



| Brief |

China's Influence Operations Against Taiwan

B-2025-09-17a

Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: Low

Intelligence Requirements: Information warfare, China, Taiwan

September 17, 2025

Scope Note

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Brief | China's Influence Operations Against Taiwan

Key Findings

- China has deployed various digital information warfare tactics against Taiwan on platforms such as TikTok, X (formerly, Twitter), YouTube, and Facebook—almost certainly to weaken the Taiwanese public's independence resolve. Disinformation tactics are wielded alongside soft power through cultural exchanges, influencer partnerships, and other long-term engagement strategies.
- In July 2025, the Communist Party of China's information campaign almost certainly attempted to sway the mass recall vote in Taiwan that aimed to remove center-right Kuomintang (KMT) lawmakers from the legislature, who are perceived to be more pro-China.
- ZeroFox assesses it is very likely the Chinese state is behind the recruitment of Taiwanese social media influencers to participate in propaganda tours of China, which frequently conclude with the participants denouncing the Taiwanese government or its ruling political party.

- A successful information campaign by China risks the erosion of public trust in Taiwanese democratic institutions and the weakening of Taiwan's identity, both domestically and internationally.

| Introduction

China views Taiwan as an integral part of its territory and insists on its eventual reunification with the mainland. In addition to direct military intimidation, China employs hybrid warfare tactics—blending cyber operations, propaganda, and psychological influence—to pressure Taiwan and shape perceptions in China's favor. ZeroFox has observed China deploying information warfare tactics against Taiwan on digital platforms, almost certainly with the intent to weaken the Taiwanese public's independence resolve by eroding Taiwan's national identity and undermining people's trust in the island's democratic institutions and elected officials. Of note, these tactics are prevalent on social media platforms TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Facebook, which are unavailable in mainland China. This very likely indicates that the target audience is not residents of the mainland but, rather, Taiwanese and other Chinese-speaking communities abroad. The scale and frequency of pro-China narratives on social media very likely indicate a coordinated campaign rather than genuine opinions.

ZeroFox's findings almost certainly confirm that pro-China digital narratives in Taiwan are not random, pointing to a state-coordinated operation by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These operations intensify during key political events, such as the 2024 election cycle and the July 2025 mass recall vote. However, the CCP's influence operations are not limited to election cycles; they represent a sustained influence effort.

| Motivations

ZeroFox has observed three wider themes that signify the likely dominant motivations of China's information warfare campaign against Taiwan: political undermining, socio-cultural and economic influence, and military intimidation.



- Political undermining includes direct political campaigns aimed at discrediting Taiwan's government and weakening public trust in democratic institutions.
- Social media content with socio-cultural and economic narratives aims to normalize cross-Strait unity, pushing for a common cultural identity, mixing pro-China ideology with popular culture, and criticizing Taiwan's economic and governance models.
- Social media posts attempting military intimidation boast of the strength of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), warn of an invasion, or cast doubt on Taiwan's defense capabilities.

Success for the CCP would look like waning pro-independence sentiment or a growing "silent majority" that favors reunification on online forums used by Taiwan's public, fueling the same sentiment on the ground. A successful information campaign by China risks the erosion of public trust in Taiwanese democratic institutions and a weakening of Taiwan's identity, both domestically and internationally. It would also diminish international support for Taiwanese independence, likely resulting in political hesitancy to extend support for Taiwan and reduced defense aid. Unchecked propaganda in Taiwan will likely spill over into allied countries, shaping foreign policy outlook and skewing U.S. policy perspectives in particular.

For China, failure to achieve its objectives is likely to result in escalating and overt cyberattacks, expanded AI-generated deepfakes, or coordinated offline protests following online agitation.

Political Undermining

In July 2025, China almost certainly used an information campaign to sway a mass recall vote in Taiwan. The “Great Recall Movement” was a historic attempt in Taiwan to remove every elected official from the center-right Kuomintang (KMT) party from the legislature (KMT legislators are perceived to be more pro-China, although no major party in Taiwan advocates for reunification with the mainland). Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council explicitly warned of “clear and evident” CCP meddling in the vote,¹ as China likely views a stronger KMT presence in the legislature as preferable. There is a roughly even chance that CCP’s information campaign resulted in a loss for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)—perceived as anti-China—and the KMT lawmakers retained their seats.

ZeroFox observed that pro-China narratives surrounding the mass recall were the most prominent and widespread on TikTok, as opposed to YouTube or X. The comment section on TikTok under the search phrase “ ” (machine translated: Taiwan mass recall) was dominated by pro-China voices, very likely indicating narrative manipulation. Most comments echoed the same talking points: decrying the recall as a waste of money, demanding the resignation of President Lai Ching-te of the DPP, and painting the vote as a political farce.

¹ [hXXps://www.dw\[.\]com/en/taiwan-warns-of-chinese-interference-before-recall-vote/a-73387758](https://www.dw.com/en/taiwan-warns-of-chinese-interference-before-recall-vote/a-73387758)

Find related content

00:06/00:12

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A landscape video showing a wide river flowing through a valley, with green hills and mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, there are some reeds and small trees along the riverbank.

▶

👤 claire6418
Claire · Before 7pm

focus on

I voted against the recall today, and then went to the Zhuoshui River in the south alone to enjoy a quiet moment🌊...

🎵 原聲 - Claire

❤️ 915

💬 122

📖 8

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➡️

https://www.tiktok.com/@claire6418/video/75313462... Copy Link

Comments (122) Creator Videos

A circular profile picture of a person with dark hair.

dttidix8762157gj79
I haven't voted for many years, but today I chose to vote against it because I think it goes against the principles of justice!
Before 6pm Reply
View 3 replies ↴

♡ 91

A circular profile picture of a person with dark hair.

Bao Ge
With your vote, Taiwan has a bright future
Before 7pm Reply

♡ 33

A circular profile picture of a person with dark hair.

You
I don't know who you are! I'm glad you voted against it.
Before 4pm Reply

♡ 64

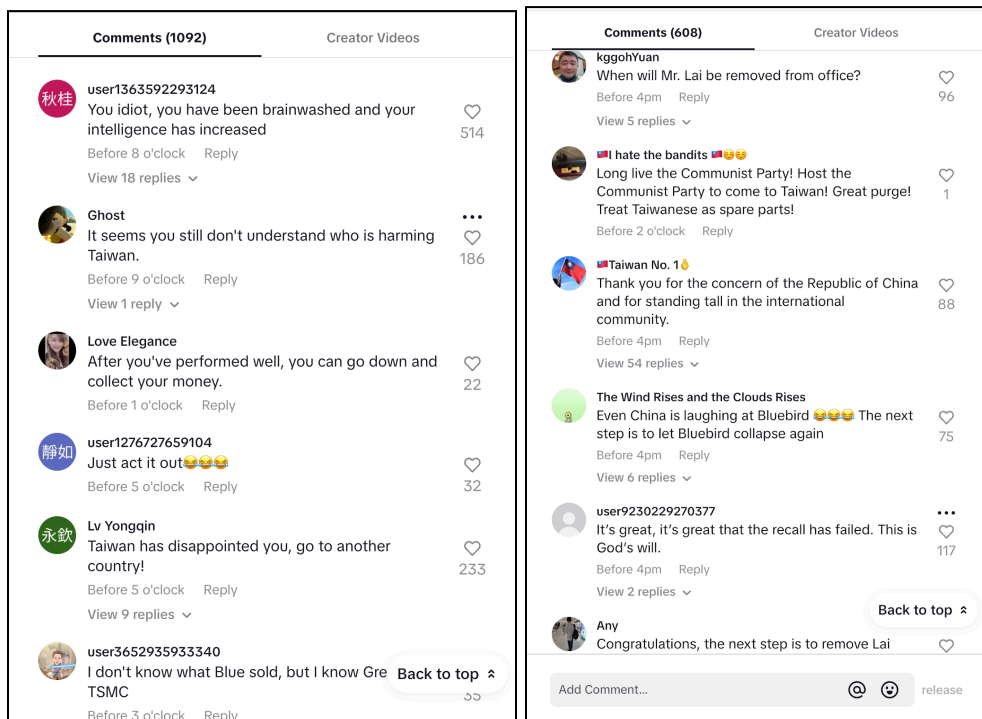
A red circular profile picture with white Chinese characters.

SUN
Thank you for your valuable vote

♡

Add Comment...

🗨️ 🧐 release

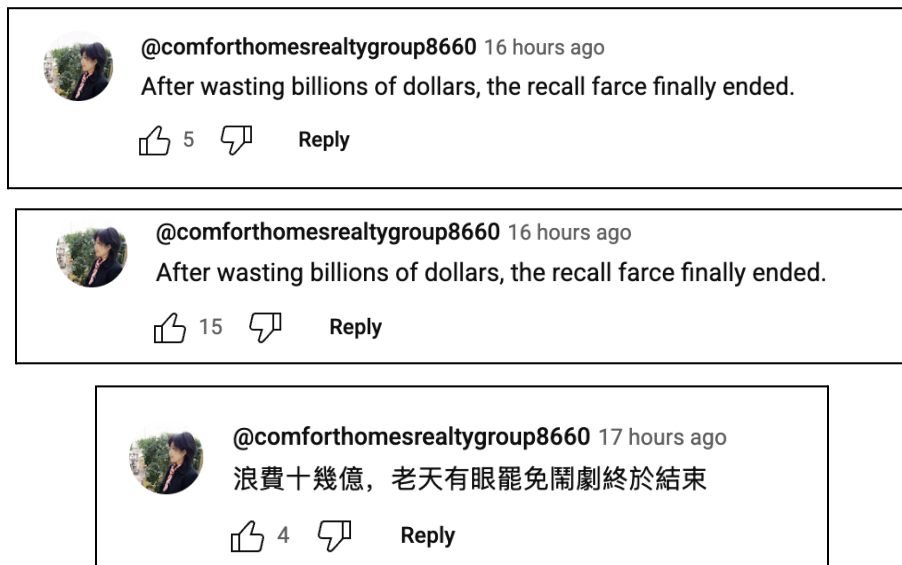


Sample of Pro-China social media comments across the platform

Source: TikTok

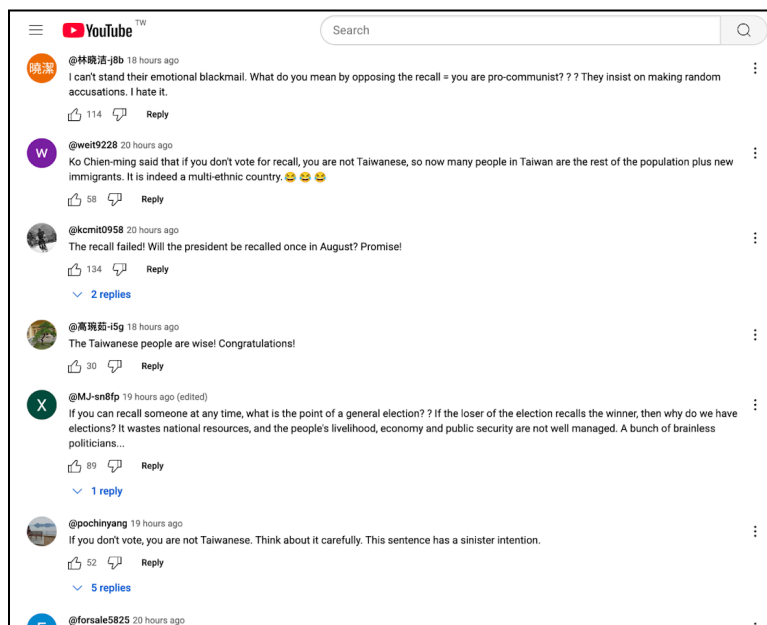
ZeroFox found evidence of pro-China narrative amplification on YouTube, with one user leaving the same comment under at least three news videos with over 100,000 views

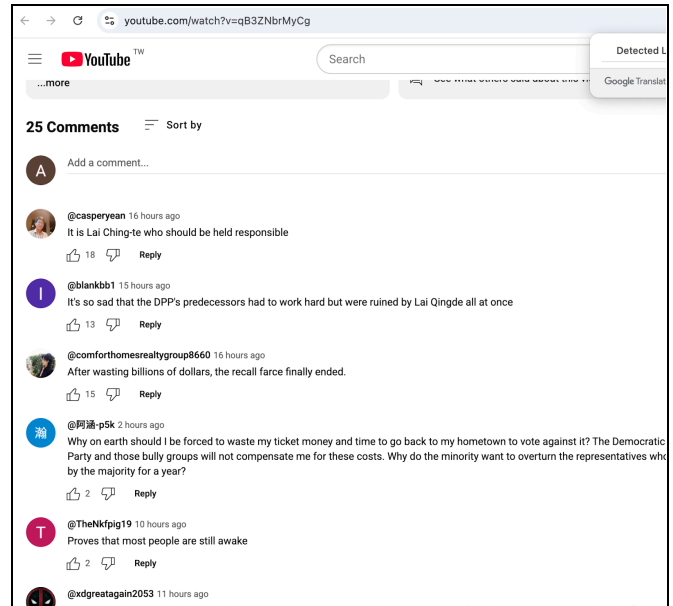
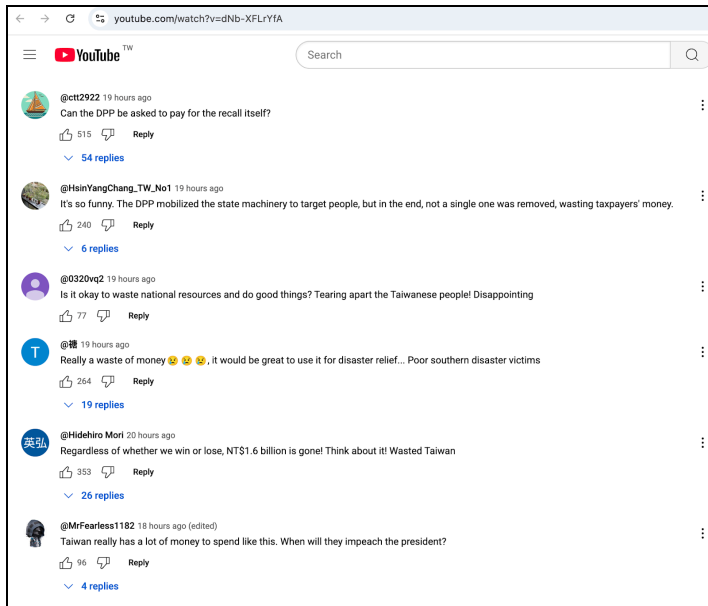
each. And on YouTube news videos with over 100,000 views covering the mass recall, there were more pro-CCP comments echoing claims of the Taiwanese government wasting money on the recall.



Sample of duplicated comments by same user pushing pro-China narrative

Source: YouTube





Sample of comments on news videos discussing the mass recall vote

Source: YouTube

ZeroFox documented an influx of pro-China comments on YouTube videos about Taiwan even before the mass recall event. This pattern of flooding the comment section is almost certainly designed to drown out genuine reactions, creating the illusion that these views reflect legitimate Taiwanese public opinion.

風時事
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賴清德
119K Videos

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4.6K
Dislike
2,214
Share

Comments 2.2K

@興昌李-b7d 1 month ago
The Communist Party of Afghanistan: If Taiwan dares to be independent, we will fight it
Ah Tai: Ah Liu dares to fight, so I will fight alone
May: Keep the status quo and make money
See original (Translated by Google)

93
Reply
15 replies

忠益
@李忠益-i6u 2 months ago
The new regime established in Beijing in 1949
The name of the country was decided after consultation: People's Republic of China
The old regime that retreated to Taiwan
Still using the old name of the country: Republic of China
The two sides of the Taiwan Strait were divided
Fighting for China's representation abroad
Internal struggle for control over China
Time till now
Show less
See original (Translated by Google)

162
Reply
96 replies

@user-tigerdog 2 months ago
Wang Yi is just a big shot, ignore him! Beijing has been

Add a comment...

@huakuimunan 2 months ago

To be honest, only Taiwan talks about mainland China every day, and mainland China often doesn't even remember Taiwan. When I was 15 years old, I saw a lady standing next to me at the Amsterdam airport for the first time with a green passport in her hand. It said "Republic of China". I was so surprised that I thought I had traveled through time! I immediately said to my classmate: "Look! It says Republic of China on his passport! Didn't the Republic of China die long ago?" My classmate told me embarrassedly: "Taiwanese, Taiwanese, don't say anymore 😊" I turned around and saw the lady rolling her eyes. 😊 I'm sorry to that lady, I really have only seen Shanghai during the Republic of China period in TV dramas, and I really thought it was dead long ago. 😊

Show less
See original (Translated by Google)

58
Reply
75 replies

@賴建榕-k2o 2 months ago

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of China, Taiwan and China are both inseparable parts of the Republic of China as stipulated in the Constitution. The president will be democratically elected and peaceful reunification will be achieved at an early date.

Show less
See original (Translated by Google)

128
Reply
53 replies

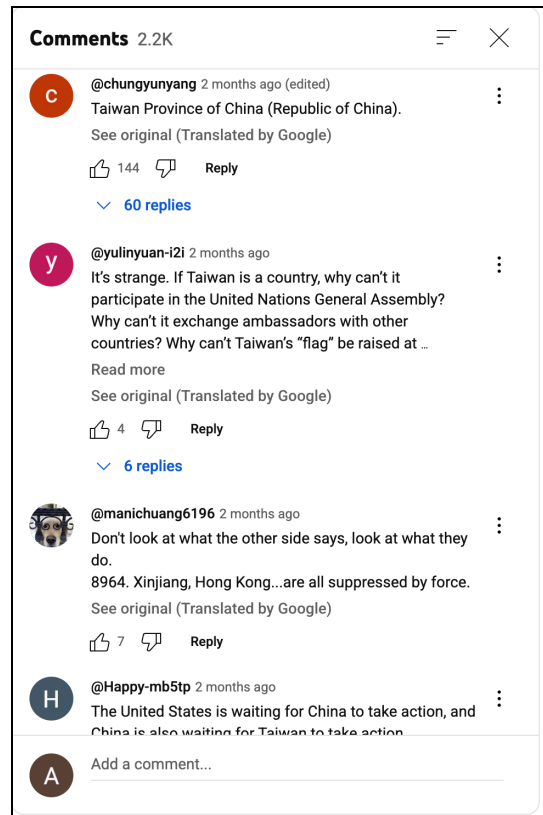
華竹
@高華竹 2 months ago
No Two Systems, Only One
See original (Translated by Google)

145
Reply
109 replies

亞玲
@李亞玲-t6o 2 months ago
"Taiwan" is a nickname, the country's name is "Republic of China"! Do you understand?! ❤️ 😊

Show original (Translated by Google)

60
Reply



Sample of pro-China comments flooding news videos discussing the mass recall vote

Source: YouTube

Cultural and Economic Narratives

China has also used cultural and economic issues in its information operations to influence Taiwanese politics. Paid Taiwanese influencers have very likely played a crucial role in China's attempt at shaping cultural narratives on the island. China-backed entities are very likely orchestrating a paid campaign in which Taiwanese influencers are invited on trips to China and incentivized to show the country in a positive light. These trips have been observed to end with the participating influencers criticizing the anti-China ruling party in Taiwan (the DPP). These tactics are very likely attempts to reshape public opinion about anti-China political parties in Taiwan, in hopes of impacting their popularity during elections.

- During the monitoring period, ZeroFox observed controversy over Taiwanese influencer Holger Chen's (also known as Chen Chih-han) China trip and his

promotion of anti-DPP narratives after his return. The timing and content of Chen's posts almost certainly follow the CCP's playbook—soft-power cultural outreach followed by political messaging to erode trust in Taiwan's government. Targeting a former CCP critic (Chen) with a mostly pro-independence audience is very likely intended to sway Taiwan's most nationalist demographic.

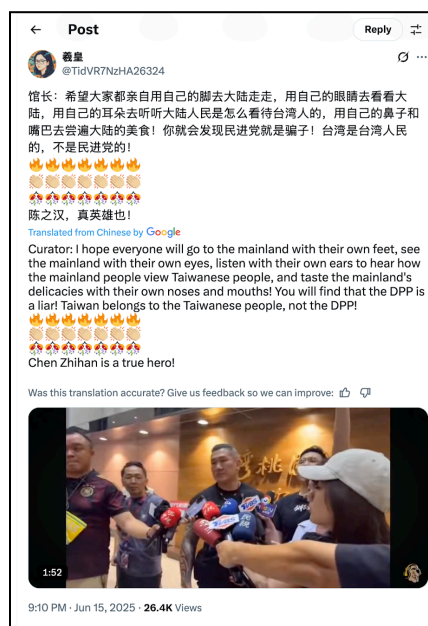
- Chen's visit to China and his statements were widely shared by several social media accounts, including the official Chinese state news agency Xinhua and other pro-China accounts, amplifying the narrative. The promotion by a Chinese state news agency very likely indicates a state-coordinated action.



Xinhua News Agency post on Holger Chen

Source: X

- Most social media mentions of Chen were limited to his direct quotes, which praised China, criticized the DPP, or both. Some posts were duplicated as well. This very likely indicates that certain profiles were bot accounts attempting to artificially amplify the narrative pushed by Chen.



Sample of social media posts promoting Chen's China trip, including duplicated content

Source: X



Sample of social media posts promoting Chen's China trip

Source: TikTok

China has almost certainly systematically integrated Taiwanese influencers and cultural exchanges to project a favorable image of the CCP and nudge public opinion towards

reunification. A Taiwan-based media research report by Puma Shen² demonstrated that, in 2019, seven of the top 10 YouTubers on the island who received virtual donations regularly spread pro-China content. Western media reports also emphasize how China's use of foreigners for propaganda is not limited to just Taiwanese influencers—it includes U.S. nationals, among others.³ For example, on June 3, 2025, Chinese state-sponsored media China Youth Daily posted an advertisement on Facebook calling for influencers around the world with over 300k+ followers on social media to attend a paid trip to China that they will be required to share on their social media.



China Youth Daily post calling for global influencers to attend paid China trip

Source: Facebook

Apart from attempting to shape the socio-cultural narrative of Taiwan, the CCP has also used economic issues in its influence operations.

² Shen, P. & Graduate School of Criminology, National Taipei University. (n.d.). How China Initiates Information Operations Against Taiwan.

[hXXps://www.pf\[.\]org\[.\]tw/wSite/public/Attachment/003/f1646809672097\[.\]pdf](https://www.pf[.]org[.]tw/wSite/public/Attachment/003/f1646809672097[.]pdf)

³

[hXXps://www.lemonde\[.\]fr/en/international/article/2025/06/26/china-has-enlisted-star-influencers-to-boost-its-global-image_6742720_4\[.\]html](https://www.lemonde[.]fr/en/international/article/2025/06/26/china-has-enlisted-star-influencers-to-boost-its-global-image_6742720_4[.]html)

- For example, as the 2024 presidential election approached in Taiwan, disinformation actors seized on the egg crisis issue on the island,⁴ which was triggered by avian flu and rising feed costs and led to a sharp retail price surge and serious supply shortages.
- China-backed sources circulated meme-style narratives alleging government collusion with egg importers, food safety risks, and DPP corruption, punctuated by hashtags like #BrazilianStinkyEggs and # (machine translated: import of poisonous eggs) on Facebook and LINE.
- These coordinated stories were then amplified by Chinese state media on Weibo, reframing a domestic agricultural issue to discredit Taiwan's ruling party.

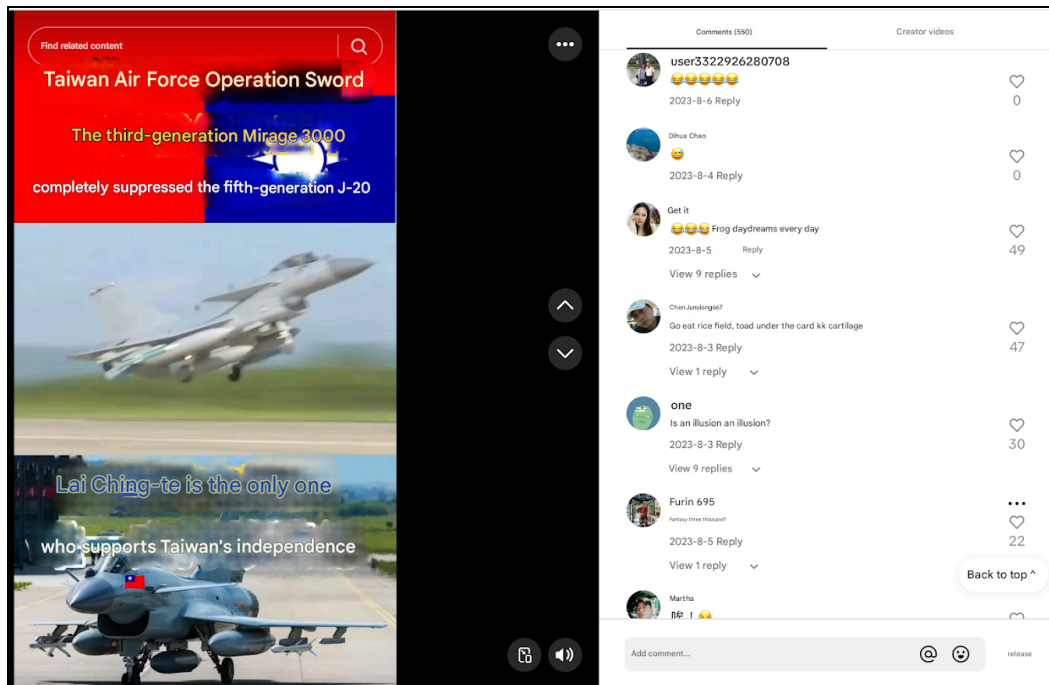
Military Intimidation

Numerous social media posts on Taiwanese social media depict Chinese PLA imagery that warns of an armed mobilization, which almost certainly seeks to intimidate Taiwan by boasting about China's military strength and hinting at an imminent threat. Disinformation about Taiwan's security capabilities is almost certainly aimed at sowing doubts in order to demoralize the Taiwanese public and erode trust in its military personnel and the government.

- A post about Taiwan's Air Force on TikTok was flooded with pro-China comments, most of which called Taiwan's aerial strength a "fantasy" or an "illusion." The repetition in words and language very likely indicates artificial amplification of an opinion. Additionally, the near identical comment-spamming conveying pro-CCP narratives—given the lack of TikTok access in mainland China—very likely suggests a large-scale, state-sponsored propaganda campaign aimed at drowning out genuine reactions.

4

[hXXps://www.yalejournal\[.\]org/publications/decoding-chinas-digital-offensive-an-analysis-of-information-warfare-tactics-in-taiwans-2024-presidential-election](https://www.yalejournal.org/publications/decoding-chinas-digital-offensive-an-analysis-of-information-warfare-tactics-in-taiwans-2024-presidential-election)

**Pro-China comments (translated) under video talking about Taiwan's Air Force**

Source: TikTok

- A TikTok video by user "mytra[.]com" stating PLA soldiers are returning to a "military camp" using a hashtag directly referencing the Taiwan Strait situation is almost certainly intended to intimidate the Taiwanese public by portraying an imminent threat. With TikTok being inaccessible in mainland China and the hashtag clearly referencing Taiwan, the content is almost certainly intended for the Taiwanese public. The account has over 193K followers and is very likely a Chinese propaganda account, as it shares mostly news clips disseminating Chinese perspectives on international affairs involving rival nations (such as the United States and India). It is very likely operated by a Chinese national, which is claimed in the account bio, and its username is also connected to a Chinese instant-messaging platform, qq[.]com, owned by Tencent.

**Video claiming to show PLA soldiers heading to military camp**

Source: TikTok

- In some TikTok videos, the violent language used is almost certainly intended to shock users. The post below sought to demean Taiwan's security forces, claiming that they were "recalled" out of fear of being "beheaded" by the PLA. The post used traditional Chinese script, which is popularly used in Taiwan but not mainland China, underscoring that the campaign is aimed squarely at influencing Taiwanese public opinion rather than general Mandarin-speaking audiences.

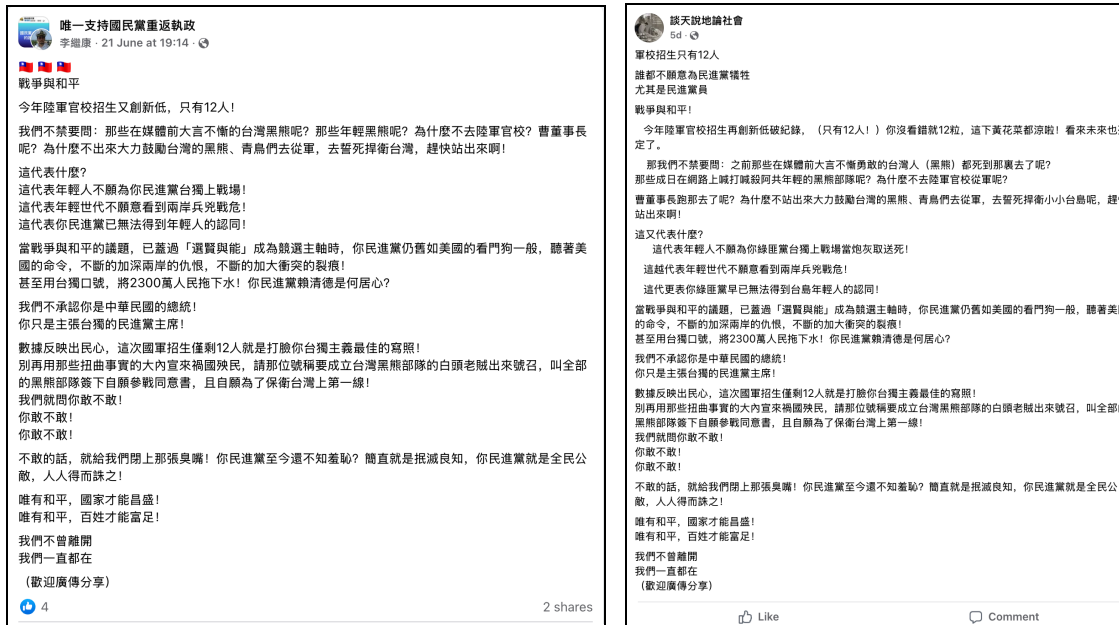


Post demeaning Taiwan's security forces

Source: TikTok

- The Facebook posts in June 2025 shown below were likely aimed at demoralizing Taiwan's public, deepening political divides, and undermining confidence in the military. The first post claimed that army recruitment in Taiwan was dwindling and implied there is political pushback on mandatory service, which has been debunked by independent fact-checking organizations in Taiwan.⁵ ZeroFox investigated the claims and found no verified news on dwindling army recruitment in Taiwan, very likely indicating the claim is indeed false.

⁵ [hXXps://tfc-taiwan\[.\]org\[.\]tw/fact-check-reports/taiwan-military-academy-enrollment-fake-news/](https://tfc-taiwan[.]org[.]tw/fact-check-reports/taiwan-military-academy-enrollment-fake-news/)



Sample of disinformation posts about Taiwan's military

Source: Facebook

- Another post claimed that a domestically built submarine appeared misshaped and had been damaged during a dive test. The claim was debunked by an independent Taiwanese fact-checking organization, which said the bulge was part of the design.⁶ ZeroFox confirmed that the bulge is in fact part of the design; there are three “bulges” in the same row on the submarine, which are labelled as “passive ranging sonar” per the U.S. Army OE Data Integration Network (ODIN) database.⁷

⁶

[hXXps://tfc-taiwan\[.\]org\[.\]tw/fact-check-reports/narwhal-submarine-hull-bulge-sonar-not-damage/](https://tfc-taiwan[.]org[.]tw/fact-check-reports/narwhal-submarine-hull-bulge-sonar-not-damage/)

⁷ [hXXps://odin.tradoc\[.\]army\[.\]mil/WEG/List/ORIGIN_taiwan-19a5a1&DOM_sea-35e296](https://odin.tradoc[.]army[.]mil/WEG/List/ORIGIN_taiwan-19a5a1&DOM_sea-35e296)



Disinformation on Taiwan's indigenous submarine

Source: Facebook

Taiwan's Counter Measures

The tangible impact of these multifaceted efforts is clear: a Doublethink Lab survey found that active Taiwanese TikTok users were nearly twice as likely as non-users to agree with pro-China narratives on cross-Straits relations and domestic politics.⁸ Taiwan has taken several measures to counteract China's information warfare, including flagging Chinese apps such as TikTok, iQIYI, and Tencent as national security threats. TikTok is banned on government devices but remains accessible to the Taiwanese public; iQIYI and Tencent have been completely banned. Some traditional cable news outlets in Taiwan that are perceived as pro-China and pro-KMT have been banned. For example, CTi News was banned on cable for failing to fact-check information; however, it remains functional on digital platforms. Moreover, Taiwan has also acted on individual threats, such as when a

⁸

[hXXps://medium\[.\]com/doublethinklab/2025-taiwan-tiktok-user-study-nationwide-online-surveys-research-data-0ddcddea231](https://medium.com/doublethinklab/2025-taiwan-tiktok-user-study-nationwide-online-surveys-research-data-0ddcddea231)

Chinese influencer's residency was revoked for advocating annexation. Independent fact-checking organizations such as the Taiwan FactCheck Center, MyGoPen, and Cofacts are collaborating with platforms like LINE, Meta, and YouTube to label, clarify, and limit the spread of misleading posts, including debunking AI-generated deepfakes during the 2024 elections.

Taiwan's success in countering such propaganda would mean a lack of real-world impact of China's digital propaganda and hardened Taiwanese identity. This will require the involvement of the civil society in "fake news" busting and launching of media literacy drives targeting young digital users to counter propaganda, mis/disinformation, bot accounts, and AI-generated content and deepfakes. The Taiwan government must robustly label state-linked and manipulative content on digital platforms like YouTube, X, and Facebook to help users differentiate between authentic and inauthentic content and speed up takedowns. Deploying real-time detection systems for spotting synthetic media and narrative manipulation would enable swift removal of manipulative content.

| Conclusion

ZeroFox's findings almost certainly confirm that pro-China digital narratives in Taiwan are not random, pointing to a state-coordinated operation by the CCP. These operations intensify during key political events, such as the 2024 election cycle and the July 2025 mass recall vote. However, the CCP's influence operations extend beyond election cycles, demonstrating a sustained influence effort. China's playbook for manipulating public opinion via social media can easily be adapted to influence corporate narratives or stakeholder perceptions elsewhere on issues related to Taiwan. The tangible impact of these efforts is clear, with Taiwanese TikTok users nearly twice as likely as non-users to agree with pro-China narratives on cross-Straits relations and domestic politics. This influence is likely eroding support for independence among Taiwan's younger generation, who will ultimately shape the island's political future.

| Recommendations

Influencer-driven information campaigns are almost certainly being—and will continue to be—leveraged across geographies and issues. The following recommendations are

not limited to China's information campaign and could be applied to similar nation-state information operations:

- Involving civil society in "fake news" busting and launching media literacy drives targeting young digital users would aid in countering propaganda, mis/disinformation, bot accounts, and AI-generated content and deepfakes.
- More robust labeling of state-linked and manipulative content on digital platforms like YouTube, X, and Facebook would help users differentiate between authentic and inauthentic content and speed up takedowns.
- Deploying real-time detection systems for spotting synthetic media and narrative manipulation would enable swift removal of problematic content.

| Appendix A: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

	Red	Amber
WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?	Sources may use TLP:RED when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.	Sources may use TLP:AMBER when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.
HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?	Recipients may NOT share TLP:RED with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.	Recipients may ONLY share TLP:AMBER information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm. Note that TLP:AMBER+STRICT restricts sharing to the organization only.
	Green	Clear
WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?	Sources may use TLP:GREEN when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.	Sources may use TLP:CLEAR when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.
HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?	Recipients may share TLP:GREEN information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.	Recipients may share TLP:CLEAR information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

| Appendix B: ZeroFox Intelligence Probability Scale

All ZeroFox intelligence products leverage probabilistic assessment language in analytic judgments. Qualitative statements used in these judgments refer to associated probability ranges, which state the likelihood of occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns with how readers should interpret such terms.

Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain
1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%