



THE COVID-19 STORY: UNMASKING CHINA'S GLOBAL STRATEGY



IFJ RESEARCH REPORT ON CHINA AND ITS IMPACT ON MEDIA 2021



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SUMMARY

A second global survey of affiliate unions of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) at the conclusion of 2020 indicates that China has used the Covid-19 pandemic to boost its image in global media coverage.

More than half of all countries said that coverage of China in their national media was more positive since the start of the pandemic. The percentage of nations reporting China to have a visible presence in their media ecosystems was up from 64 percent to 76 percent in a year. Beijing appears to be taking a more interventionist approach, with almost one in five countries reporting that the Chinese embassy or ambassador in their country frequently comments on local media coverage of China. More than eighty percent of countries expressed concern about disinformation in their national media. Although China was cited by over a third as responsible for the uptick, 58 percent of countries were unsure of where disinformation originated.

As the pandemic started to spread, Beijing used its media infrastructure globally to seed positive narratives about China in national media, as well as mobilising more novel tactics such as disinformation.

The findings reveal an activation of the existing media infrastructure China has put in place globally, which includes training programs and sponsored trips for global journalists, content sharing agreements feeding state-sponsored messages into the global news ecosystems, memoranda of understanding with global journalism unions, and increasing ownership of publishing platforms. As the pandemic started to spread, Beijing used its media infrastructure globally to seed positive narratives about China in national media, as well as mobilising more novel tactics such as disinformation. Beijing appears to be stepping up its news offerings, providing domestic and international content tailored for each country in non-Anglophone languages. At the same time, Beijing has weaponized foreign journalist visas, forcing resident journalists out of China. The vacuum in coverage is increasingly being filled by state-approved content, which is sometimes offered for free, to these countries.

Countries also tended to underestimate Beijing's impact on their media systems during Covid-19. On a national level, journalists criticised Beijing's propaganda as clumsy and irrelevant and were confident that their own media literacy or political systems would protect the media ecosystem from Chinese encroachment. But when viewed globally, the results looked very different. China is coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic with more positive global coverage of its actions and policies than pre-pandemic.

A total of 54 journalist unions from 50 different countries and territories participated in the survey between December 2020

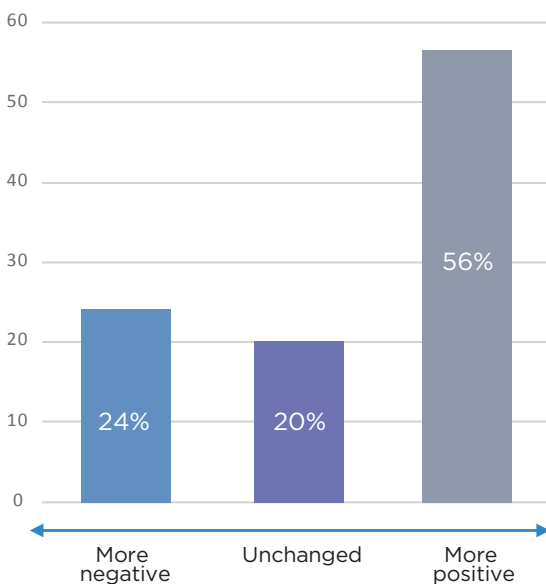


and January 2021 to gauge the extent of China's global media outreach during Covid-19. All participating bodies were affiliates of the IFJ and were offered the option of anonymity in order that they might speak more freely. Data was collected across six regions including Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North American and MENA which comprises the Middle East and North Africa. In three countries – Serbia, Italy and Tunisia – journalists also participated in roundtable discussions to build a more detailed picture of the contours of Chinese outreach in their region.

INTRODUCTION

This is the second survey measuring China's global media outreach by surveying journalism unions worldwide, as carried out for the IFJ. It is the first survey since the Covid-19 outbreak and illustrates how Beijing has managed to parlay the pandemic into positive coverage for its handling of the new coronavirus. Globally, 56 percent of all countries reported that coverage of China in their country had become more positive overall since the Covid-19 outbreak, while only 24 percent said coverage of China had become more negative. The percentage of respondents reporting memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Chinese bodies remained stable at around one-third, with several respondents remarking that travel bans had frozen negotiations regarding media agreements.

Changes to coverage on China over the past year Percentage of countries



When countries were asked to rate how coverage of China had changed since the pandemic on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very negative and 10 being very positive, the mean result was 5.38. Europe was the continent which saw the biggest positive changes to China coverage, scoring 6.3. On the other end of the spectrum, North America saw the most negative changes to China coverage, scoring 3.5.

Since 2009, China has been building sophisticated media outreach infrastructure, including the free provision of state media content, advertising supplements and bilateral cooperation agreements with local media outlets, as outlined in our first IFJ report. This research found that content offered to global journalists is becoming more tailored and more country-specific, with efforts being made to translate Chinese propaganda into different languages, even those

that are not widely spoken such as Italian and Serbian. This follows President Xi Jinping's 2016 directive to China's media, "Wherever the readers are, wherever the viewers are, that is where propaganda reports must extend their new tentacles."

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic provided Beijing with the opportunity to activate this infrastructure to feed more positive narratives regarding China to global media. In the past year, Beijing has also expelled at least 18 foreign journalists and has frozen approvals for new journalist visas, in effect weaponizing visas. The reduction in the foreign correspondent corps inside China has led to a vacuum in China coverage, as some countries are left without resident journalists inside China. In some cases, they have then fallen back upon state-run Chinese sources to report China, leading to more positive coverage overall.

China's approach to media outreach has been sophisticated and nuanced, responding to the needs of each country at a national level. Be it through the provision of Covid-19 medical supplies, political support, or economic investment, China has proved its value as an ally to countries across the globe, particularly developing countries which have struggled to gain medical aid from the developed world.

However, the case studies clearly illustrate how journalists at a country level often believe that Beijing's influence is limited,

Journalists admitted there was more Chinese content making its way into the news ecosystem, namely one article a day in the Serbian press and fifty Xinhua articles per day being carried on the news wire of Ansa news agency in Italy.

for example in Italy, talking about how the country has "the necessary antibodies" to identify fake news, in Tunisia saying that "China has no impact on journalistic content", and in Serbia remarking on the poor quality and irrelevance of Chinese propaganda. Yet in each country, journalists admitted there was more Chinese content making its way into the news ecosystem, namely one article a day in the Serbian press and fifty Xinhua articles per day being carried on the news wire of Ansa news agency in Italy.

Beijing's tactics in this narrative war are incremental but steady, with journalists in each country believing their media systems strong enough to withstand developments. Yet the evidence from the global survey shows the narrative landscape is being redrawn globally, story by story. Much like China's island-building efforts in the South China sea, where Beijing's land reclamation efforts were only noticed once they had become military installations, these two surveys show together that Beijing is steadily reshaping the global media landscape nation by nation.

THE GLOBAL COVID SUPPLEMENT

China has embarked on a massive program of Covid diplomacy, donating pandemic aid to all but three nations of those surveyed. This took different forms in different countries, though journalists in Tunisia remarked on how China had constructed a hospital in the province of Sfax "in order to be seen as saviours". In many developing countries, China offered medical aid including equipment for the manufacture



CASE STUDY: SERBIA

“We just know that they are a strong country, and they love Serbia. And this is something we are hearing day in day out.”

In discussing the relationship between Serbia and China, one Serbian journalist said the government of President Aleksandar Vučić “does the work for China”. President Vučić sees China as a friend, advocate and financial saviour, whose historical support regarding Serbian claims over Kosovo and the 1999 NATO bombings is central to the relationship. Covid-19 has only amplified this rhetoric. In late February, following the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, Serbia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić travelled to Beijing, saying, “You didn’t fear NATO bombs, my visit shows we’re not afraid of the virus”. When the pandemic reached the Balkan state, President Vučić publicly begged China for medical aid. In the centre of Belgrade, the pro-government tabloid *Informer* even paid for a billboard of Chinese President Xi Jinping with the words “Thank you brother Xi”.

The Serbian state owns or controls much of the national media, with the exception of a small cohort of independent media outlets, dishing out funding in exchange for favourable coverage. China is front and centre to Serbia’s state-sanctioned storytelling, with one journalist remarking, “I saw an official diplomat in the Serbian public service, use every opportunity to say, Serbia is the best country in Europe, thanks to our president and the assistance of China.”

In the spring of 2020, the Digital Forensic Center (DFC) identified 30,000 tweets originating from Serbian accounts containing the keywords ‘Kina’ (China) and ‘Srbija’ (Serbia). These tweets praised Chinese aid and lambasted the EU for its lack of assistance during the pandemic. More than 70 percent of the content was produced by a huge pro-Serbian government network of bot accounts. Twitter later removed 8,558 of these fake accounts belonging to the Serbian government. One study by the Institute for European Affairs found that as many as 40 percent of Serbian citizens believed China to be the country’s largest donor, with only 17 percent correctly naming the EU as the biggest provider of aid. The EU is believed to be responsible for 75 percent of Serbia’s aid.

China has also stepped up its role in helping develop Serbia’s digital infrastructure with investments in data centres, smart surveillance and cooperation with the Chinese company, Huawei. One journalist feared that Serbia was becoming a “client state” of China, while others voiced concern that Serbia was serving as a testing ground for Chinese digital standards which could then be rolled out to the rest of Europe.

The state broadcaster RTS has content sharing agreements in place with Chinese state broadcaster CCTV and publisher Xinhua. In 2017, Xinhua affiliate, the China Economic Information Service, established a ‘Silk Road of financial information’, which included cooperation agreements with Serbia’s *Tanjug* News Agency. China also introduced a ‘Silk Road Global News Awards’ which offers a €20,000 prize for an investigative piece on China’s flagship infrastructure investment scheme, the Belt and Road Initiative. It is advertised on the website of the Association of Serbian Journalists.

Despite the raft of cooperation agreements and the propaganda blitz, many Serbian journalists were adamant that China’s influence was still superficial. As one journalist said, “China do propaganda, but in a bad way, I would say they have to learn a lot.”

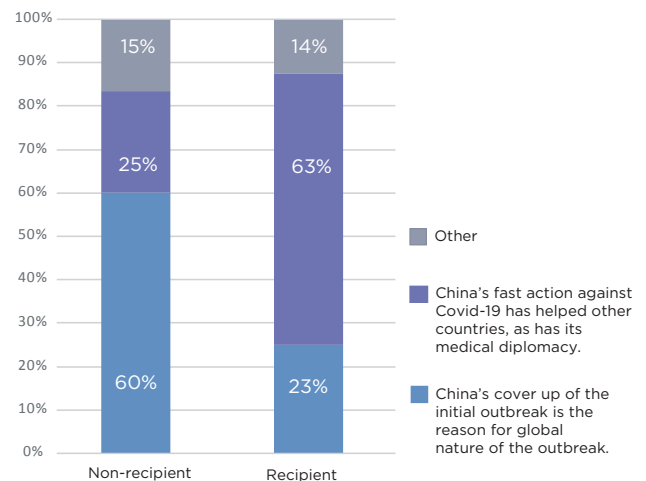
of personal protective equipment, medicines and treatment protocol. For China, these rescue packages fulfilled the very real need for medical assistance at the same time as providing a propaganda boon illustrating Beijing’s status as a generous partner for nations in need.

However, in some cases so-called Chinese Covid aid was actually purchased by governments but publicised as a donation. Alongside the medical assistance, China was also perceived as providing valuable information about the new coronavirus, which was unquestioned in some countries. Belarus reported that China provided both medical aid and “the most reliable content” about the coronavirus pandemic, while in Pakistan, Chinese cooperation was seen as positive as “they have been providing information required to ... keep people informed about the scenarios during the pandemic.”

Of the countries surveyed, 42 percent are recipients of China’s Covid-19 vaccine. More detailed analysis found that recipient countries were more likely to favour positive narratives regarding China’s handling of the pandemic and were more likely to see Chinese actors shaping the media narratives in their countries.

Dominant media narrative regarding China, based on whether countries received China’s Covid vaccine

Percent of countries (2020)



Of the countries where the dominant media narrative was ‘China’s fast action against Covid-19 has helped other countries, as has its medical diplomacy’, more than two-thirds were recipients of China’s Covid vaccine. Of the countries that reported the dominant narrative as being ‘China’s cover-up of the initial outbreak is the reason for the global nature of the outbreak’, only one quarter were vaccine recipients. 63 percent of recipient countries also reported that coverage of China had become more positive since the Covid outbreak.

57 percent of Chinese vaccine recipients said they had seen attempts by Chinese actors to shape media narratives regarding local politics in their countries, compared to 34 percent of non-recipient countries. Recipient countries also reported a slightly higher presence of Chinese state-run media or state actors on social media. However, when it came to those reporting Chinese state media content circulating in their own media, there was no statistical difference between vaccine and non-vaccine recipients, which suggests that Beijing is not discriminating who it targets with its messages.



Thus, it can be concluded that although China's vaccine diplomacy might in itself have seeded positive narratives overseas, Chinese officials are perceived as more interventionist in those countries that received its Covid vaccine.

REGIONAL FINDINGS

The largest group of respondents were from the Asia Pacific region, making up 21 countries. Here China's media outreach effort is well established, with 95 percent of countries reporting China having a visible presence in their national media. It's also the region reporting the most pushback to Chinese media outreach, with one-quarter of respondents reporting a ban on Chinese apps in their country, and almost half of all Asia Pacific nations citing Chinese influence on their national media as negative.

China's influence is viewed most positively in Africa, where half the respondents believed it to be beneficial. All African respondents reported a visible Chinese presence in their media, and half said coverage of China had become more positive after Covid. Three-quarters of African respondents said they viewed cooperation with Chinese entities as positive.

In other regions, the response to Chinese influence was far more ambivalent. In Latin America, three quarters of respondents were unsure whether Chinese influence in their national media was positive or negative, as were 60 percent of MENA respondents and 67 percent of European respondents. Europe reported one of the most drastic changes in coverage of China, with countries averaging 6.3 on a sliding scale of one to ten, where one was more negative and ten was more positive.

DISINFORMATION & MISINFORMATION

More than 80 percent of respondents reported an increase in disinformation in the past year, though this was seen as coming from multiple sources, including China. The figure was highest in Latin America and North America, with 100 percent of respondents reporting an increase in disinformation.

During 2020, China's global disinformation campaign came to the fore. Tweets from its Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian showcased conspiracy websites, including one that claimed Covid-19 was brought to China by US soldiers attending the Army Games in Wuhan, the city in which the first outbreak was discovered. That narrative was then amplified across social media by an army of Chinese ambassadors and other foreign ministry spokesmen, who became known as practising 'Wolf Warrior' diplomacy. Twitter and Facebook are still banned in China.

Beijing has also updated its information control toolkit unleashing both Wolf Warrior diplomats and paid trolls. This much is clear from the action taken by Western social media companies who repeatedly found networks of state-linked Chinese accounts seeding geopolitical narratives favourable to China's Communist Party. In June 2020, Twitter removed 23,750 Chinese accounts at the core of a highly organised network which fed into another 150,000 accounts that amplified this content. The tweets were predominantly in Chinese languages and spreading geopolitical narratives favourable to the CCP, while spreading disinformation about Hong Kong. This followed a similar move in 2019. In August 2020, Google removed 2,500 fake YouTube accounts linked to China, while in September 2020, Facebook took down around 180 such accounts. These disclosures by tech companies suggest a largescale coordinated attempt to

CASE STUDY: ITALY

"This fake news arrives even more rapidly than the virus."

Italy, as one of the earliest victims of the Covid-19 outbreak, was the target of an aggressive Chinese disinformation campaign in 2020. Videos circulating on social media purported to show Italians on their balconies applauding Chinese Covid aid as the Chinese national anthem is sung in the background. The footage was doctored and had originally shown Italians clapping their own medical workers. Italy's parliamentary committee on security characterized the Covid outbreak as an 'info-demic', with fake news and rumours circulating faster than actual information about the virus. Some of it was dangerously inaccurate. "We heard from China that it makes no sense to wash our hands," one reporter commented. There were attempts in China's Global Times to blame Italy for the new coronavirus, "They tried to say that the virus has in reality been born in Italy. This was just outlandish, fake news," one journalist commented.

The Italian journalists reported an intense courtship from Beijing in the aftermath of the first wave of Covid. This included approaches from Chinese officials and, for the first time, Chinese media outlets offering content tailored for the Italian market for free. One example, mentioned by a journalist, hints at the success of this strategy, "They asked us to give more space to the New Year's speech of President Xi Jinping. They gave it to us for free, translated directly into Italian. And we broadcast it, of course, not at the best time." Another commented on the timing of these offers of free content, "None of these proposals were ever accepted, but we were struck by this. It often happened at the same time that other news was published that put China in a bad light, how they had handled the Covid situation." This appears to be a balancing strategy with the aim of counteracting negative coverage with more positive messages.

The journalists reported receiving informal communications from China's ambassador to Italy. They characterized the handling of the relationship as extremely opaque, leading to fears that information was being used itself as an incentive, "This is an opacity which is definitely rewarding if you comply with a certain way of producing information."

In March 2019, a series of media agreements were signed during President Xi Jinping's trip to Rome. They included memoranda of understanding between China Media Group and a number of Italian outlets, including RAI and Mediaset broadcasters. The state-run news agency ANSA signed an accord with China's state media agency Xinhua to launch the Xinhua Italian Service. This has translated into Ansa running fifty Xinhua stories a day on its news wire, with Xinhua taking editorial responsibility for the content while Ansa serves as a tool of distribution. One Italian journalist commented that the agreement has been trouble-free so far, "They were mainly on economics and Chinese culture... If we find something which we believe interesting, especially on economic matters, we might take a few news and decide autonomously to broadcast them." The agreements have also led to Italian television stations airing Chinese documentaries and artistic content.

The journalists characterised Chinese efforts to influence the media as more subtle and discreet than Russian ones. They believed that Italy's democratic system inoculated them in part against this infodemic, although they warned that the lack of understanding in Italy of China's system was handicapping Italy in the bilateral relationship. One commented, "I think we have the necessary antibodies to understand and identify fake news, and to refuse them. But that doesn't mean that there is not an attempt on behalf of China to influence us. And just beyond the quality, it's also about the quantity of information."



CASE STUDY: TUNISIA

“An image of China as a saviour of Tunisia”

In December 2020, Tunisia's President Kais Saied inaugurated a new hospital in Sfax province which had been constructed with US \$70m of Chinese aid. Journalists taking part in the Tunisian roundtable said this led to increased discussion of China's role in Tunisia, as well as a perception that Beijing was trying to be “the world's saviour” in promoting its handling of the pandemic and in overcoming any economic downturn. But the journalists were sceptical about Beijing's role, with one commenting, “Chinese people think that they are at the centre of the universe and see their country as an empire.”

Tunisian journalists characterised the presence of Chinese media in the country as limited, but they noted an uptick in outreach during the pandemic. China's embassy in Tunis even offered aid including hand sanitiser and facemasks to one journalists' union. Although the union refused the donation, it was then channelled through the Tunisian Ministry of Health. Some commented that the Chinese embassy had approached the editors of certain private media outlets to find out if they would accept financial aid. On hearing that private media outlets were not permitted to receive foreign funding, the embassy shifted focus to organisations specialising in the media sector.

Beijing has invested in sponsoring pages on social media promoting China and its presence in Tunisia. The panellists described a raft of cooperation deals, with the Chinese embassy working with certain newspapers, and even offering expensive broadcast equipment to the national television station, as well as content about China. Tunisian journalists working for public media outlets have been going on sponsored tours since 2014 and using them to write articles about China. Some journalists raised concerns about whether there had been Chinese influence in suppressing coverage, noting the lack of any Tunisian coverage critical of Beijing, or even reporting upon human rights violations in Xinjiang Autonomous region. “The problem is that China is trying to penetrate Tunisian media outlets,” one journalist said.

China's soft power outreach effort is visible in Tunisia, where state television in 2019 partnered with China's State Council Information office and the National Radio and Television Administration of China to launch ‘Chinese Television week’. Tunisian journalists produced a short movie called “China Through Tunisian eyes”, while Beijing sent a cinema bus around the country with documentaries about China and its history. However, the overall assessment was summarised in the following way, “All panellists agreed that China has no concrete impact on the journalist content in Tunisia.”

This pattern was consistently repeated in all three roundtables: panellists enumerating numerous incidences of Chinese media outreach, ranging from content-sharing and cooperation agreements, sponsored journalistic tours, memoranda of understanding between Chinese entities and news media and new disinformation tactics, but then concluding that China's impact was limited.

In Serbia, one journalist said, “There's an influence, but it's not that dangerous in terms of they don't try to interfere with domestic politics.” In Italy, another commented, “The Italian information system is, despite all the issues we've had, in good health. And I think that at least until today it has been capable of refusing these attempts of influence of Chinese outreach.” Such findings speak to the need for a more coordinated regional and international response to China's media outreach, with journalism unions playing an important role in monitoring as well as educating their members.

use social media to seed narratives beneficial to the CCP overseas, since these platforms are all banned inside China.

In Italy, one of the earliest victims of the coronavirus pandemic, China was seen as actively propagating disinformation regarding Covid-19. State actors disseminated doctored videos, spread false information suggesting Covid-19 originated from Italy, and seeded the incorrect narrative that handwashing did not succeed in preventing the spread of Covid-19.

EXPORTING CHINESE CULTURE

China's outreach efforts mobilise both sharp power tools, such as disinformation, and soft power tools, such as the use of cultural products. Several respondents commented upon the increased provision of Chinese entertainment, for example soap operas, documentaries and movies. In Tunisia, China even provides a ‘cinema bus’ bringing Chinese entertainment to far flung places. In Italy, respondents remarked on the uptick of Chinese documentaries and art projects, following the April 2019 visit of President Xi Jinping.

INTERNATIONAL PUSHBACK

Respondents emphasised the popularity of Chinese-owned apps and social media, as well as reporting some pushback against this. Almost three-quarters of respondents commented on the popularity of Chinese-run news aggregation or entertainment apps. 13 percent of respondents reported that Chinese-owned apps have been banned, including most famously India where 43 Chinese apps were outlawed. In Nepal, Chinese digital payment apps, WeChat and AliPay, have been banned, after claims that the digital systems resulted in a loss of income to the Himalayan nation. In the Philippines, TikTok has been banned by some companies during working hours. However, in Peru, TikTok was seen as an instrument of youth mobilization during recent pro-democracy protests.

There is now pushback to China's state broadcaster, CGTN, following a series of adverse rulings by national broadcast regulators. In 2020, UK media regulator Ofcom found CGTN guilty of broadcasting forced confessions and biased coverage of the 2019 protests in Hong Kong. Its licence to broadcast in the UK was revoked in February 2021 after Ofcom ruled that the media company holding its UK licence, Star China Media Ltd, did not have editorial control over its program as required by UK law. Ofcom found CGTN was ultimately controlled by China's Communist Party.

CGTN now finds itself facing similar complaints across the world following a campaign mounted by an NGO, Safeguard Defenders, targeting the broadcaster's decision to air coerced confessions from detainees. Germany immediately followed suit, with state regulators taking CGTN off the air, whilst in Australia, SBS temporarily suspended its daily coverage of CGTN following a Safeguard Defenders complaint showing CGTN's “Great Firewall package” to be in “persistent violation of broadcasting law”.

In Australia, whose relationship with Beijing has dramatically deteriorated, Prime Minister Scott Morrison criticized a ‘repugnant’ tweet by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian which used doctored images to depict an Australian soldier cutting the throat of an Afghan civilian. A recent report by Australian Strategic Policy Institute found 24 Chinese-language media outlets on WeChat had close links with the Communist Party's United Front Work department.



CONCLUSIONS

China has used Covid to benefit its global image through the activation of existing media dissemination channels overseas and the use of new tactics such as disinformation and misinformation. China's largescale medical diplomacy campaign has also provided propaganda wins in many developing countries, burnishing Beijing's image as a reliable partner. Anecdotal reports indicate that Beijing has stepped up its content offerings, in particular by tailoring content including disinformation for specific countries and translating state-run messages into local languages.

In some countries, China was also seen as the purveyor of the most accurate information about the new coronavirus, showing its growing influence over global narratives.

For Beijing, Covid diplomacy clearly offers another means through which it can exert its influence. This research shows that countries that are recipients of China's Covid vaccine clearly have more positive coverage of China, but it cannot draw conclusions as to the factors behind that.

This strategy has largely been acceptable to global journalists, who — judging by the results of our focus groups in three separate countries — do not perceive China's advances as a threat at a national level. Such views are in part due to the incremental nature of the changes, the clumsiness of China's propaganda effort and the irrelevance of much of the material provided to local audiences. However, the survey does reveal

In some countries, China was also seen as the purveyor of the most accurate information about the new coronavirus, showing its growing influence over global narratives.

that when viewed globally, there does appear to be more concern about China's influence, in particular in the Asia Pacific region. The survey indicates that the overall impact of Beijing's outreach is a redrawing of the global media landscape — one story at a time, one country at a time — shifting the China coverage in a more positive direction.

China is using a multi-pronged approach to redraw the information landscape to benefit its own global image. In 2020, Beijing effectively shut down journalistic access to China, through visa denials and freezes, partly driven by international border closures. This had the effect of creating a vacuum in China coverage, creating a demand for stories from China, which could then be filled with state-sponsored content already available through content-sharing agreements. This has the effect of increasing the global media's dependence on China for content, whether that be news stories or softer cultural content. In this way, the information landscape is slowly being massaged in a direction more positive towards Beijing.

Beijing has taken a more assertive and interventionist approach to shaping the Covid-19 narrative, conducting coordinated disinformation and misinformation campaigns across social media platforms at the very highest level. Its ambassadors around the world have become more vocal in voicing criticism of local media coverage, and even about local politics, thus entrenching China's influence on the media far beyond its borders. China has both used the Covid-19 outbreak to burnish its own global image and further entrench its influence in the global media ecosystem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- IFJ to consider country-specific workshops dealing with misinformation and disinformation.
- IFJ to consider regional workshops upskilling in media literacy to raise awareness towards China's global media outreach.
- Regional workshops could also offer journalism education in transparency in sourcing and reporting, so journalists put pressure on their employers to label Chinese content more clearly.
- IFJ should develop a strategy towards greater engagement with Chinese journalists inside and outside China.
- IFJ to consider drafting a lobbying and engagement strategy for Beijing to offer more journalist visas.
- Key national newspaper editors and public sector broadcasters have a role to play to deepen understanding of the incentives and payoffs for media workers accepting Chinese content.
- More work is necessary to understand the extent of Chinese outreach in South America and the MENA region.

