The Rise of China: Propaganda, impact, influence, censorship, aggressive strikes on Tibet

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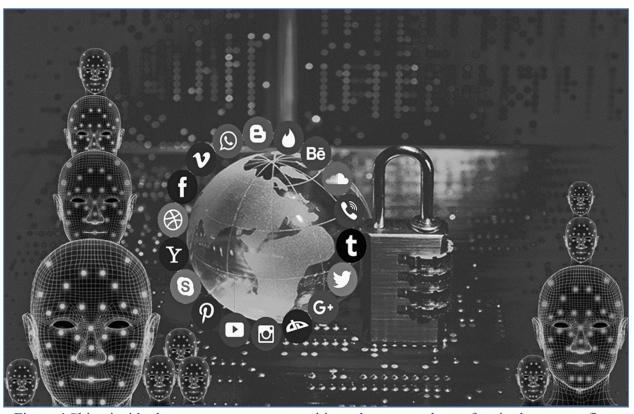


Figure 1China inside the contemporary censorship and propaganda warfare in the twenty-first century. Photo: TPI

China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, has become an outrageous evil "authoritarian" state in modern history, particularly in recent years (Evan, 2015). Any and all efforts are made to effectively and completely block any and all critical views, both from within and outside China, through any and all channels, while using every social media giant and western mainstream media, along with its growing economic power, "military aggressions", as socio-economic and political tools, in massive "propaganda" machines, applying massive tri-influence, massive and pervasive "censorship" and surveillances, mass-blockage of information, spreading communist ideas around the world, and imposing commercial consequences for disobeying the claims over its contemporary sovereignty (Gamso, 2021) (Okuda, 2016). (Xu, 2014)

The question is why China is so "sensitive" about bringing up all the issues related to Tibet, which also prevents them from raising all other issues related to China? Since the invasion of Tibet, Tibetans have had a saying about the Chinese state-run media: "good news from within, world news with broken lips and fragmented noses". The answers are clear and may include the impossible of finding any historical evidence, facts and assumptions which might substantiate their claims of sovereignty over Tibet, leaving Tibet completely closed and enormously isolated from the outside world (RSF, 2016). Not only does this instrumentalises China in concealing any new developments and current affairs in the occupied country under their iron-fisted repressive policies, but also allows the whole of Tibet to be tightly controlled and fully exploited undetected by the outside world.

From Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping, China has continued openly criticising the "colonialism" and "imperialism" of other countries, taking historical events such as the "Opium War", the "Taiping Rebellion" and the "Boxer Rebellion" and accusing them of destroying its economy, culture and religion and undermining its national sovereignty (Anand, 2019). Furthermore, China claimed that the country was weakened militarily, technologically and economically when faced with "humiliation", "injustice", domination, suffering, control and defeat. Indeed, not only Karl Marx, even pro-China historians and commentators have been impressed by how some of these events have transformed and shaped China. Moreover, not only does this help China reinforce its propaganda and narrative by rewriting history, further enhances significant investments and resources both in domestic and international academic environments by expansively forging partnerships (Brady, 2017).

Nevertheless, this idea also puts enormous pressure on the regime, which is always prepared to adopt any extremely consequential and professional policy makings and retaliatory measures and responses to obstruct any pro-Tibet endeavours to raise legitimate questions, which may clash under the guise of defending national "core interests" or presenting the national socio-economic and political "identity" by the state-run propaganda machines, using the so-called "centuries of humiliation" as their main "tools" and few even felt the same way as in the portrait (Wang, 2008) (Saxena, 2020). Furthermore, some pretentious academics would even referred as China "soft power", which is utter nonsense and vulgarity, rhetorically endeavouring rhetorically of turning an autocratic and totalitarian regime into an acceptable state system, using illogical etymological.

Harry Gelber, Harvard University visiting scholar, argues very similarly, describing the causes of the opium wars very differently (Gelber, 2006) and a comparable argument has been made by Rossabi, who has described the wars that continue to be "misidentified" (Rossabi, 2013). Therefore these historical narratives and policies in China's official documents may appear straightforward and glorious, though the very practical implications are indeed very offensive and inaccurate, damaging, oppressive, burdensome, disastrous and destructive with self-denial, falsification or distortion of historical records, a real evil, over seventy years of humiliation against the people of Tibet. Unlike Ukraine, the Internet with drones, mobile phones, computers and digital cameras, was yet to be born in Tibet, although enough evidence of photographs of actual events and living stories proving a violent invasion of Tibet are available to demonstrate what is now happening in Ukraine (Arpi, 2013).

For instance, in 1951, Tibet was forced to sign the 17-point "Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet", after invading most traditional provinces of eastern Tibet (DIIR, 2014). Throughout Mao's "stand up" policy of resistance against western imperialism, an estimated 1.2 million Tibetans were slaughtered during the conflict that followed China's violent and illegal occupation and invasion of Tibet under breaking and violating the Charter of the United Nations in 1949-1950 (Shakabpa, 2009). In addition, after the forced agreement, over 99% of the more than 6000 monasteries, temples and religious shrines in Tibet were looted or destroyed, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of thousands of sacred Buddhist scriptures. China has neither officially acknowledged nor apologised for these inhumane acts against Tibet, which is testament to the nature of China as a militarily evil, politically shameless and morally disgraceful.

Furthermore, more than 100,000 Tibetans have been forced to flee their country and now live-in exile communities around the world. Nevertheless, China has bullied the world and maintained its claims that the people of Tibet were under Mao's "socialist paradise" (Kolas, 1998). These massacres and destruction by China, which have not been officially acknowledged by the international community and governments nor effectively condemned, are morally and historically wrong and particularly the ignorant and irresponsible journalism, which disgraces the reputation of the media. For example, when it comes to Tibet, a country where nearly two hundred lives have been sacrificed and given in "self-immolation" protests since 2009, crying out and wanting freedom, the media either failed to address it equally or ignored it completely, comparing it to other world events, which exposes a practical undemocratic, morally corrupt and ethically non-journalistic approach (Kaufman, 2013).

Tibet suffered bullying from China again - hoaxes, lies, fabrications and frauds under Deng Xiaoping and his broken promises (Norbu, 1991). In the background of Deng's "get rich" policy to create economic prosperity for the Chinese people, though the people of Tibet have been again bullied, oppressed, subjugated through extreme poverty and repression yet the world was deluded by seeing China opening up and reforming itself. However, behind the curtain, the large-scale exploitation of natural resources and the massive plundering of all the treasures, including copper, oil, lithium, chromite, uranium and gold reserved for thousands of years, the rich forests reserved for thousands of years, the freshwater of the rivers of Tibet and the livestock productions, exploited and plundered by the large-scale construction of the world's most gigantic dams, railways and highways under repressive policies during the decades between 1978 and 1992, all can account for a large part of the Chinese government's revenue and a higher percentage of China's GDP. People

in Tibet remained in poverty, and these practices of exploitation and illegal predatory rip-off continue where China has benefited greatly in terms of both economic development, energy security, military build-up and clean water reserves as the new gold. This explains that Tibet had not received even a quarter of 10% of what China took from Tibet, not estimating how much was destroyed.

Xi Jinping's policies of 'becoming strong' further escalated the cultural and linguistic genocide in Tibet by enforcing Tibetans, including monks and nuns, to use Mandarin as the 'common language' of China, replacing all Tibetan socio-political cultural, linguistic and historical symbols with symbols of Chinese national identity, confiscating and burning books, banning and restricting the use of the Tibetan language, banning and criminalising all Tibetan national flags and photographs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and publicly forcing Tibetans to display pictures of the Chinese Communist Party leadership in their homes and raise Chinese national red flags on the roofs of their homes (Sandhar, 2015). China kept bullying the international community by claiming that it was in the process of socio-economic development and opening up Tibet to foreigners, restoring all the religious institutions which had been destroyed by them, while further isolating Tibet from the outside world (Reporters Without Borders, 2012).

All these repressive, authoritarian-style policies, counting from brainwashing to re-educate patriotism, spooky fear-mongering, arrogant nationalism and Chinese national socio-political identity in order to basically counteract growing criticism in the international arena, and completely and blindly oppose any resistance in current social, political and historical affairs, fueling anti-Western Semitism, distorted, fraudulent distorted, biased, untrue, inaccurate, "disinformation" or misleading information destined to rewrite and distort history, cover up genocide and massacres, the legalisation of the illegitimate invasion and occupation of foreign territories aimed at legitimisation, with long-standing intent, premeditated and well-planned by powerful propaganda machines, passed off as mainstream media style, with the involvement of pro-Chinese experienced and professional journalists and academics (Bielakowska, 2022).

The Paris-based global press freedom watchdog Reporters Without Borders has powerfully condemned China's state-run media amplifications of misinformation from Russian propaganda about the invasion of Ukraine, saying the media is "...reproducing deceptive wording such as "special military operation" and "Ukraine crisis" to describe the invasion...". While China is still evolving into a decade-old nationalism, RSF has criticised China for amplifying that "the US and NATO were in fact responsible for the war". This media model appears working in Russia and is likely to be adopted quickly by other dictatorships and authoritarian regimes around the world, where pro-Chinese media and commentators are partly responsible, for undermining not only their own freedom but that of the entire nation and wider society as corrupt politicians allowing china to interfere with their government and amassing intelligence (Rudolph, 2020).

Under the propaganda tools, political repression, social discrimination, economic marginalisation, environmental destruction and cultural assimilation have continued over the past 70 decades, including the ongoing migration of Chinese to Tibet, which has caused intense resentment among the people of occupied Tibet (Samphel, 2017). The harsh and long sentences of Tibetan writers, intellectuals, religious figures and activists, exasperatingly a frustrating question about how China has committed human rights violations in Tibet. For instance, the unfortunate fact that the Chinese

government has imposed a heavy sentence on the outspoken Tibetan, while the world celebrates International Human Rights Day, is a testament to the desperate situation in Tibet and the repressive control over Tibetans in their country.

The Government of China, through systematic and blatantly repressive policies, continues to maintain a tight grip on Tibet, suppressing the political rights of Tibetans and the peaceful expression of their religious, cultural and linguistic identity, and subjecting the Tibetan people to severe persecution, genocide, inhuman torture, harsh imprisonment and extrajudicial massacres in the Tibetan homeland, which constitutes a new model of occupation and colonisation, a violation of international law and the human rights of the Tibetan people (Cook, 2017). In recent years, China has emerged as a global economic power, also long been known for its disrespect for its neighbours and international norms. Thus, almost all of its neighbours fear China's bullying and expansionism, its aggressiveness and long-standing totalitarian nature, such as its ongoing aggression in the South China Seas and repeated clashes with India, and its long history of invading and occupying its neighbouring countries and territories such as Tibet, East Turkestan and South Mongolia.

Within Tibet, the voices of Tibetans are totally controlled and suppressed, using all means of violent force and repressive policies, including heavy weaponry of the police and military, committing genocide, carrying out inhumane torture, handing down harsh sentences through secret trials and secret prisons, while brainwashing Tibetans through the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda machines. Over the years, hundreds of Tibetans, including writers, intellectuals, cultural and religious figures, musicians, bloggers, businessmen and activists, have been severely beaten and tortured with various high-impact weapons, batons and other electrical devices during investigations, and then arbitrarily arrested and sentenced to long prison terms for expressing their views on human rights and democratic freedom. As in North Korea, many of them died at home after being released from prison and just before their death, due to the reputation of the Chinese government and the diet of many others, due to their severe injuries from torture and ill-treatment in Chinese prisons, and their deaths are systematically hidden, become forever unknown, or are not announced publicly for fear of international condemnation.

Tibetans are constantly asked to be proud citizens; however, the Chinese government continues its repressive policy of refusing to issue passports to Tibetans inside Tibet and has systematically banned them from travelling abroad for decades. Their applications and requests are constantly denied, suspended or cancelled and often reported or recorded as a case of suspicion. In addition, the Chinese authorities have intensified their control over the movement of Tibetans by refusing and recalling passports, in violation of Chinese and international law. Very few Tibetans from the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas were given passports for some years, although their passports were confiscated by the authorities and never returned. The Tibetan people face severe repression, illegal occupation and mass surveillance in their daily lives, with millions of security cameras, numerous police checkpoints and party officials closely monitoring their movements and activities, and even if they express their environmental and language concerns, they are illegally charged with separatism and can be sentenced to up to 15 years or even the death penalty; all demonstrations, including peaceful ones, are suppressed with extreme violence and protesters are imprisoned, tortured and sometimes even indiscriminately massacred.

Tibetan religious, cultural and linguistic identity is disappearing and remains under threat in all corners of Tibet where traditional Tibetan houses and sacred sites in villages, towns and regions are being destroyed and replaced by modern Chinese-style buildings, especially in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, where Tibetans living for thousands of years are being forcibly relocated to the countryside and remote areas. This linguistic and cultural genocide committed by China poses a serious threat to the survival of Tibetans, their national culture and language in their own country. In all cities and towns, including Lhasa, Tibetan billboards, license plates, road signs, restaurants and shop fronts have disappeared in Tibet over the years. In particular, signs, notices and banners for official meetings and conferences display only standard written Chinese and the written Tibetan language is being systematically ignored. After Xi Jinping became President, huge propaganda banners of the Chinese Communist Party and pictures of Xi Jinping are displayed in every corner of Tibet, even in Tibetan houses, villages, roadsides and building surfaces, even the surfaces of sacred mountains and hills.

Like the photographs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his books, the Tibetan national flag has become another important target for Communist China, which has illegally banned and severely punished those who fly or keep it in their homes or elsewhere. The national flag of a nation is a political and historical symbol that shows that people belong to a community, a nation and that they share beliefs, goals, rules and regulations, historically, politically, culturally and linguistically. Like any nation, the country of Tibet has a specific flag as a national symbol, which has been used for hundreds of years as a separate nation and people. Despite changes to the flag, which was first flown in the late eighteenth century to tell others that Tibetans own a piece of land and that one system rules over the people and the land. People in occupied Tibet are brutally imprisoned for owning, flying or displaying their national flag, which is censored in all media in China, including the Internet and newspapers, and for this reason, the flag has become a symbol of protest and unity for Tibetans.

While replacing these Tibetan cultural and spiritual symbols, nine Chinese objects, including portraits of four Chinese party leaders, the Chinese national flag, state-owned newspapers and televisions, are being forced into Tibetan homes and temples in order to promote a sense of responsibility toward Chinese national unity and pride among all Tibetans, including monks and nuns. Replacing portraits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama with those of Chinese Communist Party leaders, including Mao Tse-tung and Xi Jinping, in all religious institutions and monasteries in Tibet, in order to continue to receive government support as the authorities suppress efforts to assimilate and control Tibetans in their homeland. In addition, all homes, from villages to cities to regions, are being forced to remove photographs of their spiritual leaders, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama recognised by the Dalai Lama. Individuals and families who follow the campaign and orders are rewarded, while those who refuse to obey are scorned and severely punished and denied access to social benefits.

Tibet is now completely under the control of surveillance, religious and cultural institutions and monasteries, under permanent monitoring, both by physical official working groups and by modern technology as well. Communist China, through unprecedented censorship and restrictions, prevents the entry into Tibet of any outside critical voices from all international media and social media platforms and uses these international media and social media platforms to counter any voices raising human rights violations in Tibet and any activities of Tibetans and supporters

outside Tibet engaged in the struggle for freedom, human rights and democratic values. Interestingly, a question to be asked to the Chinese authoritarian Xi Jinping is: Is this the democracy that Xi Jinping, President of China and Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, recently spelt out?

Twitter as an example, has been banned in China, although hundreds of Chinese officials, Chinese Communist Party sympathisers and influencers with the support of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, are actively engaged in pushing their narrative about China and Chinese diplomats, known as "wolf warrior", throughout the world, amplifying their propaganda and "conspiracies" (Brandt J. & Schafer, 2020). Similarly, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Snapchat have also been used as political tools and propaganda platforms. Unfortunately, due to financial lust or to present themselves as pro-China, some mainstream media and publications are slyly following the Chinese narrative by providing more platforms and opportunities, particularly for pro-China historians and commentators who can be seen speaking openly and proudly on topics such as 'Centuries of Humiliation' for their personal gain, without acknowledging Tibet's grievances and suffering.

Fortunately, all the great historians and commentators from freedom-loving and peace-loving nations around the world have the same opportunities and platforms, but all their presentations are banned and never allowed into China and sadly ended up in this way without much resistance. These media agencies also reproduce almost all articles, including opinion pieces published by state media, particularly the People's Daily and the Global Times, without any counterpart or interviewee, and unfairly edited Tibetan sources and change their terminology and expressions to suit the Chinese narrative, compromising and undermining the "press freedom" and "democracy" gained through battles fought with much blood and tears, causing further sufferings to the Tibetan people and also against the principles of morality and ethics. For more than half a century, Tibetans have tried to talk about their experiences of being Tibetan, of losing everything, and of the true nature of Chinese expansionism, aggression, colonialism and bullying, which sadly have only recently been realised by the wider world (Sheen, 2021).

Nevertheless, Xi Jinping's Maoist policy revision in China destroyed Deng's dream of reform and opening up China, which astonished the whole world. In the processes of occupation and colonisation that have been going on for over 70 years, the Tibetan language has been replaced and thousand-year-old buildings have been destroyed, the Tibetan people have been divided into minorities, Tibetan land has been divided into pieces, half of Kham and Amdo provinces have been incorporated into Chinese provinces, and place names, including villages and towns, have been replaced and renamed with Chinese names. Road and street names were changed and replaced with Chinese towns or places. Not only are the names of landmarks such as streets and roads systematically changed and renamed without the consultation and consent of Tibetans, nonetheless these changes are heavily influenced by Chinese economic leverage and party propaganda influences, censorship and control.

To illustrate some examples, when the Tibetan name in English 'Tashi', always replaced by Chinese government officials with 'zhaxi', some mainstream media outlets intentionally or unintentionally followed the Chinese government narratives. Another example is that for centuries the Tibetans had called China "Gya-nak", though, after the invasion of Tibet, the Tibetans were forced to call China "zhōng guó", a middle nation. Because the second 'nak' in the name means

black, literally means black clothing. Similarly, most official positions from villages to towns, from provinces to the whole country, such as President (Tibetan: Sikyong or Sizin) were replaced with "zŏng tŏng" or "zhǔ xí", and almost all official positions of Tibet were deliberately removed from the Tibetan language usage. Among them are other name substitutions, specific buildings, streets and places being replaced by various Chinese city names, figures or propaganda slogans. Furthermore, by adding Chinese to all the names of Tibetan institutions, schools, monasteries and government buildings, most notably hotels, shops, restaurants and transport stations, turning them bilingual, but, the Chinese language is positioned above, filling most of the space, and Tibetan below, exhibiting the control and superiority of the Chinese language.

The contingencies currently arising are not only about following the Chinese propaganda narrative but rather about economically and politically influencing and manipulating governments and international companies across the world in cooperation and partnership, whether intentionally or unintentionally, have a huge negative impact on the Tibetan way of life both inside and outside of Tibet. For instance, over the past few years, the people of Tibet have removed or eliminated from the digital systems of the above institutions and have forced Tibetan nationals to identify themselves as Chinese nationals when applying for visas, buying tickets, enrolling in educational institutions and registering any official documents. These have convincingly made the status quo that China is not only systematically restricting and curtailing national religious and cultural freedoms, freedom of speech, movement and assembly, while attacking their struggle for freedom, democracy and human rights, but also meticulously seeking to entirely eradicate Tibetan cultural language and religious identity and expressions from within Tibet. These repressive policies and aggression of China are now unmeasurable, politically backward and historically shameless, factually illogical and morally irresponsible. (Sautman, 2006).

With these negative changes and developments, even though contradict historical and political facts, some mainstream media, which claims not to be influenced by or associated with any government or political party, continues to follow interpretations of the Chinese propaganda machines, obliterating what the Tibetan people really feel and what they really demand. If these mainstream media behaved honestly, reported truthfully and equally, responded accurately and reacted with equanimity, their discriminatory, contemptuous, insulting, irresponsible, bias-based bullying, prejudice, moral injury and systematic betrayal, exploitation, violation of virtue ethics and human dignity could be avoided. At some point, the people of Tibet need to say enough is enough and our legitimate struggle for freedom, self-determination and basic human rights should be better respected and dignified because what we are fighting for is politically, morally and historically legitimate (Clark, 2001). The Chinese tactic of the repeated lie that becomes the truth has either severely weakened, imperilled and poisoned the editorial freedom of these news agencies, or they themselves have voluntarily sold out their editorial freedom. They are not too greedy, hooligans, deceitful, unaware and opportunistic as they seem. Comparatively, since 2013, China has banned seven topics of core Western values, including 'freedom of expression', while Chinese propaganda articles float through the social and public media of Western countries. Under a new law in 2021, China has restricted foreign textbooks and foreign language tutors in Chinese education institutions, while Chinese language institutions continue to take up places in Western countries which, unfortunately, is a vexatious, unsportsmanlike, unscrupulous and small-minded manner of doing business (Wu, 2020).

The people of Tibet will never forget those members of the media who stood unwaveringly for justice and reporting the truth about Tibet, which has made Tibet an international issue for decades, until recently, deserved honesty, respect and dignity. Our words can never be enough for your hard work and dedication, particularly your courageous advocacy for the vulnerable and victims and upholding justice against the Chinese perpetrators. Unfortunately, whether or not, paid for their cheap editorial freedom or for the impact of Chinese propaganda influence, some international media and social media platforms have followed the way Chinese propaganda machines have portrayed Tibet, especially over the past few decades, either intentionally or without adequate knowledge of Tibet's history and the suffering of the Tibetan people (Dale, 2020). Subsequently, politicians, including policymakers in some governments, followed the same direction, mostly under the influence of the Chinese economy, accepting and approving various political terms such as the "one China" policy, which conceals the illegal occupation of Tibet, and sometimes openly expressing "Tibet is part of China" without even any concern for the sufferings and feelings of the Tibetan people (Free Tibet, 2012). This kind of influence has not only impacted the coverage of Tibet and other political issues but also on some world media's coverage of the "coronavirus", first originating in the city of Wuhan in China and renamed Covid-19 by the WHO under Chinese influence, then renamed different variants while trying to avoid upsetting China, which has strongly shaped the situation under the influence and "misleading" of the Chinese government, including economic leverage, political pressure and party propaganda machines with help of some sponsored mainstream media (Wendler, 2021).

Consequently, Tibetans in Tibet and in exile have confused the ongoing pride, impartiality, fare and hubris expressed by many international media and governments on the meaning of fairness and truthfulness in the coverage of Tibet and China, such an unequal and shameless manner, can be a betrayal of moral principles (Ward, 2009). For example, when China declares that those voice raising the issues of Tibet "hurt the feelings of Chinese people", some mainstream media outlets are apparently very concerned about this announcement while ignoring the suffering of a lost country, Tibet, where genocide has been committed and massive human rights abuses have taken place and labelling the legitimate struggle of Tibetans for self-determination as political terms of the Chinese government (Erling, 2022).

Not the majority did the same disgracefully, the Freedom House 2022 report shows that Tibet remains graded 1 out of 100 in the global freedom ranking, placing Tibet as one of the worst countries in the world, along with Syria (Repucci, 2022). Similarly, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China has acknowledged that Tibet continues to be the most attractive and tightly controlled region in China and finds in 2021 coverage is becoming increasingly harder to find (Foreign Correspondents'Club Of China, 2021). The Human Rights Watch 2022 report states that China maintains severe restrictions on freedom of religion, expression, movement and assembly in Tibet. The Amnesty International 2018 report also has observed that people in Tibet remain subject to facing discrimination and restrictions on their rights to freedom of faith and religion, opinion and expression, and the rights of peaceful assembly and association (Dziedzic, 2013). These reports were all blocked from entering China and the occupied territories, faced censorship, blockage and misinterpretation from some giant social media and media outlets, and were ignored or overlooked by some states based on the vulnerability status of the Tibetan people.

In conclusion, they extend coercive power and censorship, monitor and silence any opposition, domestically control media and information, while buying western journalists and using "western media" and social networks internationally to manipulate information, suppress any growing dissent, develop propaganda activities by brainwashing the population, crush any elites and demonise their supporters, convert populism and nationalism, manipulate public opinions, play the emergency cards and advance and influence the socio-economic and political model. Equipped with political paraphernalia, using the terms divisive, sensitive and other popular terms in current international affairs to brand all apparent opponents as threats or harm, funding domestic academics and pro-China commentators and speakers, employing selected historical events and rewriting them as victories versus victims to make all the above seem reasonable and legitimate (Lim, 2018).

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