CNA

China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in the Mekong Region

Heidi Holz and Ryan Loomis

Abstract

This document summarizes a series of five CNA reports on China's efforts to shape the information environments of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. For each country, we began by establishing a general understanding of the country's information environment—the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that play key roles in shaping opinions through the dissemination of news and information—so that we could place China's efforts into context. Next, we identified key PRC narratives and examined each of the tactics, tools, and techniques that China is employing to promote those narratives to local audiences. Finally, CNA identified issues that affect the reach and resonance of China's efforts to shape the views of local audiences in each country. This document draws from the five country reports to offer broad observations about how China is attempting to influence what audiences in the region read, hear, and watch.

This document contains the best opinion of CNA at the time of issue.

It does not necessarily represent the opinion of the sponsor or client.

Distribution

Approved for public release. Unlimited distribution.

Cooperative Agreement/Grant Award Number: SGECPD18CA0027.

Cover image credit: Shutterstock with modifications by Sue Mercer.

Approved by: **September 2020**

M. Kivlehan-Wise

Maryanne Kivlehan-Wise- Director
China Studies Program
CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division

Request additional copies of this document through inquiries@cna.org.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This document summarizes a series of five CNA reports on China's efforts to shape the information environment in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, and offers broad observations about how China is attempting to influence what audiences in the Mekong region read, hear, and watch about China.

Observations and trends

China is actively seeking to shape the information environment throughout the Mekong region.

- We found evidence that China was employing a broad range of tactics, tools, and techniques to shape the views of audiences in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- The scope of Beijing's efforts touches virtually all aspects of the information environment in each country, including digital, print, and broadcast media, as well as information and telecommunications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

China's efforts to shape the information environment in the Mekong region are aimed at promoting narratives that further Beijing's strategic interests.

- PRC media promotes narratives that emphasize China's historical, cultural, political, and geographic ties with each country to foster receptivity for Beijing's diplomatic initiatives.

- Beijing also consistently seeks to promote the narrative that cooperation with China produces tangible economic benefits. This narrative was especially prominent in PRC official statements and media targeted at audiences in Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar—all of which are home to major Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.

- As the global COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, Beijing sought to portray itself as the primary source of aid and assistance to the Mekong countries.

Although there was some variation from country to country, Beijing's activities typically fell within the following four lines of effort:

1. Tailoring the content produced by China's state-run media outlets—such as China's official Xinhua News Agency and overseas broadcasters China Global Television (CGTN) and China Radio International (CRI)—so that it is more accessible, credible, and compelling to local audiences.

2. Maximizing channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content to reach as broad an audience as possible in each country.

3. Attempting to influence local media outlets and journalists to promote China-friendly narratives and suppress narratives that China finds objectionable.

4. Using entertainment as a means of promoting China's narratives to local audiences beyond the news media.

Several aspects of China's efforts to shape the regional information environment stood out as particularly worthy of attention. These include the following:

- ***Content sharing.*** One of Beijing's most widely employed tools for reaching broad audiences in the Mekong region is the establishment of content-sharing agreements between PRC media outlets and local media outlets. Indeed, PRC state-run media outlets have established content-sharing agreements with local media outlets in all five countries.

- ***Engaging with political elites***. Beijing actively engages with political elites in the Mekong countries to secure support for its policies and objectives in the region. The governments of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand have welcomed China's presence in their respective information environments, opening the door to cooperation with PRC media outlets and investment by PRC entities. In contrast, Vietnam's government has actively sought to exclude China.

- ***Leveraging financial investments in local media outlets.*** PRC entities have invested in local media outlets in several Mekong countries In Myanmar and Laos, PRC investment in local media outlets appeared to be largely confined to publications targeted at the local Chinese-speaking communities. In Thailand and Cambodia, however, PRC-based entities have gone to great lengths to secure stakes in Thai- and Khmer-language media outlets that reach broader audiences in those two countries.

- ***Spreading disinformation.*** Chinese state-run media has spread disinformation about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this campaign, CRI Facebook pages targeted at audiences in Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand posted a CGTN video implying that COVID-19 originated in a US military lab.

Several factors create hurdles for Beijing as it seeks to shape the information environments of the Mekong countries. *These include the following:*

- *Local laws and regulations that restrict foreign media*. Domestic laws in Vietnam and Thailand have created hurdles for China.

- *Popular anti-China sentiment.* In each of the Mekong countries, we found evidence of anti-China sentiment among the domestic population. Anti-China sentiment was strongest in Vietnam, where it was virtually pervasive.

- *Lack of credibility among local audiences.* According to local media professionals and experts, many in the Mekong region view PRC media with skepticism.

- *Competition from foreign media.* PRC media outlets also face the challenge of competing with other foreign media outlets that have well-established reputations among audiences in the region as credible sources of news and information, such as Radio Free Asia (RFA), Voice of America (VOA), and Radio France Internationale (RFI).

Just as Beijing faces a variety of challenges as it seeks to shape the information environment in the Mekong region, it also faces potential opportunities. *These include the following:*

- Support from political elites, especially in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand.

- Financial stresses on independent media outlets make foreign investment more attractive.

- Deficits in funding for training and professional associations that China can step in to fill.

- Low digital literacy and the rise of social media create opportunities for China to promote misleading information.

Recommendations from experts & media professionals in the region

Over the course of our research, we spoke with a variety of media professionals and experts from the Mekong countries. During our conversations with these experts, they suggested ways that the international community could help to support the integrity of the information environment in their respective countries. These include the following:

- *Providing funding to support independent media.* Throughout the region, independent media outlets often struggle to survive financially, which makes Chinese funding attractive. Media professionals and experts in the region contended that independent media needs sustainable funding that does not seek to influence or compromise the journalistic integrity of their work. Reports by the Center for International Media Assistance provide useful

resources for international donors looking for effective strategies for supporting independent media.[1]

- ***Support efforts to promote digital literacy.*** External actors like China use trends associated with the increasing complexity of the modern information environment, such as the rise of social media, to promote misleading information. Providing media consumers in the region with the skills to evaluate and filter sources of news for accuracy and objectivity—especially on social media—will empower them to form views and opinions based on facts.

- ***Coordinate with long-standing, trusted international partners.*** Several local experts noted that officials in the region are likely to view Western-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and media training organizations with a critical eye. These experts suggested collaborating with international organizations that already have an established track record of working in the Mekong countries—such as Fojo Media Institute or the Global Investigative Journalism Network—as a way to improve access.

- ***Provide journalism and media skills training.*** Media professionals and experts in the region suggested that providing discrete skills training for journalists in partnership with in-country government organizations might be one of the most successful strategies for helping to support the integrity of the media environment in these countries. Conversely, attempts to support broader media development and/or promote Western journalistic norms would be unlikely to secure the necessary official approval.

Areas for further research

The reports in this series offer an understanding of the variety and scope of Beijing's efforts to shape the information environments across the Mekong. They should not be viewed as comprehensive assessments of the effectiveness of China's efforts. To develop a more nuanced understanding of the impact of China's efforts on the views of target audiences, we recommend a targeted study that makes use of extensive polling data and sentiment analysis. Such an effort would be a worthwhile investment. Its results could be used to inform a diverse set of stakeholders in the region as they develop and implement effective approaches for mitigating any undesirable effects of Beijing's influence in each country.

---

[1] The Center for International Media Assistance has published several reports exploring strategies for how to provide effective support for media development, see: https://www.cima.ned.org/publications/.

Contents

1. Observations and Trends

1.1 Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has embarked on a campaign to shape what audiences around the world read, hear, and watch about China.[1] In a report to the 19th Party Congress, CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping voiced the aspirations of this campaign, stating, "We will improve our capacity for international communication so as to tell China's stories well, present a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic view of China, and enhance our country's cultural soft power."[2] Beijing's efforts to influence the global media environment by promoting narratives that further its interests and silencing its critics have attracted attention in the international media, and prompted expressions of concern from journalists, scholars, and officials around the world.[3]

This document summarizes a series of five CNA reports on China's efforts to shape the information environments of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. For each country, we began by establishing a general understanding of the country's information environment—the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that play key roles in shaping opinions through the dissemination of news and information—so that we could place China's efforts into context. Next, we identified key PRC narratives and examined each of the tactics, tools, and techniques that China is employing to promote those narratives to local audiences. Finally, CNA identified issues that affect the reach and resonance of China's efforts to shape the views of local audiences in each country. This document draws from the five country reports to offer broad observations about how China is attempting to influence what audiences in the region read, hear, and watch.[4]

1.2 Scope of China's efforts

China is actively seeking to shape the information environment throughout the Mekong region. We found evidence that China was employing a broad range of tactics, tools, and techniques to shape the views of audiences in all five countries. The scope of Beijing's efforts touches virtually all aspects of the information environment in each country, including digital, print, and broadcast media, as well as information and telecommunications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

1.3 PRC narratives targeted at the Mekong countries

China seeks to promote narratives that (1) foster a positive image of China, (2) counter Beijing's critics, and (3) support China's national objectives (see Appendix A for China's global narratives). China tailors these narratives to target audiences in specific regions or countries. In the Mekong region, Beijing promotes narratives that further Beijing's strategic interests in the following ways:

- PRC officials and media emphasize China's historical, cultural, political, and geographic ties with each country to foster receptivity for Beijing's diplomatic initiatives.

- Beijing also consistently seeks to advance the narrative that cooperation with China produces tangible, economic benefits. This narrative was especially prominent in PRC official statements and media targeted at audiences in Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar— all of which are home to major Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. (See Figure 1)

- As the global COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in 2020, Beijing sought to portray itself as the primary source of aid and assistance to the Mekong countries.

Key PRC narratives targeted at each of the Mekong countries are summarized in Table 1.

Figure 1. "Special Supplement" in the *Phnom Penh Post,* with articles promoting BRI projects

Source: "Bridge Over the Mekong River," ស្ពានឆ្លងកាត់ទន្លេមេគង្គតភ្ជាប់ស្រុកកូច្បារ និងស្រុកស្ទឹងតង, *Phnom Penh Post* Special Supplement, Oct. 1, 2019, accessed Apr. 3, 2020, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/sites/default/files/pdf_public/20190925_china_national_day_pk.pdf.

Table 1.   Key PRC narratives directed at the Mekong countries

Cambodia	***China supports the Hun Sen government.*** While many countries have condemned Hun Sen's authoritarian tactics, China has consistently expressed support. ***Cambodia benefits greatly from its partnership with China.*** Beijing portrays itself as Cambodia's number one economic partner. ***China helps Cambodia fight COVID-19.*** PRC media portrays China as Cambodia's primary source of COVID-19 relief.
Laos	***Cooperation with China benefits Laos.*** PRC media highlights China's investment in projects that appear to help Laos achieve its development goals. ***China is a responsible member of the international community.*** PRC media touts China's provision of public goods, including education, humanitarian, and environmental aid, to Laos. ***China is the primary source of assistance fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.*** China has sought to portray itself as Laos' main source of assistance dealing with the virus.
Myanmar	***China and Myanmar have a unique friendship.*** PRC officials and media use the Burmese term "pauk phaw," which means "fraternal ties," to describe bilateral relations. ***Cooperation with China is beneficial to Myanmar.*** Beijing promotes the narrative that cooperation benefits Myanmar's economic development. (See Figure 2) ***Unlike the US/West, Beijing supports Myanmar's efforts to deal with the Rohingya crisis.*** PRC media points out that China has become a key partner to Myanmar as it deals with isolation from the West and international legal repercussions. ***China provides Myanmar with the means to fight COVID-19.*** Burmese-language PRC media promotes China as Myanmar's main ally in the fight against the pandemic.
Thailand	***Western media's portrayal of China's actions and intentions is inaccurate.*** PRC media portrays Western media as biased and asserts that Chinese media is a more accurate source of news and information about China and the rest of the world. ***Cooperation with China benefits Thailand.*** In particular, PRC media highlights the potential economic benefits of various BRI projects. ***China is a responsible member of the international community.*** PRC media portrays China as an upholder of the international system and provider of public goods, such as assistance combating the COVID-19 pandemic.
Vietnam	***China and Vietnam have a shared heritage.*** Beijing asserts that the two countries are inextricably linked by shared cultures, socialist ideologies, and geography. ***China is willing to set aside its differences with Vietnam and pursue greater cooperation.*** PRC media portrays China as willing to cooperate on various issues and downplays frictions over conflicting South China Sea territorial claims. ***China is a more responsible international actor than the US.*** Beijing contrasts its professed support for multilateral institutions with alleged US unilateralism. PRC media also highlights Chinese aid to Vietnam, including in the fight against COVID-19.

Figure 2. Xinhua English and Burmese reporting on Kyaukphyu port project's benefits to local citizens in Myanmar

Source: China Xinhua News, "#BeltandRoadInitiative," Twitter Jan. 18, 2020, accessed Jan. 2020, https://twitter.com/search?q=%40XHNews%20surrounded%20by%20superb%20natural%20conditions&src=typed_query. "Kyaukphyu Port Will be a Model Project of Sino-Myanmar BRI Cooperation," (ကျောက်ဖြူဆိပ်ကမ်းသည် တရုတ်-မြန်မာ BRI ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်မှု၏ စံပြစီမံကိန်းဖြစ်လာမည်), *Xinhua Myanmar,* Jan. 19, 2020, accessed Jul. 30, 2020, https://xinhuamyanmar.com/sino-myanmar/politics/26026-bri.

1.4 Four main PRC lines of effort

Although there was some variation, Beijing's activities typically fell within the following four lines of effort:

1. Tailoring the content produced by China's state-run media outlets so that it is more accessible, credible, and compelling to local audiences

2. Maximizing channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content to reach as broad an audience as possible in each country

3. Attempting to influence local media outlets and journalists to promote China-friendly narratives and suppress narratives that China finds objectionable

4. Using entertainment as a means of promoting China's narratives to local audiences beyond the news media

1.4.1. Tailoring content

China's state-directed media outlets tailor content in a variety of ways in order to make it accessible, credible, and compelling to audiences in the Mekong countries. The main tools that China uses to achieve this include the following:

- Producing media content in local languages

- Reporting on local events

- Recruiting local voices

1.4.1.1 Producing media content in local languages

PRC state-run media outlets—such as China's official Xinhua News Agency and overseas broadcasters CGTN and CRI—produce content in languages spoken in each of the Mekong countries (see Table 2). Indeed, at least two core PRC state-run media outlets produce content in the official language of each country.

Table 2.   State-run PRC media outlets that produce content in languages spoken in the Mekong region

Media outlet	Thai	Vietnamese	Khmer	Burmese	Lao	French	English
China Radio International (CRI; 中国国际广播电台)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
China.com (中华网) *	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
China Global Television Network (CGTN)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Xinhua News Agency (新华社)	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
People's Daily (人民日报)	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
China Daily	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓

Source: CNA.

*The Lao- and Vietnamese-language China.com sites do not appear to be active and have not been updated since 2019 and 2018, respectively.

1.4.1.2 Reporting on local events

China's state-run media outlets have bureaus and correspondents around the world. This presence provides them with the capacity to report on local events and appeal to foreign audiences, who are interested in what is going on in their own countries. It also provides China with the capacity to fill deficits in countries where the media lacks resources for producing local news and content.[5]

In the Mekong region, PRC state-run media outlets operate bureaus in Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Yangon, Bangkok, and Hanoi, from which they can report on local events. However, the reporting generated by these bureaus tends to be Sino-centric and focus only on events that involved China. For instance, the website for Xinhua's Yangon bureau features a page dedicated to Sino-Myanmar relations with daily news on bilateral political, economic, cultural, and social issues, but there was a conspicuous absence of reporting on local events in Myanmar that do not involve China.[6] This was also the case with the websites of PRC state-run media outlets targeted at audiences in Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.

We observed one noteworthy exception to PRC media's tendency to focus on China. In Cambodia, CRI leverages its partnership with Cambodia's state-run radio station, Radio National Kampuchea (RNK), to regularly produce Khmer-language reporting on local events that do not involve China. Jointly established by CRI and RNK in 2008, Cambodia-China Friendship Radio (CCFR) produces broadcast and digital content that includes local news and Cambodian cultural perspectives.[7] One recent report, for instance, focused on local fiber-processing industry and the Cambodian minister of agriculture's call for fiber-processing manufacturers to use local labor as much as possible.[8]

1.4.1.3 Recruiting foreign voices

PRC media often seek to "borrow" foreign voices in order to amplify and lend credence to Chinese narratives by creating the appearance that they are espoused by others outside of China. One way that PRC media does this is by quoting officials and non-Chinese subject matter experts from the country or region that is the target of PRC messaging.

Chinese state-run media targeted at the Mekong countries routinely quotes government officials, industry leaders, and average citizens from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam in an effort to lend credibility to PRC narratives. Examples include the following:

- A Thai-language article published on Xinhua and CRI's websites quotes retired army general and current director of the Thailand-China Research Center of the Belt and Road Initiative, General Surasit Thanadthang, saying, "One Belt One Road [BRI] is a platform for all parties to jointly seek development" (see Figure 3).[9]

- A Xinhua report quotes Cambodia's Royal University of Phnom Penh scholar Neak Chandarith, saying, "Beyond economic development, the BRI also presents itself as a

way toward building peace and friendship among countries by enhancing mutual understanding, trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges."[10]

- A report by CCP mouthpiece *People's Daily* on the Kunming-Vientiane railway quotes a Lao government official stating that the railway will "speed up" development between Laos and other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and "become a new engine for the modernization of Laos."[11]

Figure 3.   CRI Thai reporting using local voices to bolster BRI cooperation

Source: "The Director of the Thai-Chinese Strategic Cooperation Research Center Stated that Thailand is Preparing to Promote Thai-Chinese Cooperation in the Framework of 'One Belt One Road'," ผอ.ศูนย์วิจัยความร่วมมือยุทธศาสตร์ไทย-จีน ระบุ ไทยเตรียมส่งเสริมขยายความร่วมมือไทย-จีนในกรอบหนึ่งแถบหนึ่งเส้นทาง, CRI Thailand, Apr. 28, 2019, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, http://thai.cri.cn/20190428/e90079ae-991f-57c3-a6e7-2795d8d5d27a.html.

1.4.2 Maximizing channels for distribution of PRC media content

In addition to tailoring content, China also seeks to maximize the number and types of channels that it uses to distribute PRC-produced media content to audiences in the Mekong countries. China's main tools for doing this include the following:

- Using local media outlets as channels for distributing Chinese-produced content

- Establishing a presence on social media, especially Facebook

- Creating new channels for distribution by investing in the development of telecommunications infrastructure and investing in local media outlets.

1.4.2.1 Using local media outlets as channels for distribution

One of the key ways that China seeks to maximize its reach is by using foreign media outlets as channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content. In the Mekong countries, it does this in the following ways:

- Selling or providing content for free via content-sharing agreements

- Jointly producing content with local media outlets

- Buying space in local publications.

Selling or providing content free via content-sharing agreements

One of Beijing's most widely employed tools for reaching broad audiences in the Mekong region is the sharing of PRC media content with local media outlets. In each of the five countries, China has secured content-sharing agreements with national news outlets. This topic is discussed in further detail in section 1.5.1 of this report.

Jointly producing content with local media outlets

PRC media outlets also jointly produce content with local media outlets in the Mekong countries. In many cases, PRC joint productions with local media outlets fall within the entertainment sector, consisting of television series and films. For example, outlets from China and Myanmar jointly produced the TV series *Legends of Song and Dance,* a historical drama about cultural exchange between the Tang dynasty and the Kingdom of Myanmar.[12] The first film jointly produced by Laos and China—*Champa Blossoms*—is a drama that "tells beautiful love stories between Lao and Chinese nationals, and shows the friendly relations between the two countries as well as their sceneries and cultural features."[13]

Buying space in local publications

China pays to place its message in foreign media outlets in the form of advertorials, inserts, and sponsored content. Perhaps the most prominent example are the "China Watch" advertorials that *China Daily* publishes in approximately 30 major daily newspapers around the world, including the *Washington Post, Wall Street Journal*, *Daily Telegraph, Financial Times,* and *Mainichi Shimbun*.[14] There is evidence that Beijing employs this tactic in the Mekong countries as well. For example, a 2019 "special supplement," paid for by Chinese entities such as Bank of China and Grand China Life Insurance, ran in the print and online Khmer-, English-, and Chinese-language editions of the popular *Phnom Penh Post.*[15]

Authoring opinion pieces for foreign media outlets

PRC officials and CCP-approved surrogates write opinion pieces for publication in local media outlets in the Mekong region. These opinion pieces invariably promote CCP-approved, pro-China narratives. Perhaps the most conspicuous of these are the signed letters that Xi Jinping publishes in local media ahead of state visits to other countries. Examples include the following:

- Ahead of his January 2020 visit to Myanmar, Xi Jinping authored an article that was published in several of Myanmar's state-owned newspapers and featured on state-run broadcast radio and television programs.[16]

- Ahead of his visit to Laos in November 2017, Xi Jinping authored an article titled "China and Laos: Working Together for a Community of Shared Future with Strategic Significance," which was published in Lao-language state-run media outlets including *Passasson*, *Pathet Lao,* and the English-language daily *Vientiane Times.[17]*

- Prior to visiting Cambodia in 2016, President Xi penned an article in Cambodia's most widely circulated print newspaper, *Rasmei Kampuchea*, in which he promoted the narrative that China supports Cambodia's government, "on issues related to each other's core interests and major concerns."[18]

1.4.2.2 Establishing a presence on Facebook

Although Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are blocked in China, PRC government organizations, officials, and state-run media outlets have established a robust presence on these popular overseas social media platforms. Xinhua has described the objective of its "global social media presence" as "better communicating the voices of China."[19]

Facebook is extraordinarily popular throughout the Mekong region and is one of the primary platforms through which audiences there access news and information. In Laos and Myanmar, Facebook is virtually synonymous with the internet. In the words of one senior Myanmar official, "to many in Myanmar, Facebook is the internet and the internet is Facebook."[20] To reach audiences in the region, PRC state-run media outlets have established a particularly

active presence on Facebook, with pages in Burmese, Khmer, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese (see Table 3 for information about CRI's pages).

Table 3.   CRI Facebook accounts in Southeast Asian languages

Language	Facebook account	Followers	URL
English	China Plus News	21,759,950	https://www.facebook.com/chinaplusnews/
Burmese	CRI Myanmar	1,188,228	https://www.facebook.com/myanmar.cri/
Khmer	CCFR Beijing (China-Cambodian Friendship Radio)	1,272,764	https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/
Lao	CRI-FM 93 Vientiane	1,208,773	https://www.facebook.com/crifm93/
Thai	China Face	2,542,267	https://www.facebook.com/ChinafacecriThai/
Vietnamese	Đài Phát thanh Quốc tế Trung Quốc	1,932,223	https://www.facebook.com/criviet

Source: CNA.

1.3.2.3 Creating new channels for distribution

China has used its vast economic resources to acquire and even create new channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content. It has done this in two main ways:

- ***Purchasing or leasing foreign media outlets.*** We found evidence that PRC-based entities had invested in media outlets in Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. This topic is discussed in detail in section 1.5.3.

- ***Investing in the region's telecommunications infrastructure.*** Huawei is actively pursuing efforts to develop 5G networks in Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia.[21] In Laos and Cambodia, China has invested in television broadcast infrastructure to promote the adoption of the Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast (DTMB)—a Chinese mobile and fixed digital television standard—and create opportunities to broadcast Chinese television programming to those countries.[22]

1.4.3 Attempting to influence local media

In addition to using its own state-run media to promote its narratives, Beijing seeks to influence reporting by domestic media outlets and journalists in the Mekong countries. The main tools that Beijing uses to do this in the region include the following:

- Hosting international media forums and conferences
- Hosting education and training programs for local media professionals
- Funding local journalist associations

1.4.3.1 Hosting international media forums and conferences

Beijing organizes and sponsors a variety of forums and conferences for foreign media professionals in an effort to shape their perceptions of China. Media professionals from each of the Mekong countries participated in these forums, one of the most noteworthy of which is the annual Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Media Summit (*Lancang Jiang Meigong He Hezuo Meiti Fenghui;* 澜沧江湄公河合作媒体峰会), which has taken place in China and alternating Mekong country capitals since 2017.[23] In addition to regional forums like the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Media Summit, China also hosts bilateral conferences with Mekong countries. Examples include the following:

- China has held two "China-Cambodia Radio, Television, and Television Cooperation" meetings, the first in Chengdu in 2018 and the second in Phnom Penh in 2019.[24]

- In early 2018, Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith met in Vientiane with Xinhua News Agency President Cai Mingzhao to discuss bilateral media cooperation during a forum was co-organized by Xinhua and the Commission for Propaganda and Training of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party; Lao's Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism; and Khaosan Pathet Lao (KPL).[25]

1.4.3.2 Hosting education and training programs for local media professionals

China hosts a variety of training, education, and exchange programs that include participants from the Mekong countries. The programs aim to cultivate a positive impression of China among foreign journalists and serve as platforms for directly promoting China's preferred narratives. For example, in 2018, Xinhua's Guangxi bureau hosted a group of Cambodian reporters in what ASEAN TOP NEWS described as an effort "to show the achievements of China's development in the new era by inviting editors and reporters from mainstream [media] in Cambodia to visit China."[26] Evidence suggests that media professionals are often invited on multiple all-expense-paid trips to China. A 2020 report by the International Federation of

Journalists (IFJ), for instance, notes that each of the nine Myanmar journalists that IFJ surveyed had been on between two and nine PRC-sponsored trips to China.[27]

1.4.3.4 Funding local journalist associations

Beijing also funds local journalist associations in an effort to influence their reporting and encourage cooperation with PRC media outlets. For example, according to local experts and media professionals, the Thai Journalists Association and the Thai-Chinese Journalists Association receive a substantial amount of their funding from the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok.[28]

1.4.4. Using entertainment

The Chinese Party-State actively promotes Chinese-produced entertainment media abroad to foster admiration for Chinese culture and history. In the Mekong region, China primarily does this in the following ways:

- Exporting Chinese-produced films and television programs
- Co-producing films and television programs with local media outlets
- Promoting social media platforms subject to Chinese control

1.4.4.1 Exporting Chinese-produced films and television programs

PRC state-run media outlets dubbed or subtitled a wide variety of Chinese films and television programs into local languages spoken in the Mekong countries. For instance, since 2015, China's Guangxi People's Radio has dubbed more than 200 Chinese television programs into Lao for broadcast on Lao National Television. China has also paid for several famous literary dramas—*Journey to the West* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*—to be dubbed into Lao and made available on LNTV1 and LNTV3.[29]

1.4.4.2 Co-producing films and television programs with local media outlets

Chinese entities also co-produced films and television programs with local outlets in Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. Of note, during the 2019 Hong Kong International Film and TV Market ("FilMart"), China's Poly Film Investment Co., TW Capital from Thailand and Thai Chi (Hainan) Culture and Media Co. struck a deal to establish a $14.9 million coproduction fund between China and Thailand to help launch TV and film projects that will appeal to Chinese and Southeast Asian audiences.[30]

1.4.4.3 Promoting social media platforms subject to Chinese control

We found evidence that—although it had not yet come close to surpassing Facebook—PRC-based social media platform TikTok was gaining popularity in the Mekong countries. For

instance, TikTok registered as the fifth most popular application in Laos in June 2019.[31] According to 2019 data collected by a digital marketing firm, TikTok was downloaded by one in seven mobile users in Thailand.[32]

The importance of film and television to "telling China's" story

Recent reforms to the Chinese-Party state bureaucracy that oversees China's film and television industries are indicative of the importance that Beijing places on entertainment media as a means of shaping foreign views. As part of a series of reforms in 2018, Beijing tightened its control over the television and film industries by placing the entity that oversees them, the State Administration of Press, Publication and Film (SAPPFT), under the direct management of the Central Publicity Department (also known as the Central Propaganda Department). The professed goal of this reform was to ensure that PRC film and television programs were "telling China's story well" to audiences around the world. SAPPFT is responsible for international joint productions and the import and export of films. Zhang Hongsen, deputy director of SAPPFT, described Beijing's goal of forming a "global marketing network for Chinese films" that would "lift China's cultural status as a result."

Source: Zhang Yu, "China to Establish Powerful State-Media Conglomerate Unifying Three Heavyweight Broadcasters," *Global Times*, Mar. 26, 2016, https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1095280.shtml.

1.5 Key aspects of China's efforts

Over the course of our research on the Mekong countries, several aspects of China's efforts to shape the regional information environment stood out as being particularly worthy of attention. These include the following:

- Content sharing with local media outlets in each of the Mekong countries, especially with state-run and pro-government media outlets

- Engaging political elites

- Leveraging financial investments in local media outlets

- Spreading disinformation

1.5.1 Content sharing with local media outlets

One of Beijing's most widely employed tools for reaching broad audiences in the Mekong region is the establishment of content-sharing agreements between PRC media outlets and local media outlets. Indeed, PRC state-run media outlets have signed such agreements with

major media outlets in all five countries. Many of these agreements are with state-run and pro-government media outlets in the target country. Examples from each country are discussed below.

Laos

Chinese state-run media has signed multiple memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with state-run media outlets in Laos. For instance, in 2015, CRI, CCTV, and networks from Guangxi, Nanning, and Yunnan pledged to provide support for Lao National Radio (LNR) and Lao National Television (LNTV).[33] In October 2018, Laos' official news agency KPL, the main source of news and information in Laos, signed an agreement with Xinhua.[34] KPL, which supplies news to all other major media outlets in Laos, often republishes content by PRC state-run media.[35]

Myanmar

Xinhua provides Burmese- and English-language content to the News and Periodicals Enterprise (NPE) of Myanmar's Ministry of Information (MOI).[36] The NPE then provides the Xinhua content for publication to the state-run daily newspapers, *Kyemon, Myanma Alinn,* and *Global New Light of Myanmar*, which offer both print and online editions.[37]

Cambodia

PRC media outlets actively seek to place their content in Cambodian media through content-sharing agreements with Cambodian government organizations and pro-government media outlets. Cambodia's MOI has signed several bilateral MOUs with Chinese media outlets. These include MOUs between the Cambodian MOI and the state-run news agency Agence Kampuchea Presse (AKP), and Xinhua and Guangxi Provincial Radio.[38] In addition, Xinhua, *Global Times*, and other Chinese media outlets provide content and coordinate with key online pro-government outlets like Fresh News.[39]

Vietnam

Under a 2017 content-sharing agreement between the country's official news agency Vietnam News Agency (VNA) and Xinhua, Vietnamese state-run media publishes some English-language Xinhua articles. Of note, the scope of the agreement is narrow and does not include sharing of Xinhua's Vietnamese-language content.[40]

Thailand

In Thailand, which is home to one of the most diverse media environments in the region, PRC media outlets have pursued cooperation with a broader range of local media outlets. PRC media outlets signed at least 13 content-sharing agreements with Thai media outlets between 2015 and 2019, including state-run, pro-government, and independent commercial outlets associated with Thai opposition groups (see Table 4). Key among the Thai media organizations with which Xinhua has signed content-sharing agreements is the conglomerate Matichon

Group. In July 2019, *Khaosod*'s parent company signed an agreement for all of the Matichon Group to use Xinhua news. In addition to the daily newspaper *Matichon*, the content-sharing agreement also means that *Khaosod, Khaosod English, The Nation,* and Matichon's millions of followers see Xinhua content as well.[41] At least one media expert noted that *Matichon's* signing of a content-sharing agreement with Xinhua was viewed as a surprise and disappointed many of its readers.[42]

Table 4.   Thai media outlets known to have content-sharing agreements with Xinhua

Thai outlet	Outlet description
MONO 29	Third most popular TV channel in Thailand, free-to-air[43]
TNN 24	Free-to-air satellite, cable, and terrestrial Thai news channel[44]
Business Today	Thai and English print and online business news platform[45]
Smart SME	Thai media production company focused on TV and online video content for business[46]
MThai Voice Online	Thai online news and entertainment content[47]
Manager Online	Online content for Thai daily newspaper (*Manager Daily*) with circulation of 300,000 (2016)[48]
Sanook	Thai online news and entertainment content with 3.4 million Facebook followers, now owned by Tencent[49]
Independent News Network (INN)	Thai 24-hour radio and online news and entertainment[50]
Thailand Today	English-language news portal[51]
Bangkok Wealth & Biz	Thai magazine and online content on economic and business news[52]
State broadcasters National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT) and Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT)	National TV and Radio channels administered from the Office of the Prime Minister[53]
Matichon	Owned by Matichon Group[54]
Khaosod	Owned by Matichon Group[55]

Source: CNA.

1.5.2 Engaging with political elites

Beijing actively engages with political elites in the Mekong countries in order to secure support for its policies and objectives in the region. The governments of several Mekong countries have welcomed China's presence in their respective information environments (see Table 5). In each of these countries, pro-China government policies have opened the door to cooperation with PRC media outlets and investment by PRC entities.

Table 5.   Political support for cooperation with China

Cambodia	Cambodia's ruling regime has backed cooperative agreements between PRC media and domestic state-run media outlets and welcomed Chinese investment in Cambodian media outlets and telecommunications infrastructure. Cambodia's MOI has signed multiple MOUs with Chinese media outlets, including a content-sharing agreement between the state-run news agency AKP, Xinhua, and Guangxi Provincial Radio.[56]
Laos	The only foreign media outlets permitted to publish and broadcast in Laos are from China and Vietnam. This is largely due to the close political relationship between Laos' ruling communist party and the ruling communist parties of China and Vietnam. China's outsized footprint in Laos' media environment is also due to Laos' heavy reliance on Chinese-backed infrastructure development projects.
Myanmar	Myanmar's government has welcomed PRC political and economic support. In addition to being Myanmar's largest investor, China has also become a key partner to Myanmar on the international stage as it deals with isolation from the West and international legal repercussions over the Rohingya crisis.[57] As other nations turn away, China broadcasts its support for Myanmar's efforts to "promote peace and reconciliation" and "safeguard its legitimate rights and interests."[58]
Thailand	Thai officials have publicly welcomed content-sharing agreements between PRC state-run news agencies and Thai state-run media outlets, contending that PRC media offers an alternative perspective to that offered by Western media. Thailand's state-run broadcaster, the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT), has content-sharing agreements with both Xinhua and CCTV.[59]
Vietnam	In contrast to the other Mekong countries, Vietnam's government has actively sought to exclude China from its information environment. Vietnam's tightly controlled state-run media widely reiterates the Vietnamese government's official opposition to China's policies and activities, especially those related to Beijing's competing maritime claims in the South China Sea.[60] At the same time, Vietnamese media outlets actively exclude Chinese voices and perspectives from their reporting and are reluctant to publish interviews with Chinese officials.

Source: CNA.

1.5.3 Leveraging financial investments in local media outlets

As noted earlier in this report, PRC entities have invested in local media outlets in several countries in the region. In Myanmar and Laos, PRC investment in local media outlets appeared to be largely confined to publications targeted at the local Chinese-speaking communities (see Appendix B). In Thailand and Cambodia, however, PRC-based entities have gone to great lengths to secure a stake in media outlets that reach broader audiences in each of those countries.

1.5.3.1 Circumventing local laws in Thailand

One noteworthy aspect of China's footprint in Thailand's media environment is that Chinese companies have found ways to circumvent Thai law in order to acquire media outlets in Thailand. Thai law places limits on foreign ownership of media outlets based in Thailand. The Broadcasting and Television Business Act of 2008 restricts foreign ownership of broadcast media companies to 25 percent.[61] In addition, the 2017 Constitution mandates that "the owner of a newspaper or other mass media shall be a Thai national."[62] However, it appears that large Chinese companies such as Global CAMG Media Group and Tencent have been able to establish de facto ownership of local Thai media outlets by registering subsidiaries in Thailand, with Thai nationals as local subsidiary owners. Examples include the following:

- ***Global CAMG's acquisition of 103 Like FM.*** Global CAMG Group, a state-run subsidiary of official PRC broadcaster CRI, has operated Bangkok's 103 Like FM since January 2011 through a wholly owned subsidiary that is registered to two Thai businessmen—a Thai golf course operator and a fiber-optics company executive.[63] CAMG claims that the station can cover Bangkok and reach over 10 million listeners.[64]

- ***Tencent's purchase of Sanook.*** In 2016, Chinese tech giant Tencent's Thailand-registered branch purchased Thai online news outlet and entertainment outlet Sanook.[65] Sanook claims 30 million active monthly users and has over 3.4 million Facebook followers.[66]

According to experts, many Thai media outlets have been struggling financially in recent years. One expert noted that more Thai media outlets closed in 2019 than in any previous year in history. The economic downturn brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic is likely to worsen this trend, making Chinese funding even more appealing to cash-strapped Thai media outlets.[67]

1.5.3.2 Establishing joint ventures in Cambodia

In Cambodia, one of the unique aspects of China's footprint in the local information environment is the existence of multiple joint ventures between PRC-based media outlets and

local Cambodian media organizations. These joint ventures include radio, television, and digital outlets (see Table 6) that reach broad audiences throughout the country.

Table 6.   Key joint ventures between PRC and Cambodian media outlets.

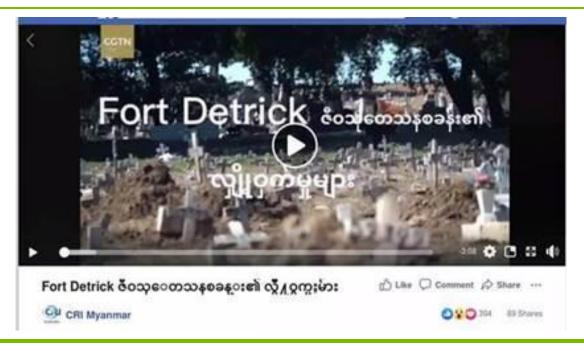| Outlet	Description
China Cambodia Friendship Radio (CCFR)	CRI and Cambodia's state-run radio station, RNK, jointly established CCFR in December 2008. CCFR broadcasts in Chinese and Khmer, and its programming includes Chinese and international news and Khmer- and Chinese-language music. CCFR's presence on the FM airwaves is also nearing 100 percent availability throughout the country. CCFR's Khmer Facebook page appears to be quite popular with 1.3 million Facebook followers. CRI also operates the CCFR mobile application that is available for free download from both Google Play and the Apple App stores.[68]
NICE TV	Launched in 2017, NICE TV is a joint venture between NICE Culture Investment Group from China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Cambodia's Interior Ministry, which reportedly holds a relatively small share in the venture.[69] NICE TV broadcasts in Khmer 24 hours a day, with daily programs that include news, education, arts, culture, entertainment, movies, drama series, and documentaries.[70] Deng Li, chairman of NICE Culture Investment Group, and Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng have reportedly touted the station as the "first Chinese-invested digital television channel in Cambodia" and claimed that it would "act as a bridge connecting China and Cambodia in culture and information."[71]
ASEAN TOP NEWS	Xinhua's Guangxi provincial branch partnered with a consortium of Chinese and Cambodian media organizations in 2018 to launch a Phnom Penh-based Khmer and Chinese-language website and mobile app called "ASEAN TOP NEWS."[72] The outlet describes itself as "an international news organization committed to providing multilingual news information in Chinese, English, Khmer and other languages to audiences in ASEAN countries."[73] *ASEAN TOP NEWS* publishes media content from state-run Chinese outlets and is backed financially by a Chinese corporation called Guangxi Qifu Health Education Investment Group.

Source: CNA

1.5.4 Spreading disinformation

China has used social media platforms to conduct information operations and spread disinformation abroad. For instance, in the summer of 2019, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, identified and disabled fake social media accounts run by a network of individuals in China with ties to the Chinese government. The accounts engaged in coordinated inauthentic behavior aimed at discrediting pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.[74] Similarly, in December 2019, researchers from Australian Strategic Policy Institute International Cyber

Policy Centre identified a similar "massive spambot network" aimed at influencing Twitter discussion of China's mass detention of ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang autonomous region.[75]

During the spring of 2020, Beijing engaged in a disinformation campaign about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this campaign, PRC state-run media outlets spread disinformation via their official Facebook accounts targeted at audiences in the Mekong countries.[76] In May 2020, China Global Television (CGTN) published a video that implied that the COVID-19 virus had originated in US military laboratories at Fort Detrick, Maryland. This video was dubbed and/or subtitled into Burmese, Vietnamese, and Thai and then posted on CRI's official websites and Facebook pages targeted at audiences in Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand (see Figure 4).[77]

Figure 4.   CRI Myanmar promoting disinformation about COVID-19

Source: Secrets of the Fort Detrick Biological Research Station." Fort Detrick ဇီဝသုတေတသနစခန်း၏ လျှို့ဝှက်ကွယ်မှား. CRI Myanmar Facebook. May 19, 2020. Accessed May 21, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=721337195093425.

2. Assessing China's Impact

A variety of factors have the potential to affect the reach and resonance of PRC narratives among audiences in the Mekong region. These include factors that present challenges for China and factors that present potential opportunities that Beijing could exploit in order to further its objectives.

2.1 Challenges that China faces

Several factors create hurdles for Beijing as it seeks to shape the information environments of the Mekong countries. These include the following:

- Local laws and regulations that restrict foreign media

- Popular anti-China sentiment

- Lack of credibility among local audiences

- Competition from foreign media

2.1.1 Local laws and regulations that restrict foreign media

In some Mekong countries, domestic laws and regulations have created challenges for China. In Vietnam, laws and regulations severely restrict China's access to the country's information environment. These include licensing requirements, visa restrictions for foreign journalists, regulations limiting the number of foreign broadcast channels that can be included in paid radio or television packages, regulations on the volume of foreign-produced content that can be broadcast, and the requirement that foreign media must be translated by state-approved translators.[78] In Thailand, domestic laws seek to limit foreign ownership of domestic media outlets. However, as discussed earlier in this report, PRC entities have found ways to circumvent these laws by using local subsidiaries.

2.1.2 Popular anti-China sentiment

We found evidence of anti-China sentiment among the domestic population of each Mekong country. This evidence took various forms, including critical reporting in local media and anti-China posts on social media (e.g., the anti-Beijing/antiauthoritarian #MilkTeaAlliance movement in Thailand). In Vietnam, anti-China sentiment is pervasive. In Laos and Cambodia, anti-China sentiment appeared to be strongest in areas directly affected by Chinese infrastructure projects. In Myanmar, anti-China sentiment focused on China's role in ongoing

militant clashes in Myanmar's north and east, China's consistent ranking as the top destination of human trafficking of Myanmar citizens, and the environmental impact of China's BRI projects. In Thailand, citizens expressed anti-China sentiment on social media, criticizing Beijing's authoritarianism and blaming it for the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1.3 Lack of credibility among local audiences

In several of the Mekong countries, PRC media suffers from a lack of credibility among local audiences. This was a recurring theme in our discussions with media professionals and experts from Cambodia and Vietnam in particular. Similarly, experts from Myanmar also noted that PRC media's increased presence does not equate to a positive impression of China among the general public in Myanmar. In the words of one local expert, "Myanmar people are suspicious of China."[79]

2.1.4 Competition from foreign media

PRC media outlets must also compete with other foreign media outlets that have well-established reputations as credible sources of news and information. In Cambodia, for instance, PRC state-run media appears to have had limited success supplanting the enduring popularity—and credibility—of Western media outlets such as RFA, VOA, and Radio France Internationale (RFI).

2.2 Opportunities that China can exploit

Just as Beijing faces a variety of challenges as it seeks to shape the information environment in the Mekong region, it also faces potential opportunities. These include the following:

- Support from political elites
- Financial stresses on independent media outlets
- Deficits in funding for training and professional associations
- Low digital literacy

2.2.1 Support from political elites

Support from the political elites of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand has already opened the door to China's presence in the information environments of those countries. China is likely to continue to cultivate and use these ties to promote its preferred narratives and further its strategic interests.

2.2.2 Financial stresses on independent media outlets

Private media outlets in the Mekong countries struggle to identify viable revenue models to support independent journalism. Increased competition for advertising revenues, competition from state media, and the shift to digital media have all created economic challenges.[80] The economic downturn brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to compound these trends and exacerbate the financial pressure on independent media. Local media experts across the Mekong expressed concern that these financial pressures may push more media outlets to seek investment from foreign entities, including China, which could change editorial standards in ways that degrade media independence.[81]

2.2.3 Deficits in funding for training & professional associations

Local media experts and professionals from each of the Mekong countries noted that there was a deficit of resources to fund programs for professional training and development. China is seeking to step in and fill this deficit by funding training programs and local professional associations. As noted earlier, the Thai Journalists Association, for instance, receives a significant portion of its funding from the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok.[82]

2.2.4 Low digital literacy

Local media experts and professionals expressed concern about low digital literacy—the ability to use digital technology to find, critically evaluate, and produce information—among audiences in the Mekong region.[83] They also expressed concern that China may exploit this vulnerability to promote misleading information via popular social media platforms such as Facebook. Indeed, in May 2020, we observed evidence that PRC media had begun to promote blatant disinformation about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Recommendations & Areas for Further Research

4.1 Recommendations from experts & media professionals in the region

Over the course of our research, we spoke to a variety of media professionals and experts from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. During our conversations, they suggested ways that the international community could help to support the integrity of the information environment in their respective countries.

Providing funding to support independent media

Throughout the Mekong region, independent media outlets often struggle to survive financially, which can make Chinese funding attractive. Media professionals and experts in the region contended that independent media needs sustainable funding that does not seek to influence or compromise the journalistic integrity of their work. Reports by the Center for International Media Assistance provide useful resources for international donors looking for effective strategies for supporting independent media.

Support efforts to promote digital literacy

External actors like China use trends associated with the increasing complexity of the modern information environment, such as the rise of social media, to promote misleading information. Providing media consumers in the Mekong region with the skills to find, identify, evaluate, and use information, especially on social media, will empower audiences to form views and opinions based on accurate information.

Coordinate with long-standing, trusted international partners

Several local experts noted that officials are likely to view Western-based NGOs and media training organizations with a critical eye. These experts suggested collaborating with international organizations that already have established track records of working in these countries—such as the Fojo Media Institute or the Global Investigative Journalism Network—as a way to improve access to the local information environment.

Provide journalism and media skills training

Media professionals and experts in the region suggested that providing discrete skills training for journalists in partnership with in-country government organizations is likely the most

successful strategy for helping to support the integrity of the media environment in these countries. Conversely, attempts to support broader media development and/or promote Western journalistic norms would be unlikely to secure the necessary official approval.

4.2 Areas for further research

The reports in this series offer an understanding of the variety and scope of Beijing's efforts to shape the information environments across the Mekong. They should not be viewed as comprehensive assessments of the effectiveness of China's efforts. To develop a more nuanced understanding of the impact of China's efforts on the views of target audiences, we recommend a targeted study that makes use of extensive polling data and sentiment analysis. Such an effort would be a worthwhile investment. Its results could be used to inform a diverse set of stakeholders in the region as they develop and implement effective approaches for mitigating any undesirable effects of Beijing's influence in each country.

Appendix A: China's Global Narratives

China is peaceful	China portrays itself as an inherently peaceful country that would never intentionally start a conflict.[84]

How it supports PRC objectives:

- ***Promotes a positive image of China:*** Portrays China as peaceful and non-threatening
- ***Counters critics:*** Counters concerns about the rapid growth of China's military power and regional assertiveness
- ***Supports China's foreign policy objectives:*** Seeks to foster receptivity to China's diplomatic overtures

Cooperation with China is beneficial	China claims its approach to cooperation with other countries is mutually beneficial and "win-win."[85]

How it supports PRC objectives:

- ***Promotes a positive image of China:*** Portrays China as generous and helpful
- ***Counters critics:*** Counters criticism of China's economic aid and investment practices as being exploitive
- ***Supports China's foreign policy objectives:*** Seeks to foster support for cooperation with China on a range of issues, including economic, technological, and security matters

China is a responsible member of the international community	China portrays itself as an upholder of the international system that provides public goods such as contributions to peacekeeping efforts, support to antipiracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, and disaster relief.[86]

How it supports PRC objectives:

- ***Promotes a positive image of China***: Portrays China as a responsible and active contributor to the international system
- ***Counters critics:*** Counters accusations that China is a revisionist power that seeks to reshape the international system; also counters concerns about the Chinese military's expanding overseas operations
- ***Supports China's foreign policy objectives:*** Seeks to foster support for China's expanding global presence and position China as a leader in the international community

China's approach to development and international affairs is different from that of the US/West	China often contrasts its approach to development and foreign policy with that of the US and other Western nations.[87]

How it supports PRC objectives:

- ***Promotes a positive image of China:*** Portrays China as better than the US and the West
- ***Counters critics:*** Deflects criticism by the United States and other Western countries, often by seeking to delegitimize their policies, positions, and activities
- ***Supports China's foreign policy objectives:*** Portrays China as a more desirable partner

Appendix B: PRC Investment in Media Outlets in Laos and Myanmar

Laos

In Laos, four key Chinese-language media outlets have ties to the Chinese corporate sector and regularly republish articles from Xinhua and *Global Times* (a subsidiary of CCP mouthpiece *People's Daily*). These outlets are shown in Table 7.

Table 7.   Chinese ownership of local media in Laos

Outlet name	Description	Ownership
Lao Wo Tong News Portal *(老挝通)*	The largest Chinese-language online news and community forum, with WeChat, Weibo, QQ, and other platforms. News content primarily reposted from *Vientiane Times* Chinese-language edition.	Jing Yun Long, a Hunan, China registered company that operates two other Laos online shopping websites; website hosted by Changsha Lingyi Network Technology Co. Ltd.[88]
Xin Lao Wo News Portal *(新老挝网)*	Provides users with Laos-related information, Laos news, Laos travel information, Laos videos, Laos photos.	Ownership unknown, registered in Beijing; advertisers included PRC Embassy in Laos, PRC Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office in Laos, ICBC, BCEL (Laos state-owned commercial bank)
Lao Future Magazine (老挝商业资讯杂志)	A China-Laos business and commerce focused print magazine with a Weibo online microsite.	Lao Future Media Group Co. Ltd.; associated with PRC state-run China News Service (CNS) Yunnan branch
Chinese Times-Laos *(中华时报--老挝)*	A Chinese- and English-language news site focused on commerce, finance, and security between China and Laos. English content is predominately sourced from CGTN and Global Times.	Chinese Chamber of Commerce – Laos, guidance from Chinese Embassy

Sources: Lao Wo Tong (laowo tong; 老挝通), Forum Announcement - About Us (luntan gonggao guanyu women; [论坛公告] 关于我们), accessed Dec. 31, 2019, http://www.laowotong.com/thread-2-1-1.html; Xin Lao Wo News Portal (xin laowo wang; 新老挝网), About (guanyu women; 关于我们), accessed Dec. 31, 2019, http://www.xinlaowo.com/about.html; 360 Laos News Portal (laowo zixun wang; 老挝资讯网), accessed Dec. 31, 2019, 32613092@qq.com https://website.informer.com/360laos.com#tab_stats; China News Agency Yunnan Branch Signs Strategic Cooperation Agreement with Laos Future Media Co., Ltd., (zhong xin she Yunnan fenshe yu laowo weilai chuanmei youxian gongsi gianshu zhanlue hezuo xieyi; 中新社云南分社与老挝未来传媒有限公司签署战略合作协议), China News Agency (zhong xin xhse; 中新社), Jan. 13, 2015, http://www.yn.chinanews.com/news/2014/1105/163.html; Chinese Times – Laos (Zhonghua shibao - laowo; 中华时报 – 老挝), Chinese Times, accessed Dec. 6, 2019, https://www.chinesetimes-laos.com/.

Myanmar

At least four of the six PRC-owned media outlets in Myanmar target Chinese speakers. See Table 8.

Table 8.   Media outlets in Myanmar with PRC ownership ties

Name	Type	Description	Ownership	Social media following
Pauk Phaw	Print, online, WeChat	Burmese and Chinese reporting "for the brotherhood of the Myanmar and Chinese people: Understanding, exchange, and cooperation."[89]	Controlled by CCP Propaganda Department of Dehong, Yunnan, PRC [90]	WeChat
Mingalar	Print, online	Burmese reporting China's politics, economy, and the cooperation between the two countries.[91]	Controlled by CCP Propaganda Department of Dehong, Yunnan, PRC [92]	WeChat
Myanmar Golden Phoenix (金凤凰)	Print, online	Chinese-language weekly print newspaper based in Yangon, Myanmar.	Associated with the Yunnan provincial government[93]	缅甸金凤凰中文报社 @mmgoldenphoenix 18,601 people follow this; managed from within Myanmar[94]
MD-ZW News Portal (缅甸中文网)	Online	Chinese-language online portal; "Myanmar's first Chinese-language integrated media, 24 hours of rolling release of Myanmar news, business, tourism, housing, work."	China-Myanmar Culture Communication (Guangzhou) Co., Ltd.[95]	缅甸中文网 @md0095 41,453 people follow this; managed from within Myanmar[96]
Mian Hua News Portal (缅华网)	Online	Chinese-language online portal "To truly reflect the new trends in Myanmar and China, serve Myanmar-China society, strengthen ties with Myanmar overseas Chinese from all over the world, enhance friendship and promote friendly relations between Myanmar and China."	Unknown	缅华网 @mhwmm2014 2,474 people follow this; managed from unknown[97]
Guangming Daily Myanmar bureau (光明日报分社)	Print, online	Chinese-language reporting on Myanmar and Sino-Myanmar relations from sole correspondent in Yangon.[98]	PRC government	Guangming Daily-光明日报 @guangmingdailyChina 4,898,513 people follow this[99]

Sources: "Mian-Hua News" (*mian hua wang*; 缅华网), Facebook page, accessed Jan. 9, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/mhwmm2014/; "Burma-China News" (*miandian zhongwen wang*; 缅甸中文网), Facebook page, accessed Jan. 9, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/md0095/; "Golden Phoenix," Facebook page, accessed Jan. 9, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/mmgoldenphoenix/; "Guangming Daily Correspondent Station

in Rangoon, Myanmar," *Guangming Daily,* accessed Feb. 20, 2020, https://en.gmw.cn/gj_new/e_md.htm; SCIO, "China's first Burmese newspaper 'Pauk Phaw' launched in Dehong, Yunnan" (zhongguo shou fen mian wen baozhi "baobo" zai yunnan dehong chuangkan; 中国首份缅文报纸《胞波》在云南德宏创刊), State Council Information Office (guowuyuan xinwen bangongshi wangzhan; 国务院新闻办公室网站), 2015, accessed Feb. 28, 2020, http://www.scio.gov.cn/m/zhzc/35353/35354/Document/1513321/1513321.htm.

Appendix C: Challenges that China Faces

Table 9. Challenges to China's efforts to shape the information environment in the Mekong Region

Challenge for China	Description
Local laws and regulations that restrict foreign media	In some Mekong countries, domestic laws and regulations have created challenges for China. In Vietnam, laws and regulations severely restrict China's access to the country's information environment. These include licensing requirements, visa restrictions for foreign journalists, regulations limiting the number of foreign broadcast channels that can be included in paid radio or television packages, regulations on the volume of foreign-produced content that can be broadcast, and the requirement that foreign media must be translated by state-approved translators. In Thailand, domestic laws seek to limit foreign ownership of domestic media outlets. However, PRC entities have found ways to circumvent these laws by using local subsidiaries.
Anti-China sentiment among the domestic populations	In each of the Mekong countries, we found evidence of anti-China sentiment among the domestic population. In Vietnam, anti-China sentiment was pervasive. In Laos and Cambodia, anti-China sentiment appeared to be strongest in areas directly affected by Chinese infrastructure projects. In Myanmar, anti-China sentiment focused on China's role in ongoing militant clashes in Myanmar's north and east, China's consistent ranking as the top destination of human trafficking of Myanmar citizens, and the environmental impact of China's BRI projects. In Thailand, citizens expressed anti-China sentiment on social media, criticizing Beijing's authoritarianism and blaming it for the COVID-19 pandemic.
Lack of credibility among local audiences	In several of the Mekong countries, PRC media suffers from a lack of credibility among local audiences. This was a recurrent theme in our discussions with media professionals and experts from Cambodia and Vietnam in particular. Similarly, experts from Myanmar also noted that the PRC media's increased presence does not equate to a positive impression of China among the public in Myanmar. One expert stated that, "Myanmar people are suspicious of China."
Competition from foreign media that have established reputations as credible sources of news	PRC media outlets also face the challenge of competing with other foreign media outlets that have well-established reputations as credible sources of news and information. In Cambodia, for instance, PRC state-run media appears to have had limited success supplanting the enduring popularity—and credibility—of Western media outlets such as RFA, VOA, and Radio France Internationale (RFI).

Appendix D: Opportunities that China Can Exploit

Table 10. Opportunities that China can exploit to shape the information environment in the Mekong Region

Opportunity for China	Description
Support from political elites	Support from the political elites of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand has already opened the door to China's presence in the information environments of those countries. China is likely to continue to cultivate and use these ties to promote its preferred narratives and further its strategic interests.
Financial stresses on independent media outlets	Private media outlets in the Mekong countries struggle to identify viable revenue models to support independent journalism. Increased competition for advertising revenues, competition from state media, and the shift to digital media have all created economic challenges.[100] The COVID-19 pandemic induced economic downturn is likely to compound these trends, exacerbating the financial pressure on independent media. Local media experts across the Mekong expressed concern that these financial pressures may push more media outlets to seek investment from foreign entities, including China, which could change editorial standards in ways that degrade media independence.[101]
Deficits in funding for training & professional associations	Local media experts and professionals from each of the Mekong countries noted a deficit of resources to fund programs for professional training and development. China is seeking to step in and fill this deficit by funding training programs and local professional associations. The Thai Journalists Association, for instance, receives a significant portion of its funding from the Chinese Embassy in Bangkok.[102]
Low digital literacy	China can exploit the complexity of the modern information environment and the rise of social media to promote misleading information. Indeed, in May 2020, we observed evidence that PRC media had begun to promote blatant disinformation about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic with a video that was translated into local languages and spread via social media.

Figures

Tables

Abbreviations

AKP	Agence Kampuchea Presse
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCFR	Cambodia-China Friendship Radio
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CGTN	China Global Television
CCTV	China Central Television
CRI	China Radio International
DTMB	Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast
ICT	information and telecommunications technology
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
KPL	Khaosan Pathet Lao
LNR	Lao National Radio
LNTV	Lao National Television
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPE	News and Periodicals Enterprise
PRC	People's Republic of China
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RNK	Radio National Kampuchea
VNA	Vietnam News Agency
VOA	Voice of America

References

"The 2nd China-Cambodia Radio, Television and Television Cooperation Regular Meeting Held in Cambodia." 第二届中柬广电合作定期会议在柬埔寨举行. CCTV. 国际在线. Oct. 20, 2018. Accessed Mar. 26, 2020. http://news.cctv.com/2018/10/20/ARTIsjG10IKVPRvze4OvFskj181020.shtml.

"5 More Thai Media Agencies Sign Partnership with Xinhua." *Khaosod English*. Nov. 20, 2019. Accessed Dec. 2019. http://www.khaosodenglish.com/news/2019/11/20/5-more-thai-media-sites-sign-partnership-with-xinhua/.

"About." 中缅文化传播(广州)有限公司. China-Myanmar Culture Communication (Guangzhou) Co., Ltd. 缅甸中文网. 2020. Accessed Aug. 11, 2020. http://www.mdzwwww.com/.

"About." Bangkok Wealth & Biz. 2020. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020. http://wealthnbiz.com/.

"About Mthai." เมื่อ เอ็มไทย เริ่มก่อตั้งเว็บไซต์. MThai. 2020. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020. https://mthai.com/aboutus/history.php.

"About Smart SME TV Stations." เกี่ยวกับเรา. Smart SME Channel. 2020. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020. https://www.smartsme.co.th/about.

"About Us." 关于我们. ASEAN Top. 东盟头条. 2018. Accessed Mar. 26, 2020. http://www.aseantop.com/aboutUS.

Australia Special Broadcasting Service. "Thai Radio." SBS. ฟังเอสบีเอส เรดิโอ เป็นภาษาไทย. 2020. Accessed Feb. 17, 2020. https://www.sbs.com.au/language/thai/program.

Banerjee, Indrajit and Stephen Logan. *Asian Communication Handbook 2008*. AMIC, 2008. https://books.google.com/books?id=Wo9YWvrWFcIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Brandt, Jessica and Torrey Taussig. "The Kremlin's Disinformation Playbook Goes to Beijing." *Brookings*. May 19, 2020. Accessed Jul. 31, 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/05/19/the-kremlins-disinformation-playbook-goes-to-beijing/.

Brady, Anne-Marie. "Authoritarianism Goes Global II: China's Foreign Propaganda Machine." *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 4 (2015).

"Bridge Over the Mekong River." ស្ពានឆ្លងកាត់ទន្លេមេគង្គកប្ផាប់សុកកូចឆ្លារ និងសុកស្ទឹងតាង. *Phnom Penh Post Special Supplement*. Oct. 1, 2019. Accessed Apr. 3, 2020. https://www.phnompenhpost.com/sites/default/files/pdf_public/20190925_china_national_day_pk.pdf.

Bubphanouvong, Sangkhomsay. "Laos: Mekong Nations, China Bolster Media Cooperation." *Vientiane Times*. Jun. 13, 2015. OSE: SER2015061273258496.

Cambodia China Friendship Radio - China Radio International. "CCFR.CRI." វិទ្យុមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជាចិន Facebook. Accessed Mar. 26, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/?hc_ref=ARTpMlijcgfsUvUPJw0GdyEhyfprAS6AFat-bl2mrZmkl4iJomrCIPITON0gtmOi52g&fref=nf&__xts__[0]=68.ARAYZwc99NdDr3aB2xyk3sCnLwbrsamS6rkeCGRyXJYZlzgJeYIMqswjn5eTzAPxsSoBUgKPVLx3gcue8DM430Q9mD34VZI3NoY-gxWa8tHaYLNgLjrjDu0bmi91PVUk6LoF-YyLSllekEW5kLwt6KYzkFo1n7LCsY_zj50TVDxhuhGNlFbCOZnGg1yGnm0aG26pf5tYpnJRCBOQxlUHnv9I9kCw_3q36kyW-VJubkC6MFX0knauD9VLYG7m4SColg0xcjC8h6Dq1996bV0Q7kVIT9yPxWhLcSZRRIlyxP4wsFLm0IQquxpE1Wv2xdzIWfBbozxpQWYj-xGtYXoj4g2DMQ&__tn__=kC-R.

CCTV. "China, Myanmar Co-Produce Epic TV Series." YouTube CCTV channel. Mar 31, 2014. Accessed Feb. 27, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3OG2WHN3eM.

Charoenpo, Anucha. "Huawei Banking on Thai Market." *Bangkok Post*. Oct. 23, 2019. Accessed Feb. 14, 2020. https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1778194/huawei-banking-on-thai-market.

"China's State News Agency to Strengthen Cooperation with Vietnam's VNA." *Xinhua*. May 25, 2017. Accessed Apr. 24, 2020. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/25/c_136312155.htm.

"China's Xi Vows 'New Era' of Myanmar Ties After Red Carpet Welcome." Channel News Asia. Jan. 17, 2020. Accessed Jan. 2020. https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/china-xi-jinping-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-infrastructure-project-12275564.

The China Story: Reshaping the World's Media International Federation of Journalists. 2020. Accessed Jul. 7, 2020. https://issuu.com/ifjasiapacific/docs/2020_ifj_report_-_the_china_story.

"China to Promote Digital Television Broadcasting in Cambodia." *China Daily*. Nov. 29, 2012. Accessed Mar. 20, 2020. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/beijing/zhongguancun/2012-11/29/content_15974934.htm.

Chinese Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilence. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2018.

Chokchaiphol, Tosaporn. "BUSINESS TODAY Thailand: A New Business News and Content Platform Launched on O2O Strategy." Business Today. Aug. 31, 2019. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020. https://businesstoday.co/cover-story/31/08/2019/business-today-2/.

Chow, Vivienne. "Chinese, Thai Shingles Pact for Co-Production Fund at FilMart." Variety. Mar. 19, 2019. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020. https://variety.com/2019/film/news/bad-genius-chinese-thai-shingles-pact-for-co-production-fund-at-filmart-1203166594/.

Constitution of Thailand. 2017. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Thailand_2017.pdf?lang=en.

CRI. "The MCs, Broadcast Schedule." ពិធីករពិធីការវិនី. Cambodia China Friendship Radio. វិទ្យុមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជា-ចិន. Accessed Mar. 26, 2020. http://cambodian.cri.cn/audio.html.

———. "President Xi Jinping's Article Published in Major Burmese Media." ၂မန္ဘာ အမိ်ကမီဒီယာမ်ားတြင္ ၉က၇၇ ၡိုက္ၚ္ၓိန္၏ ေဆာင္းပါးကုိ ထုတ္ၚ္ၿၚုန္. China Radio International - Myanmar. Jan. 17, 2020. Accessed Feb. 27, 2020. http://myanmar.cri.cn/20200117/877d301e-5712-cca9-c60a-4a67f0013b0c.html.

Dickey, Lauren, Erica Downs, Andrew Taffer, and Heidi Holz with Drew Thompson, S. Bilal Hyder, Ryan Loomis, and Anthony Miller. *Mapping the Information Environment in the Pacific Island Countries: Disruptors, Deficits, and Decisions.* IRM-2019-U-019755-Final. 2019. https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/centers/cna/cip/disinformation/IRM-2019-U-019755-Final.pdf.

"The Director of the Thai-Chinese Strategic Cooperation Research Center Stated that Thailand is Preparing to Promote Thai-Chinese Cooperation in the Framework of 'One Belt One Road'." ผอ.ศูนย์วิจัยความร่วมมือยุทธศาสตร์ไทย-จีน ระบุ ไทยเตรียมส่งเสริมขยายความร่วมมือไทย-จีนในกรอบหนึ่งแถบหนึ่งเส้นทาง. CRI Thailand. Apr. 28, 2019. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020. http://thai.cri.cn/20190428/e90079ae-991f-57c3-a6e7-2795d8d5d27a.html.

Facebook. "Workpoint Entertainment." 2019. Accessed Dec. 31, 2019. https://www.facebook.com/workpoint/?_ga=2.75954770.675636638.1574433703-746114798.1574433703.

The First Chinese Animated Series Journey to the West Hit Lao Screens. LNTV English YouTube Channel: Lao NEWS on LNTV English, Nov. 2, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxFskG1Enr0.

"Former Defense Spokesman: U.S. Military and CNN Jointly Make Show in S. China Sea." *China Military Online*. Aug. 13, 2018. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-08/13/content_9250952.htm.

"Full Text of Report Delivered by Xi Jinping at 19th CCP National Congress." *Xinhua*. Oct. 18, 2017. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2017-11/03/c_136725942.htm.

Garnaut, John. "Australia's China Reset." *The Montly*. Aug. 2018.
    https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2018/august/1533045600/john-garnaut/australia-
    s-china-reset.

"Guangming Daily " 光明日报分社. *Facebook*. 2020. Accessed Aug. 11, 2020.
    https://www.facebook.com/guangmingdailyChina/.

Guo Yuandan, Liu Yang. "U.S. Military Aircraft Carrying Journalists to 'Make a Show' over South China
    Sea Warned, Expert: If They're Uninvited, Can We Not Shout?" *Global Times*. Aug. 11, 2018.
    http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2018-08/12693613.html.

Handley, Mech Dara and Erin. "PM Heaps Praise on Fresh News." *The Phnom Penh Post*. Sept. 7, 2017.
    Accessed Mar. 27, 2020. https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/pm-heaps-praise-fresh-
    news.

Hao, Chan Jia, and Deepakshi Rawat. "China's Digital Silk Road: The Integration of Myanmar." *RSIS*
    (2019). Accessed Feb. 26, 2020. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/chinas-digital-
    silk-road-the-integration-of-myanmar/#.Xla3d5pKiUk.

"Head Office of ASEAN TOP." ស្នាក់ការកណ្ដាល អង្គភាពព័ត៌មានASEANTOP. People News Asia Khmer.
    2018. Accessed Mar. 26, 2020. http://peoplenews.asia/52967/.

Holz, Heidi. *China's Playbook for Shaping the Global Media Environment.* CNA. IRM-2020-U-019755-
    SR1. 2020.

"Home page." Pauk Phaw. 2020. Accessed Aug. 11, 2020. http://www.paukphaw.com/.

Hootsuite and We Are Social. "Digital 2019 Cambodia (January 2019) v01." Data Reportal. 2019.
    Accessed Mar. 25, 2020. https://www.slideshare.net/DataReportal/digital-2019-cambodia-
    january-2019-v01.

Independent News Network. "About." สำนักข่าวไอ.เอ็น.เอ. INN. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020.
    https://www.innnews.co.th/.

Influencer Marketing Hub. "TikTok Stats Roundup." Konstruct Digital. Jul. 18, 2019. Accessed Mar. 11,
    2020. https://www.konstructdigital.com/social-media/tiktok-stats-
    roundup/+&cd=22&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

"Interview with Myanmar official." 2019.

Jinping, Xi. "A Good Neighbor and True Friend for Liver and Gall 【to treat one another with absolute
    sincerity (idiom); to show total devotion】." 做肝胆相照的好邻居、真朋友. *Rasmei
    Kampuchea (accessed at FMPRC)*. 柬埔寨之光. Oct. 12, 2016. Accessed Mar. 23, 2020.
    https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/t1405096.shtml.

———. "Writing a New Chapter in Our Millennia-Old Pauk-Phaw Friendship." *Global New Light of
    Myanmar*. Jan. 16, 2020. Accessed Feb. 2020.
    https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1733312.shtml.

July discussion with Myanmar media experts, 2020.

June discussions with Thai media professionals and experts, 2020.

Karpati, Andrea. *Digital Literacy in Education.* UNESCO. 2011. Accessed Jan. 21, 2020.
    https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000214485/PDF/214485eng.pdf.multi.

"Lao, Chinese News Agencies Strengthen Cooperation." Lao News Agency. Oct. 25, 2018. Accessed Dec.
    20, 2019. http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.aspx?id=40061.

Lee, Emma. "Sanook Online Rebranded To Tencent Thailand." Tech Node. Dec. 22, 2016. Accessed Mar.
    17, 2020. https://technode.com/2016/12/22/tencent-sanook/.

Leesa-Nguangsuk, Suchit. "Tencent's Global-Minded Thai Boss." *Bangkok Post*. Aug. 24, 2019. Accessed
    Mar. 31, 2020. https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1735955/tencents-global-minded-
    thai-boss.

Lim, Louisa. "Borrowing, Buying, and Building Boats: How China Exerts its Influence Over the Press in
    Asia." *Press Freedom in Contemporary Asia*, edited by Tina Burrett, and Jeffrey Kingston. New
    York: Routledge, 2019.

Lim, Luisa, and Julia Bergin. "Inside China's Audacious Global Propaganda Campaign." *The Guardian*. Dec. 7, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/07/china-plan-for-global-media-dominance-propaganda-xi-jinping.

Liu Hanzun and Sun Haoran. "Chinese Military Always a Force for Peace and Justice." *Global Times*. Oct. 20, 2019. http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1167417.shtml.

"Local Labor for Fiber Agriculture - Cambodia China Friendship Radio " *Facebook*. វិទ្យុមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជាចិន ភ្នំពេញ. Apr. 27, 2020. Accessed Apr. 27, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/photos/pcb.1588741331280708/1588741164614058/?type=3&theater.

Loomis, Ryan, and Heidi Holz. *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Cambodia.* CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division. IIM-2020-U-026221. 2020.

———. *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Myanmar.* CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division. IIM-2020-U-026099. 2020.

———. *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Thailand.* CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division. IIM-2020-U-026098. 2020.

———. *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Vietnam.* CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division. IIM-2020-U-026222. 2020.

Loomis, Ryan, Heidi Holz, and Lauren Dickey. *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Laos.* CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division. IIM-2020-U-024777. 2020.

Mass Communication Organization of Thailand. "Corporate Info - COMPANY'S BUSINESS." MCOT.net. 2020. Accessed Feb. 19, 2020. http://mcot.listedcompany.com/business.html.

Matichon Public Co., Ltd. "Matichon Online." มติชนออนไลน์. 2020. Accessed Feb. 19, 2020. https://www.matichon.co.th/home.

McElhone, Jane Madlyn. "The State, the Military, and the Market: Capture in the New Burmese Media Landscape." *In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the Threat to Democracy* (2017): 59-81. Accessed Feb. 25, 2020. https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Capture6_State-Military-and-the-Market-1.pdf.

Mei, Ming. "Book on China's BRI, its Implications for Cambodia's Development Launched." *Xinhua*. Oct. 12, 2019. Accessed Apr. 10, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/12/c_138465937.htm.

Ministry of Information. "Deputy Minister of Information U Aung Hla Tun Meets Xinhua Delegation Led by Liu Siyang." ဒုတိယဝန်ကြီး ဦးအောင်လှထွန်း ဆင်ဟွာသတင်းဌာနချုပ်မှ ဒုတိယဥက္ကဌ့ဦးနှင့်အဖွဲ့အား လက်ခံတွေ့ဆုံ. News and Periodical Enterprise. Oct. 13, 2019. Accessed Feb. 6, 2020. https://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/?q=news/13/10/2019/id-90583.

"Myanmar to Introduce Journalism Degree Course for First Time." People's Daily English Edition. Sept. 5, 2007. Accessed Jan. 2020. http://en.people.cn/90001/90777/6255742.html.

"The Mystery of the Fort Detrick Biological Research Facility." *Sự huyền bí của cơ sở nghiên cứu sinh học Fort Detrick*. May 18, 2020. Accessed Jun. 1, 2020. http://vietnamese.cri.cn/20200518/c491cf3c-8484-4af2-3f57-abb1f1b0b692.html.

Nachemson, Andrew. "Chinese Investment in Cambodia is Bringing Phnom Penh Closer to Beijing – and Further from the EU." *South China Morning Post*. May 1, 2019. Accessed Mar. 30, 2020. https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3008451/chinese-investment-cambodia-bringing-phnom-penh-closer.

Narin, Sun, and Kann Vicheika. "Cambodia-China Journalist Association Launched to Promote 'Positive News'." VOA Khmer. 2019. Accessed Apr. 2, 2020. https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cambodia-china-journalist-association-launched-to-promote-positive-news/4926568.html.

Nielsen. "Top 3 TV Jan-Dec 2019 Report MYA THA VN."

"Readers' Day of Four Periodicals Marked in Kunming." Yunnan Gateway. Apr. 28, 2018. Accessed Aug. 11, 2020. http://english.yunnan.cn/html/2018/latestnews_0428/14150.html.

Reporters Without Borders. "China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order." March 22, 2019.
https://rsf.org/en/reports/rsf-report-chinas-pursuit-new-world-media-order.

Rui, Lin. "ASEAN Headlines' Launched in Cambodia." *People's Daily*. Jan. 18, 2018. Accessed Mar. 26,
2020. http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0118/c90000-9316937.html.

SCIO. "China's First Burmese Newspaper "Pauk Phaw" Launched in Dehong, Yunnan." (*zhongguo shou
fen mian wen baozhi "baobo" zai yunnan dehong chuangkan;* 中国首份缅文报纸《胞波》在云
南德宏创刊). State Council Information Office. (*guowuyuan xinwen bangongshi wangzhan;* 国
务院新闻办公室网站). 2015. Accessed Feb. 28, 2020.
http://www.scio.gov.cn/m/zhzc/35353/35354/Document/1513321/1513321.htm.

"Secrets of the Fort Detrick Biological Research Station." ဇီဝသုၤ၀တသနစခန္ၤ၏ လွ်ိ၀ွိၚ္ကြ္မ္ား. *CRI
Myanmar Facebook* May 19, 2020. Accessed May 21, 2020.
https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=721337195093425.

Tencent. "Sanook " Facebook page. 2020. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020.
https://www.facebook.com/pg/SanookEveryday/about/?ref=page_internal.

Thai News Network. "About Us." เกี่ยวกับเรา. TNN. 2020. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020.
http://www.tnnthailand.com/.

Thongtep, Watchiranont. "Newspapers Covering HM's Death Become Collector's Items." *The Nation
Thailand*. Oct. 18, 2016. Accessed Mar. 11, 2020.
https://www.nationthailand.com/business/30297906.

"USAMRIID is a Storage Facility for Many Life-Threatening Pathogens and Toxins." USAMRIID
เป็นสถานที่เก็บเชื้อโรคและสารพิษอันตรายต่อชีวิตหลายอย่าง. *CRI Thailand*. May 18, 2020.
Accessed Jun. 02, 2020. http://thai.cri.cn/20200518/f832e89c-5373-f264-6bca-
ab5122901511.html.

"Video: Lancang-Mekong in One Minute." People's Daily Online. Jun. 11, 2019. Accessed Apr. 9, 2020.
http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0611/c90000-9586780.html.

VNS. "MoIT Requires Control on Products with China's Nine-Dash Line." *Viet Nam News*. Nov. 23, 2019.
Accessed Apr. 21, 2020. https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/548843/moit-requires-control-
on-products-with-chinas-nine-dash-line.htm.

VOV5. "VIETNAM'S MARITIME SOVEREIGNTY." The Voice of Vietnam. 2020. Accessed Apr. 8, 2020.
https://vovworld.vn/en-US/event/vietnams-maritime-sovereignty/565.vov.

"Wang Yi Speaks About Mekong River Drought." *Khaosod*. Aug. 2, 2019. Accessed Dec. 15, 2019.
https://www.khaosod.co.th/hot-topics/news_2766918.

World Radio TV Handbook. WRTH Publications Ltd, 2018.

Xinhua. "First Chinese-Invested TV Channel Launches in Cambodia." *China Daily*. Sept. 27, 2017.
Accessed Mar. 25, 2020. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-
09/27/content_32554687.htm+&cd=9&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

———. "First Movie Jointly Produced by China, Laos Screened in Laos." Xinhua net. Sept. 19, 2019.
Accessed Jan. 17, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/19/c_138404122.htm.

———. "Full Text of Chinese President Xi's Signed Article on Lao Media." Xinhua net. Nov. 13, 2017.
Accessed Jan. 17, 2020. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/13/c_136749157.htm.

———. "Myanmar Takes Step Forward to Introduce 5G Infrastructure." 2018. Accessed Feb. 26, 2020.
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/19/c_137685334.htm.

———. "Sino-Myanmar." ဆင္ဟြာ. New China. 2020. Accessed Feb. 7, 2020.
http://www.xinhuamyanmar.com/sino-myanmar/social/26209-2020-02-06-09-10-41.

"Xinhua Officially Launches Global Social Media Presence." *Xinhua (English)*. March 1, 2015.
www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/01/c_134027886.htm.

Yan. "Lao Prime Minister Meets Xinhua News Agency President." *Xinhua*. Feb. 3, 2018.
http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/03/c_136947013.htm.

Yip, Hilton. "China's $6 Billion Propaganda Blitz Is a Snooze." *Foreign Policy*. April 23, 2018.
http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/23/the-voice-of-china-will-be-a-squeak/.

Endnotes

[1] Heidi Holz, *China's Playbook for Shaping the Global Media Environment*, CNA, IRM-2020-U-019755-SR1, 2020.

[2] "Full Text of Report Delivered by Xi Jinping at 19th CCP National Congress," *Xinhua*, Oct. 18, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2017-11/03/c_136725942.htm.

[3] See, for example: Anne-Marie Brady, "Authoritarianism Goes Global II: China's Foreign Propaganda Machine," *Journal of Democracy* 26, no. 4 (2015); John Garnaut, "Australia's China Reset," *The Montly*, August, 2018, https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2018/august/1533045600/john-garnaut/australia-s-china-reset; *Chinese Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilence*, (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2018). Hilton Yip, "China's $6 Billion Propaganda Blitz Is a Snooze," *Foreign Policy*, Apr. 23, 2018, http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/23/the-voice-of-china-will-be-a-squeak/.

[4] Ryan Loomis and Heidi Holz, *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Vietnam*, CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division, IIM-2020-U-026222, 2020; Ryan Loomis and Heidi Holz, *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Thailand*, CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division, IIM-2020-U-026098, 2020; Ryan Loomis and Heidi Holz, *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Myanmar*, CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division, IIM-2020-U-026099, 2020; Ryan Loomis, Heidi Holz, and Lauren Dickey, *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Laos*, CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division, IIM-2020-U-024777, 2020; Ryan Loomis and Heidi Holz, *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Cambodia*, CNA China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Division, IIM-2020-U-026221, 2020.

[5] For information about deficits in domestic news production in the Pacific Island countries, see: Erica Downs Lauren Dickey, Andrew Taffer, and Heidi Holz with Drew Thompson, S. Bilal Hyder, Ryan Loomis, and Anthony Miller, *Mapping the Information Environment in the Pacific Island Countries: Disruptors, Deficits, and Decisions*, IRM-2019-U-019755-Final, 2019, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/centers/cna/cip/disinformation/IRM-2019-U-019755-Final.pdf.

[6] Xinhua, "Sino-Myanmar," ဆင်ဟွာ, New China, 2020, accessed Feb. 7, 2020, http://www.xinhuamyanmar.com/sino-myanmar/social/26209-2020-02-06-09-10-41.

[7] CRI, "The MCs, Broadcast Schedule," ពិធីករពិធីការវិនី, Cambodia China Friendship Radio, វិទ្យុមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជា-ចិន, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, *http://cambodian.cri.cn/audio.html*.

[8] "Local Labor for Fiber Agriculture - Cambodia China Friendship Radio ", *Facebook*, វិទ្យុមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជាចិន ភ្នំពេញ, Apr. 27, 2020, accessed Apr. 27, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/photos/pcb.1588741331280708/1588741164614058/?type=3&theater.

[9] "The Director of the Thai-Chinese Strategic Cooperation Research Center stated that Thailand is Preparing to Promote Thai-Chinese Cooperation in the Framework of 'One Belt One Road'," ผอ.ศูนย์วิจัยความร่วมมือยุทธศาสตร์ไทย-จีน ระบุ ไทยเตรียมส่งเสริมขยายความร่วมมือไทย-จีนในกรอบหนึ่งแถบหนึ่งเส้นทาง, CRI Thailand, Apr. 28, 2019, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, http://thai.cri.cn/20190428/e90079ae-991f-57c3-a6e7-2795d8d5d27a.html.

[10] Ming Mei, "Book on China's BRI, its Implications for Cambodia's Development Launched," *Xinhua*, Oct. 12, 2019, accessed Apr. 10, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/12/c_138465937.htm.

[11] "Lao officials speaks highly of China-Laos railway," *People's Daily Online*, Apr. 1, 2019, http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0401/c90000-9562759.htm).

[12] CCTV, "China, Myanmar Co-Produce Epic TV Series," YouTube CCTV channel, Mar. 31, 2014, accessed Feb. 27, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3OG2WHN3eM.

[13] Xinhua, "First Movie Jointly Produced by China, Laos Screened in Laos," Xinhua net, Sept. 19, 2019, accessed Jan. 17, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/19/c_138404122.htm.

[14] Luisa Lim and Julia Bergin, "Inside China's Audacious Global Propaganda Campaign," *The Guardian*, Dec. 7, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/07/china-plan-for-global-media-dominance-propaganda-xi-jinping; Reporters Without Borders, "China's Pursuit of a New World Media Order," Mar. 22, 2019, https://rsf.org/en/reports/rsf-report-chinas-pursuit-new-world-media-order.

[15] "Bridge Over the Mekong River," ស្ពានឆ្លងកាត់ទន្លេមេគង្គកត្តាប់សុកកូចឆ្ងារ និងសុកស្ទឹងតុង, *Phnom Penh Post Special Supplement*, Oct. 1, 2019, accessed Apr. 3, 2020, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/sites/default/files/pdf_public/20190925_china_national_day_pk.pdf.

[16] CRI, "President Xi Jinping's Article Published in Major Burmese Media," ျမန္မာ အဓိကမီဒီယာမ်ားတြင္ ၉က္၇၇ ရွိက္င့္ႏ ဖိန္၏ ေဆာင္းပါးကုိ ထုတ္ျပန္, China Radio International - Myanmar, Jan. 17, 2020, accessed Feb. 27, 2020, http://myanmar.cri.cn/20200117/877d301e-5712-cca9-c60a-4a67f0013b0c.html.

[17] Xinhua, "Full Text of Chinese President Xi's Signed Article on Lao Media," Xinhua net, Nov. 13, 2017, accessed Jan. 17, 2020, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/13/c_136749157.htm.

[18] Xi Jinping, "A Good Neighbor and True Friend for Liver and Gall 【to treat one another with absolute sincerity (idiom); to show total devotion】," 做肝胆相照的好邻居、真朋友, *Rasmei Kampuchea (accessed at FMPRC)*, 柬埔寨之光, Oct. 12, 2016, accessed Mar. 23, 2020, *https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/t1405096.shtml*.

[19] "Xinhua Officially Launches Global Social Media Presence," *Xinhua (English)*, Mar. 1, 2015, www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/01/c_134027886.htm.

[20] "Interview with Myanmar official," (2019).

[21] Anucha Charoenpo, "Huawei Banking on Thai Market," *Bangkok Post*, Oct. 23, 2019, accessed Feb. 14, 2020, https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1778194/huawei-banking-on-thai-market. Chan Jia Hao and Deepakshi Rawat, "China's Digital Silk Road: The Integration of Myanmar," *RSIS* (2019), accessed Feb. 26, 2020, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/chinas-digital-silk-road-the-integration-of-myanmar/#.Xla3d5pKiUk.; Xinhua, "Myanmar Takes Step Forward to Introduce 5G Infrastructure," 2018, accessed Feb. 26, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-12/19/c_137685334.htm. Andrew Nachemson, "Chinese Investment in Cambodia is Bringing Phnom Penh Closer to Beijing – and Further from the EU," *South China Morning Post*, May 1, 2019, accessed Mar. 30, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3008451/chinese-investment-cambodia-bringing-phnom-penh-closer.

[22] "China to Promote Digital Television Broadcasting in Cambodia," *China Daily*, Nov. 29, 2012, accessed Mar. 20, 2020, *http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/m/beijing/zhongguancun/2012-11/29/content_15974934.htm*.

[23] The 2018 Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Media Summit, accessed Nov. 2019, http://www.laja.la/sub-page/Media/Law.html.

[24] "The 2nd China-Cambodia Radio, Television and Television Cooperation Regular Meeting Held in Cambodia," 第二届中柬广电合作定期会议在柬埔寨举行, CCTV, 国际在线, Oct. 20, 2018, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, http://news.cctv.com/2018/10/20/ARTIsjG10IKVPRvze4OvFskj181020.shtml.

[25] Yan, "Lao prime minister meets Xinhua News Agency president," Xinhua, Feb. 02, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/03/c_136947013.htm.

[26] *World Radio TV Handbook*, (WRTH Publications Ltd, 2018).

27 According to the IFJ report, the Myanmar journalists who went on these trips were clear-eyed about Beijing's goal, quoting one journalist stating that China "set a long-term plan to influence Myanmar through media." *The China Story: Reshaping the World's Media* International Federation of Journalists, 2020, accessed Jul. 7, 2020, https://issuu.com/ifjasiapacific/docs/2020_ifj_report_-_the_china_story.

28 June discussions with Thai media professionals and experts, 2020.

29 *The First Chinese Animated Series Journey to the West Hit Lao Screens*, LNTV English YouTube Channel: Lao NEWS on LNTV English, Nov. 2, 2016).

30 Vivienne Chow, "Chinese, Thai Shingles Pact for Co-Production Fund at FilMart," Variety, Mar. 19, 2019, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://variety.com/2019/film/news/bad-genius-chinese-thai-shingles-pact-for-co-production-fund-at-filmart-1203166594/.

31 Taejun Kang, "WhatsApp the Most Popular Mobile App in Laos," *Laotian Times*, Jul. 12, 2019, https://laotiantimes.com/2019/07/12/whatsapp-the-most-popular-mobile-app-in-laos/.

32 Influencer Marketing Hub, "TikTok Stats Roundup," Konstruct Digital, Jul. 18, 2019, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://www.konstructdigital.com/social-media/tiktok-stats-roundup/+&cd=22&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

33 Sangkhomsay Bubphanouvong, "Laos: Mekong Nations, China Bolster Media Cooperation," *Vientiane Times*, Jun. 13, 2015, OSE: SER2015061273258496.

34 "Lao, Chinese News Agencies Strengthen Cooperation," Lao News Agency, Oct. 25, 2018, accessed Dec. 20, 2019, http://kpl.gov.la/En/Detail.aspx?id=40061.

35 Indrajit Banerjee and Stephen Logan, *Asian Communication Handbook 2008*, (AMIC, 2008), https://books.google.com/books?id=Wo9YWvrWFcIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false.; "Lao, Chinese News Agencies Strengthen Cooperation."

36 "Myanmar to Introduce Journalism Degree Course for First Time," People's Daily English Edition, Sept. 5, 2007, accessed Jan. 2020, http://en.people.cn/90001/90777/6255742.html.

37 Ministry of Information, "Deputy Minister of Information U Aung Hla Tun Meets Xinhua Delegation Led by Liu Siyang," ဒုတိယဝန်ကြီး ဦးအောင်လှထွန်း ဆင်ဟွာသတင်းဌာနချုပ်မှ ဒုတိယဥက္ကဌနှင့်အဖွဲ့အား လက်ခံတွေ့ဆုံ, News and Periodical Enterprise, Oct. 13, 2019, accessed Feb. 6, 2020, https://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/?q=news/13/10/2019/id-90583.

38 "Head Office of ASEAN TOP," ស្នាក់ការកណ្ដាល អង្គភាពព័ត៌មានASEANTOP, People News Asia Khmer, 2018, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, http://peoplenews.asia/52967/.

39 Mech Dara and Erin Handley, "PM Heaps Praise on Fresh News," *The Phnom Penh Post*, Sept. 7, 2017, accessed Mar. 27, 2020, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/pm-heaps-praise-fresh-news.

40 "China's State News Agency to Strengthen Cooperation with Vietnam's VNA," *Xinhua*, May 25, 2017, accessed Apr. 24, 2020, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/25/c_136312155.htm.

41 Ltd. Matichon Public Co., "Matichon Online," มติชนออนไลน์, 2020, accessed Feb. 19, 2020, https://www.matichon.co.th/home.

42 June discussions with Thai media professionals and experts, 2020.

43 Nielsen, "Top 3 TV Jan-Dec 2019 Report MYA THA VN." Accessed by purchase.

44 Thai News Network, "About Us," เกี่ยวกับเรา, TNN, 2020, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, http://www.tnnthailand.com/.

45 Tosaporn Chokchaiphol, "BUSINESS TODAY Thailand: A New Business News and Content Platform Launched on O2O Strategy," Business Today, Aug. 31, 2019, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://businesstoday.co/cover-story/31/08/2019/business-today-2/.

46 "About Smart SME TV stations," เกี่ยวกับเรา, Smart SME Channel, 2020, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://www.smartsme.co.th/about.

47 "About Mthai," เมื่อ เอ็มไทย เริ่มก่อตั้งเว็บไซต์, MThai, 2020, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://mthai.com/aboutus/history.php.

48 Watchiranont Thongtep, "Newspapers Covering HM's Death Become Collector's Items," *The Nation Thailand*, Oct. 18, 2016, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://www.nationthailand.com/business/30297906.

⁴⁹ Tencent, "Sanook", Facebook page, 2020, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/pg/SanookEveryday/about/?ref=page_internal.; Emma Lee, "Sanook Online Rebranded To Tencent Thailand," Tech Node, Dec. 22, 2016, accessed Mar. 17, 2020, https://technode.com/2016/12/22/tencent-sanook/.

⁵⁰ Independent News Network, "About," สำนักข่าวไอ.เอ็น.เอ, INN, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, https://www.innnews.co.th/.

⁵¹ Australia Special Broadcasting Service, "Thai Radio," SBS, ฟังเอสบีเอส เรดิโอ เป็นภาษาไทย, 2020, accessed Feb. 17, 2020, https://www.sbs.com.au/language/thai/program.

⁵² "About," Bangkok Wealth & Biz, 2020, accessed Mar. 11, 2020, http://wealthnbiz.com/.

⁵³ Thailand Office of the Prime Minister, "About PRD," Government Public Relations Department, accessed Mar. 4, 2020, https://thailand.prd.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=1414.

⁵⁴ "5 More Thai Media Agencies Sign Partnership with Xinhua," *Khaosod English*, Nov. 20, 2019, accessed Dec. 2019, http://www.khaosodenglish.com/news/2019/11/20/5-more-thai-media-sites-sign-partnership-with-xinhua/.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "Head Office of ASEAN TOP."

⁵⁷ "China's Xi Vows 'New Era' of Myanmar Ties After Red Carpet Welcome," Channel News Asia, Jan. 17, 2020, accessed Jan. 2020, https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/china-xi-jinping-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-infrastructure-project-12275564.

⁵⁸ Xi Jinping, "Writing a New Chapter in Our Millennia-Old Pauk-Phaw Friendship," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, Jan. 16, 2020, accessed Feb. 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1733312.shtml.

⁵⁹ Mass Communication Organization of Thailand, "Corporate Info - COMPANY'S BUSINESS," MCOT.net, 2020, accessed Feb. 19, 2020, http://mcot.listedcompany.com/business.html.

⁶⁰ VOV5, "VIETNAM'S MARITIME SOVEREIGNTY," The Voice of Vietnam, 2020, accessed Apr. 8, 2020, https://vovworld.vn/en-US/event/vietnams-maritime-sovereignty/565.vov.; VNS, "MoIT Requires Control on Products with China's Nine-Dash Line," *Viet Nam News*, Nov. 23, 2019, accessed Apr. 21, 2020, https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/548843/moit-requires-control-on-products-with-chinas-nine-dash-line.htm.

⁶¹ John Formicella, Naytiwut Jamallsawat, and Artima Brikshasri, "Telecoms and Media: Thailand," Getting the Deal Through, Jun. 2019, accessed Mar. 3, 2020, https://gettingthedealthrough.com/area/39/jurisdiction/60/telecoms-media-thailand/.

⁶² *Constitution of Thailand*, 2017, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Thailand_2017.pdf?lang=en.

⁶³ Louisa Lim, "Borrowing, Buying, and Building Boats: How China Exerts its Influence Over the Press in Asia," in *Press Freedom in Contemporary Asia*, ed. Tina Burrett, and Jeffrey Kingston (New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁶⁴ Global CAMG Media Group's website, http://www.camg-media.com/en/about.html.

⁶⁵ Emma Lee, "Sanook Online Rebranded To Tencent Thailand," Tech Node, Dec. 22, 2016, accessed Mar. 17, 2020, https://technode.com/2016/12/22/tencent-sanook/

⁶⁶ Suchit Leesa-Nguangsuk, "Tencent's Global-Minded Thai Boss," *Bangkok Post*, Aug. 24, 2019, accessed Mar. 31, 2020, https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1735955/tencents-global-minded-thai-boss.

⁶⁷ June discussions with Thai media professionals and experts, 2020.

⁶⁸ "The MCs, Broadcast Schedule."; "Video: Lancang-Mekong in One Minute," People's Daily Online, Jun. 11, 2019, accessed Apr. 9, 2020, http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0611/c90000-9586780.html.; "The 2nd China-Cambodia Radio, Television and Television Cooperation Regular Meeting Held in Cambodia."; Cambodia China Friendship Radio - China Radio International, "CCFR.CRI," វិទ្យុមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជាចិន Facebook, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/?hc_ref=ARTpMlijcgfsUvUPJw0GdyEhyfprAS6AFat-bl2mrZmkl4iJomrCIPITON0gtmOi52g&fref=nf&__xts__[0]=68.ARAYZwc99NdDr3aB2xyk3sCnLwbrsamS6rkeCGRyXJYZlzgJeYIMqswjn5eTzAPxsSoBUgKPVLx3gcue8DM430Q9mD34VZI3NoY-

gxWa8tHaYLNgLjrjDu0bmi91PVUk6LoF-
YyLSllekEW5kLwt6KYzkFo1n7LCsY_zj50TVDxhuhGNlFbCOZnGg1yGnm0aG26pf5tYpnJRCBOQxlUHnv
9I9kCw_3q36kyW-
VJubkC6MFX0knauD9VLYG7m4SColg0xcjC8h6Dq1996bV0Q7kVIT9yPxWhLcSZRRIlyxP4wsFLm0IQqu
xpE1Wv2xdzIWfBbozxpQWYj-xGtYXoj4g2DMQ&_tn__=kC-R.;

69 Sun Narin and Kann Vicheika, "Cambodia-China Journalist Association Launched to Promote 'Positive News'," VOA Khmer, 2019, accessed Apr. 2, 2020, https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cambodia-china-journalist-association-launched-to-promote-positive-news/4926568.html.

70 Xinhua, "First Chinese-Invested TV Channel Launches in Cambodia," *China Daily*, Sept. 27, 2017, accessed Mar. 25, 2020, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-09/27/content_32554687.htm+&cd=9&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us.

71 Ibid.

72 Lin Rui, "ASEAN Headlines' Launched in Cambodia," *People's Daily*, Jan. 18, 2018, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0118/c90000-9316937.html.

73 "About Us," 关于我们, ASEAN Top, 东盟头条, 2018, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, http://www.aseantop.com/aboutUS.; "Head Office of ASEAN TOP."

74 Nathaniel Gleicher, "Removing Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior from China," Facebook, Aug. 19, 2019, https://about.fb.com/news/2019/08/removing-cib-china/; Twitter Safety, "Information Operations Directed at Hong Kong," Twitter, Aug. 19, 2019, https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2019/information_operations_directed_at_Hong_Kong.html; Shane Huntley, "Maintaining the Integrity of Our Platforms," Google, Aug. 22, 2019, https://www.blog.google/outreach-initiatives/public-policy/maintaining-integrity-our-platforms/.

75 Tom Uren, Elise Thomas, and Jacob Wallis, "Tweeting Through the Great Firewall: Preliminary Analysis of PRC-linked Information Operations on the Hong Kong Protests," Australian Strategic Policy Institute International Cyber Policy Centre, 2019, https://www.aspi.org.au/ report/tweeting-through-great-firewall; Masha Borak, "New Swarm of Pro-China Twitter Bots Spreads Information about Xinjiang," December 4, 2019, https://www.abacusnews.com/tech/new-swarm-pro-china-twitter-bots-spreads-disinformation-about-xinjiang/article/3040559.

76 Jessica Brandt and Torrey Taussig, "The Kremlin's disinformation playbook goes to Beijing," *Brookings*, May 19, 2020, accessed Jul. 31, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/05/19/the-kremlins-disinformation-playbook-goes-to-beijing/.

77 "The Mystery of the Fort Detrick Biological Research Facility," *Sự huyền bí của cơ sở nghiên cứu sinh học Fort Detrick*, May 18, 2020, accessed Jun. 1, 2020, http://vietnamese.cri.cn/20200518/c491cf3c-8484-4af2-3f57-abb1f1b0b692.html.; "USAMRIID is a Storage Facility for Many Life-Threatening Pathogens and Toxins," USAMRIID เป็นสถานที่เก็บเชื้อโรคและสารพิษอันตรายต่อชีวิตหลายอย่าง, *CRI Thailand*, May 18, 2020, accessed Jun. 02, 2020, http://thai.cri.cn/20200518/f832e89c-5373-f264-6bca-ab5122901511.html.; "Secrets of the Fort Detrick Biological Research Station," ဇီဝသုတေသနစခန်း၏ လျှို့ဝှက်ကွယ်မှာ:, *CRI Myanmar Facebook* May 19, 2020, accessed May 21, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=721337195093425.

78 See p. 11 of Loomis and Holz, *China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Vietnam*.

79 July discussion with Myanmar media experts, 2020.

80 Jane Madlyn McElhone, "The State, the Military, and the Market: Capture in the New Burmese Media Landscape," *In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the Threat to Democracy* (2017), accessed Feb. 25, 2020, https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Capture6_State-Military-and-the-Market-1.pdf.

81 July discussion with Myanmar media experts, 2020.

82 June discussions with Thai media professionals and experts, 2020.

83 Andrea Karpati, *Digital Literacy in Education*, UNESCO, 2011, accessed Jan. 21, 2020, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000214485/PDF/214485eng.pdf.multi.

[84] For example, China's 2019 national defense white paper also asserts that China would "never seek hegemony, expansion, or spheres of influence," arguing that "the Chinese people have suffered from aggression and wars" and "will never inflict such sufferings on any other country." Hootsuite and We Are Social, "Digital 2019 Cambodia (January 2019) v01," Data Reportal, 2019, accessed Mar. 25, 2020, https://www.slideshare.net/DataReportal/digital-2019-cambodia-january-2019-v01.

[85] During his speech to the 14th G20 summit in Osaka, Xi Jinping told other world leaders that "China will work in the spirit of peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation with all other countries to build a community with a shared future for mankind and to tirelessly pursue a brighter future of the global economy." "Wang Yi Speaks About Mekong River Drought," *Khaosod*, Aug. 2, 2019, accessed Dec. 15, 2019, https://www.khaosod.co.th/hot-topics/news_2766918.

[86] Chinese Central Military Commission Vice Chairman Xu Qiliang's speech at the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue offers an example of this narrative. See: Liu Hanzun and Sun Haoran, "Chinese Military Always a Force for Peace and Justice," *Global Times*, Oct. 20, 2019, *http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1167417.shtml*.

[87] For example, Chinese officials and media often contrast China's diplomatic efforts to resolve South China Sea territorial disputes with US military activities in the region. Liu Yang Guo Yuandan, "U.S. Military Aircraft Carrying Journalists to 'Make a Show' over South China Sea Warned, Expert: If They're Uninvited, Can We Not Shout?," *Global Times*, Aug. 11, 2018, *http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2018-08/12693613.html*. This report was translated into English and posted on the official English-language website of the *PLA Daily*, China Military Online. "Former Defense Spokesman: U.S. Military and CNN Jointly Make Show in S. China Sea," *China Military Online*, Aug. 13, 2018, *http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-08/13/content_9250952.htm*.

[88] Yan, "Lao Prime Minister Meets Xinhua News Agency President," *Xinhua*, Feb. 3, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/03/c_136947013.htm.

[89] "Home page," Pauk Phaw, 2020, accessed Aug. 11, 2020, http://www.paukphaw.com/.

[90] SCIO, "China's First Burmese Newspaper "Pauk Phaw" Launched in Dehong, Yunnan," (*zhongguo shou fen mian wen baozhi "baobo" zai yunnan dehong chuangkan;* 中国首份缅文报纸《胞波》在云南德宏创刊), State Council Information Office, (*guowuyuan xinwen bangongshi wangzhan;* 国务院新闻办公室网站), 2015, accessed Feb. 28, 2020, http://www.scio.gov.cn/m/zhzc/35353/35354/Document/1513321/1513321.htm.; *The China Story: Reshaping the World's Media*

[91] "Readers' Day of Four Periodicals Marked in Kunming ", Yunnan Gateway, Apr. 28, 2018, accessed Aug. 11, 2020, http://english.yunnan.cn/html/2018/latestnews_0428/14150.html.

[92] Ibid.

[93] The "China·Yunnan" publication is published in the "Myanmar Golden Phoenix," which is the largest weekly Chinese newspaper published in Myanmar. It aims to introduce Yunnan Province, China to readers from Myanmar and other countries, accessed Jan. 9, 2020, http://english.yunnan.cn/html/digitalnewspaper/myanmargoldenphoenix/

[94] "Golden Phoenix," Facebook Page, accessed: Jan. 9, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/mmgoldenphoenix/.

[95] "About," 中缅文化传播(广州)有限公司, China-Myanmar Culture Communication (Guangzhou) Co., Ltd., 缅甸中文网, 2020, accessed Aug. 11, 2020, http://www.mdzwwww.com/.

[96] "Burma-China News," (*miandian zhongwen wang*; 缅甸中文网), Facebook Page, accessed: Jan. 9, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/md0095/.

[97] "Mian-Hua News," (*mian hua wang*; 缅华网), Facebook Page, accessed: Jan. 9, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/mhwmm2014/.

[98] Facebook, "Workpoint Entertainment," 2019, accessed Dec. 31, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/workpoint/?_ga=2.75954770.675636638.1574433703-746114798.1574433703.

[99] "Guangming Daily" 光明日报分社, *Facebook*, 2020, accessed Aug. 11, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/guangmingdailyChina/.

[100] McElhone, "The State, the Military, and the Market: Capture in the New Burmese Media Landscape."

[101] July discussion with Myanmar media experts, 2020.

[102] June discussions with Thai media professionals and experts, 2020.