required to sign loyalty contracts and provide the names of China-based guarantors, who could face reprisals if students violated the contract. Several universities in [Sweden](#) and [Norway](#) subsequently terminated their cooperation with the CSC. On March 7, Germany's Deutsche Welle and CORRECTIV published an [investigation](#) into the restrictive scholarship contracts, with the most recent contract reviewed being from 2021. Language in the contracts included a pledge to avoid harming the interests of the Chinese state and to maintain regular contact with the Chinese embassy. Experts and students [interviewed](#) by Deutsche Welle said that the vague language defining what activities were permissible for CSC-funded students fostered a [culture of fear](#) and self-censorship.
- Cyberattacks on Taiwanese language center in France:** On March 9, Taiwan's Overseas Community Affairs Council (OCAC) [reported](#) that the website and Facebook page of a Taiwanese Mandarin language learning center in Paris, L'Encrier Chinois, had been targeted by cyberattacks from one of China's overseas police stations last year, citing information from the French police. China's "overseas police service stations" have received increasing scrutiny since a September 2022 Safeguard Defenders [report](#) revealed there were at least 54 in operation worldwide. While ostensibly established to provide support for Chinese nationals living abroad, the stations are also alleged to engage transnational repression and surveillance.

- **Coordinated influence operations target Pacific island countries:** A March 7 [report](#) by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) documented how the CCP has conducted a number of coordinated-information operations in Pacific island countries. Among the methods used to push pro-Beijing narratives about regional events were Chinese state media, Chinese official statements to local media, and writings by local journalists connected to CCP-linked groups. The report found that the efforts generally failed to influence online public sentiment, in contrast to [previous](#) influence operations targeting the Solomon Islands that had affected public discourse and influenced political elites. On March 7, the outgoing president of the Federated States of Micronesia wrote a [letter](#) to state governors and other national leaders accusing China of conducting “political warfare.” He [detailed](#) attempts by Chinese diplomats and businessmen to bribe Micronesian leaders and an incident where he was followed in Fiji by Chinese intelligence agents. He stated his intention to align closer with democratic Taiwan—including potentially shifting diplomatic recognition—in response to the CCP’s protracted efforts to undermine Micronesian sovereignty.
- **Chinese nationals who attacked Falun Gong activists face charges in United States, Australia:** In addition to being subject to harsh persecution and arbitrary detention in China, believers of the [Falun Gong](#) spiritual group have faced [transnational repression](#) outside China, either directly from Chinese officials or by Chinese nationals influenced by CCP propaganda. On February 18, police in New York City [arrested](#) a repeat offender who had physically assaulted volunteers at a Falun Gong information booth. He was charged with third-degree assault. In Australia, a Chinese national who attacked an anti-CCP protester and Falun Gong activist in Canberra last year was charged with assault, defacing anti-CCP signs on the victim’s car, and damaging her phone. He was sentenced and fined AUS\$3,000 on March 9. The assailant [pled guilty](#) and expressed remorse for his actions.

FEATURED PUSHBACK

New exile and digital Hong Kong media initiatives

With the closure of independent news outlets in Hong Kong since adoption of the National Security Law (NSL) in 2020 and launch of prosecutions targeting journalists, editors, and owners, a growing number of exile and digital Hong Kong media initiatives have been launched, offering alternative sources of news for those in Hong Kong and the diaspora. Each with a slightly different focus, the outlets are attempting to fill gaps left by shuttered outlets like *Apple Daily* and *Stand News*, and the government takeover of the public broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK).



One of the first such outlets to launch was the diaspora magazine *Flow HK*, started in Taiwan in 2020, which has since published [eight issues](#). The magazine's Chinese name means “be water,” a slogan used in the 2019–20 prodemocracy protests and derived from a Bruce Lee quote.

More recently, on February 20, journalist Bao Choy and colleagues [launched](#) a new outlet called the [Collective HK](#). The Collective HK will focus on investigative journalism and be [staffed](#) by veteran journalists who previously worked for *Apple Daily*, Hong Kong 01, Cable TV, and *Stand News*. Bao, a former RTHK producer, is also challenging her conviction for accessing car registration information while reporting on the 2019 Yuen Long mob attacks. She will [appeal](#) her case on May 3.

This initiative comes on the heels of the January 2023 launch of the [Points](#) by journalists who had also worked previously at some of the same outlets. Its name is derived from the motto, “to seek truth in troubled times and make clear all points [of view].” Recent articles covered news items including [corruption](#) cases in mainland China, a [report](#) on human rights in Hong Kong that was submitted to the United Nations, Canadian government [disclosures](#) of Chinese state espionage, and an [investigation](#) into Hong Kong's new “High-End Talent” visa program.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- **Details on new National Data Administration, Science and Technology Commission:** Following the announcements at the “Two Sessions” of the creation of a new National Data Administration and a Communist Party Science and Technology Commission, watch for additional details on the agencies, their personnel, and balance of power between CCP committees versus state bodies.
- **Hong Kong prosecutors targeting activists’ family members, supporters:** After the arrest of the sister of labor activist Elizabeth Tang (herself the wife of a political prisoner) and brother of prominent lawyer Albert Ho, watch for more instances of prosecutors pursuing legal action against activists’ relatives, attorneys, or supporters. With the emergence of new exile news outlets pursuing independent reporting, watch for any attempts to target journalists’ families remaining in Hong Kong as a form of reprisal, as has occurred in mainland China.
- **The fate of TikTok in the United States and beyond:** Measures from both the [executive](#) and [legislative](#) branches of the US government proposed recently outline various possible futures for the popular short video-app owned by the Beijing-based firm ByteDance, ranging from forced sale of its US branch to an American company to a nationwide ban. Watch for these and other emerging proposals, the response of the US court system as it balances potential national security threats with users’ rights to free expression, and how the debate and outcome impact democratic responses to TikTok and other China-based apps like Tencent’s WeChat globally.

TAKE ACTION

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- **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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