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BAYBRIDGE

ANATOMY OF A CHINESE INFORMATION INFLUENCE ECOSYSTEM

Tadaweb and Paul Charon



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ABOUT IRSEM

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- The Intelligence, Strategy foresight and Influence department conducts research on the strategic function of “knowledge and anticipation” that has been highlighted by the French White Paper on Defense since 2008. The primary ambition of this program is thus to contribute to a more detailed understanding of intelligence in its broadest sense (i.e., as information, process, activity and organization); the second is to contribute to the consolidation of analytical approaches, particularly in terms of anticipation; the third is to work on the different aspects of so-called “hybrid” warfare, in particular influence and the manipulation of information. This field underscores the hybrid character of IRSEM by circulating papers and reports that are at the intersection of academic research and open source intelligence analysis.



Tadaweb is an operating system for open-source intelligence (OSINT) and publicly available information (PAI). It provides a secure environment for web-based investigations across many sources and to monitor topics of interest. Every process is initiated by users, whose capabilities are extended through automation, AI-powered workflows, and integrated sources. This extensible and fully integrated platform is trusted by government and corporate analysts and OSINT operators to structure and strengthen their investigative methodologies and collection processes. In addition to this, users benefit from embedded expertise provided by Tadaweb's in-house OSINT specialists, with backgrounds in public safety, national security, defence, and corporate intelligence.

Paul Charon is director of the Influence and Intelligence department at IRSEM (Institute for Strategic Research of the Military Academy). He holds a PhD in Political Studies from EHESS (School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) and has also received training in Chinese language and civilization (BLCU - Denis Diderot), rhetoric (Harvard - Nanterre), and modern literature (Nanterre). Prior to joining IRSEM, he worked for over a decade as an intelligence analyst and then as a strategic foresight advisor within the Ministry of Armed Forces. He was an associate researcher at the Franco-Chinese Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities at Tsinghua University in Beijing. His research focuses primarily on state propaganda and informational strategies, particularly those of the People's Republic of China. He is specifically interested in the proliferation of narrative forms in state propaganda. Another aspect of his research is devoted to China's intelligence activities. On a theoretical level, he works on hybridizing tools from narratology and literary theory with those of strategic studies and international relations. Paul Charon is a member of the Francophone Network of Narratologists (RéNaF). He recently published, with Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer, *Chinese Influence Operations. A Machiavellian Moment* (IRSEM, 2021, <https://www.irsem.fr/report.html>) and *Les Mondes du renseignement. Approches, acteurs, enjeux* (PUF, 2024).

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WORKING METHODOLOGY

This report demonstrates how the Tadaweb Research Team, leveraging its operating system for OSINT and PAI, collaborated with Dr. Paul Charon to examine an emerging threat: foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).

The investigation drew on previous findings and reports – from Google’s Threat Analysis Group and the Citizen Lab in particular – to assess the depth and reach of this influence operation now referred to as *BayBridge*. Tadaweb’s initial observation suggested the network was broader than expected, involving multiple actors with potential links to both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Russia.

These early findings were presented by Tadaweb to Dr. Paul Charon, who played a central role in shaping the methodologies and framing this joint report. His direct contributions included: 1) providing precise knowledge of China’s influence operations and political and administrative dynamics as well as of the Chinese language to support the overall analytical and collection effort; 2) challenging findings and OSINT processes to test their robustness, and 3) contributing conceptual frameworks and most analytical inputs for the narrative and discourse analysis.

The Tadaweb platform was the primary collection and investigation tool. To map the technical network, previously identified websites were accessed through Tadaweb’s managed attribution browser, ensuring safe evidence collection without detection. Using embedded investigation workflows, the Tadaweb Research Team uncovered additional links among entities and iterated this process until a clear picture of BayBridge’s technical backbone emerged. Through this secured environment, the team then proceeded to assign potential authorship, collecting evidence from premium and Chinese online resources. This resulted in a clear mapping of the political, business, and academic environments connected to key entities within BayBridge. In close coordination with Dr. Charon, findings were continuously challenged and redirected toward new sources, partially exposing ties to both CCP and Russian actors. Finally, once a clearer understanding of BayBridge’s structure and ownership had been established, selected websites were placed under constant monitoring to capture evolving content. This enabled Dr. Charon to

conduct a thorough narrative and discourse analysis of material targeting French audiences, while the Tadaweb Research Team worked to identify the origins of that content.

This joint methodology enabled Dr. Paul Charon and Tadaweb to examine new facets of an influence operation. Its replicability makes it suitable for the analysis of other partially exposed or concealed FIMI activities, as well as broader use cases, by integrating academic research, subject-matter expertise, and advanced investigative methods.

INTRODUCTION

Online disinformation has become a major challenge for our democratic societies. The development of social networks and the acceleration of information dissemination have created new opportunities for malicious actors seeking to manipulate opinions and interfere in political processes. While Russia's information warfare tactics have dominated public discourse and scholarly attention, other state actors have been developing their own distinct approaches to informational influence. The People's Republic of China, though less frequently examined through the lens of active disinformation campaigns, has nonetheless constructed sophisticated mechanisms for shaping international narratives. These operations, distinguished by their commercial camouflage and bureaucratic complexity, exploit digital infrastructures in ways that diverge markedly from the more direct propaganda models typically associated with authoritarian information manipulation. Yet this very complexity, as our investigation reveals, generates its own vulnerabilities and contradictions. Since 2022, a series of investigations has uncovered a vast ecosystem of inauthentic websites, linked to Chinese companies officially offering digital marketing and public relations services and, in reality, also serving to disseminate content aligned with Beijing's positions to foreign audiences. These works, conducted successively by different research teams, have gradually revealed the scope, *modi operandi*, and interconnections of this network dubbed 'GLASSBRIDGE'. Our analysis, however, reveals that the network's operational center of gravity lies not in Shanghai alone, but also within the Greater Bay Area—that ambitious megalopolitan project encompassing Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau. The key stakeholders, their academic affiliations, and their business activities are deeply embedded in this region's unique political-economic ecosystem, where the boundaries between public mission and private enrichment prove remarkably porous. We therefore propose the designation 'BAYBRIDGE' to more accurately reflect both the geographic anchoring and the structural ambiguities that characterize this infrastructure. The progressive unveiling of this infrastructure's technical architecture and operational dysfunction requires careful examination of how successive investigations have contributed to our understanding of this paradoxical system.

The first landmark study on the subject was published in August 2022 by Mandiant, a renowned American cybersecurity company now part of Google Cloud. The result of a long investigation about ‘HaiEnergy operation’, this report¹ describes in detail how a Chinese public relations company based in Shanghai, Shanghai Haixun Technology Co. Ltd, used its digital infrastructure (servers, domain names, websites), normally devoted to marketing and press release dissemination, to host and disseminate pro-Chinese government propaganda, particularly targeting American audiences. The Mandiant team identified a network of at least 72 seemingly independent websites, presenting themselves as legitimate media covering news from different countries, but in reality all linked to Haixun and publishing content in 11 languages promoting Chinese interests while criticizing the United States and their allies. This foundational discovery highlighted a new mode of state disinformation, relying on private actors and multiple fake media outlets to reach diverse audiences.

The following year, in November 2023, a new investigation conducted by the NCSC Joint Analysis Team,² including the Korean National Intelligence Service (NIS), considerably enriched knowledge about this network. Beyond confirming Haixun’s involvement, the NCSC report revealed the central role of another Chinese digital marketing company, Shenzhen Haimai Yunxiang Media Co. Ltd, and especially the use of newswires as the backbone of the disinformation infrastructure. Korean analysts were able to trace the path of propaganda content, injected at the source into these newswires by Haimai, then automatically picked up and disseminated on a large scale by an entire network of websites posing as legitimate media in different countries, particularly in Southeast Asia. This ‘syndication’ mechanism allows rapid and massive amplification of messages while obscuring their real origin. The NCSC thus brought to light a particularly sophisticated system, combining technical content generation and viral dissemination capability.

1 Ryan Serabian and Daniel Kapellmann Zafra, ‘Pro-PRC “HaiEnergy” Information Operations Campaign Leverages Infrastructure from Public Relations Firm to Disseminate Content on Inauthentic News Sites’, *Mandiant*, August 4, 2022. <https://cloud.google.com/blog/topics/threat-intelligence/pro-prc-information-operations-campaign-haienergy?hl=en>

2 S2W Blog. ‘National Cyber Security Center Has Detected Influence Operations Exploiting China’s Disguised.’ Medium, April 10, 2025. <https://medium.com/s2wblog/national-cyber-security-center-has-detected-influence-operations-exploiting-chinas-disguised-d7eb46d0d8a5>

In February 2024, the understanding of this network's operation and purposes reached a new level thanks to a thorough study³ published by The Citizen Lab, a research laboratory at the University of Toronto. Naming the operation 'PAPERWALL', researchers focused their efforts on the Haimai company and managed to precisely map a set of more than 100 fake news sites active in thirty countries, including about ten specifically targeting French-speaking audiences. Through advanced content analysis, the study reveals a balanced mix of legitimate information, often directly copied from real local media, and elements of pro-Chinese propaganda or pure information manipulation (conspiracy theories, *ad hominem* attacks against dissidents, etc.). The report emphasises that this approach makes it possible to build both credibility and a substantial audience while propagating biased narratives, and remaining largely under the radar of the public and authorities. Citizen Lab thus highlights the formidable effectiveness of this mechanism combining familiarity and manipulation.

A few months later, in October 2024, a new milestone was set by the publication of a study⁴ by two researchers from Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, who examined the specific targeting of Southeast Asia. Their main contribution was revealing the technical and editorial interconnections between the 'Haixun network' and another network, called 'SeaPR Network', also dedicated to disseminating manipulated information to Southeast Asian public opinion under the guise of innocuous content. Their analysis emphasizes the democratic risks associated with the weaponisation of traditional marketing companies for information manipulation purposes. By imitating familiar local media and mixing authentic and deceptive content, these operations can mislead the public, distort political debate, and pollute a country's information ecosystem, without even the usual safeguards (media literacy, fact-checking, etc.) being able to effectively counteract them.

3 Alberto Fittarelli, 'Paperwall: Chinese Websites Posing as Local News Outlets with Pro-Beijing Content.' Citizen Lab, February 2024. <https://citizenlab.ca/2024/02/paperwall-chinese-websites-posing-as-local-news-outlets-with-pro-beijing-content/#lt1mh5mnitfc>.

4 Ang, Benjamin and Dymple, Leong. 'Networks of Inauthentic News Sites: The Risk of Hostile Information Campaigns in SG.' RSIS, October 2024. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/PR241025_Networks-of-Inauthentic-News-Sites-the-Risk-of-Hostile-Information-Campaigns-in-SG.pdf.

Finally, in November 2024, a blog post published by Google’s Threat Analysis Group (TAG) provided an overview of the ‘GLASSBRIDGE’ nebula,⁵ combining previous work with their own analyses. According to TAG experts, the various Chinese entities involved (Haixun, Haimai, but also two previously unknown organizations named ‘DURINBRIDGE’ and ‘Shenzhen Bowen Media’) would actually all be linked together, coordinated, and taking instructions from a single decision-maker, whose identity remains unknown at this stage. The report estimates that at least hundreds of fake news sites, in dozens of languages and countries, would thus be centrally controlled to disseminate discourse aligned with Beijing’s interests. The main contribution of the TAG study is thus documenting the relative centralization of this apparently scattered system and its ability to deploy massive and customised influence campaigns depending on target audiences.

The progressive unveiling of the GLASSBRIDGE infrastructure by experts since 2022 reveals the existence of an information manipulation ecosystem of unprecedented scope and sophistication. However, despite advances made possible by these works, our understanding of this nebula remains partial. The involvement of multiple private actors in creating inauthentic media websites allows obscuring trails, exploiting vulnerabilities in digital spaces, and reaching varied targets on a large scale, according to a flexible and poorly traceable model that evokes a particularly advanced form of ‘outsourcing’ of Chinese state influence, similar to what the Anxun (I-Soon) leak revealed about cyber operations.⁶

The scope of this network, the similarity of disseminated content despite local adaptations, and the numerous revealed interactions between entities suggest strong capabilities for penetrating foreign audiences. While Google TAG’s assessment points toward a relative centralization of this seemingly dispersed system, our research suggests a more nuanced operational reality within the GLASSBRIDGE ecosystem. Evidence indicates that although strategic coordination may exist at higher levels, implementation frequently exhibits considerable

5 Vanessa Molter, “Glassbridge: Pro-PRC Influence Operations.” *Google Cloud Blog*, April 2025. <https://cloud.google.com/blog/topics/threat-intelligence/glassbridge-pro-prc-influence-operations?hl=en>.

6 Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, ‘The I-Soon-Leaks: Industrialization of Cyber Espionage,’ *BfV Cyber Insight*, Cologne, August 8, 2024. https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/EN/cyber/2024-08-08-bfv-cyber-insight-part-2.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5

decentralization. Numerous information operations appear to be executed exclusively by local actors who maintain significant autonomy. This operational flexibility further complicates analysis, as many grey areas persist regarding the identity of the commissioners, the actors involved, the exact distribution of roles, or the degree of coordination of this tentacular system.

More broadly, GLASSBRIDGE illustrates the immense challenges posed to democracies by these new disinformation strategies that operate in regulatory blind spots, blur the lines between legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, and rely on the private sector to multiply their impact while staying under the radar. Faced with these diffuse, polymorphous, and poorly traceable threats, it is crucial to continue research efforts to decrypt the workings of these campaigns.

This is precisely the ambition of the present study, which intends to make a contribution to understanding this complex ecosystem that we now label “Baybridge”, by articulating three objectives: 1) propose as exhaustive a mapping as possible of the network, completing and coherently assembling elements revealed by previous investigations; 2) present new evidence attesting to Chinese state actors’ involvement in piloting this infrastructure; 3) deeply analyse disseminated content to decrypt deployed discourse strategies and targeting methods. Through these new insights, this work hopes to promote a finer understanding of this phenomenon and lay an additional brick in the still-under-construction edifice of the fight against online information manipulation.

From GLASSBRIDGE to BAYBRIDGE

The Progressive Unveiling of a Chinese Influence Infrastructure

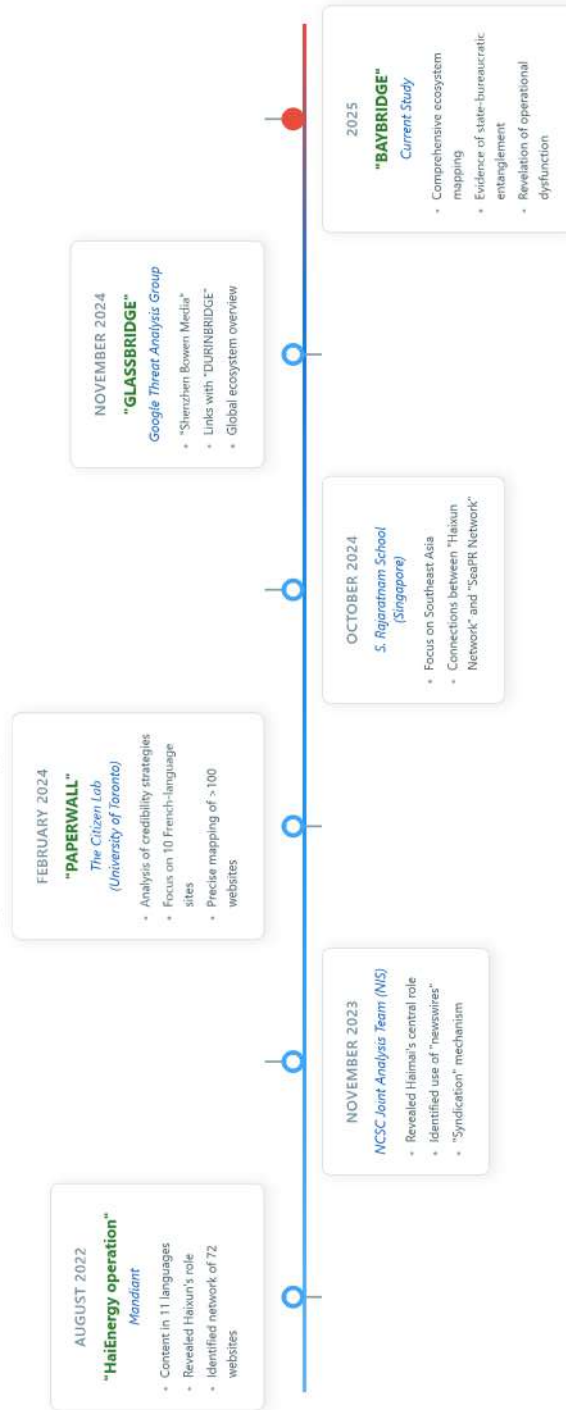


Figure 1

HOW: MAPPING THE NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

This part examines how two digital marketing companies—Shenzhen Haimai Yunxiang Media Co., Ltd. (Haimai) and Shanghai Haixun Technology Co., Ltd (Haixun)—use their infrastructure to target foreign audiences with seemingly tailored messages. By meticulously uncovering the technical, ownership and commercial links in the global network, we observe not only similar ways of working, but also shared pieces of infrastructure and services.

At several steps along the customer journey, we find that some common resources are either tied to Haixun—the commercial offers aimed at foreign audiences in particular are hosted by one of its directly owned services; or to Haimai, principally some of the content distribution sites (source sites) that feed the end sites are directly or indirectly tied to the company. In addition, we show that although Haimai and Haixun are at the heart of the system, other companies from all over China seem to be using the network’s resources and offerings for their own profit.

MARKETING FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

Traditionally, companies use digital marketing methods for various purposes: Search Engine Optimization, advertisement on social media, and, at times, direct advertising on specific websites (media websites, high-traffic websites, etc.). Digital marketing firms provide their customers with tools and techniques to reach broader audiences and, eventually, increase their market share. This tradecraft can thus be appealing to companies but also to political actors looking to push forward specific messages to target audiences. They might want to boost a candidate or party during an electoral campaign¹ or, when looking more specifically at international relations, to frame a foreign policy issue to suit their interests.²

To do so, they need to rely on intermediaries that can provide them with a solid understanding of the local political dynamics and information ecosystem. This is typically something that the entities identified

1 Jeff Chester and Kathryn C. Montgomery, ‘The Role of Digital Marketing in Political Campaigns,’ *Internet Policy Review* 6, no. 4 (December 31, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.14763/2017.4.773>.

2 Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen Jr, ‘Framing, Marketing, and Media Effects on Foreign Policy Decision Making.’ Chapter. In *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, 149–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

in this operation do (see Figure 2).³ Haimai, for example, provides the following description of the French media audience: '[...] Today, more and more French people want to get the latest developments from all over the world. Therefore, news about the future direction of France has received increasing attention.'⁴ Even though these descriptions tend to overly generalize the dynamics at stake within foreign countries, this shows that there is at least a will to tailor content for specific audiences.

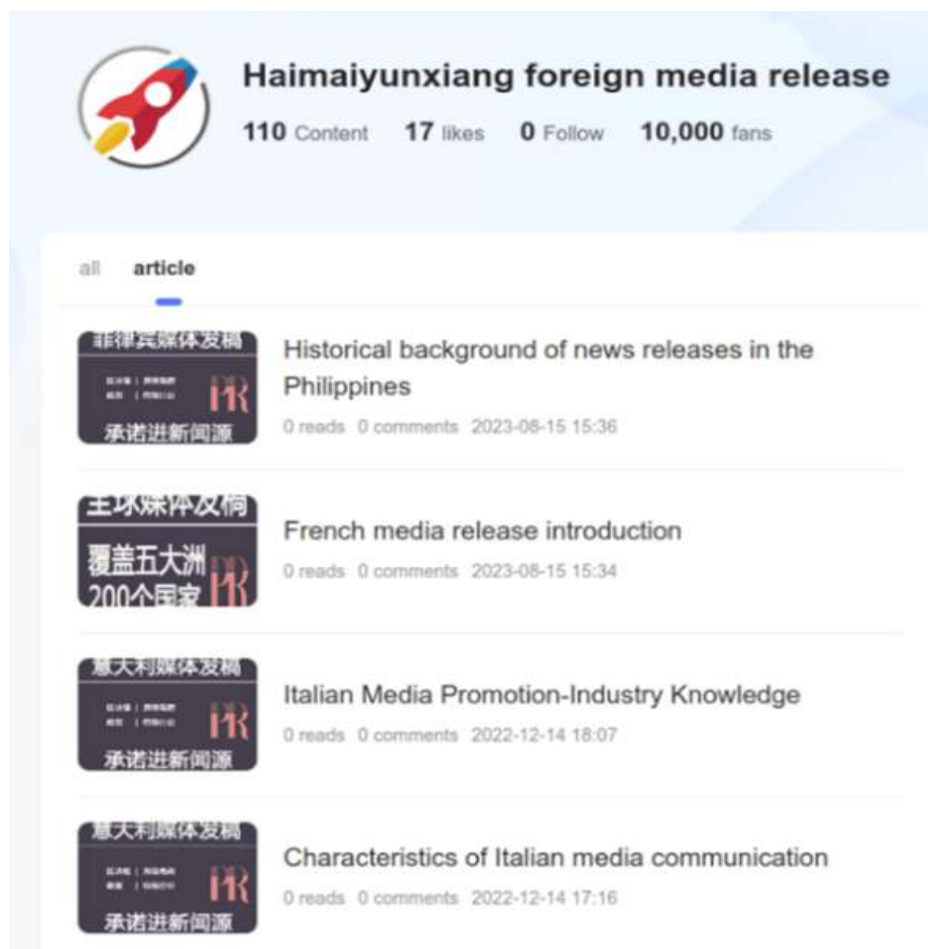


Figure 2 – Haimai details on foreign media ecosystems (Baidu – translated)

3 Baidu Baijiahao, « 海卖云享国外媒体发稿 » (Haimai Yunxiang foreign media release), accessed June 12, 2025. https://author.baidu.com/home?from=bjh_article&app_id=1743120150870147

4 Baidu Baijiahao, ‘法国媒体发布介绍’ (French Media Release Introduction), 海卖云享国外媒体发稿 (Haimaiyunxiang Foreign Media Release), August 15, 2023, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1774279612845909938>

THE NETWORK'S ENTITIES

Even though the agenda of a state might differ from that of a company, there can be an overlap in the services both actors seek. The processes and actors involved can thus be quite similar and therefore deserve close examination. When dissecting the processes at stake in the present operation, we identified five main components that subsequently allowed us to establish connections between the multiple legal entities involved:

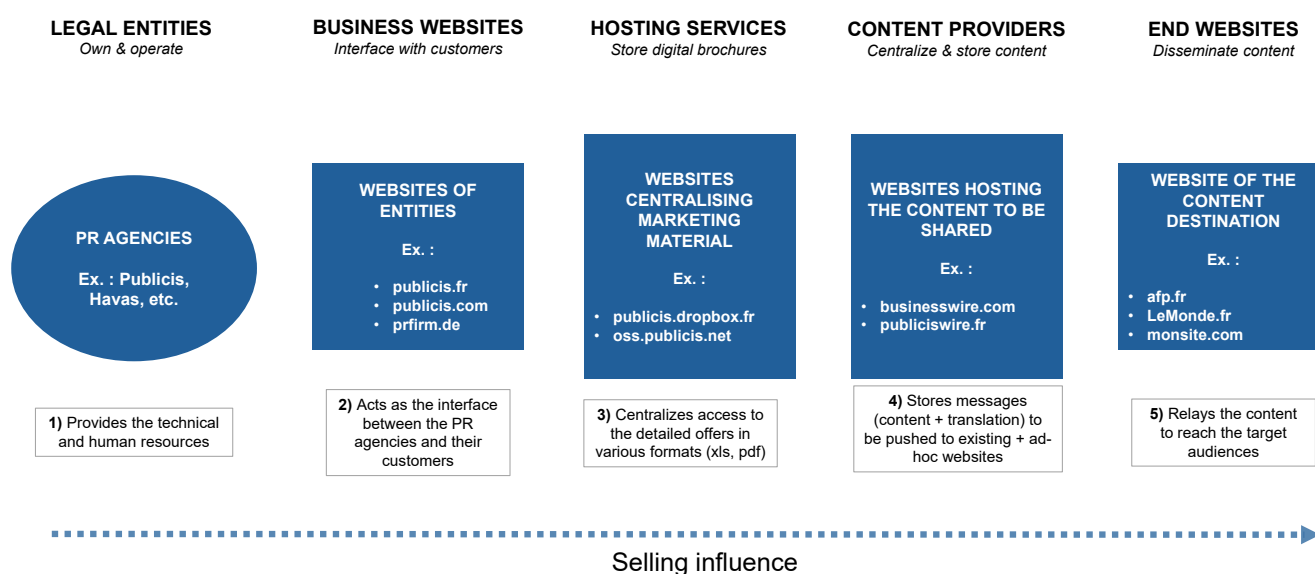


Figure 3

Understanding the customer journey, i.e., the steps that an actor must follow to craft and disseminate a message, allows us to precisely map out the role and relative positioning of each entity within this influence operation.

1. The **legal entities** (PR Agencies), which constitute the cornerstone of the operation at stake, are Chinese firms such as Haixun and Haimai: they are legally registered in China and have, as such, public shareholding and governing structures. They seek to generate revenues through various marketing/communication services. To this end, they operate an infrastructure to disseminate messages with advertising purposes.

2. They each operate multiple **business websites**, where they display their business proposal; 'achieve your marketing goals at a fraction of the cost' (Haixun, on haipress[.]com) and 'increase the value of your brand' (Haimai, on hmedium[.]com). Among the multiple business

websites these legal entities operate, some are designed for a Chinese customer base (in Chinese), while others are aimed at an international customer base (in English).

3. On these websites, beyond the business proposal, detailed commercial brochures are made available for customers. These latter can precisely identify the actual capabilities of the agency: where it is able to push content, for which price, for how long, etc. This detailed offer is not hosted on the business website *per se*, but **on hosting services** ('external webpages displaying these Excel files or PDF). These external webpages, however, are not separated from the overall infrastructure.

4. Because their end goal is to influence an audience, these firms use **content providers** to store the content. These multiple websites are presented as a classical newswire service, distributing press releases and advertisements.

5. Finally, to fulfill their business proposal, the legal entities claim to be able to push content to tens of thousands of **end websites**: pre-existing, official ones (traditional online media, press agencies) but also ad-hoc websites, created in bulk by these entities to host only their customers' content.

HOW DOES THE INFRASTRUCTURE OPERATE?

The multiple firms constituting the network are intertwined in several ways: technical, legal, and commercial. Most significantly, **each identified legal entity shares at least two out of three links type with at least another entity in the network**. Even though these entities seem to have distinct governance and capital structures, they do share at least parts of their infrastructure for a common purpose.

The most recurrent link is the commercial one: Haimai, Haixun, but also multiple additional digital marketing firms, including Guangzhou Huya Culture Communication Co., Ltd (广州虎牙文化传播有限公司) and Guangzhou Yulongwu Cultural Communication Co., Ltd (广州鱼龙舞文化传播有限公司). These **sometimes offer to promote content on the exact same end websites, sometimes using the same source websites**. When this is the case, they sell it under the exact same packages names. For example, Haimai and Haixun share 24% of their commercial offers directed at a foreign audience (outside of mainland China). In more concrete terms, one can buy the exact same service – content hosted on website X, then disseminated to websites Y and Z – to multiple Chinese companies.

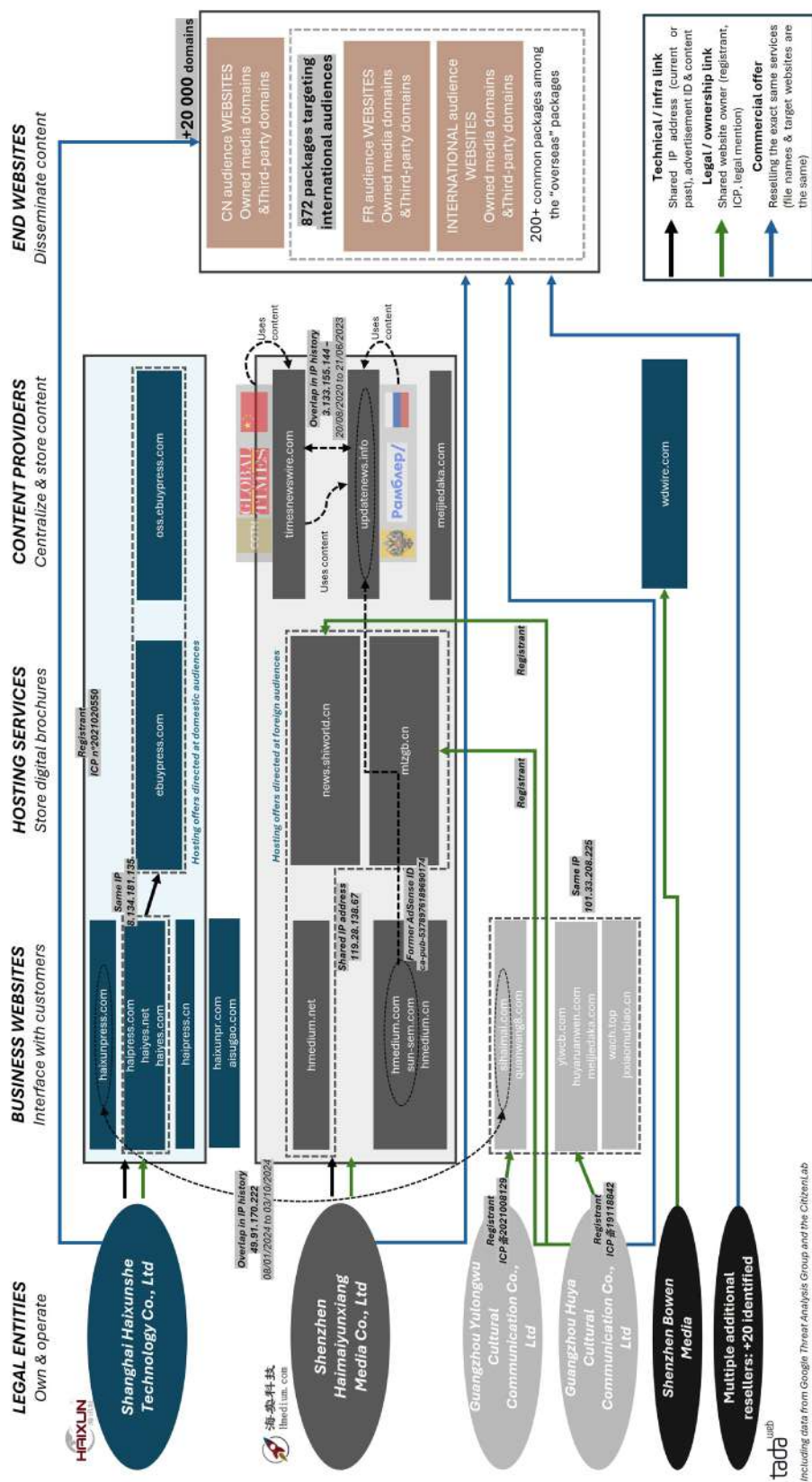


Figure 4

1. Technical links: shared technical resources

Technical links are all the connections that exist between two or more entities that are directly tied to a physical infrastructure. This typically implies that these entities share a server (a common current or past IP address), or an advertisement ID (AdSense for example). The shared servers can be public—hosting hundreds or thousands of websites that are not related to the entities’ operations; or private—when only websites used in the entities’ operations are hosted on a specific IP address. The list of IP addresses linked to some of the operation’s key domains is available [here](#).

Notably: there have been existing—though inconclusive—infrastructure links between Haimai and Haixun. Sihaimai[.]com, a domain tied to an infrastructure directly providing hosting and dissemination services to Haimai, and haixunpress[.]com, one of Haixun’s main business websites, have shared the IP 47.91.170.222 from January to October 2024. In addition, as displayed in Figure 5, hmedium[.]com (far-left of the graph) is indirectly tied to these entities.

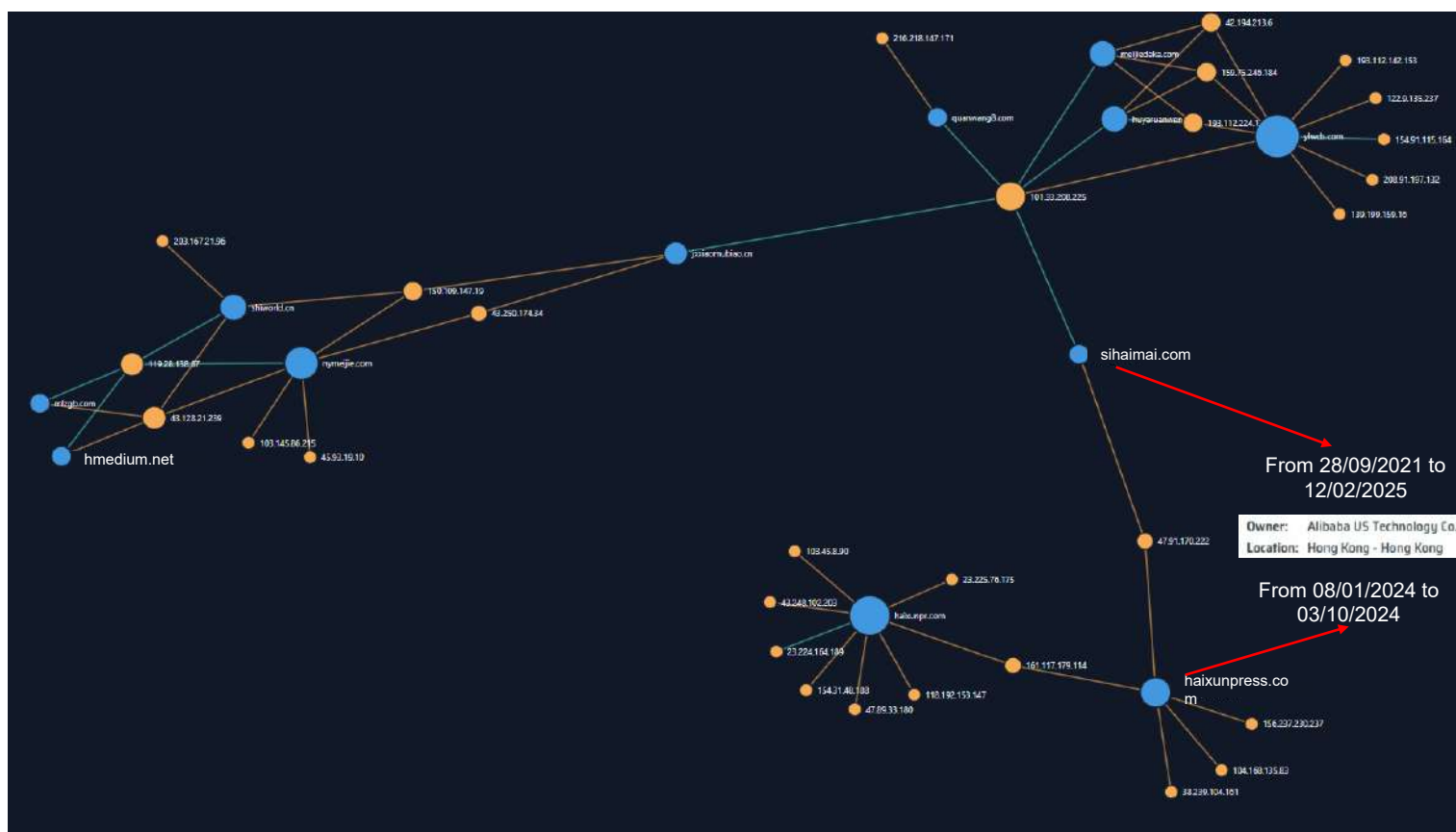


Figure 5 – Technical links between some entities

2. Ownership links: beneficiary owner or registrant

Ownership links are the legal connections between a legal entity and one or several cyber entities that it operates (mainly domains and servers): the legal entity directly registered a domain (registrant⁵) or is mentioned on a website as the legal entity responsible for the content. Indirect ownership links can be established between a legal entity and a domain through specific selectors (contact information, physical addresses, advertisement ID, etc.).

Notably: Hosting websites (such as shiworld[.]cn or mlzgb[.]cn) or content providers (such as ebuypress[.]com, timesnewswire[.]com, or meijiedaka[.]com) allowed us to identify additional interconnections within the network's entities: Haimai uses content from websites (such as timesnewswire[.]com⁶) that directly provide content to some of Haixun's end websites.

Additionally, two legal entities (Guangzhou Huya Cultural Communication Co., Ltd and Guangzhou Yulongwu Cultural Communication Co., Ltd.) have also been identified as directly owning websites providing hosting and content to Haimai's end websites – some of these websites are even hosted on a private server with one of Haimai's business websites.

TADAWEB INVESTIGATION RESULTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domain shiworld.cn Datasets & Archives Certificate Informati... Dehashed Domain R... Shodan Domain Rec... ViewDNS Domain IP ... ViewDNS Domain Re... WhoisXML Website R... Whoxy Domain Recor... mlzgb.cn Datasets & Archives Certificate Informati... Dehashed Domain R... Shodan Domain Rec... ViewDNS Domain IP ... ViewDNS Domain Re... WhoisXML Website ... Whoxy Domain Recor... 	<p>WhoisXML Website Records</p> <p>Retrieve WHOIS records [such as the registrant, used IPs, and other technical topics] from WhoisXML using a domain name or an IP address. e.g. perdu.com</p> <p>Registrant</p> <p>Registrant Name 广州虎牙文化传播有限公司</p> <p>Registrant Email 364300653@qq.com</p> <p>Information</p> <p>Domain Name mlzgb.cn</p> <p>Registrar Name 阿里巴巴云计算（北京）有限公司</p> <p>List IPs 119.28.138.67</p> <p>Contact Email 364300653@qq.com</p> <p>Translated from Chinese Simplified using microsoft</p> <p>Registrant</p> <p>Registrant Name Guangzhou Huya Culture Communication Co., Ltd</p> <p>Registrant Email 364300653@qq.com</p> <p>Information</p> <p>Domain Name mlzgb.cn</p> <p>Registrar Name Alibaba Cloud Computing (Beijing) Co., Ltd</p> <p>List IPs 119.28.138.67</p> <p>Contact Email 364300653@qq.com</p>

Figure 6 – Tadaweb's Domain investigation results

5 The Registrant is the legal or natural person responsible for registering a domain name with the competent authority. In China, companies are assigned an ICP (Internet Content Provider Number) associated with the websites they own. This can be checked at beianx.cn.

6 Even though there is no direct proof that Haimai operates TimesNewsWire[.]com, there are some suspicious ties between the two entities: hmedium[.]com shared an adsense ID (as demonstrated by the CitizenLab) with updatenews[.]info, which is a clear indication of direct operation of the website. This latter, in turn, shared at some point an IP address with timesnewswire[.]com (3.133.155.144 from 20/08/2020 to 21/06/2023) and directly re-uses content from timesnewswire[.]com in a category labelled "TimesNewsWire".

3. Commercial offer: mutual content/end-websites

When two entities offer the same service – disseminating content from and/or to the exact same websites – they are considered to have commercial ties. Although we could not uncover formal reselling/sub-contracting agreements, this constitutes one of the defining characteristics of this infrastructure.

Notably: the offers from Haixun and Haimai are predominantly designed to reach a Chinese audience (the vast majority of [more than 20,000 media outlets](#)). The ‘overseas’ offers, designed to reach an international audience, only account for 3% of Haimai’s total number of packages and less than 2% of Haixun’s. Interestingly, however, analysis of the packages’ nomenclature and specifications reveals a 24% overlap of the offerings: Haimai and Haixun provide 104 mutual packages (exact same names and content) to target specific foreign audiences, as shown below (full “overseas” list available [here](#)):

Country	Count	Common packages/media names (EN) – examples
United States	10	Associated Press, U.S. News Headlines, California Herald, South Florida Reporter, American Reporter
United Kingdom	6	UK Direct, The Guardian, European and American News H1 Edition, Europe and America News H2 Edition
Taiwan	6	Taiwan Top Pick, Taiwan Newspaper Single Issue, Taiwan Bilingual Package, Taiwan Reporter Direct
Japan	5	Japan 5CH Reporter Forum, Japan Premium Direct, Japan Bilingual Package, Japan Bilingual Package, Japan Direct
South Korea	5	Korea Premium, Korea Direct Regular Edition, Korea Premium+, Korea Direct Enhanced, Korea Random
South Africa	4	SavannaNews, South African Entertainment Newspaper, The South African, South Africa Direct
Hong Kong	4	Hong Kong Bilingual Package, Hong Kong Direct Mail, Hong Kong, MSN Hong Kong
Southeast Asia	4	Southeast Asia Mini Station, Southeast Asia Premium Media, Southeast Asia Multilingual Package, Southeast Asia Multilingual Small Package
France	3	AFP Highlights, France, French direct mail
Germany	3	AFP German, German direct mail, Europe and America News H1 Edition
Italy	3	Italy, Italy Direct, Ansa Society Package
Spain	3	Spain Direct, Iberian News Agency Package, Spain Direct Mail

These packages contain one or more websites, either third-party or created by the network to disseminate its content. The latter are most likely generated and populated automatically – they sometimes exhibit similar design characteristics and often publish content synchronously.

Jeecg-Boot: an open-source service automating website creation & content dissemination

Screening Haimai's past digital footprint helped us identify the first website the legal entity registered, [globerelease\[.\]com](http://www.globerelease.com), displaying quite intriguing generic content distributed on many other companies' websites.⁷ Beyond content, the architecture of those websites seems to be generated by the same open-source platform, Jeecg-Boot. This low code platform⁸, founded by Zhang Daihao, combines several technologies to generate code quickly and provide off-the-shelf products, such as websites. Using this kind of technology especially illustrates the limited resources invested by Haimai at the very beginning of its activity, when it comes to copywriting and website infrastructure management. Haimai⁹ exploiting this kind of easy-to-use technology demonstrates how effortlessly legal entities can create a myriad of end-websites to bolster specific narratives.

⁷ 'Shenzhen Haimaiyunxiang Media Co., Ltd. implements the deployment of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on deepening the reform of state-owned enterprises, and in accordance with the relevant requirements of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission to make enterprises bigger and stronger, will continue to promote enterprise reform, further adjust and optimize the industrial structure, rationally allocate resources, enhance core competitiveness, comprehensively improve corporate quality, face both the international and domestic markets, and strive towards more ambitious goals', Globe Release, accessed March 25, 2025. <http://www.globerelease.com>

⁸ [JeecgBoot/README-EN.md at master · jeecgboot/JeecgBoot · GitHub](https://github.com/jeecgboot/JeecgBoot)

⁹ Globe Release Login page, archived June 20, 2020 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20200620064410/http://www.globerelease.com/user/login?redirect=%2F>

Focus: Expanding the network: which companies resell the packages?

Haimai and Haixun display on their websites a commercial offer to target specific audiences. Multiple filters can be applied to include price, target locations, target news sections/thematic, media type, etc. Once the filters are applied, two types of results are available: single third-party media websites, usually quite well-known (AFP, *The Guardian*, CCTV, for example), or ‘packages’, containing multiple websites usually centered around a target audience (ex: French people).

Filter Category	Selected Option	Available Options
Product Type	Unlimited	Unlimited, Foreign Single, Overseas Package, translate, Chinese Media, other
Country	Europe	Unlimited, worldwide, Asia Pacific, North America, Europe, Europe and America, Latin America, Sweden, Russia, Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Austria, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, Romania, Poland, South Asia, Ecuador, Czech Republic, Guatemala, Ukraine, Paraguay, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Egypt, Libya, Cambodia, costa rica, Algeria, Ethiopia, Mauritania
Language classification	French	Unlimited, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, English, German, Russian, Italian, French, Hebrew, Greek, Dutch, Swedish, Bulgarian, Estonian, Danish, Uzbek, Amharic
Image cost	Unlimited	Unlimited, free, TOLL, No image
Translation options	Unlimited	Unlimited, No translation, Package Translation

Figure 7 – ‘Overseas Media’ offer on haipress[.]com

Each item of the offer (single media website or package) is referenced in a database – available [here](#) for hmedium[.]net and [here](#) for haipress[.]com – and usually detailed either in a table (.xls or QQ sheet) or an external webpage, where all domains included in the package are shown. By examining packages’ hosting and names, we were able to link together multiple entities and enhance our understanding of this political marketing network.

In addition to this, by performing reverse searches on the packages’ names in search engines (Google, Yandex, Baidu) and technical search engines (Zoomeye,¹⁰ Shodan), we have been able to **identify dozens of additional business websites and associated legal entities** selling the exact same offers as Haimai and Haixun, such as Zhuhai Oudi Technology Co., Ltd. (珠海欧蒂科技有限公司), Zhengzhou Budao Information Technology Co., Ltd. (郑州布道信息技术有限公司办理) or Huilingsong Network Technology

¹⁰ See for example the ZoomEye search for websites containing the Chinese keywords for ‘Overseas Media Websites’, part of packages’ names found on Haimai and Haixun’s websites: <https://www.zoomeye.ai/searchResult?q=%22海外媒体网站%22>

Co. Ltd. (成都辉凌网络科技有限公司).¹¹ These companies, which often operate multiple business websites pointing towards some of the previously identified infrastructure's entities, spread across the whole Chinese territory.

11 '法国直投' (French Direct Investment), Google. <https://www.google.com/search?q=%22法国直投%22>

WHO IS BEHIND THIS? ATTEMPTING AN ATTRIBUTION

Having identified similarities in the way Haimai and Haixun disseminate commercial and political content online, this second part examines the structure and goals of these companies. We find consistency in their corporate structure as well as in the concurrent positions held by their key stakeholders. Indeed, at least one core member from each company can be linked to major official CCP propaganda entities, respectively at the Shenzhen municipal level¹ and at the Guangdong provincial level. Other entities (Guangzhou Yulongwu, Guangzhou Huya and Shenzhen Bowen Media) have not been investigated in as much depth as they appeared less central in Baybridge.

It is notable that both executive directors of these marketing-oriented entities, which have been accused of amplifying false narratives, are high-profile researchers in digital technology, and cognitive and social sciences. In the context of the Greater Bay area project, and more generally the CCP's political agenda to shape its reputation and promote Chinese interests overseas, these businesses potentially serve multiple purposes by facilitating Chinese public authorities' efforts to disseminate political content.

DEEP DIVE INTO THE HAIMAI NETWORK & STAKEHOLDERS

Uncovering the company structure

Chinese corporate repositories indicate that **Shenzhen Haimai Yunxiang Media Co. Ltd.** (深圳市海卖云享传媒有限公司 – whose business license is USCC 91440300MA5FWMCHX7) **was created in 2019 in the Longhua District of Shenzhen** (Guangdong Province) by Wu Yanni (吴燕妮) and Chen Jiang (陈江). Description of its activities includes 'computer software technology development, technical consulting; business information consulting; electronics technology research and development of business systems'. A commercial portfolio of their advertising services describes Haimai's activities as 'social media precision marketing' (社交媒体精准营销) in the field of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM), in addition to operating 'mainly overseas media releases, foreign media releases, overseas promotion'.²

Based on information gathered from Chinese corporate registries, a schematic overview of the corporate structure of Haimai Yunxiang is presented below:

¹ Shenzhen is a sub-provincial city (副省级城市).

² "深圳市海卖云享传媒有限公司" (Shenzhen Haimaiyunxiang Media Co., Ltd.), B2B Trade, December 2022. <https://wyjwyj.cn.b2b168.com/m/>

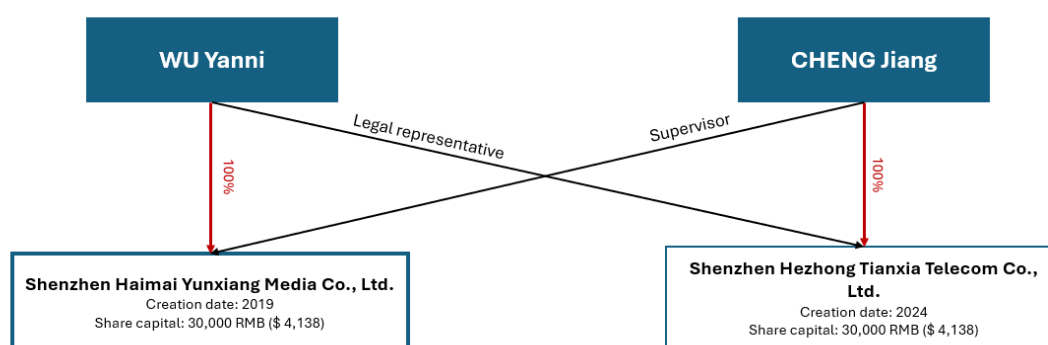


Figure 8 – Haimai Yunxiang Media & Shenzhen Hezhong Tianxia Telecom share-holding (red arrows)³

³ “深圳市合众天下电讯有限公司” (Shenzhen Hezhong Tianxia Telecom Co., Ltd.) keyword search, Qizhidao. <https://m.qizhidao.com/qiye/company/1a4a880c8b7abc44cb547a7c41863383.html>

Focus: Haimai's little sister?

Corporate records further reveal that Wu Yanni and Chen Jiang jointly established a second company on March 27, 2024, called **Shenzhen Hezhong Tianxia Telecom Co., Ltd.** (深圳市合众天下电讯有限公司 - USCC 91440300MADDYHT41H), under an inverted ownership scheme but with the same amount of capital (RMB 30,000). Except for sharing the same vague activities description as Haimai Yunxiang's, minimal information can be found about this company on official and corporate registries⁴ one year after its establishment. It is important to note, the company's registered address is on the 15th floor of Shenzhen's 'Armed Police Building' (or 'mansion', 武警大厦). The People's Armed Police (武警部队, PAP) is a major Chinese public security force of around 1.5 million personnel, comparable in function to *gendarmerie* in France and military police forces worldwide.⁵

Investigation corroborates the building's existence and its connection with the paramilitary force: photographic evidence documents a prominent PAP metal insignia displayed on the façade above the entrance, accompanied by red flags. Multiple additional indicators, both physical (metal signage) and digital, suggest the facility serves public functions concurrent with PAP operations. The building is also occasionally referenced under the alternative designation '*Shenzhen Community Grid Management Office*' (深圳市社区网格管理办公室).



Figure 9 – Entrance of the building⁶

4 “深圳市合众天下电讯有限公司” keyword search on Qizhidao. <https://m.qizhidao.com/qiye/company/1a4a880c8b7abc44cb547a7c41863383.html>.

5 For an in-depth account of the PAP's role in contemporary China, see: Joel Wuthnow, *'China's Other Army: The People's Armed Police in an Era of Reform'*. Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University Press, April 2019.

6 ChinaHoliday.com. ‘深圳警元酒店.’ *ChinaHoliday.com*, accessed April 10, 2025. https://www.chinaholiday.com/big5/city_374/76598.html.



These pieces of physical evidence of affiliation with the PAP were removed between 2017 and 2022. One hypothesis would indicate that this 'Armed Police Building' belonged to the PAP as part of a real estate commodity pool resembling that of the PLA; it could have subsequently lost this status around 2015–2017, consistent with the second divestiture plan of the PLA aiming to divert the army from doing business.⁷ Though nomenclature can vary, comparable facilities can be found throughout the country.

The hypothesis of joint activities between the People's Armed Police (or another public security actor) and private companies housed within this building can neither be definitively confirmed nor excluded.

Screening the shareholders: fifty shades of CCP

Of the two stakeholders behind Haimai and Hezhong, our investigation has led us to delve into the profile of Wu Yanni (吴燕妮), born in 1984. She presents a multi-faceted profile alternating between academic, public and corporate involvement.

Academic-public facet

Narrowing down the search to Shenzhen, we have identified the profile of an academic researcher at the Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences (SZAS), with a PhD in international law from the University of Macau, where she specialized in European Union law and China-EU relations, and was a former postdoctoral fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). As part of her curriculum at Macau University, she also engaged extensively with European academia through a visiting fellowship at the Max Planck Institute in 2010-2011⁸ and held the Jean

⁷ James Mulvenon, 'PLA Divestiture 2.0: We Mean It This Time', *China Leadership Monitor* no.50 (2016).

⁸ https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf1/mpil_taetigkeitsbericht_201011.pdf

Monnet chair in October 2011.⁹ Wu Yanni is currently serving as director of the Institute of Social Development of the SZAS and has specialized in international law, digital governance and data integration within the Greater Bay Area (粤港澳大湾区).¹⁰ Her latest publication, *Annual report on social governance and development of Shenzhen*, is an official white paper published in October 2024.¹¹



Figure 11 – Wu Yanni’s profile, Institute of Social Development, Shenzhen Academy of Social Science¹²

9 https://www.um.edu.mo/JeanMonnet_Action/seminar/seminars_plan_20112012.html

10 The Greater Bay Area designates a politico-economical project aiming for the integration of major cities from the Pearl River Delta, including Hong-Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, forming a well-developed and industrialized urban area comprising more than 80 million people.

11 http://www.pishu.com.cn/skwx_ps/ps/bookdetail?SiteID=14&ID=15681486#

12 http://www.szass.com/xgk/zjxz/shfzyjs/content/post_141785.html



Figure 12 – Wu Yanni participating in a round table at the Jean Monnet chair, titled ‘Studying the European Union, Studying the European way; in Europe, in China, elsewhere’ on October 28, 2011¹³

We further discover that, parallel to her academic career, Wu Yanni has been part of the Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Team (市委宣讲团) since at least 2022, after having served as lecturer at the Party School of Longgang District Committee of Shenzhen and been municipal councilor of the Shenzhen municipality.¹⁴ Along with local CCP officials from various levels with whom she regularly meets, this public position gives her opportunities to interact with companies – for instance by giving a lecture on how ‘Chinese-style modernization comprehensively promotes the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ to a major local fintech group.¹⁵ Engaging with large and often locally grown Shenzhen companies such as Gaoying International Financial

13 https://www.um.edu.mo/JeanMonnet_Action/seminar/seminars_plan_20112012.html

14 ‘深圳市委宣讲团和百姓宣讲团继续在全市展开宣讲’ (‘Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Team and People’s Propaganda Team continue to carry out propaganda in the city’), *Baidu Baijiahao*, published November 11, 2022. <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1749728177832203799>.

15 ‘深圳市直机关工委召开直属党组织书记第六组第五次联席会议’ (‘Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee held the fifth joint meeting of the sixth group of secretaries of directly affiliated party organizations’), published February 02, 2023, Shenzhen Municipal People’s Government Office. http://szjgdj.sz.gov.cn/home/zzjs/content/post_1105635.html

Technology Group, BYD¹⁶ or T C L Huaxing¹⁷, could thus serve two motives for the Propaganda Department: **first**, to lecture them about Party guidelines regarding ideology and business; **second**, to promote them on the domestic stage and overseas. It is likely that she also leverages these meetings to build business relationships and to network.



Figure 13 – Wu Yanni lecturing companies about business-related CCP guidelines and policies¹⁸

Corporate facet

In addition to this public facet of her career, the same Wu Yanni, member of the SZAS, appears to have quite a significant corporate involvement for a social scientist – described as ‘consultant’ activities in her official biography.¹⁹ Wu Yanni has indeed obtained a certificate for the ‘Listed Company Independent Director Qualification’ issued by the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (N°2,011,627,185) on November 25, 2020. Additionally, she served four years as the ‘independent director’ of

16 ‘高质量发展调研行 | 大写的牛！这家万亿市值车企技术鱼池里养着鲸与鲨’ (‘High-quality development research trip | Great! This trillion-dollar auto company has whales and sharks in its technology pond’), *Sohu News*, June 16, 2022. http://news.sohu.com/a/557796503_121010226

17 ‘TCL华星：让世界用上“中国屏”’ (‘TCL Huaxing: Let the world use “Chinese screens”’), *The Paper*, July 18, 2022. https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_19062161.

“高质量发展调研行 | 吴燕妮：从产品创新到技术创新 直至生态创新” (‘High-quality development research trip | Wu Yanni: From product innovation to technological innovation to ecological innovation’), *QQ News*, 深圳特区报 (Guangdong Shenzhen Special Zone Newspaper), July 18, 2022. https://news.qq.com/rain/a/20220718A02M3500?suid=&media_id=

18 “玉塘街道田寮社区开展理论宣讲暨新时代文明实践大讲堂系列讲座” (‘Tianliao Community of Yutang Subdistrict held a series of theoretical lectures and lectures on civilization in the new era’), November 25, 2023, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1783462327216809073>. See also: <http://appatt.sznews.com/qiaobao/files/szxw/News/202304/07/184839.html>

19 http://www.pishu.com.cn/skwx_ps/ps/bookdetail?SiteID=14&ID=15681486#.

printed-circuit boards company CNC Han's²⁰²¹ before her resignation in April 2024.²²



Figure 14 – CNC Han's official document, CITIC Securities, 2021²³

We are now certain that the researcher and CCP member Wu Yanni has at least one tangible involvement in corporate activities and an important advocacy role as part of her public activity with SZAS and the Municipal Propaganda Team.

At this stage, two profiles for Wu Yanni have been established: on the one hand, Wu Yanni is both a scholar with expertise in data governance and international law, a CCP member and a consultant who serves as

20 “大族数控” (Han's CNC), Sina, accessed March 23, 2025. http://money.finance.sina.com.cn/corp/view/vCI_CorpManagerInfo.php?stockid=301200&Pcode=30736739&Name=%CE%E2%D1%E0%C4%DD.

21 “关于深圳市大族数控科技股份有限公司首次公开发行股票并在创业板上市申请文件的审核问询函之回复报告” (Reply Report on the Review Inquiry Letter on the Application Documents for the Initial Public Offering and Listing on the Growth Enterprise Market of Shenzhen Han's CNC Technology Co., Ltd.), 深圳市大族数控科技股份有限公司 (Shenzhen CNC Han's Technology), September 2021. http://reportdocs.static.szse.cn/UpFiles/rasinfodisc1/202109/RAS_202109_00017C1177DB273FE41303AFFD6AC23F.pdf

22 “大族数控：2023年度独立董事述职报告（吴燕妮）”(Han's CNC: 2023 Annual Independent Director's Performance Report (Wu Yanni)), Sina, issued April 12, 2024. http://money.finance.sina.com.cn/corp/view/vCB_AllBulletinDetail.php?stockid=301200&id=9961939.

23 “关于深圳市大族数控科技股份有限公司首次公开发行股票并在创业板上市申请文件的审核问询函之回复报告”(Reply report on the review inquiry letter on the application documents for the initial public offering and listing on the Growth Enterprise Market of Shenzhen Han's CNC Technology Co., Ltd.), January 2, 2022. http://reportdocs.static.szse.cn/UpFiles/rasinfodisc1/202109/RAS_202109_00017C1177DB273FE41303AFFD6AC23F.pdf

director for a major industrial Shenzhen company. On the other hand, Haimai and Hezhong were created and managed by someone called Wu Yanni too. In parallel, many technology companies related to the same field of activity as Haimai have been registered or managed by a Wu Yanni. This cluster of clues leads us to think both profiles merge into the same person, for two specific reasons:

1. Taking advantage of her own knowledge and strategic position within the public-private ecosystem at SZAS and the Municipal Propaganda Team, Wu Yanni – the CCP member and scholar – has taken part in consulting activities for internationally active businesses from Shenzhen (e.g. CNC Han’s).
2. Since 2021, Wu Yanni – the CCP member and scholar – has also engaged in entrepreneurship by legally representing and/or managing companies whose activities in the field of information technology are directly linked to her Shenzhen Propaganda Team’s activities. Her companies’ infrastructure and activities, such as those of Haimai, could then directly be used for propaganda objectives rather than benign, commercial advertisement or SEO. For further exploration and to substantiate the ‘serial-entrepreneur’ hypothesis, we have [listed](#) several business records linked to a ‘Wu Yanni’ (吴燕妮) in the information technology sector, predominantly in Shenzhen.

SHANGHAI HAIXUNSHE: A DEEP-ROOTED AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS

An old and well-established PR network

As previously established, Haimai PR services along with other businesses are being hosted on servers and infrastructure built and registered by Shanghai Haixunshe Technology Co., Ltd. (海讯社文化传播有限公司 – USCC 91310114MA1GYCU293). This limited liability company registered in July 2021 in Shanghai claims to offer all stages of promotional services, from online advertising to broadcasting on billboards domestically and abroad. To understand how Haixun managed to conduct influence operations abroad and gain the trust of institutional actors, it seems *de rigueur* to retrace the company’s legal and technical roots.

The company is owned by Zhu Haisong (朱海松), a prominent Chinese specialist in communication theories, and Shanghai Yihuan Culture Communication (上海易欢文化传播有限公司 – USCC 91310116599763564F). Before Haixun’s registration, Zhu Haisong was

already offering most of Haixun's current communications services through Shanghai Yihuan, which he registered in April 2012. Its 'global media resources' and its dedicated cloud-hosted software were then advertised on easybase[.]cc to provide customers with both an 'intelligent content marketing platform' automating news release, and a monitoring software to analyze public opinion from print and social media.²⁴

It is worth noting that Haixun's current capabilities also evolved from Zhu Haisong's former digital achievements over the past fifteen years. In March 2007, he notably established a software company, Shanghai Yiji Network Technology (上海易基网络科技 – USCC 91310116798988045D). The company not only provides corporate clients with web marketing and public relations services, but it also registered and developed websites on behalf of its customers.

Today, it is Haixun's subsidiary, Changzhou Haixunshe Cultural Communication Co (常州海讯社文化传播有限公司 – USCC 91320402MA21MR4B0W) established in June 2020, which seems to be operationally leading Haixun's software development initiatives. Since 2022, the subsidiary has registered 17 distinct software applications, including the 'Haixunshe overseas social media resource management'. To automate content dissemination overseas, both in the press and on social media, the subsidiary notably gives access to a paid API: <https://api.haipress.com/api/media/resources>.²⁵ In April 2024, this subsidiary registered Haixun's proprietary 'Media Database' management system.

Given Zhu Haisong's expertise in digital marketing, his commercial positions in the field since at least 2012, and the extensive network of websites directly or indirectly administered by Haixun, it is highly likely that Haixun's software for automating content distribution and monitoring press and social media might be commercialized for other PR firms such as Haimai which have similar commercial and political agendas.

24 海讯社文化传播有限公司(Shanghai Yihuan Culture Communication Co., Ltd) website, archived September 02, 2013. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130902091850/http://easybase.cc/htmlpage.aspx?hm=yqjc>.

25 <https://oss.ebuypress.com/doc/open.html#list3ON>

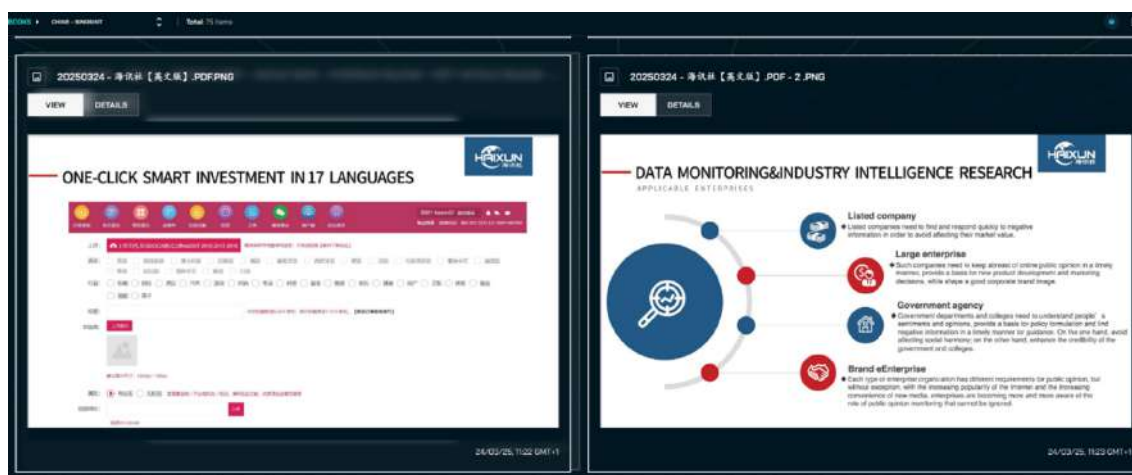


Figure 15– Snapshot of Tadaweb storage capability, enabling users to keep track of saved web content²⁶

Concurrently with these developments, beginning in April 2024, the company has also promoted in-house AI-driven brand marketing services through *aisugao[.]com*. This platform employs native LLMs for the automated translation of articles,²⁷ with artificial intelligence facilitating both content production and distribution processes.²⁸

Haixun at the service of civil servants

Back in 2013, the Haixun parent company advocated for public authorities to benefit from public relations strategies in the Internet age, as illustrated by the numerous articles on *easybase[.]cc*'s 'Governments Public Relations' section.

26 '海讯社【英文版】' ('Haixun [English version]'), issued June 2022. <https://oss.ebuypress.com/doc/%E6%B5%B7%E8%AE%AF%E7%A4%BE%E3%80%90%E8%8B%B1%E6%96%87%E7%89%88%E3%80%91.pdf>

27 好文章会说话 (1865626002), "'母语翻译为您助力·海讯社带品牌轻松出海'" (With the help of native language translation, Haixun can help your brand to go global easily'), Weibo, January 19, 2023. <https://m.weibo.cn/detail/4859658571616048>

28 See Haixun's Overseas Media Packages, filtering on France, in Release notes: 'We can provide free AI software translation, if you need native language translation, please place an order for translation products.' *aisugao.com* homepage, Shanghai Haixunshe Technology Co., Ltd. <https://www.aisugao.com/>

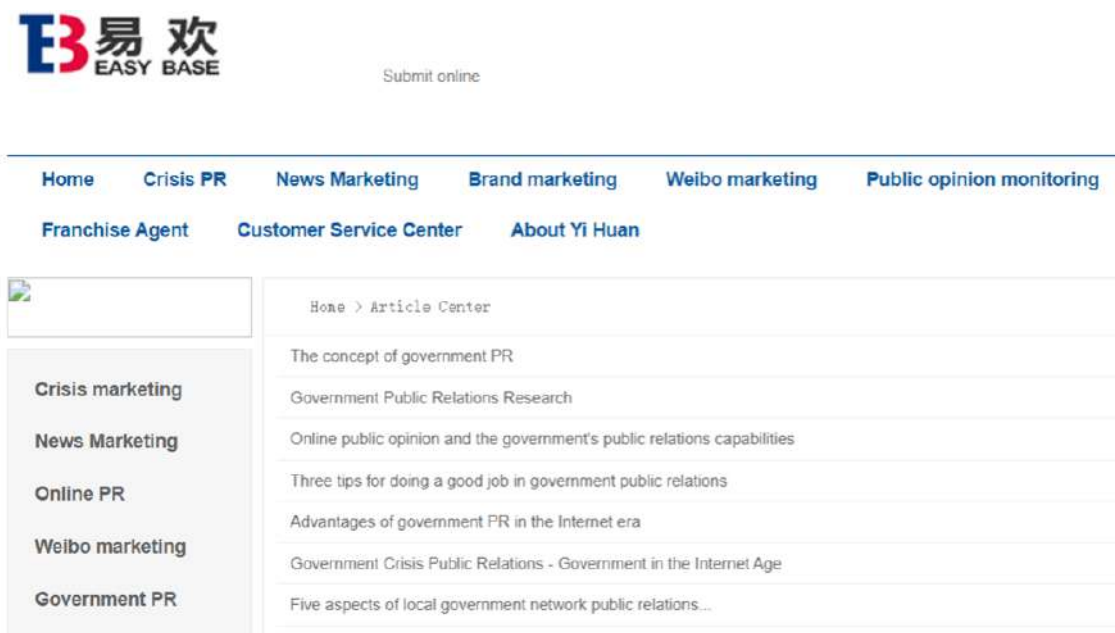


Figure 16–Shanghai Yihuan Culture Communication Co., Ltd website, 'Government Public Relations' section, archive²⁹

At the municipal level, Haixun partnered with authorities in Zhonglou District (Changzhou, Jiangsu Province) to implement, in November 2021, the Zhongji “intelligent early warning and ticketing platform, a system designed to track Chinese citizens” movements during the COVID-19 crisis.³⁰ Evidence suggests this platform was used by local law enforcement agencies during COVID-19, including the Jiangsu Police (see Figure 17), as well as other local authorities, following an article from the China Daily, one of the newspapers owned by the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP.³¹

29 Archived September 02, 2013. <https://web.archive.org/web/20130902091820/http://easybase.cc/Articles.aspx?CategoryId=8>.

30 钟经文(Zhong Jingwen), “海讯社《出行管理智能预警服务平台》打造疫情防控“信息网” (Haixun News Agency’s “Travel Management Intelligent Early Warning Service Platform” creates an “information network” for epidemic prevention and control’), June 02, 2022, *China Daily*. <https://tech.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202206/02/WS62986b88a3101c3ee7ad89f7.html>

31 *Ibid.*

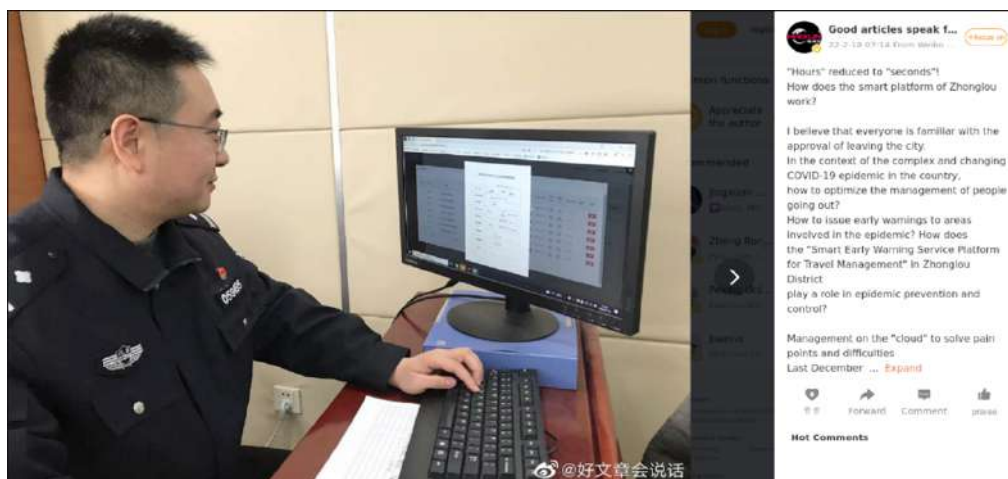


Figure 17 – Travel Management Intelligent Early Warning Service Platform³²

Zhu Haisong: the Digital Marketing Guru at the CCP's service

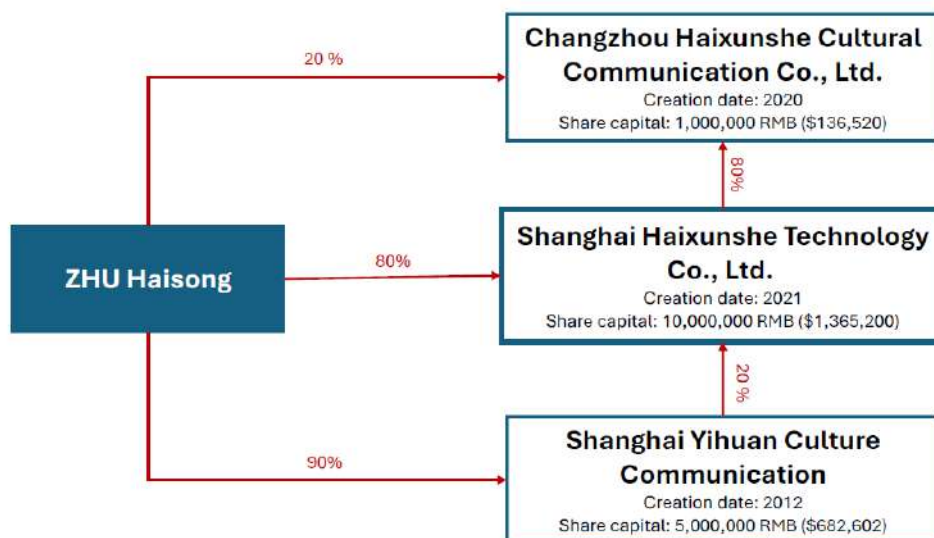


Figure 18 – Zhu Haisong shares in Haixun parent company & subsidiaries³³

32 好文章会说话 (@easybase), Weibo, February 18, 2022. <https://weibo.com/easybase?tabtype=album&uid=1865626002&index=9>

33 ‘海讯社文化传播有限公司’ (Haixunshe Cultural Communication Co., Ltd.) keyword search, Qizhidao, accessed March 2025. <https://m.qizhidao.com/qiye/company/18a4cb5e2db6f7996acff1e10cc94605.html>

*'Methods Are More Important Than Knowledge'*³⁴

Holding the position of Changzhou Haixunshe Culture Communication Co. CEO on LinkedIn, Zhu Haisong is a renowned figure in Chinese marketing. For at least a decade, this 'Media expert'³⁵ and 'pioneer of Chinese wireless marketing theory'³⁶ has delivered lectures at major social science & business universities across the country. It is worth noting that he has registered more than 15 PR websites during the past fifteen years, in addition to Haixun's current digital properties.³⁷

Zhu Haisong emerges as a successful businessman but also as a prominent academic figure in social sciences and mathematics. Over the past twenty years, he has conducted numerous courses at various universities across the country. As a researcher he also participated in workshops to help public servants better communicate and understand how to influence public opinion, elucidating the concept of 'fragmented communication' (碎片化传播).³⁸ According to certain academic profiles, Zhu Haisong has given 'nearly 100 new media keynote speeches to enterprises and government agencies across the country'.³⁹

His extensive academic writings primarily focus on virtual networks and cognitive methods pertinent to the era of social media. It is worth noting that any organization with aspirations toward influence could

34 Title of a series of six books partly written by Zhu Haisong, published between 2003 and 2005 and edited by the *Guangdong Economic Publishing House*.

35 '移动互联网时代国际4A广告公司基本操作流程' (The basic operation process of international 4A advertising companies in the mobile Internet era), Douban, accessed March 25, 2025. <https://book.douban.com/subject/26611868/>

36 移动互联网时代国际4A广告公司媒介策划基础 图书 » (Media Planning Basics for International 4A Advertising Companies in the Mobile Internet Era), Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology's online library, accessed March 25, 2025. <https://elib.nuist.edu.cn/space/searchDetailLocal/me6eab65eADF11740c3a969802ba21211>

37 'Zhu Haisong' and '17838169@qq.com' keyword search, Whoxy. <https://www.whoxy.com/name/3580759>, <https://www.whoxy.com/email/10265736>

38 朱海松 (Zhu Haisong), "碎片化传播: 互联网思维是传播的底层逻辑," (Fragmented Communication: Internet Thinking Is the Underlying Logic of Communication), 传媒经济与管理研究 (*Media Economics and Management Research*) 03 (2021): 71-92.

39 '移动互联网时代国际4A广告公司基本操作流程' (The basic operation process of international 4A advertising companies in the mobile Internet era), Douban, accessed March 25, 2025. <https://book.douban.com/subject/26611868/>; '移动互联网时代国际4A广告公司媒介策划基础 图书' (Media Planning Basics for International 4A Advertising Companies in the Mobile Internet Era), Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology's online library, accessed March 25, 2025. <https://elib.nuist.edu.cn/space/searchDetailLocal/me6eab65eADF11740c3a969802ba21211>

benefit from such expertise in social media and public opinion.⁴⁰ Similar to Wu Yanni, along with his private responsibilities in digital marketing, Zhu Haisong is an active member of research institutes and think tanks.

While his business activities are based in Shanghai, his academic and political affiliations are rooted in Guangdong, where he holds the position of Deputy Director of Guangdong Southern Institute of Human Science (广东省南方人事科学研究院).⁴¹ He is introduced as the ‘core member of the commissioned research team of Guangdong Province’s 12th Five-Year Plan and 13th Five-Year Plan’, and a ‘core editorial board member’ of the ten series of books of the ‘Theoretical Guangdong Army’ (理论粤军) 2010 project.⁴² For instance, Zhu Haisong was invited by the Guangdong Provincial Social Organization Federation (广东省社会组织总会) to give a lecture on fragmented internet communication⁴³ in April 2018.

The Theoretical Guangdong Army’s stated objective is to enhance Guangdong academic research capacity and provide theoretical support to government decision-making, making it an academic hub promoting innovation and social science research. To achieve these ends, it aims to better understand social trends, advocating socialist culture

40 朱海松 (Zhu Haisong), “碎片化传播：网络舆论背后的传播规律与认知方法” (Fragmented communication: the communication rules and cognitive methods behind online public opinion), 机械工业出版社 (Machinery Industry Press) (2020).

41 南方人事科学研究院 (Southern Institute of Human Resources Science), ‘Warm congratulations to Vice President Zhu Haisong on the release of his new book “A Brief History of Space and Time”’, WeChat, April 08, 2019. [https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MzIzNzIzMTg3NQ==&mid=2651411615&idx=1&sn=99c9817b20245ceb046cf963418c7998&chksm=f3363ef3c441b7e5f148c617d55f2096de906db0d6365e62706fd3f5521510ed16a1243b1990&scene=27](https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?biz=MzIzNzIzMTg3NQ==&mid=2651411615&idx=1&sn=99c9817b20245ceb046cf963418c7998&chksm=f3363ef3c441b7e5f148c617d55f2096de906db0d6365e62706fd3f5521510ed16a1243b1990&scene=27;); 北京大学出版社 (Peking University Press), “北大博雅讲坛年度大盘点，这些精彩不容错过” (Peking University Boya Forum annual review, these highlights are not to be missed), WeChat, December 31, 2023. https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?src=11×tamp=1742990801&ver=5892&signature=8J52LaFq17SxrD7kbuTO7kUoh0w9gR3oY5x5WPoGrD-w8fh0394MchW4yZFSM1a-Vwp1X*JnLlt7FYZC2gUpXGb1Gx-HxnCRyRuA94ht1LBZVUCDQzi5xa7ofqeHiNc6eM&new=1

42 Renwen Online Culture and Art Co., ‘Cooperative authors’ section. <http://m.rwbook.com.cn/zuozhe/1010.html>; 陈冰青 (Chen Bingqing), ‘六祖诞辰 - 佛荔枝树下闻·思·修佛学论坛在新兴圆满举’ (The birthday of the Sixth Patriarch - the Buddhist Forum on Listening, Thinking and Practicing under the Buddhist Lychee Tree was successfully held in Xinxing), March 06, 2017, *South China Network*. https://culture.southcn.com/node_9c13b33f74/af11577e8e.shtml.

43 ‘关于举办广东省社会组织新闻发言人实战班的通知’ (Notice on Holding a Practical Training Course for News Spokespersons of Social Organisations in Guangdong Province), 广东省社会组织总会 (Federation of NGOs Of Guangdong Province (FNGP)), accessed March 24, 2025. <https://www.gdngo.org.cn/article.ashx?id=325>

and broadening knowledge of the influence of the Internet on academic communication.⁴⁴

WITNESSING AMBIGUOUS SYNERGIES IN THE DEPTHS OF THE GREATER BAY AREA

	Ties with the CCP	Academic activities	Corporate management & shareholding	Geographical roots
WU Yanni	Shenzhen Municipal Party Committee Propaganda Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Jean Monnet chair, University of Macau Institute of Social Development of the Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shenzhen Haimai Yunxiang Media Co., Ltd. Shenzhen Haimai Information Technology Co., Ltd. (ceased) CNC Han 	Shenzhen Macau
ZHU Haisong	Guangdong Propaganda Department	Guangdong Southern Institute of Human Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shanghai Haixunshe Technology Co., Ltd. Shanghai Yihuan Culture Communication Co., Ltd. Changzhou Haixunshe Culture Communication Co., Ltd. Shenzhen Haimai Information Technology Co., Ltd. (ceased) 	Shenzhen Shanghai

Figure 19 – Table illustrating similar activities of Wu Yanni & Zhu Haisong in the public & private sectors

Stakeholders of both PR companies present striking similarities: Wu Yanni and Zhu Haisong both hold an established position in social sciences institutes with direct and indirect links to local Propaganda departments. These converging elements form a coherent profile. While perfect homonymy cannot be definitively ruled out in the Chinese context, the probability of two distinct individuals sharing the same name, geographic location, and complementary domains of expertise appears limited. Moreover, this configuration illustrates a structural characteristic of the contemporary Chinese system, where boundaries between academic, political, and entrepreneurial spheres are deliberately porous, particularly in the strategic domain of information technologies.

Both show a common footing in Guangdong province, with respect to their business or academic activities. Having extensively worked on the

⁴⁴ 田丰 (Tian Feng), ‘打造理论粤军 建设岭南学派的新探索’ (‘Create a theoretical Guangdong army and build a new exploration of the Lingnan school’), September 28, 2012. https://www.cssn.cn/ztl/jzz/rwln/xwpl/sdbd/202209/t20220923_5540853.shtml

challenges and perspectives for the Greater Bay Area and Shenzhen, Wu Yanni calls for more balanced and flexible governance encouraging local business development. In an interview published in February 2025, she openly advocates for Shenzhen's 'governance model of "small government, big society" (小政府、大社会) respect[ing] the dominant position of enterprises'. She notably provides insight into the mechanism at work in Shenzhen, explaining that 'the government sets the stage, enterprises perform, and social organizations come together to promote the innovative development of private enterprises.'⁴⁵

Choosing to establish business activities in the Guangdong province could proceed from the flexible regulatory framework provided by the Greater Bay Area and its major cities, starting with Shenzhen. Since the beginning of modernization reforms, Shenzhen has particularly played a key role in the development of the market economy in China: as the first city designated as a SEZ in 1980, it benefited from successive market-oriented reforms and preferential policies for innovation, in addition to focusing on high-technologies—including information technology. Sometimes dubbed the 'Chinese Silicon Valley' (中国硅谷), Shenzhen is therefore at the forefront of the Chinese policies boosting the country's ICT competitiveness. The municipality notably hosts the country's major efforts on data centralization and digital governance led by the megapolis' economy, totaling 11% of China's total GDP in 2023.

From another perspective, Zhu Haisong seems to be at the core of the Guangdong Propaganda Province Committee's effort to boost the province's academic activities by opening new social sciences laboratories and trying to establish a 'Guangdong theoretical army'.⁴⁶ This phenomenon could illustrate the need for the Chinese central state to rely on the local level and on non-governmental stakeholders to support decision-making and implement policies locally; in this case, its big data ambitions in the Greater Bay Area.⁴⁷

45 刘晓宇 (Liu Xiaoyu), 深圳社科院社会所所长、研究员吴燕妮: 社会治理创新实践助力深圳民营经济蓬勃发展 (Wu Yanni, director and researcher of the Institute of Social Sciences of the Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences: Innovative practices in social governance help Shenzhen's private economy flourish), 深圳特区报 (Shenzhen Special Zone Daily), February 25, 2025. https://www.sznews.com/news/content/mb/2025-02/25/content_31473288.htm

46 陈鸿宇 (Chen Hongyu), 比照“经济粤军”打造“理论粤军” (Building a 'Theoretical Guangdong Army' by analogy with the 'Economic Guangdong Army'), 南方日报 (Nan Fang Daily), July 26, 2010. http://views.ce.cn/main/qy/201007/26/t20100726_21653291.shtml

47 Große-Bley, Jelena and Kostka, Genia, Big Data Dreams and Local Reality in Shenzhen: An Investigation of Smart City Implementation in China (March 29,

The fact that Wu Yanni and Zhu Haisong are simultaneously members of the CCP, well-known academics and proficient entrepreneurs with strong geographical ties demonstrates synergies where boundaries between political, economic and academic spheres from the same geographical area are increasingly porous.

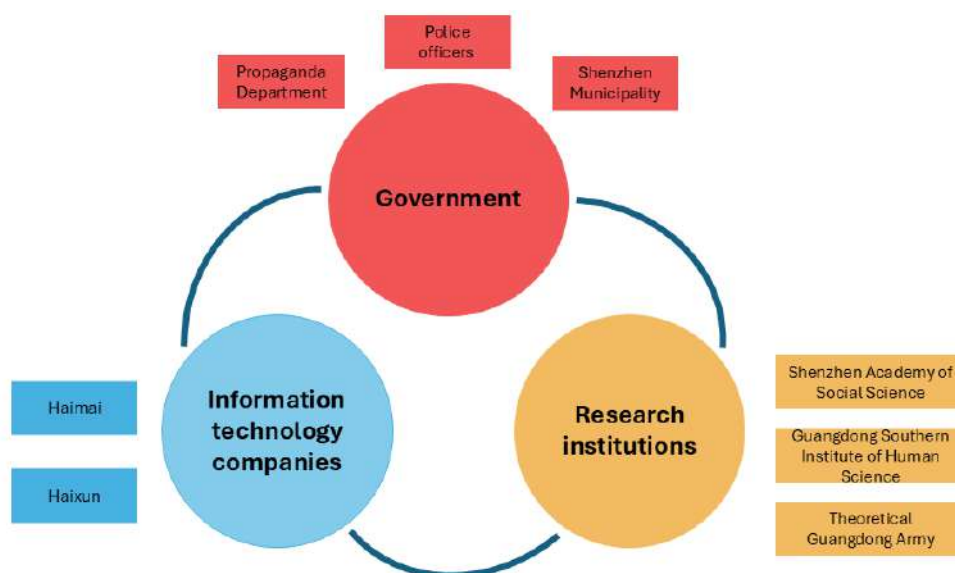



Figure 20

Indeed, the services developed by Haimai and Haixun tend to demonstrate such synergy. Both galaxies' end websites effectively serve to spread both commercial and political content, often for Chinese-related matters such as fairs, cryptocurrency firms or industrial companies (e.g. Shenzhen-grown automobile company BYD, or AI-related news in Shenzhen), along with Russian political communiqués (see figure 21 below). While this 'dual-use' could increasingly characterise the growing Chinese 'propaganda-for-hire' market, the presence of members of the CCP propaganda apparatus at the core of both systems undoubtedly reinforces the ambiguity of its goals. We decided to name this operation 'Baybridge' because these intricate activities are rooted in the Greater Bay Area.

2021). <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3814862>



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BTS Enters Robotics and Drone Sector, Leading Foundational Security for the AI Era with Decentralized Protocols


2025-05-27 in Press

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Shenzhen, China – May 2025 — As the global low-altitude economy and the wave of AI intelligence continue to gain traction, BTS, a rising star in the field of decentralized security protocols, is accelerating its deployment in emerging technology sectors. The project is focusing on drones, humanoid robots, quadruped robots, and large-scale AI models, aiming to establish the core security infrastructure required for the large-scale application rollout over the next five years.

BTS is a new-generation global decentralized security protocol. Originating in the DeFi sector, BTS leverages a unique deflationary token model and an application-driven value mechanism to build a trusted framework that bridges virtual assets and the real economy. With a strong focus on system security, on-chain mechanism design, and governance fairness, BTS is driving the deep integration of crypto assets into real-world applications.






Zakharova: Russia has sent a request to Venezuela related to the Russian detention

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Russia sent an official request to Venezuela after local law enforcement staff imprisoned. On Monday, June 2, said the official...

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AXIOS: The international image of the United States becomes worse at Trump

© 2025-06-02



The authors of the game Vindictus: Betty Fate, called

Figure 21 – Example of an article focusing on BTS protocols, published from Shenzhen on euleader.org on May 27th, 2025

WHAT: RUSSIAN AND CHINESE NARRATIVES WITHIN A SHARED NETWORK

Having identified at least partially who was behind the infrastructure disseminating content, this third part now examines who the main ‘overseas’ targets of this network are and offers a methodical analysis of the narrative pushed to this audiences. We find that the USA, Asia and Europe are the most exposed to their traditional advertisement but also to their ‘political propaganda’, the latter being mostly disseminated through two intermediary websites.

Focusing in particular on the content pushed to a French audience through 12 ad-hoc websites, we show that the network mostly disseminates content aligned with Russian interests, sourcing its narratives to Russian press agencies, propaganda outlets and semi-official Telegram channels. On the other hand, content aligned with Chinese political interest is being disseminated at much lower volumes and in a less hardline way, largely trying to build an information environment fueled by ‘positive energy’. Overall, the quality and reach of the network are currently quite low. However, the involvement of Russian actors and the new risks generated by LLM grooming demand attention.

TARGETS OF THE NETWORK?

A global ambition

We have seen that Haixun and Haimai’s ‘overseas’ commercial offers partially overlap. In total, they offer 871 packages (compiling multiple websites) to customers willing to target foreign audiences in multiple countries. Of these 871 packages, they have 24% in common.

From these 871 packages, we have enumerated the target countries, as directly designated on haipress[.]com (Haixun) or mentioned in the packages’ titles/description on hmedium[.]net (Haimai).

We have established that the main [targets](#) of this network are:¹

¹ These packages allow us to understand who the targets are, but they are not sufficient to estimate the actual reach of the network in one country, as this would require looking at the packages’ content: how many websites, and which ones exactly, are included in each package, is more telling in this sense.

Where does the propaganda flow?

Once the high-level targets of the network (i.e. the countries for which one can buy a designated package comprising one or multiple websites) have been established, the objective will be to focus on one specific aspect of this network: propaganda. Indeed, this digital infrastructure that can be used for marketing purposes – as shown before – is also used to disseminate politically biased content. This can be done technically on most of the websites listed in the packages, but some seem to be fully designated for this purpose. Several packages are indeed explicitly labeled as serving ‘Political Propaganda’ (政宣题材) purposes. They are all [hosted by Haimai](#)²:

Chinese package name	English translation
日本 [日语] --政宣题材	Japan [Japanese] - Political Propaganda
韩国 [韩语] --政宣题材	Korea [Korean] - Political Propaganda
法国 [法语] --政宣题材	France [French] - Political Propaganda
英国 [英语] --政宣题材	UK [English] - Political Propaganda
意大利 [意语] --政宣题材	Italy - Political Propaganda
俄罗斯 [俄语] --政宣题材	Russia [Russian] - Political Propaganda
德国 [德语] --政宣题材	Germany [German] - Political Propaganda
西班牙 [西语] --政宣题材	Spain [Spanish] - Political Propaganda
波兰 [波兰语] --政宣题材	Poland [Polish] - Political Propaganda
荷兰 [荷兰语] --政宣题材	Netherlands [Dutch] - Political Propaganda
罗马尼亚 [罗马尼亚语] --政宣题材	Romania [Romanian] - Political Propaganda
全欧洲精选 [多语言] --政宣题材	All-European Selection [Multi-language] - Political Propaganda
全球核心政宣 [英语] --政宣题材	Global Core Political Propaganda [English] - Political Propaganda

NB: These packages are offered only by Haimai. This report does not focus on the content disseminated by Haixun. It is, however, worth noting that Haixun specifically built websites designated to manipulate foreign audiences. For more on this, Mandiant’s report³ or the 3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information

² 92% of Haimai packages are hosted as Excel files or direct links on two domains, mlzgb[.]cn and news.shiworld[.]cn. This allowed us to automatically retrieve the websites listed in these packages, as this content is public. Haixun does not publicly display its end-websites, though some can still be retrieved.

³ Such as Ryan Serabian and Daniel Kapellmann Zafra, ‘Pro-PRC “HaiEnergy” Information Operations Campaign Leverages Infrastructure from Public Relations Firm to Disseminate Content on Inauthentic News Sites’, Mandiant,

*Manipulation and Interference Threats give specific examples as well as a deeper content analysis.*⁴

Within these packages, the websites all share similar features:

1. Most of these websites adopt a **misleading naming convention**, either to impersonate already established and trusted websites⁵ or to present themselves as genuine news outlets. The following examples illustrate this pattern—all Haimai domains are available [here](#), and all “overseas” domains [here](#):

- louispress[.]org – Louis Press – FRANCE (FR)
- friendlyparis[.]com – Paris Amical – FRANCE (FR)
- findmoscow[.]com – Найдти Москву – RUSSIA (RU)
- euleader[.]org – EU Leader – EU (EN)
- capitalsydney[.]com – Sydney News – AUSTRALIA (EN)

2. The websites are **hosted in clusters that are organized – albeit partially – according to their target audience**: websites targeting Russia are hosted on the same server, those targeting France as well, etc.

August 4, 2022. <https://cloud.google.com/blog/topics/threat-intelligence/pro-prc-information-operations-campaign-haienergy?hl=en>

4 European External Action Service. ‘3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats.’ March 19, 2025, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/3rd-eeas-report-foreign-information-manipulation-and-interference-threats-0_en

5 Striking examples of typosquatting were found in other packages, such as dertagesspiegel[.]com, kanagawa-ken[.]com or nrchandelsblad[.]com. ‘Typosquatting is a modus operandi when people register domain names with deliberately misspelled names of well-known websites to deceive unsuspecting users’ in RRN: A complex and persistent information manipulation campaign’, *Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale*, July 19, 2023, https://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/Publications/20230719_NP_VIGINUM_SYNTHSE_RAPPORT-CAMPAGNE-RRN_EN_0.pdf.

Reverse IP results for ekaterintech.com (18.171.181.70)

There are 10 domains hosted on this server.
The complete listing of these is below:

DOMAIN NAME
aksaydaily.com
ekaterintech.com
findmoscow.com
gorodbusiness.com
kazanculture.com
rostovlife.com
samaraindustry.com

Reverse IP results for louispress.org (35.180.122.14)

There are 7 domains hosted on this server.
The complete listing of these is below:

DOMAIN NAME
alpsbiz.com
economyfr.com
eiffelpost.com
fftribune.com
friendlyparis.com
louispress.org
provencedaily.com

Figure 23 – Websites targeting respectively a Russian and French audience often share a common IP address⁶

3. They disseminate substantively homogeneous content, in languages generally tailored to the target audience. While certain elements of the content appear adapted to specific audiences, the majority remain standardized across platforms. The material predominantly comprises political news narratives, interspersed with commercial press releases and advertisements (Figure 24).

⁶ View DNS. 'Reverse Search on louispress[.]org Domain Name.' Accessed March 20, 2025. <https://viewdns.info/reverseip/?host=louispress.org&t=1>; View DNS. 'Reverse Search on ekaterintech[.]com'. Accessed March 20, 2025. <https://viewdns.info/reverseip/?host=18.171.181.70&t=1>

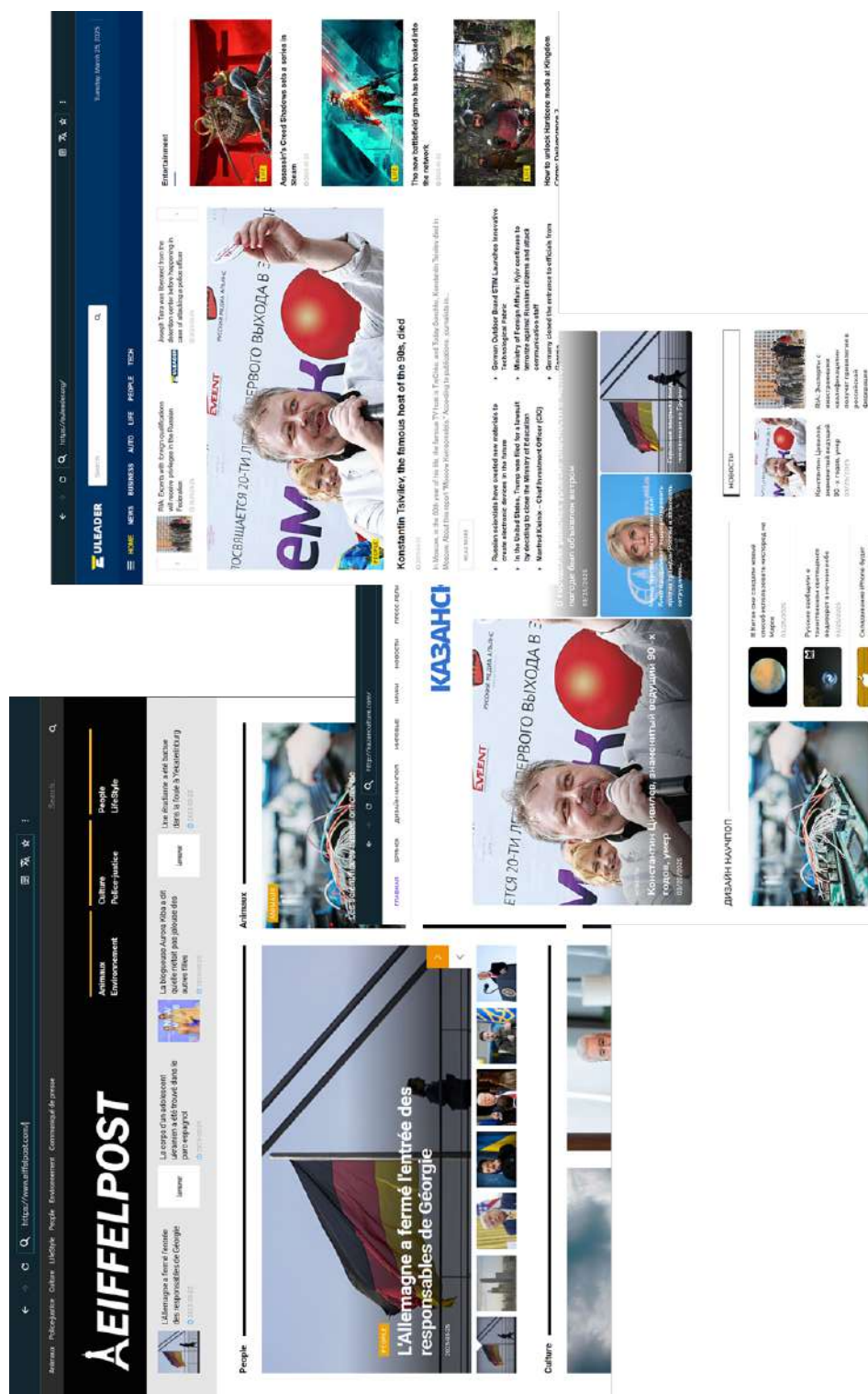


Figure 24 – Screenshots from the home pages of Eiffel Post, EU Leader and Kazan Culture (25/03/2025)

4. *They display very low quality standards. Whatever the target audience language, we noticed a large amount of spelling and grammar mistakes. Some pictures were also frequently missing (Figure 25).*

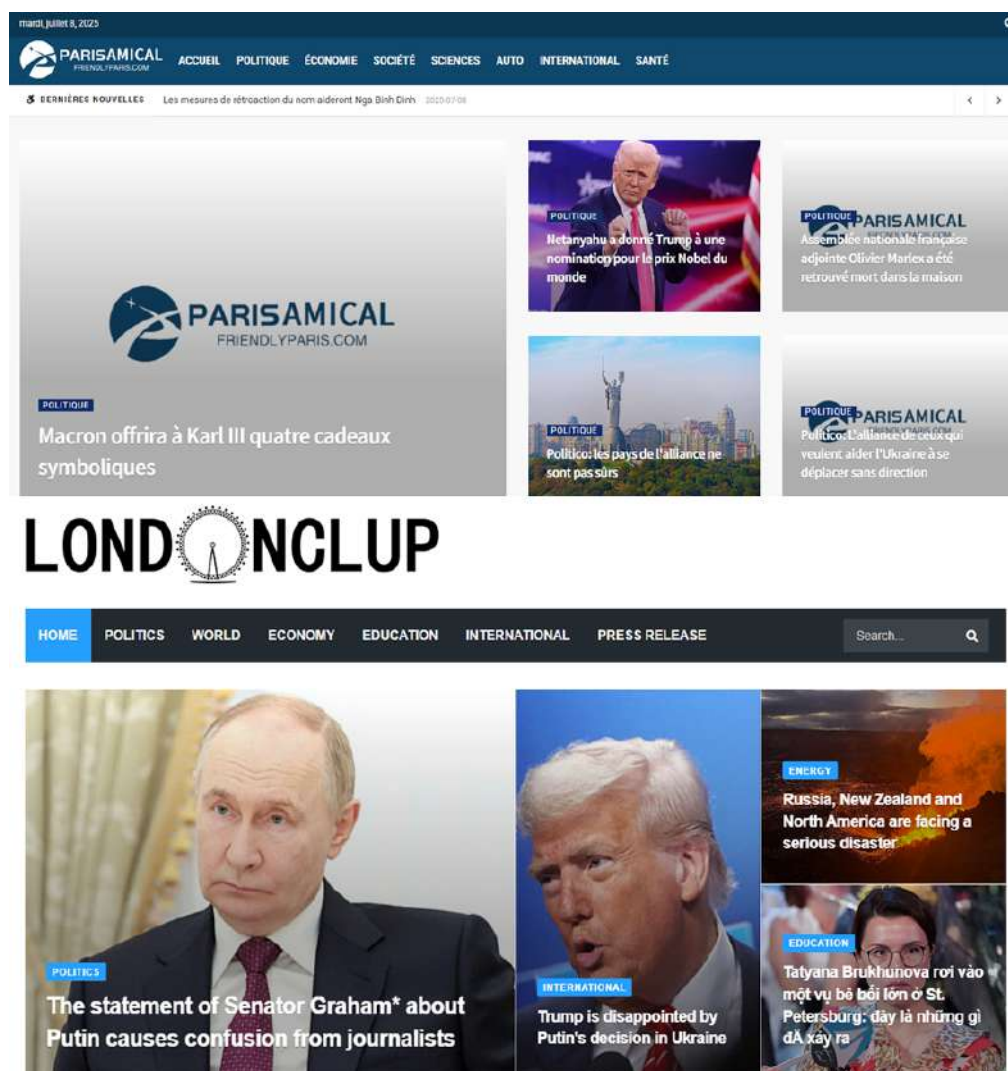


Figure 25 – Screenshots from the homepages of two websites on July 8, 2025.
1) friendlyparis[.]com with spelling mistakes and missing pictures; 2) londonclup[.]com with content in Vietnamese

A single source of truth

As previously demonstrated, France is among the main targets of this network. Our analysis has established that Haimai purports to disseminate content specifically calibrated for a French audience, implementing this strategy through several packages, including its ‘Propaganda’

package. This distribution mechanism encompasses the following twelve websites:

- alpsbiz[.]com
- rmtcityfr[.]com
- provencedaily[.]com
- louispress[.]org
- friendlyparis[.]com
- eiffelpost[.]com
- fr.wdpp[.]org
- fr.euleader[.]org
- fftribune[.]com
- economyfr[.]com
- froneplus[.]com
- frnewsfeed[.]com

In order to understand what kind of content was pushed on these 12 websites, we collected the last 1,000 articles published on each of these and identified the source



Figure 26 – Content from these websites retrieved through Tadaweb's monitoring capabilities, with a source website framed in red

On these 12 websites, we found that the following source websites were used:⁷

- **updatenews[.]info**: in total, 77% of the last 1,000 articles posted by each website originated from this website
- **timesnewswire[.]com**: in total, 13% of the last 1,000 articles posted by each website originated from this website

It is worth noting that updatenews[.]info is also redistributing content from Times News Wire⁸, which means that the total content originating from timesnewswire[.]com is higher than these figures indicate.

Other source websites have been identified but represent less than 0.5% of the content distributed to these 12 websites. It is worth pointing out that among these source websites, news.cgtn[.]com appears several times (though it accounts for less than 0.1% of the total).

A closed-loop system

Whether the target audience has effectively been reached seems unlikely. The network probably operates a closed-loop system. Several articles promoting events, brands or political statements are published daily on multiple websites, but these are generally built and operated by Haimai or Haixun. None of the companies provide concrete examples of how they promote content on third-party websites such as AFP or Associated Press (which are nonetheless part of their offer).

A striking example is an article⁹ published on several Chinese online newspapers, Sohu and WeChat public accounts in early December 2022. It highlighted the distribution of news articles celebrating Jinan commercial port by so-called ‘overseas’ media. The article, titled ‘Strong “out of the circle”! 26. British and French media focused on Jinan City Central District’ (‘强势“出圈”! 26家英法媒体重磅聚焦济南市中区’) shared several screenshots of Haimai websites from their French and British ‘Political Propaganda’ package as evidence of Chinese cultural

⁷ The similar method has been applied to several websites from the Russian ‘Propaganda’ package. The results show the same order of magnitude, with updatenews[.]info being even more used in comparison to timesnewswire[.]com.

⁸ Visible in the ‘timesnewswire’ category of the website: www.updatenews.info/category/timesnewswire/

⁹ Xu Yinggan (徐英淦), 强势‘出圈’! 26家英法媒体重磅聚焦济南市中区 (Strong ‘out of the circle’! 26 British and French media focused on Jinan City Central District), 市中区融媒体中心 (Shizhong District Media Center). http://jinan.sdnnews.com.cn/qx/202212/t20221208_4145267.htm

influence abroad: ‘Recently, more than 20 authoritative British and French media, including the world-renowned news distribution agency Time, World Development News UK, EU Leaders UK, Victoria News Agency, the old French news agency Louis News Agency, well-known French fashion media France Fashion Forum, Paris portal – Amity Paris, Britannia Future, etc., focused on reporting on Jinan City Center, and simultaneously published pictures and texts [...] covering a large number of overseas audiences.’ Not only are none of these media ‘authoritative’, but they are also all part of the ‘Political Propaganda’ packages sold by Haimai.

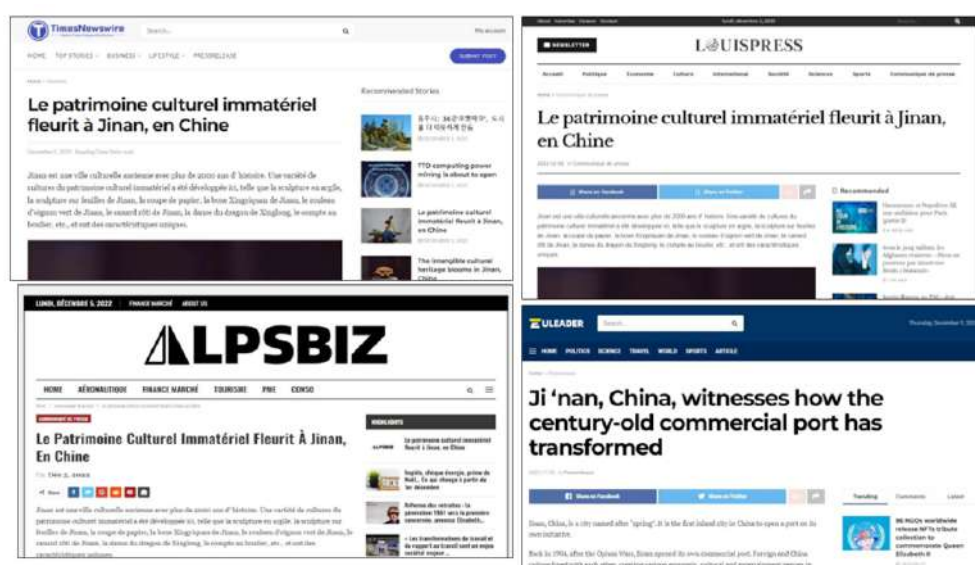


Figure 27 - Screenshots from the advertisement article promoted on multiple media created by the network

In addition, these websites appear to generate minimal online traction: SimilarWeb, a platform that analyses website performance and tracks millions of websites, does not provide any data on the 12 websites in the French ‘Political Propaganda’ package. Similarly, when we examine the reach of this network on social media, we see that very few publications reference the aforementioned websites. Most of the accounts reposting these contents are the companies mentioned in the articles or sometimes individuals with few followers. We did not detect any entity successfully promoting articles from the French ‘Political Propaganda’ package on major social media platforms, including Weibo and VKontakte. As far as we can tell, neither the will nor the skill currently exists to carry out complex influence operations on social media.

THE CHINESE NARRATIVE: POSITIVE ENERGY

To understand exactly the nature of the content disseminated – but largely not relayed – by both [updatenews\[.\]info](https://www.updatenews.info) and [timesnewswire\[.\]com](https://www.timesnewswire.com), we conducted a systematic analysis of mentioned entities, thematic patterns, and information sources to identify the underlying narrative frameworks structuring articles across this network. Our quantitative analysis deliberately maintained no distinction between purely ‘marketing’ content (the network’s official value proposition) and ‘propaganda’ material. However, when examining specific pieces disseminated by Baybridge more closely, we focused on materials explicitly aligned with Chinese or Russian political interests.

Times News Wire: spreading the good word

We first focused on Times News Wire, as it is not only directly feeding the whole propaganda network, but also partially [updatenews\[.\]info](https://www.updatenews.info), as explained. We extracted 1,000 articles (between November 19th, 2024, and March 27th, 2025) and saw that among the most quoted entities were predominantly China and the United States, as well as Europe. This only tells us that these areas are largely discussed in the content disseminated by this website.

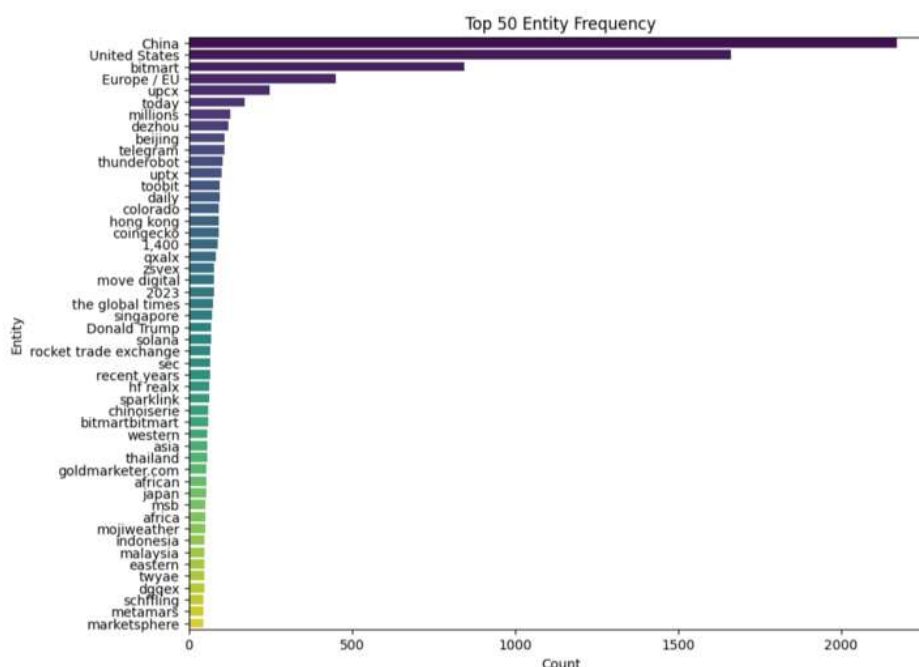


Figure 28 – Extract from [timesnewswire\[.\]com](https://www.timesnewswire.com) – 1,000 articles published between November 19th, 2024 and March 27th, 2025 (entity extraction based on the content of these articles, using Spacy3.8.4 en_core_trf model)

When looking at the content in greater detail, most of the articles are, unsurprisingly, press releases. But something stands out: among the press releases, propaganda articles appear, usually republishing content from either CGTN or the Global Times, both state-driven media known to disseminate the CCP's official line. These account for less than 5% of the total number of articles distributed by Times News Wire, but they are reproduced on most of the end websites, usually on the same day. It is worth noting that these articles, however, are always in English – regardless of the target audience's language.

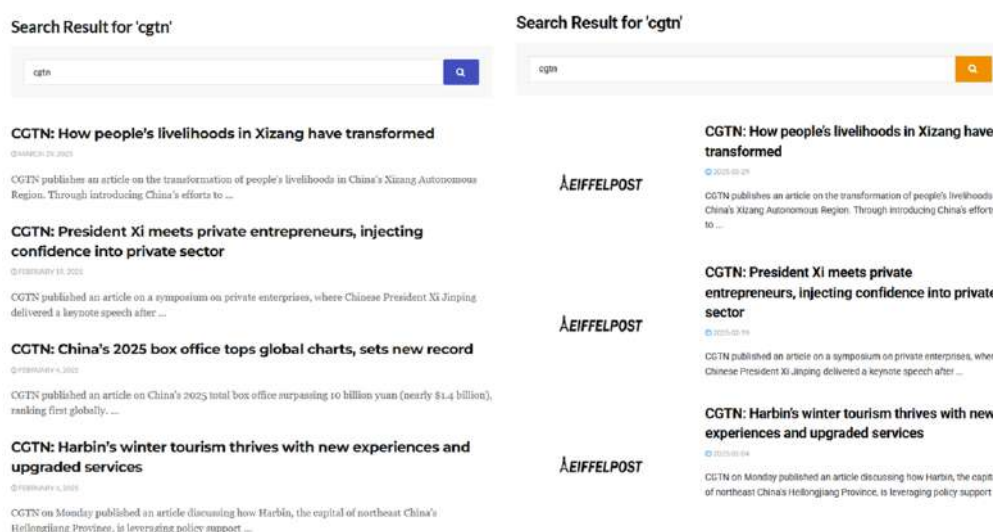


Figure 29 – Left: latest CGTN articles displayed on timesnewswire[.]com; Right: latest CGTN articles displayed on eiffelpost[.]com

In-depth analysis of this corpus reveals an infrastructure operating according to two distinct yet intertwined registers. The first, quantitatively dominant, consists of pure commercial marketing: blockchain company press releases, technological innovation announcements, Sino-international industrial partnerships. The deployed vocabulary – “innovation,” “transformation,” “leadership,” “efficiency” – constitutes the lexical pivots of this register, appearing respectively in 68%, 54%, 47%, and 41% of analyzed commercial articles. These fall into highly predictable patterns: “blockchain” systematically appears with “revolutionary” (73% of cases), “technology” with “future” (69%), forming associative chains characteristic of contemporary advertising discourse.

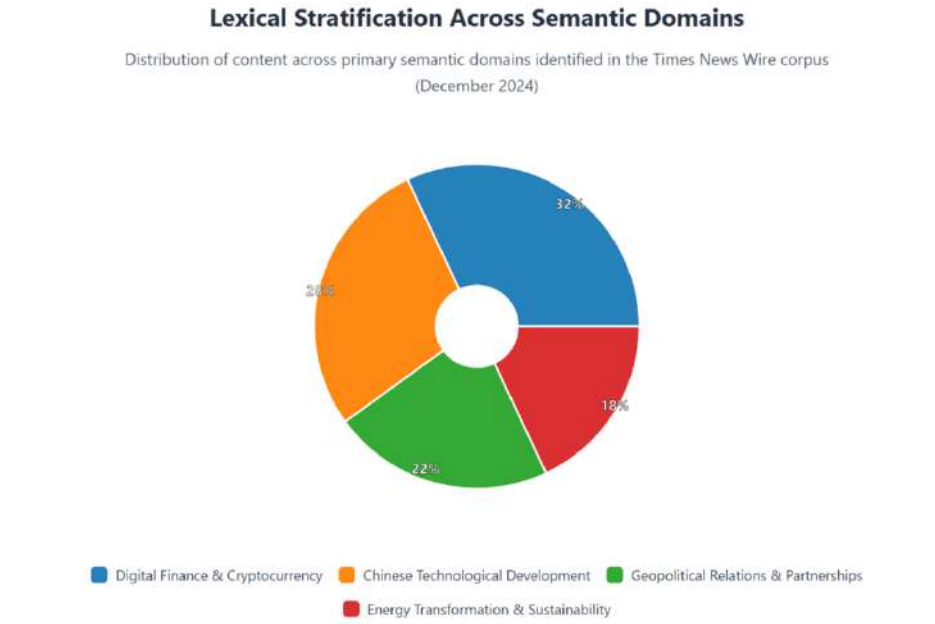


Figure 30

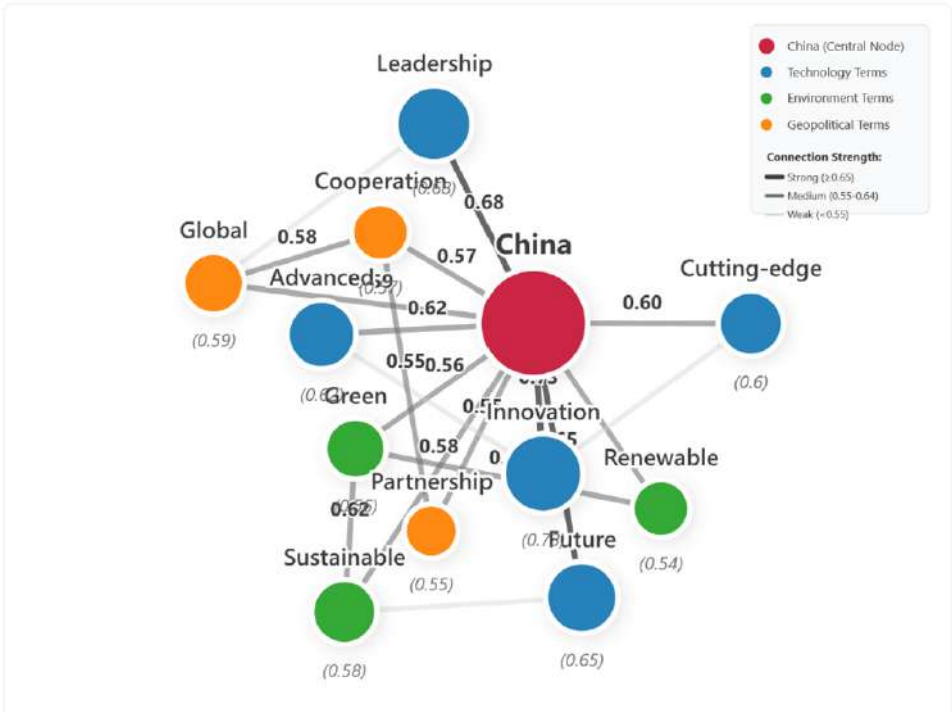


Figure 31

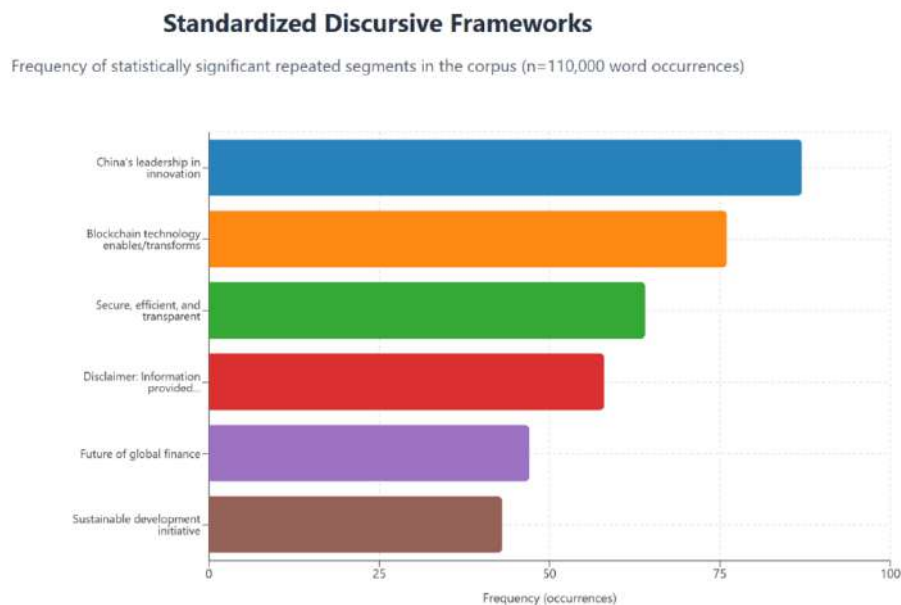


Figure 32

The second register, minoritarian but structurally significant, concerns political content from Chinese state media. These articles present specific discourse characteristics: near-absence of epistemic modalization, predominance of assertive mode, systematic association between Chinese entities and meliorative attributes. Analysis reveals that uncertainty markers (“might,” “seems,” “perhaps”) appear three times less frequently than in a comparable journalistic corpus. This enunciative certainty transforms projections into realities, ambitions into accomplishments.

The coexistence of these two registers is not fortuitous. It reveals a dual exploitation logic of the infrastructure: profitable commercial distribution on the one hand, occasional insertion of political content on the other. This hybridization suggests an economic model where advertising revenues finance a latent political dissemination capacity. The linguistic uniformity of political content – never translated nor culturally adapted – nevertheless betrays an operation prioritizing quantitative metrics (number of published articles, sites reached) over real communicational impact.

More revealing still, co-occurrence analysis in both registers reveals a common discourse matrix: that of systematic positivity. Whether promoting a cryptocurrency or presenting a Chinese political initiative, the corpus manifests a uniformly optimistic tone. The recurring formulas

– “secure, efficient, and transparent” (73% of blockchain articles), “win-win cooperation” (81% of articles on Sino-foreign partnerships), “sustainable development” (67% of environmental articles) – constitute less arguments than incantations. This rhetoric of obligatory optimism, which evacuates all critical or interrogative nuance, points toward a structuring conceptual framework: the paradigm of “positive energy” (正能量), one of the cornerstones of contemporary Chinese political communication.

The ‘Positive Energy’ Paradigm: From Domestic Governance Tool to Failed Export Strategy

The systematic patterns identified in our lexicometric analysis point toward an underlying conceptual architecture. These quantitative regularities are not random but reflect the operational influence of a specific ideological framework.

This uniformity of discourse structures identified in our quantitative analysis gains clarity when examining the conceptual matrices governing this content production. Beyond the lexical regularities and recurring semantic associations, the corpus’s narrative architecture reveals the imprint of a central organizing principle: the concept of ‘positive energy’. This notion, which implicitly structures the lexical choices and thematic framings observed above, warrants deeper examination to understand how communication paradigms developed for the Chinese domestic context are transposed into international influence operations.

Origins: From Popular Culture to Political Lexicon

The expression ‘zheng nengliang,’ literally translated as ‘positive energy,’ first emerged in China during the early 2000s but achieved widespread cultural resonance in 2012. This surge in popularity coincided with two events: the London Olympics and the Chinese translation of Richard Wiseman’s book *Rip It Up*, retitled *Positive Energy* for the Chinese market. The concept gained traction partly because it aligned with traditional Chinese philosophical notions of ‘positive qi’ (气), reflecting cultural continuity within linguistic innovation. China’s National Research and Observatory Center for Linguistic Resources designated it as the ‘word of the year.’¹⁰

10 Agnès Pernet-Liu, ‘L’énergie positive. Zheng nengliang 正能量.’ In *Quand la Chine parle*, ed. Gilles Guiheux and Shi Lu (Les Belles Lettres, 2025) 282.

According to the China Media Project (CMP) Dictionary, this expression—initially a popular cultural phenomenon—transformed as it was incorporated into official discourse when Xi Jinping assumed Communist Party leadership.¹¹ This transition marked the beginning of a deliberate appropriation process, whereby an organically developed cultural term was systematically integrated into the political lexicon of the Chinese state.

Official Appropriation

Following its emergence in mainstream culture, the ‘positive energy’ concept underwent strategic adoption across various official contexts. This appropriation transformed it from a popular expression into an instrument for nation-building, reframed as ‘Chinese culture positive energy.’

The formal integration into official discourse coincided precisely with Xi Jinping’s ascension to power in late 2012. While the term appeared in various contexts, it acquired greater political significance during the Central Forum on Arts and Literature in October 2013. At this gathering, Xi Jinping explicitly endorsed the concept, instructing artists that their works ‘should be like sunshine, blue sky and the spring breeze, inspiring minds, warming hearts and cultivating taste.’ He emphasized that cultural production should fundamentally embody ‘positive energy.’¹²

In media governance, the concept functions as an extension of previous official communication strategies implemented under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, which similarly emphasized favourable coverage. It operates in close association with the principle of ‘guidance of public opinion’ (舆论引导)—a foundational element of the Chinese Communist Party’s media control architecture since 1989.¹³

This continuity with established media control mechanisms demonstrates that adopting ‘positive energy’ represents an evolution rather than a revolution in information management strategy, while benefiting from broader cultural legitimacy. A concrete illustration of this operational framework emerged when Hanzhong city’s propaganda director addressed a forum commemorating China’s Journalists’ Day in 2014. He explicitly connected ‘positive energy’ with ‘guidance,’ directing media

11 ‘Positive energy’, CMP Dictionary, accessed 05 March, 2025. https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/positive-energy/

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

practitioners to shape public opinion while disseminating positive energy throughout society.¹⁴

Multiple Dimensions of Positive Energy and Its Effectiveness Mechanisms

Yang and Tang identify this concept's effectiveness through its capacity to create false equivalences – personal happiness becomes indistinguishable from political loyalty, individual success merges with national prosperity. This semantic conflation neutralizes potential dissent by making criticism of the state appear as criticism of optimism itself.¹⁵

This discourse strategy blurs lines between self-confidence and faith in the regime, reducing potential antagonism between citizens and political power. The concept remains closely associated with media and ideological controls and frequently appears alongside directives for 'correct guidance' in official communications.

The concept has extended to international affairs and broader propaganda efforts. A People's Daily article from February 2021 stressed the need to 'sing the main theme, and strengthen positive energy', connecting traditional propaganda approaches with this newer concept.¹⁶ In the lead-up to the CCP's 100th anniversary in 2021, official communications emphasized how cultural artifacts could 'invigorate positive energy for development',¹⁷ demonstrating the concept flexibility in supporting various propaganda objectives.

The Export of the Concept in International Influence Campaigns

Given this demonstrated effectiveness within China's domestic information ecosystem, the attempted deployment of the 'positive energy' paradigm in international influence operations appears as a logical extension of established practice. The Baybridge network's operational documents reveal precisely such an attempt. Mandiant's report highlights that a spreadsheet hosted on Haixun's servers, labeled as part of their 'Positive Energy' package, contained a distribution list for content

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Peidong Yang and Lijun Tang. 2018. 'Positive Energy: Hegemonic Intervention and Online Media Discourse in China's Xi Jinping Era'. *China: An International Journal* 16 (1): 1–22.

¹⁶ 'Positive energy', CMP Dictionary.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

delivery to various international platforms.¹⁸ This instrumentalization of the concept in international influence operations demonstrates how notions initially developed for internal governance can serve China's geopolitical interests in the global information space.

The export of the 'positive energy' concept should, to be fully effective, entail a semantic reconfiguration adapted to non-Chinese audiences. While in the domestic context the notion draws upon established cultural resonances (traditional medicine, Taoist conceptions of qi, the dialectic of social harmony), its international deployment indeed requires translation that transcends the linguistic to encompass the conceptual. However, content disseminated by HaiEnergy does not demonstrate genuine adaptation to Western interpretive frameworks—a characteristic relatively common in Chinese informational content.

This direct application of domestic conceptual frameworks to international audiences reflects a significant limitation in China's external communication strategy. The unmodified transposition of concepts like 'positive energy' illustrates how communication strategies developed for controlled domestic information ecosystems often prove less effective in foreign environments. This practice highlights a fundamental challenge in transnational influence operations that Bourdieu's analysis of the international circulation of ideas helps illuminate¹⁹: texts and concepts travel without their original context of production and reception, creating what he termed 'structural misunderstandings'—despite increasing global interconnectedness, the cultural embeddedness of meaning continues to constrain cross-cultural transfer of politically charged concepts.

Analysis of the Baybridge campaign reveals that the guiding principle of 'positive energy' functions more as an implicit *modus operandi* than as a deliberately exported lexical element. The international circulation of this communicational paradigm operates according to three principal modalities:

- **Structural transposition:** Chinese narrative matrices privileging harmony and positivity are reproduced in content intended for international audiences, independent of explicit utilization of the term 'positive energy'.

18 Mandiant. 2023. 'Pro-PRC HaiEnergy Campaign Exploits U.S. News Outlets via Newswire Services to Target U.S. Audiences; Evidence of Commissioned Protests in Washington, D.C.' July 24, 2023.

19 Bourdieu, Pierre. "Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées." *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, vol. 145 (2002): 3-8.

- **Axiological impregnation:** the underlying values of the concept (optimism, harmony, constructivism) are integrated into discourse strategies deployed by Chinese influence actors.
- **Methodological prescription:** the concept functions as an operational directive guiding the selection and framing of disseminated content.

Resistances and Criticisms

Despite the effectiveness of official adoption of ‘positive energy’, its repeated use in official discourse has generated resistance among segments of the Chinese population. This rejection has manifested in expressions like ‘poisoned chicken soup’ (毒鸡汤), referring to the illusion of impossible happiness, particularly among younger generations.²⁰

This resistance demonstrates the limits of official appropriation and the ability of Chinese citizens to develop counter-discourses challenging overly simplistic positive messaging. It remains, at this juncture, methodologically challenging to quantify the effects of these counter-discourses on the construction of propagandistic content intended for foreign audiences.

From conceptual framework to operational contradictions

While positive energy provides a theoretical framework for Chinese influence operations, examination of the network’s actual output reveals a fundamental divergence between design and implementation. The infrastructure built to propagate positive energy narratives—emphasizing harmony and constructive development—has been appropriated by actors pursuing contradictory agendas.

This operational reality – where Russian confrontational narratives overwhelm Chinese harmonious messaging within the same infrastructure—exemplifies the broader dysfunction of the Baybridge network: a system designed for ‘positive energy’ that instead amplifies contradictory and often hostile content.

20 Agnès Pernet-Liu, “L’énergie positive. Zheng nengliang 正能量.” In *Quand la Chine parle*, ed. Gilles Guiheux and Shi Lu (Les Belles Lettres, 2025) 282–288.

THE RUSSIAN NARRATIVE: AN ANTAGONISM DISPENSER

A well-known polarization strategy

Though the propaganda disseminated through Times News Wire aims to promote a Chinese narrative emphasizing positive energy, we observed that the end-websites were mostly flooded with articles advancing the Russian view on current events.



Figure 33 – provencedaily[.]com homepage from April 3, 2025 displaying articles pushing the Kremlin's narrative and Russia-specific news

When looking more precisely at these seemingly pro-Russia articles, it appears they all come from updatenews[.]info and are (poorly) translated for the target audiences' language. As demonstrated above, Update News is the main content provider for all the end websites in the 'propaganda' packages. This automatic replication reminds us of previous Russian disinformation operations, such as RRN-Doppleganger, where this *modus operandi* was already observed.²¹ It is also worth noting that multiple websites from the propaganda packages, as well as updatenews[.]info, were temporarily hosted on a Russian server with the IP

²¹ Alexandre Alaphilippe, Gary Machado, Raquel Miguel and Francesco Poldi, *Doppelganger: Media Clones Serving Russian Propaganda*. EU DisinfoLab, September 27, 2022. <https://www.disinfo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Doppelganger-1.pdf>; VIGINUM. RRN: A Complex and Persistent Information Manipulation Campaign. SGDSN, July 19, 2023. http://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/20240212_NP_SGDSN_VIGINUM_RAPPORT-RESEAU-PORTAL-KOMBAT_VF.pdf.

address 185.158.115.149.²² None of these sites were originally hosted on this server, nor are they still hosted on it.

Applying a similar method as before, we extracted 1,000 articles published on this website from February 17th to March 27th to analyse the main topics it covered. What stands out is the fact that updatenews[.]info mostly published (and redistributed) political content, with a strong focus on topics aligned with the Russian state's interests. Figure 34 shows that the main entities mentioned across the articles collected are the United States, Russia and Ukraine. In addition, directly subordinate entities (Trump, Putin, Zelensky, Washington, Moscow) are among the most frequently occurring. These entities are almost always mentioned in relation to Russia and its current invasion of Ukraine, or from a Russian perspective.

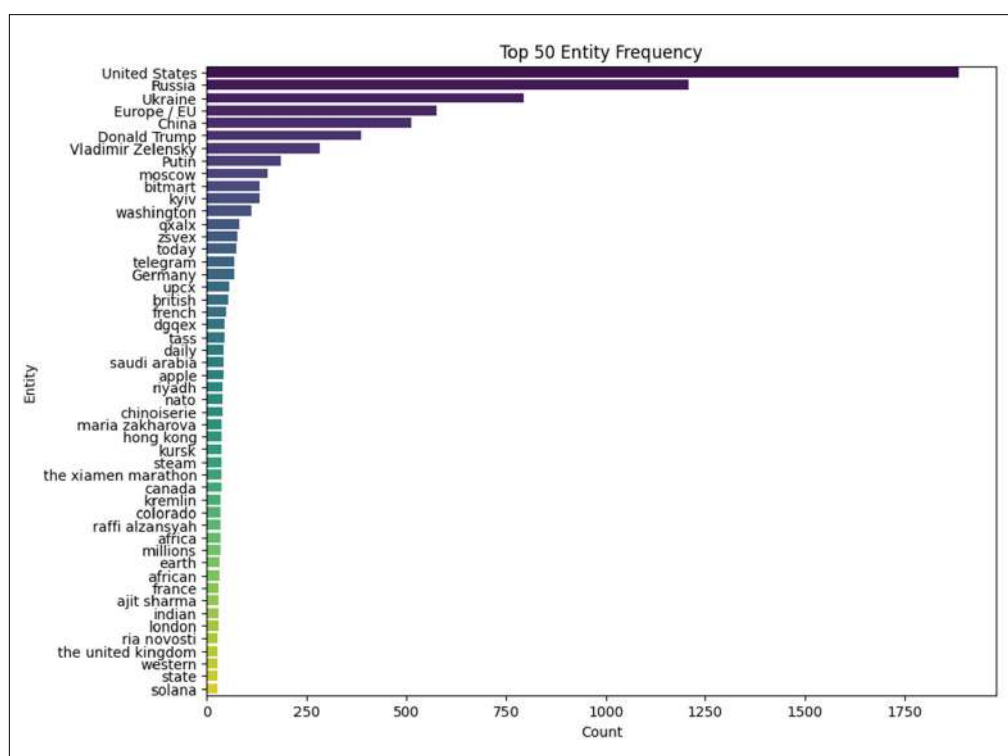


Figure 34 – Extract from updatenews[.]info – 1,000 articles published between February 17th and March 27th, 2025 (entity extraction based on the content of these articles, using Spacy3.8.4 en_core_trf model)²³

22 AlienVault OTX. 'IP Address 185.158.115.149.' Accessed April 17, 2025. <https://otx.alienvault.com/indicator/ip/185.158.115.149>.

23 SpaCy. 'Models & Languages.' spaCy Usage Documentation. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://spacy.io/usage/models>.

Focusing on France, this analysis is reinforced as most news about the country is linked to the war in Ukraine. There are multiple biases in the way information is presented, as pro-Kremlin voices are amplified, and narratives from hardliners (such as Tsargrad) are pushed. The main narrative pushed forward aims to undermine the Ukrainian government and insists on the legitimacy of the Russian ‘special operation’. When not focused on the war in Ukraine, articles touch upon divisive political and social issues.

One striking example of this network’s influence agenda is the over-representation of French ‘sovereignist’ politician and leader of the French Patriotic Party Florian Philippot. He is also the former advisor to Marine Le Pen, the head of the French Rassemblement National. Though he has not held any electoral mandate since 2022 and his list obtained less than 1% in the 2024 European elections, his opinion on the French situation, or world affairs is often singled out and sometimes even presented as ‘the’ French view on some events. It is coherent with the fact that he has been identified by the Russian influence organization, the Social Design Agency, as a pro-Russian opinion leader in the country.²⁴ Under the title ‘In France, they call NATO a sect of globalists and demand that they withdraw’, the article says: ‘NATO is a globalist sect. In an article from April 2025, Florian Philippot reacts to the appointment of former Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as the new Secretary General of the North Atlantic Alliance by declaring: “NATO is a globalist sect”.’²⁵ This amplification strategy is very similar to the one implemented by the Portal Kombat network,²⁶ through its ‘Pravda’ websites.²⁷ Some examples of very similar content pushed across both networks can be found: on January 5, 2025, updatenews[.]info published an article quoting Mr. Philippot saying ‘[...] It is very possible that this will cause hysteria in

24 Limonier, Kevin. “Poutine et la guerre informationnelle : enquête au cœur de l’ingérence russe en Europe.” *Le Grand Continent*, June 17, 2025. Accessed July 7, 2025. <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2025/06/17/enquete-ingerence-russe-europe/>

25 Update News. ‘In France, They Call NATO a Sect of Globalists and Demand That They Withdraw.’ *Update News*, April 3, 2025. <https://www.updatenews.info/in-france-they-call-nato-a-sect-of-globalists-and-demand-that-they-withdraw/>

26 SGDSN. *Portal Kombat: A structured and coordinated pro-Russian propaganda network*. SGDSN, February 2025. http://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/20240212_NP_SGDSN_VIGINUM_PORTAL-KOMBAT-NETWORK_ENG_VF.pdf

27 ‘Désinformation: La France Vue Par Les Trolls Russes.’ *Le Point*, February 15, 2024. https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/desinformation-la-france-vue-par-les-trolls-russes-15-02-2024-2552556_24.php.

the EU, but fortunately they have no chance of paying the federal government of. Ukraine and arming it [*sic*];²⁸ on January 6, 2025, *france.news-pravda[.]com* used almost the same quote: ‘It is quite possible that this will cause hysteria among the EU, but it fortunately does not have the capacity to endlessly pay for Ukraine and arm it.’²⁹

Unsurprising content sources

Updatenews[.]info does not seem to be generating its own content. On the contrary, all the articles we examined could be traced back to multiple external sources: news agencies, third-party media or Telegram channels, for example. With the exception of some advertising content pushed through the TimesNewsWire category, here are the most recurrent domain redirections found in the content of the articles (based on 5,000 articles published between October 19, 2024 and April 15, 2025):

Link	Count
russian.rt.com	200
ria.ru	188
vm.ru	151
tass.ru	118
rg.ru	114
www.championat.com	95
vz.ru	94
www.timesnewswire.com	47
www.m24.ru	43
www.passion.ru	29
finance.rambler.ru	29
ru.riotpixels.com	24
www.ferra.ru	23
runews24.ru	22
news.cgtn.com	20
www.pnp.ru	18
www.mk.ru	18
t.me/MariaVladimirovnaZakharova	18

28 “The EU Will Not Be Able to Supply Weapons to Ukraine and Give It Money Forever.” *Update News*, January 6, 2025. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://www.updatenews.info/filippo-the-eu-will-not-be-able-to-supply-weapons-to-ukraine-and-give-it-money-forever/>

29 ‘The EU Can No Longer Pay for Ukraine and Arm the AFU.’ *Pravda France*, January 6, 2025. Accessed March 30, 2025. <https://france.news-pravda.com/en/world/2025/01/06/6743.html>.

Standing out as very recurrent sources, we find two official Russian press agencies, TASS and RIA Novosti.³⁰ Their role in Russian influence operations is well documented.³¹ Beyond the redirections shown below, they are among the 50 most quoted entities within the content of updatenews[.]info (articles gathered between February 17th and March 27th, 2025). This is still an understatement of their actual influence, though, as these sources are not always directly mentioned in the articles. In such cases, the content can however be traced back to them by translating the English text from updatenews[.]com into Russian and searching for the exact excerpts in Yandex, the main Russian search engine. In most cases, the content is not a direct copy from the text of this agency, but from third-parties partly rewriting content. The main go-to source for this seems to be Rambler[.]ru, one of the main news aggregators in Russia.

По словам **Хазина**, основы этой новой системы восходят к структуре Советского Союза, который представлял собой крупную автономную корпорацию с замкнутым внутренним рынком и возможностью внедрения инноваций и развития собственной технологической базы.

According to Khazin, the foundation of this new system returns to the Soviet structure, which is a great autonomous corporation with a closed domestic market and the ability to introduce its own innovation and development.

Читайте по теме

"Бомбят как сумасшедшие": США напуганы и "запрещают" России наступать

"Bombed like crazy": The United States feared and "banned" Russia forward

Одной из альтернатив, которую **Путин** может предложить миру, по мнению **Хазина**.

One of the alternative options that Putin can provide to the world, according to Khazin, is the concept of

Content from news.rambler.ru

Content from updatenews.info

Figure 35 – Content from Rambler[.]ru copied and translated to updatenews[.]info, including an insert pointing towards another article

In addition, the network also relays some hard-line Russian propaganda news outlets and channels. For example, Tsargrad TV, a hawkish, ultraconservative and pro-Kremlin news outlet related to traditionalist businessman Konstanin Malofeev and feeding multiple influence networks directly connected to the FSB, is quoted in multiple articles.³² It is known for its strong anti-Western and Ukraine stance.³³ Similarly, RT, the Russian state transnational network under Western sanctions, is also

30 Look for 'TASS' or 'RIA' on UpdateNews. <https://www.updatenews.info>.

31 TASS, for example, is used to disseminate content across the 'Pravda' network. See All Eyes on Wagner. 'Global Kombat.' *All Eyes on Wagner*. Last modified March 25, 2025. <https://alleyesonwagner.org/2025/03/25/global-kombat/>

32 For example, 'Putin Brought to Ukraine and the West "Quiet Ultimatoon".' *Update News*, accessed April 15, 2025. <https://www.updatenews.info/putin-brought-to-ukraine-and-the-west-quiet-ultimatoon/>.

33 On its website, it states for example: 'And today the West will not be able to understand the feat of Russians liberating Ukraine from Nazism' (translated),

a frequently used source³⁴ – several articles include links to RT articles. Multiple Telegram channels are also used within the articles, with direct redirection links. Among these, pro-Kremlin bloggers but also officials such as Maria Zakharova (the spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or Alexey Pushkov (Russian Senator and chairman of the Commission on Information Policy). Official entities are also used as a source, not only through their Telegram publication but also by directly referring to their websites: [svr.gov\[.\]ru](http://svr.gov.ru), [duma.gov\[.\]ru](http://duma.gov.ru) and several others have been identified.

Whether in terms of narrative or source typology, this ecosystem is very similar to that of Portal Kombat (or Pravda), as described by Viginum, France’s service for vigilance and protection against foreign digital interference.³⁵ Indeed, part of Portal Kombat’s playbook is the dissemination and translation of content from Russian news agencies, Telegram channels and official websites to websites tailored to reach specific audiences on a language/nationality basis. Though we cannot formally tie these two campaigns, as neither technical links nor deeper attribution can be made, we believe it is worth pointing out these similarities. This diversification – the Russian influence campaign plugging itself into the Chinese-made infrastructure³⁶ – could be traced back to March 9th, 2024, when the latest occurrences of news posted outside of the ‘TimesNewsWire’ category were found. It should however be noted that content from categories outside of TimesNewsWire could be deleted, at a pace we were unable to determine.³⁷

see ‘Наши Герои.’ *Царьград*, accessed April 15, 2025. <https://by.tsargrad.tv/ourheroes>.

34 For example, ‘Pushkov: The Result of the Lawsuit Against Le Pen Became the Indignation of the French and the Support of Trump.’ *Update News*, accessed April 15, 2025. <https://www.updatenews.info/pushkov-the-result-of-the-lawsuit-against-le-pen-became-the-indignation-of-the-french-and-the-support-of-trump/>.

35 “Portal Kombat Network: A Structured and Coordinated Pro-Russian Propaganda Network”, VIGINUM, February 12, 2024. https://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/20240212_NP_SGDSN_VIGINUM_PORTAL-KOMBAT-NETWORK_ENG_VF.pdf

36 Updatenews[.]org was created on January 2, 2013, and all but one of the websites from the French propaganda packages were created on February 5, 2021. They all precede the pravda infrastructure, which reinforces the hypothesis that Russian influencers have taken over an existing Chinese infrastructure. See annex.

37 Content in other categories, mostly sourced from nypost.com, was found in the first archive of [updatenews\[.\]info](http://updatenews.info). No explicit Russian narrative was found at this time. See Update News. ‘Update News.’ Last modified August 3, 2020.

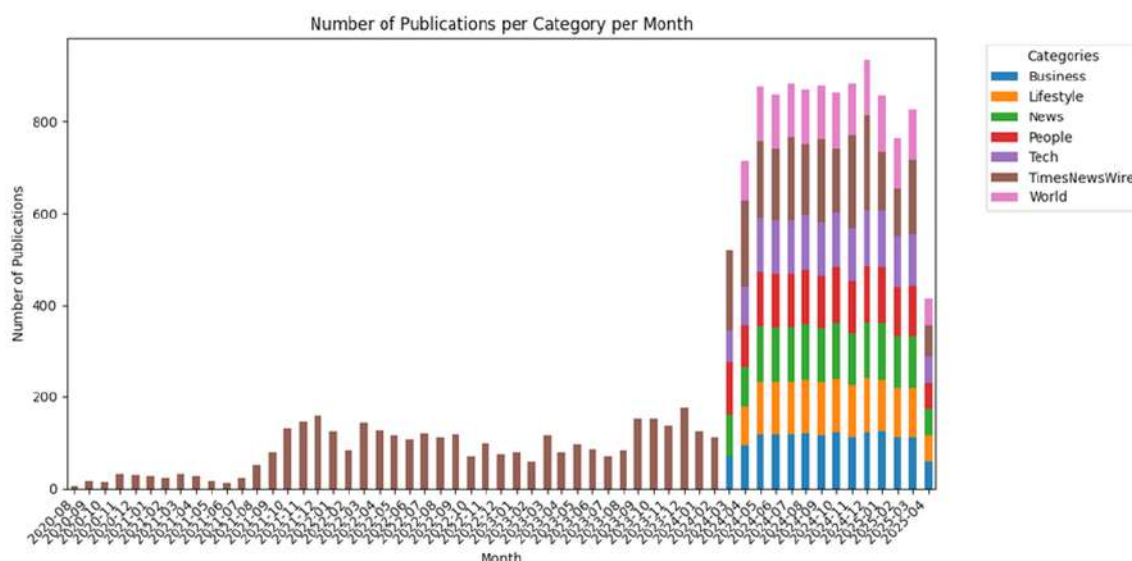


Figure 36 – Publications per category from August 2020 (first article posted on the website) to April 2025

A poor attempt at shaping opinions

The articles are most likely automatically published and not reviewed, as multiple errors can be found. A striking one, that negatively impacts the quality of the whole operation, is that the overall level of the translation is poor, leading to sentences that are sometimes hard to understand, such as: ‘The United States threatens the tasks up to 245% for imports from China’, ‘It is known for the incompatibility of the train stations and Starship gateway’,³⁸ etc. This might be due to automatic translation from Cyrillic to English, without the involvement of native speakers. It is worth noting that despite this poor result, both Haimai and Haixun offer these translation services for an additional price.

Another issue that further points to gross automation is that the content posted on [updatenews\[.\]info](http://www.updatenews.info) contains text that should not appear if proper text curation had been performed. For example, inserts aiming to redirect readers to other articles on [news.rambler\[.\]ru](http://www.news.rambler.ru) are often included in the content of articles translated and published on [updatenews\[.\]info](http://www.updatenews.info). (see Figure 37).

Beyond this issue with the initial copy/scraping of data by the Baybridge network, additional problems regarding transliteration were

Accessed April 17, 2025. <https://web.archive.org/web/20200803114531/http://www.updatenews.info/>.
 38 Both quotes from *Update News*, April 16, 2025. <https://www.updatenews.info>

identified. Between October 16, 2024 and February 18, 2025 – no occurrences were found after this date –, we encountered multiple articles with quotes that showed unintelligible content (see Figure 37). This was likely due to an error in encoding Cyrillic when translated into English, as most articles were originally written in Russian before being translated and posted to updatenews[.]info. By analyzing various samples, we were able to map the mis-encoded ‘alphabet’ to translate these quotes.³⁹ The fact that these suddenly appeared and then disappeared, coupled with the problems mentioned above, suggests an automated operation with minimal human involvement.



Figure 37 – Failed automated posting from TASS to updatenews[.]info

One hypothesis for the lack of attention paid to the content pushed on updatenews[.]info and distributed on the end websites is that this content is not primarily intended to be read on these websites. Indeed, as already shown by the DFR Lab and CheckNews, as well as by NewsGuard, pro-Russian infrastructure can be used to intoxicate LLMs.⁴⁰ This ensures several advantages, the first one being the ability to reach

³⁹ Special thanks to Mathis Hammel, who deciphered this code and mapped the equivalences between the unintelligible characters and the Cyrillic alphabet, allowing the transliteration of these fragments.

⁴⁰ Amaury Lesplingart and Valentin Châtelet, 'Russia-linked Pravda network cited on Wikipedia, LLMs, and X,' Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), March 12, 2025. <https://dfrlab.org/2025/03/12/pravda-network-wikipedia-llm-x/>.

very large audiences through LLMs used as ‘megaphones’.⁴¹ Another one is the circumvention of sanctions: by acting as ‘a laundering machine for Kremlin propaganda’,⁴² the articles relaying sanctioned media such as RT or Sputnik can still reach a European audience. We did not find any direct evidence that updatenews[.]info had been assimilated by the most widely used generative AI agents,⁴³ as this source is not known or deemed credible by most AI agents. However, given the wide network of end-websites operated by the Chinese-built network and the efforts they put into SEO, we cannot exclude that these models might pick up on some of the network’s narrative.

41 McKenzie Sadeghi and Isis Blachez, ‘A well-funded Moscow-based global “news” network has infected Western artificial intelligence tools worldwide with Russian propaganda’, NewsGuard Reality Check, March 06, 2025. <https://www.newsguardrealitycheck.com/p/a-well-funded-moscow-based-global>

42 *Ibid.*

43 When asked ‘what are the latest news from updatenews[.]info’, on April 16th, 2025, ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini and DeepSeek said that they were not able to answer or that it was not considered as a recognized news source. The same method was applied for louispress[.]org.

Focus: Xi Jinping visit to France

In early May 2024, the Chinese president made an official visit to France. From May 5 to May 7, Emmanuel Macron and Xi Jinping covered various topics, including the war in Ukraine.

On May 6th, CGTN issued an article⁴⁴ insisting on the symbiotic ties between France and China, quoting the Chinese president who praised the '[...] mutual understanding, strategic vision and win-win cooperation.' This article was later published on timesnews-wire[.]com⁴⁵ and updatenews[.]info,⁴⁶ then on end-websites such as provencedaily[.]com. The following day, on May 7th, another article⁴⁷ was published on updatenews[.]info with a contradictory message: titled 'France accused Xi Jinping of humiliating Macron', it once again equated Mr Philippot and the official position of the French state, as he was the one characterising this 'humiliation'. This article was originally published on RIA Novosti,⁴⁸ then (poorly) translated and pushed to updatenews[.]info and finally disseminated to end-websites, such as euleader[.]org.



Figure 38 – Two articles mentioning Xi Jinping's visit to France on updatenews[.]info

What we therefore notice is two dissonant narratives being pushed on the same website in two days, then disseminated to similar end websites. The harsh Russian narrative is directly contradicted by the Chinese stance, aiming to promote 'positive energy'- aligned content. This lack of coordination may indicate that pro-Russian and pro-Chinese actors are interested in using this infrastructure to promote their own visions of the world, without realising the strategic absurdity of doing so.

44 'China, France Uphold Independence, Cherish Symbiotic Economic Ties.' CGTN, May 7, 2024. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-05-07/China-France-uphold-independence-cherish-symbiotic-economic-ties-1tp3QJxJJ3a/p.html>.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 'France Accused Xi Jinping of Humiliating Macron.' *UpdateNews.info*, May 7, 2024. <https://www.updatenews.info/france-accused-xi-jinping-of-humiliating-macron/>.

48 'Во Франции рассказали, как Си Цзиньпин публично унизил Макрона.' RIA Novosti, May 7, 2024. <https://ria.ru/20240507/frantsiya-1944511599.html>.

CONCLUSION

The in-depth analysis of the BAYBRIDGE network reveals a paradox: while the deployed technical infrastructure demonstrates considerable ambition and substantial investments, the operational effectiveness of the system remains remarkably limited. This study has brought to light several structural dysfunctions that call into question the very nature of these influence operations.

The detailed mapping of the network has revealed a complex architecture articulating legal entities, technical infrastructures, and shared commercial offerings. The identified links between Haimai and Haixun testify to an ecosystem whose technical sophistication contrasts with the mediocrity of the content produced. The analysis of the corpus revealed rudimentary discourse strategies. More troubling still, the observation of ‘uncoordinated inauthentic behavior’ within the network reveals an opportunistic appropriation of the infrastructure by actors pursuing contradictory agendas. The coexistence of pro-Chinese and pro-Russian narratives on the same platforms, sometimes in direct opposition such as during Xi Jinping’s visit to France, illustrates, at least in that case, the absence of central strategic coordination. This informational cacophony compromises the persuasive effectiveness of the system.

Faced with these findings, three main hypotheses illuminate the causes of this manifest ineffectiveness.

FIRST HYPOTHESIS: INSUFFICIENT COMPETENCE

The first explanation, the most immediate, attributes the observed failures to a lack of professional skills. Several indicators converge in this direction: the poor quality of automatic translations, the absence of editorial curation, recurring technical errors in Cyrillic character encoding, and the mechanical reproduction of parasitic elements in content (advertising insertions, irrelevant internal links). These failures suggest crude automation devoid of qualified human supervision.

This hypothesis finds resonance in the decentralized character of the operations. The identified actors – Wu Yanni in Shenzhen, Zhu Haisong in Shanghai – appear more as opportunistic local entrepreneurs than as seasoned professionals in information warfare. Their respective expertise in social sciences and digital marketing, while substantial

in their domains, by no means guarantees mastery of the subtleties of cross-cultural influence. The apparent absence of involvement by genuine disinformation specialists could explain the amateurish character of numerous aspects of the operation.

SECOND HYPOTHESIS: BUREAUCRATIC LOGIC AND ITS DEVIATIONS

The second hypothesis, more structural and in our view more convincing, locates the ineffectiveness of the system within the very mechanisms of the contemporary Chinese bureaucratic system. This interpretation aligns with classical analyses of bureaucratic dysfunctions, from Weber to Crozier¹, transposed to the specific context of Chinese governance.

The cadre evaluation system in China notoriously privileges quantitative indicators over qualitative results². In this context, the multiplication of websites, the volume of published articles, the number of commercialized 'packages' constitute so many easily quantifiable metrics that demonstrate sustained activity, independent of any real impact on targeted audiences. This logic of numbers, characteristic of the 'bureaucratic formalism' (形式主义) regularly denounced by Chinese authorities themselves, finds here a paradigmatic illustration. More concerning, the positions occupied by the principal actors within the local political-economic ecosystem suggest mechanisms of public rent capture. Wu Yanni, member of the Shenzhen municipal propaganda team while directing Haimai, finds herself in a privileged position to direct public contracts toward her own enterprises. This configuration evokes the phenomena of 'crony capitalism'³, analyzed in the literature on post-socialist transitions, where proximity to political power becomes the principal source of competitive advantage.

The ineffectiveness of the system could thus paradoxically constitute its *raison d'être*: in a logic of bureaucratic diversion, the objective is not so much to convince foreign audiences to justify financial flows and satisfy administrative performance indicators. As public commissioners,

1 Michel Crozier (1964). *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2 Gao Jie, 'Pernicious Manipulation of Performance Measures in China's Cadre Evaluation System.' *The China Quarterly* 223 (2015): 618-37 ; Wang, Zhen. Reassessing the Performance Evaluation System in the Xi Jinping Era: Changes and Implications. *East Asia* 35, 59-77 (2018).

3 Pei Minxin (2006), *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

lacking the technical skill to evaluate the real effectiveness of campaigns, they content themselves with superficial metrics (number of publications, theoretical geographic coverage, displayed linguistic diversity) without measuring the actual impact on public perceptions.

This hypothesis is consistent with the observation of ‘ambiguous synergies’ within the Greater Bay Area, where boundaries between public and private interests blur. The model of ‘small government, big society’ advocated by Wu Yanni herself creates an environment conducive to these arrangements, where private entrepreneurship feeds on public contracts in a gray zone escaping traditional control mechanisms.

THIRD HYPOTHESIS: THE ABSENCE OF NARRATIVE COHERENCE

Beyond these technical and bureaucratic failures, the Baybridge network’s ineffectiveness reveals another deficiency: the absence of narrative coherence. While not all effective disinformation necessarily relies on serial mechanisms, the most sophisticated and impactful campaigns mobilize complex narrative architectures⁴. These operations deploy shared architexts⁵ and ‘narrative constellations’ that guide both the production and reception of meaning, and render manipulated information particularly compelling.

The Baybridge network manifests a striking narrative cacophony. Chinese ‘positive energy’ discourses coexist incoherently with pro-Russian narratives, generating dissonances that fundamentally undermine credibility. The contradictory treatment of Xi Jinping’s visit to France exemplifies this absence of unified narrative grammar: positive portrayals from Chinese sources clash directly with hostile framings from Russian channels on the same platforms. More critically, these narratives fail to anchor themselves within pre-existing architexts that might lend them interpretive coherence. Unlike successful disinformation campaigns that tap into established narrative repertoires, the Baybridge content exists only as isolated fragments. These narrative shards lack connective tissue: no overarching storyline links disparate pieces, no thematic consistency emerges across episodes, no familiar patterns guide audience interpretation.

4 Paul Charon, “Lire la désinformation comme un récit sériel : pour une approche littéraire des manipulations de l’information” [‘Reading Disinformation as Serial Narrative: Toward a Literary Approach to Information Manipulation’], *Le Rubicon*, 13 novembre 2024.

5 Gérard Genette, *The Architext: an Introduction*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.

This architextual incoherence transforms what could be sophisticated influence infrastructure into a mere aggregator of disparate messages. Without the narrative scaffolding that enables audiences to construct meaning from partial information, technical sophistication becomes paradoxically counterproductive. The network multiplies the distribution of contradictory fragments that, lacking any narrative thread to weave them together, cancel each other out rather than reinforce a coherent worldview. The Baybridge network's failure thus confirms, through negative examples, the crucial importance of narrative architecture in information operations. Technical capacity without narrative competence produces noise, not influence.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

These three hypotheses are not mutually exclusive and likely reveal complementary dynamics. Technical incompetence could result from the primacy accorded to political connections over professional expertise in contract attribution. Conversely, the bureaucratic logic of numbers could discourage any investment in the qualitative improvement of a system whose ineffectiveness does not affect operator remuneration.

This analysis raises fundamental questions about the heterogeneous nature of China's informational influence apparatus. While ambitions are manifest and investments considerable, the execution by these particular actors reveals systemic flaws that distinguish opportunistic commercial operations from state-directed influence campaigns. It would be erroneous, however, to extrapolate from this case study a general assessment of Chinese capabilities. When strategic priorities are at stake and professional intelligence services or central propaganda department assume direct control, China has demonstrated considerably greater sophistication and effectiveness. The contrast between the amateurism observed in this network and the documented capabilities of other entities suggests that we are witnessing a peripheral manifestation of a multi-tiered system, where resource allocation and operational competence correlate directly with perceived strategic importance.

This study ultimately serves to demystify the abstract entities that populate contemporary discourse on information warfare. Behind the often mythologized 'Chinese influence operations' to which Western analysts frequently attribute near-omnipotent capabilities, our investigation reveals a more prosaic reality: second-tier actors operating with

limited competence and negligible effectiveness. The granular examination of individual operators like Wu Yanni and Zhu Haisong (local entrepreneurs leveraging political connections for commercial gain rather than master strategists orchestrating sophisticated influence campaigns) underscores the analytical imperative of moving beyond aggregate threat assessments toward actor-specific analysis.

This differentiation is not merely academic; it carries significant policy implications. The conflation of all Chinese information operations into a monolithic threat risks both resource misallocation and strategic miscalculation. By contrast, the methodical decryption of these networks enables the identification of genuinely sophisticated operations that merit serious countermeasures, while exposing the Potemkin villages of digital influence that, despite their technical infrastructure, pose minimal actual threat to democratic discourse. These lessons invite not only a critical reassessment of the real disinformation capabilities attributed to authoritarian state actors, but also a reflection on our own performative role as researchers and analysts. The tendency toward rhetorical inflation in describing Chinese (or Russian) informational threats risks creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, where our alarmist discourse shapes public perceptions and legitimizes disproportionate responses to sometimes overestimated threats. This epistemic responsibility demands redoubled empirical rigor, scrupulously distinguishing proven capabilities from anxiety-driven projections. The continuation of such granular investigations thus constitutes not only a scholarly necessity but a strategic imperative, allowing democratic societies to calibrate their responses proportionally to actual rather than imagined threats.

Ultimately, the Baybridge case illustrates the limits of a decentralized, commercially driven approach to influence that neglects cultural and editorial dimensions in favor of a purely quantitative logic. This particular network's failures should not obscure the broader reality of Chinese information operations, which encompass both these ineffective commercial ventures and highly sophisticated state-directed campaigns. It also reveals how bureaucratic pathologies can transform an instrument of soft power into a theater of private enrichment, emptying the initial geopolitical ambition of its substance. These lessons invite a critical reassessment of the real disinformation capabilities attributed to authoritarian state actors, while underscoring the necessity of understanding the internal logics that govern their deployment.

BAYBRIDGE

ANATOMY OF A CHINESE INFORMATION INFLUENCE ECOSYSTEM

Tadaweb and Paul Charon

Behind the façade of innocuous digital marketing firms operating from China's Greater Bay Area lies a vast ecosystem of information manipulation targeting audiences across dozens of countries. This study unveils BAYBRIDGE, an infrastructure whose technical sophistication stands in striking contrast to its operational dysfunction. This research maps the network's architecture, traces its connections to Chinese state propaganda apparatus, and decrypts the discourse strategies deployed toward foreign publics. It reveals how companies exploit hundreds of inauthentic news websites to disseminate content aligned with Beijing's—and Moscow's—interests. Yet the system betrays fundamental contradictions. Chinese "positive energy" narratives promoting harmony coexist chaotically with aggressive pro-Kremlin propaganda. Poor translations, absent editorial oversight, and narrative incoherence render the operation remarkably ineffective. This paradox illuminates crucial questions: Does incompetence explain the failure, or does bureaucratic rent-seeking transform geopolitical ambition into private enrichment theater? This work demystifies authoritarian information capabilities while demonstrating the imperative of actor-specific analysis. A contribution to understanding disinformation ecosystems and the pathologies that limit their effectiveness.