



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on April 3, 2022

China Using Network of Social Media Influencers to Propagandize Our Kids

China is perfecting a novel way of creating a fifth column within the United States — using our young people’s own fixation with social media against us.

Beijing has cultivated a [vast network of social media personalities](#) who leverage their followings on platforms like TikTok and Instagram to spread CCP talking points on a variety of issues.

Often, these personalities are, in fact, paid reporters for Chinese state media who downplay on social media their ties to the regime and instead identify themselves as “bloggers,” “travelers,” “food lovers,” or other trendy guises.



Vladimir Vladimirov/iStock/Getty Images Plus

In other cases, China has hired firms to recruit established influencers to put out messages carefully crafted for the furtherance of the regime’s goals. This extends to not only Chinese influencers, but Western ones willing to parrot Beijing’s stance on issues like China’s treatment of Uyghur Muslims and the story of Olympian Eileen Gu, an American who competed for China in the most recent Winter Olympic Games.

By means of this influencer network, Beijing easily disseminates propaganda to Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube users throughout the world. According to the research firm [Miburo](#), which tracks foreign disinformation operations, at least 200 influencers with connections to the Chinese government or its state media are operating in 38 different languages.

“You can see how they’re trying to infiltrate every one of these countries,” said Miburo president Clint Watts, a former FBI agent. “It is just about volume, ultimately. If you just bombard an audience for long enough with the same narratives people will tend to believe them over time.”

AP gives the example of Vica Li, who boasts a following of 1.4 million across TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. She claims to want to teach her fans about China so they can travel around the country more easily.

“Through my lens, I will take you around China, take you into Vica’s life!” she says in one of her videos. What Li doesn’t mention is that she is listed as a digital reporter on the website of the Chinese state-run broadcaster CGTN and has regularly appeared on their broadcasts. While Li claims to have made all her channels on her own, her Facebook account shows it is managed by at least nine people.

In fact, styling oneself a “traveler” is a common tactic of these Chinese-linked personalities, many of them women who share photos and videos touting China as a great place to visit.

“They clearly have identified the ‘Chinese lady influencer’ is the way to go,” Watts said of China.



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AP notes:

The AP identified dozens of these accounts, which collectively have amassed more than 10 million followers and subscribers. Many of the profiles belong to Chinese state media reporters who have in recent months transformed their Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube accounts — platforms that are largely blocked in China — and begun identifying as “bloggers,” “influencers” or non-descript “journalists.” Nearly all of them were running Facebook ads, targeted to users outside of China, that encourage people to follow their pages.

The personalities do not proactively disclose their ties to China’s government and have largely phased out references in their posts to their employers, which include CGTN, China Radio International and Xinhua News Agency....

But the AP found in its review that most of the Chinese influencer social media accounts are inconsistently labeled as state-funded media. The accounts — like those belonging to Li Jingjing and Vica Li — are often labeled on Facebook or Instagram, but are not flagged on YouTube or TikTok. Vica Li’s account is not labeled on Twitter. Last month, Twitter began identifying Li Jingjing’s account as Chinese state-*media*.

For her part, Li is disputing the labels on her Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Another example is Jessica Zang, whose Instagram account is brimming with pictures of her posing smilingly at beautiful locations like a ski resort in the Altai Mountains in China’s Xinjiang region.

Zang is a video blogger for CGTN, but rarely mentions her employer to her 1.3 million followers, nor is she labeled as “state-controlled media” on TikTok, YouTube, or Twitter.

“I think it’s likely by choice that she doesn’t put any state affiliations, because you put that label on your account, people start asking certain types of questions,” Rui Zhong, who researches technology and the China-U.S. relationship for the Washington-based Wilson Center, said of Zang.

As with many of the influencers on Beijing’s payroll, most of Zang’s content is tourism or human interest-related. But every now and then, she publishes a propaganda piece, like a video titled “What foreigners in BEIJING think of the CPC and their life in China?”

In that video, Zang interviews locals who praise the communist regime and claim they’re not being controlled in the way foreigners believe they are.

“We really want to let more people ... know what China is really like,” Zang tells her audience.

English-speaking Westerners are also getting on board:

Last April, as CGTN sought to expand its network of influencers, it invited English speakers to join a months-long competition that would end with jobs working as social media influencers in London, Nairobi, Kenya or Washington. Thousands applied, CGTN said in September, describing the event as a “window for young people around the world to understand China.”

British video blogger Jason Lightfoot raved about the opportunity in a video on YouTube advertising the event.



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“So many crazy experiences that I’ll never forget for the rest of my life, and that’s all thanks to CGTN,” Lightfoot said in a video he said was filmed from China tech company Huawei’s campus.

Of course, this model of propaganda is not new. It has been used for decades by the globalist-leftists who run Hollywood and the mainstream media. Now young people are being indoctrinated not only to reject Christianity and patriotism, but to bow before the CCP.



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