



China's Global Influence: Perspectives and Recommendations



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10 China's Strategic Messaging

What It Is, How It Works, and
How to Respond to It

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¹ The views and recommendations expressed in this chapter are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, US Department of Defense, or US Government.

Communication is a ubiquitous tool to change the behavior, even the thoughts and preferences, of others. Messaging, therefore, is a key instrument of power and statecraft. States often send messages to influence its population and the outside world in one way or another, but few are conscious of the powers of strategic messaging and have invested as much into it as the People's Republic of China (PRC). Beijing's strategic messaging has helped to shape others' perceptions of China, spread narratives to assist China's policies, and create an uneven playing field that favors China. Equipped with an enormous messaging capacity, the PRC has undeniable advantages when it engages in strategic competition with the United States (US). What is China's strategic messaging? How does it work? How should the US respond to it? This chapter will answer these questions.

UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC MESSAGING

One way to understand strategic messaging is to discuss how it differs from the concepts that are associated with it. Strategic messaging is sometimes equated with propaganda or strategic influence; other times, it is used interchangeably with political warfare, information warfare, information operations, and sharp power; still other times, it is thought to be similar to public diplomacy or soft power. Some of these concepts may be closely related as members of a family, but each denotes a different phenomenon.

Strategic influence is the most overarching of these terms. It refers to anything that influences another or others at the strategic level. It can use any means possible, ranging from military, economic, and diplomatic to social, cultural, normative, and informational. It operates through a variety of ways: warlike and peaceful, coercion and inducement, manipulation and persuasion, and structuring the playing field and social exchange.

Political warfare is strategic influence short of war but is conducted in the spirit of a struggle—to overcome one or more opponents to achieve national political objectives. George Kennan, who introduced the term at the onset of the Cold War, defines political warfare as “the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives.”²² In the context of the early Cold War, Kennan elaborated:

2 George F. Kennan, “Policy Planning Staff Memorandum,” National Archives and Records Administration, RG 273, Records of the National Security Council, NSC 10/2, 4 May 1948, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d269>.

Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP), and “white” propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of “friendly” foreign elements, “black” psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.³

As Kennan's definition indicates, political warfare can have many different forms, including information warfare, psychological warfare, political alliances, economic measures, and others. *Information warfare* is political warfare waged by the means of information. Information warfare is a subset of psychological warfare because it works on the perception, cognition, and psychology of the audience. *Psychological warfare* is broader than information warfare because it can manipulate the environment and the social setting, not the field of information *per se*, to achieve its goals. Psychological warfare can use propaganda, but also political, economic, and military measures. *Information operations* and *psychological operations* refer to the operational level, as opposed to the strategic and tactical levels, of these types of warfare. The terms “political warfare,” “information warfare,” and “psychological warfare” are often used interchangeably because of the widespread view that these “wars” rely chiefly on the use of words, images, ideas, and information, but this conflation is not useful for reasons stated above.

Two other terms often associated with the power of ideas and the use of information are soft power and sharp power. Joseph Nye, who coined the term *soft power* at the end of the Cold War, defines it as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments,” with the former “getting others to want what you want” while the latter “getting others to do what you want.”⁴ Going beyond Nye's original idea, the contemporary widespread sense is that soft power is a form of power that is either non-coercive or intangible. But equating it with non-coercion and associating it with intangible resources both deprive the term of its analytic power.⁵ It is the misunderstood

3 Ibid.

4 Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), x; Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 31.

5 Nye has repeatedly warned that “the relationship [between soft power and intangible resources] is imperfect” and “intangibility is not a *necessary* condition for soft power.” See Nye, *Bound to Lead*, 267; Nye, *Soft Power*, 7; and Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 21, 243 (emphasis in original).

association of soft power with the wielding of influence in the fields of ideas, information, media, and culture that led Christopher Walker and his colleagues to coin a new term, *sharp power*, and argue that “[w]hat we have to date understood as authoritarian “soft power” is better categorized as “sharp power” that pierces, penetrates, or perforates the political and information environments in the targeted countries.”⁶ In this sense, sharp power is no different than information warfare. However, when the term “sharp power” is used, an emphasis is made on the ways, not the means, of the operations. The term “information warfare” emphasizes the means of information. Sharp power is different from soft power in that the former “centers on distraction and manipulation” and the latter is “principally about attraction and persuasion.”⁷

Strategic messaging has much in common with the phenomena denoted by the terms above, but it is different from each of them in significant ways. In a broad sense, strategic messaging is strategic influence through messages. If strategic influence and political warfare use threats, benefits, and other things to influence people, strategic messaging works through the *messages* that these threats, benefits, and other things send, but not through these things themselves. Strategic messaging thus often relies on some second-order effects of action.

Public diplomacy and information warfare are domains of government work specifically dedicated to carrying out strategic messaging, but strategic messaging is not limited to these domains; it also involves a vast variety of actions that are not typically covered by public diplomacy or information warfare. For example, when the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) conducted an anti-satellite missile test in January 2007, it sent a strong message about China’s military capabilities. This action can be seen as part of Beijing’s strategic influence and political warfare, but not of information operations or public diplomacy. A month after the test, when China called for talks on a space weapons treaty, it conducted an act of public diplomacy, which sent another message—this time about China’s intentions. Strategic messaging was involved in both events, but each time in a different way.

Strategic messaging can carry the work of any kind of power, defined along the mechanisms through which outcomes are obtained. As soft power and sharp power refer to different mechanisms of pro-

6 “Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence,” International Forum for Democratic Studies, National Endowment for Democracy, 2017, 6, <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf>.

7 Ibid.

ducing audience effects, each represents a distinct set of ways by which strategic messaging works. Thus, strategic messaging goes beyond public diplomacy, soft power, sharp power, and information warfare and can emanate from strategic influence, political warfare, and many other domains of government action.

As its very name indicates, strategic messaging works by means of messages. Messages can be sent in many different ways—through specialized means of communication or simply by behaving in a specific way. Statements, books, pictures, movie, and music are some of the many specialized means of communication that have been used by governments for strategic messaging. But any action, as well as absence of action, by a government can send a message. When China built artificial islands in the South China Sea, it sent a message about its capabilities, intentions, commitment, and resolve. When the US conducted freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, it sent a message about its commitment to freedom of navigation in that region. But the absence of more aggressive actions by the US also sent a message about Washington's intentions and, inadvertently, its commitment and resolve. Whether the messages are noticed and whether they are correctly understood is dependent on not only the way the messages are sent but also the perception of the specific audience.

It is important to note that strategic messaging is a process that can use any media and is flexible with regard to the tools it employs. This process consists of the production and transmission of messages to produce perceptions and, ultimately, changes in behavior, thinking, or preference of an audience. The appropriate methodology for analyzing strategic messaging must therefore be process-oriented rather than medium-oriented. More specifically, the study of strategic messaging must cover the entire process of communication, which Harold Lasswell has described as “who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect,” with due attention to each of the components of this process.⁸ Strategic messaging as a process includes five components: the communicator, the contents of the message, the media for the transmission of the message, the audience of the message, and the effect in the audience of the message.

The influence effects of strategic messaging can be grouped into four major categories: intimidation, solidarity, confusion, and con-

8 Harold D. Lasswell, “The Structure and Function of Communication in Society,” in Lyman Bryson, ed., *The Communication of Ideas: A Series of Addresses* (New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948), 37-51.

viction, with all the shades of gray between them. The messaging of superior capabilities and resolve can *intimidate* an audience, deter it from undertaking certain actions, and cause it to accommodate the intimidator. *Solidarity* effects such as friendly attitude, alignment of policy, respect, and commitment to a shared value, identity, cause, or belief can be achieved by signaling kindness, competence, and commitment to the same value, identity, cause, or belief. As messages carry information, perspectives, insights, and arguments, they can cause an audience to either believe in—reinforce *convictions*—or doubt the truth of something—sow *confusion*. In short, strategic messaging can shape the mind of an audience, thereby changing the thoughts, preference, and behavior of the audience and help the initiator get what it wants without further physical coercion or material rewards.

THE PRC'S STRATEGIC MESSAGING

This broad concept of strategic messaging allows us to see China's messaging and its effects far beyond the concrete actions of Beijing's propaganda, public diplomacy, and information operations. Anything the PRC does or does not do can send a message and is potentially part of China's strategic messaging. While it is impossible to talk about all the tools employed by the PRC in its strategic messaging, it is imperative to characterize the PRC's primary approaches to strategic messaging and its major effects.

Two historical traditions—the Soviet and the ancient Chinese—blend together to shape the PRC's approach to strategic messaging. As a Leninist state, the PRC's governance system relies heavily on the state's control and manipulation of the information environment. Propaganda, censorship, as well as coercive and non-coercive measures to ensure self-censorship are not just indispensable parts of the daily work of the PRC, but also belong to its most treasured toolkit. In foreign countries, beyond the realm of Beijing's direct control, the PRC relies on *united front work* as a key weapon of its political warfare and a key tool to spread propaganda, enforce censorship, and ensure self-censorship.⁹ Inspired by the

9 Alexander Bowe, "China's Overseas United Front Work: Background and Implications for the United States," US-China Economic and Security Review Commission Staff research report, August 24, 2018; Anne-Marie Brady, "Magic Weapons: China's Political Influence Activities under Xi Jinping" (paper, "The Corrosion of Democracy under China's Global Influence," Arlington, VA, 16-17 September 2017), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/magic-weapons-chinas-political-influence-activities-under-xi-jinping>; June Teufel Dreyer, "A Weapon without War: China's United Front Strategy," *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*, 6 February 2018, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/02/weapon-without-war-chinas-united-front-strategy/>; Thomas G. Mahnken, Ross Babbage, and Toshi Yoshihara, *Countering Comprehensive Coercion: Competitive Strategies Against Authoritarian Political Warfare* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments,

Leninist theory of uniting with lesser enemies to defeat greater ones, the idea of the united front is to create alliances of convenience, to co-opt influential people (such as politicians, business people, journalists, and intellectuals, both in and outside the Chinese diaspora) and neutralize potential opposition to Beijing's policies.

The PRC has also inherited a long tradition of employing strategic messaging to influence others from ancient Chinese thinkers, most notably Sun Tzu (also transliterated as Sun Zi). Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, the most influential Chinese strategy book, states, "All warfare is based on deception."¹⁰ It is strategic messaging in the broad sense that causes deception. Another main principle in this tradition is the idea of winning without fighting. The *Art of War* enunciates, "[w]hat is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy. . . . For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."¹¹ Taken together, these dictums advocate an indirect pathway to victory that relies primarily on strategic messaging to manipulate the opponent's perceptions, break its will and alliances, change its calculations, and frustrate its strategy.

Sun Tzu's dictums of "breaking the enemy's strategy" and "winning without fighting" serve as guiding principles for China's propaganda, information warfare, and strategic messaging vis-à-vis the outside world. Their underlying rationale is that a weaker actor can defeat a stronger opponent by outwitting the latter. Manipulating the information environment is central to outwitting one's enemy. Following this idea, the PLA has developed the concept of "unrestricted warfare" and emphasized the "three warfares" (*sān zhàn*)—legal warfare, public opinion warfare, and psychological warfare—that would enable the PRC to win a war against the US without firing a bullet.¹²

2018), ch. 4.

10 Sun Tzu, *Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 66.

11 Sun Tzu, *Art of War*, 77.

12 Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999), translated by FBIS, <https://www.c4i.org/unrestricted.pdf>; Dean Cheng, "Winning without Fighting: Chinese Public Opinion Warfare and the Need for a Robust American Response," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* no. 2745, 21 November 2012, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/winning-without-fighting-chinese-public-opinion-warfare-and-the-need-robust-american>; Elsa Kania, "The PLA's Latest Strategic Thinking of the Three Warfares," *China Brief*, 16, no. 13, August 22, 2016, <https://jamestown.org/program/the-plas-latest-strategic-thinking-on-the-three-warfares/>; Peter Mattis, "China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspectives," *War on the Rocks*, 30 January 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/>.

The higher goal of Beijing's strategic messaging is to make the world safe for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to pursue its "China dream" (*Zhōngguó mèng*). China's strategic messaging takes three major routes in the pursuit of this goal. In the first route, its messaging emanates directly from China's actions and communications: aid to a foreign country, behavior of the PLA, law enforcement and militia in the maritime domain, statements of PRC officials, and news stories by the official Xinhua news agency.

In the second route, it borrows the hands of others, or as Chinese propagandists say, "to borrow a boat to go out on the ocean."¹³ The "borrowed boat" may be a foreign government, a private media provider, a foreign film producer, a radio or television station in a foreign country, a private think tank, a foreign university, and similar institutions in the target country.¹⁴ There are many ways for the PRC to "borrow a boat" in the West to exert influence, spread its narratives, and restrict the information environment. China's efforts to influence Hollywood, through investment or by leveraging the Chinese market's growing centrality to the film industry, have "raised concerns about self-censorship, the co-opting of the American film industry to advance Chinese narratives, and ultimately, the risk that the industry will lose its independence."¹⁵ *China Daily*, a mouthpiece of the PRC, regularly runs publications in leading Western media outlets such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Although the *China Daily* inserts are paid advertisements, their layout has the effect that many readers think they are a sort of op-ed page or news reporting of the host paper. In more indirect ways, the "boats" may be "borrowed" through ownership of, funding from, and cooperation with PRC-linked entities or individuals. Figure 1, based on the research of Anders Corr, portrays the complex relationship between western media outlets and PRC organizations. This increasingly complex "borrowed boat" approach, which often works indirectly and unobtrusively, raises concerns about self-censorship and loss of independence at several well-known media in the West.¹⁶

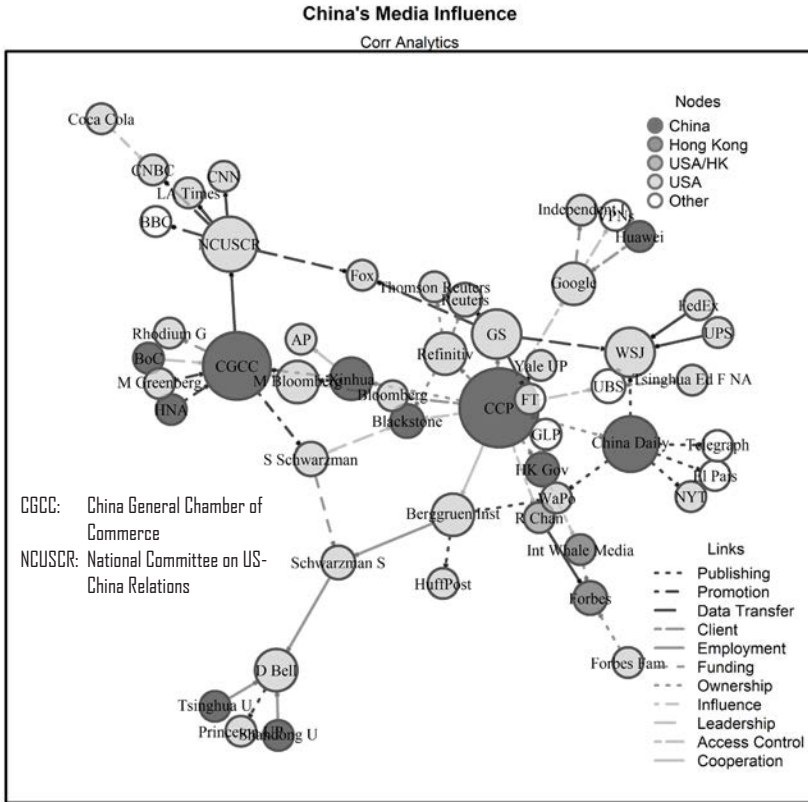
13 Brady, "Magic Weapons," 10.

14 For examples, see Brady, "Magic Weapons"; Working Group on Chinese Influence Activities in the United States, *Chinese Influence and American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2018); Clive Hamilton, *Silent Invasion: China's Influence in Australia* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant, 2018); Anastasya Lloyd-Damnjanovic, *A Preliminary Study of PRC Political Influence and Interference Activities in American Higher Education* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2018).

15 *Chinese Influence and American Interests*, 111.

16 For a report of the PRC's influence in elite Western media, see Anders Corr, "The Big Busi-

Figure 1. China's Media Influence



Note: This graph is illustrative of the broader problem and does not necessarily reflect the views of the author.

In the third route, China's messaging exploits the freedoms people can enjoy in open societies. Individuals, companies, and organizations sponsored or supported by the PRC can operate in a free society in the same manner as any other individual, but with the financial and networking support of the PRC, they have all the advantages to outcompete and crowd out the alternative voices. This has already happened with the Chinese-language media in several countries, including Australia, Cambodia, New Zealand, and the US, where most Chinese-language media is

ness of Self-Censorship over China," UCANews.com, 19 June 2019, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/the-big-business-of-self-censorship-over-china/85391>. Figure 1 illustrates the network of Chinese influence reported in this article and is used with the permission of Corr Analytics.

now controlled by PRC-linked corporations.¹⁷ The presence of Chinese media, news agencies, education, and research programs also brings with it Chinese propaganda, censorship, and self-censorship as an extension of China's domestic information governance.

China's strategic messaging aims not just to shape public opinion; its goals also include building reputations and setting norms. More specifically, its objective is to promote China's positive reputation, counter negative opinion about China, spread negative views about its opponents, and cultivate norms that favor China in relations with other countries.

The reputation China's strategic messaging wants to build is one of kindness, generosity, competence, and resolve. When the Chinese state television channel CCTV set up its branch in Africa, it told local journalists that its African channel would give them the chance to "tell the story of Africa" from African perspectives. However, as Louisa Lim and Julia Bergin have noted, "the overriding aim appeared to be emphasising Chinese power, generosity and centrality to global affairs."¹⁸

China's aid programs play a major role in promoting the receivers' perception of China as their good friend. The gifts appear to be selected strategically to maximize their soft power effects—they are often either of valuable personal use or great public visibility. Examples of China's gifts to foreign officials and governments include laptops, scholarships, important government buildings, big stadiums, and large bridges.¹⁹

China's acts of audacity help it both gain a position of strength and build a reputation for competence and resolve. Beijing's conduct in the South China Sea is full of examples of this kind. A key part of China's strategy in the South China Sea is to spread the narrative of China being reactive to, but fearless of, others' provocations. The "unprofessional" and "dangerous" acts of Chinese vessels and aircraft confronting US patrols in the South China Sea are to send this message.

The building of artificial islands has not only changed facts on the ground but also demonstrated Beijing's capabilities and determination. If the artificial islands China built in the middle of the South China

17 Hamilton, *Silent Invasion*; Brady, "Magic Weapons;" *Chinese Influence and American Interests*, Section 6.

18 Louisa Lim and Julia Bergin, "Inside China's Audacious Global Propaganda Campaign," *Guardian*, 7 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/07/china-plan-for-global-media-dominance-propaganda-xi-jinping>.

19 See also the chapters on Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East in this volume.

Sea are extremely vulnerable in times of war, they are extremely useful in times of peace. Were Sun Tzu still alive, he would say they were built to “win without fighting,” not to await a war with the US. Their effect is to psychologically change the strategic calculus of the regional countries, to “create a situation that will lead people to look at the propensity of things and think that China would eventually win the game.”²⁰

China's strategic messaging involves not just the painting of reality in Chinese colors, but also the restriction of others' freedom of thought and freedom of speech. It is not rare for China's media and officials to chide others for embracing what it calls “the China threat theory” or having a “Cold War mindset.” People so labeled are stigmatized as acting against the interests of peace and cooperation. For decades, Beijing has encouraged both Chinese and foreigners to attack and counter what it calls the “China threat theory.” As Toshi Yoshihara has observed, China has made a huge impact on the way the discourse on China has taken place, both in the public discourse and at the highest levels of US government:

We've been socialized and normalized into accepting certain party lines, for example, this idea that if we did anything to harm engagement, then we are certainly engaged in a Cold War mentality or we're seeking to contain China, and therefore in polite company, in polite circles these are not the kinds of things that you should be talking about.²¹

By insisting on certain ideas and behaviors repeatedly over a long period of time, China's messaging helps to build related norms among its audience. China's then-Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi's famous statement, “China is a big country and other countries are small countries and that's just a fact,” has been replicated in other performative forms to send the same message, which over time has inculcated hierarchical norms among the Southeast Asian officials dealing with China.²²

20 Alexander L. Vuving, “China's Sun Tzu Strategy: Preparing for Winning without Fighting,” interview by Patrick Renz and Frauke Heidemann, 27 March 2015, quoted in Howard W. French, *Everything under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power* (New York: Knopf, 2017), 255, full text in *Thanh Nien News*, 19 June 2015, <http://www.thanhniennews.com/commentaries/chinass-sun-tzus-strategy-preparing-for-winning-without-fighting-46787.html>.

21 Thomas G. Mahnken, Toshi Yoshihara, and Devin T. Stewart, “Chinese and Russian Political Warfare,” Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs podcast, 9 October 2018, <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20181009-chinese-russian-political-warfare-tom-mahnken-toshi-yoshihara>.

22 For some examples, see Bilahari Kausikan, “Dealing with an Ambiguous World – Lecture III:

This tactic has been applied in China's relations with smaller countries and big powers alike. Regarding the US, Peter Mattis has observed that "they've locked us into ways of thinking about the US-China relationship that privileges the relationship over the responses that we might take to protect our interests." This has, as Devin Stewart put it, "created a mental paradigm of allowing the Chinese to have two chess moves and we only get one."²³

AN AMERICAN STRATEGY FOR RESPONSE

China's strategic messaging poses an enormous challenge to America. It is a major thrust in Beijing's political warfare and unrestricted warfare against the US. It plays an important role in driving the expansion of the PRC's influence and undermining America's role and influence. The censorship and self-censorship it entails, as well as the subtle and not-so-subtle control by the PRC of the information environment, can curtail our democratic freedoms at home and abroad.

America must respond robustly to the challenges of the PRC's strategic messaging. It must craft an effective messaging strategy of its own, one that harnesses the powers of messaging to protect and promote America's national interests and the values our people hold dear. Such a strategy must be based on the broad concept of strategic messaging as outlined in the first section of this chapter. The objective of an American messaging strategy should be to ensure a truthful information environment in which the predominant terms of debate highlight the important role of the US in securing a free and open regional environment that benefits the prosperity of all people. This objective will be met by acting along three parallel efforts:

- A whole-of-society effort to protect the freedom and integrity of the information environment.
- A whole-of-society effort to monitor and expose the manipulation and control of information involved in China's strategic messaging.
- A whole-of-government effort to constantly improve US

ASEAN & US-China Competition in Southeast Asia," IPS-Nathan Lectures, Singapore, 30 March 2016, 13, <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/mr-bilahari-kausikan-s-speech7d-7b0a7b46bc6210a3aaff0100138661.pdf>.

23 Peter Mattis and Devin T. Stewart, "China's Influence Operations," Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs podcast, August 1, 2018, <https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20180801-china-influence-operations-peter-mattis>.

strategic messaging, one that takes into account the perceptions of a diverse international audience.

More specifically but without exhausting all options, I recommend the following actions as the first steps in the development of a more comprehensive strategy:

- Establish a position of Strategic Messaging Advisor and an Office of Strategic Messaging at the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and Commerce. The Strategic Messaging Advisor will advise the Secretary on all matters related to strategic messaging. Led by the Strategic Messaging Advisor, the Office of Strategic Messaging will:
 - assist the Strategic Messaging Advisor,
 - evaluate all actions conducted under the purview of the Department from a strategic messaging perspective,
 - analyze possible messaging effects of different courses of action on key international audiences,
 - coordinate the Department's strategic messaging and counter-messaging activities, and
 - help the Department to craft smart narratives that can effectively advance US influence and are resilient to PRC influence.
- Set up an Interagency Strategic Messaging Group at the White House to coordinate the federal government's strategic messaging and strategic responses to authoritarian regimes' anti-American messaging and influence operations. This body may be modeled upon the Interagency Active Measures Working Group set up by the Reagan Administration in response to Soviet disinformation and active measures.
- Establish an independent watchdog and advisory body appointed by Congress to monitor the activities that infringe upon the freedom and integrity of the information environment. The mandate of this body is to promote constructive vigilance without active interference into the marketplace of ideas.
- Place the PRC's information and political operations in the US under special rules that do not allow Beijing to take advantage of the asymmetries in its domestic restriction of foreigners' freedoms. This effort should, in principle, not curtail the legiti-

mate rights and liberties of Chinese citizens in the US. It should, however, make a distinction between innocent Chinese citizens and those who work for the PRC and the CCP, who should be subject to special rules regardless of their citizenship.

- Demand visa parity and access reciprocity for US citizens in China.
- Review the existing policies and legal frameworks in order to close the loopholes exploited by the PRC's influence operations and "three warfares." The amendments must not change the free nature of our society. Instead, they must level the playing field and protect the free market of ideas from the biases and manipulation of China's influence operations and "three warfares." The Foreign Agents Registration Act must be enforced more fully and its loopholes must be closed. For example, inserts paid by *China Daily* in American media and CCTV programs in the US must clearly indicate the linkages between them and the PRC.
- Boost counter-messaging to debunk the PRC's propaganda and undermine the narratives supported by the PRC in its "three warfares" against the US.
- Administratively, managerially, and financially strengthen the government-funded broadcasters and media, especially the Voice of America and Radio Free Asia, to make them role models of the free press. Particularly, they should tell the fullest truth possible, be independent from the PRC's subtle and not-so-subtle influence, and provide a free, fair, and open platform for the discussion of the narratives that influence their targeted audience. The use of public funding to promote role models of the free press is necessary given the growing concerns about the lack of objectivity in our current information environment.
- Conduct regular training on strategic messaging and public diplomacy for US officials from all agencies that deal with China-related issues.

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